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We Are the Road

ABSTRACT

Contemporary archival art practices utilise their artefacts in a variety of ways. *We Are the Road* aims to develop an approach to the artefact and strategies of artists moving image production that run contrary to the typical habits of these practices. My approach foregrounds certain artefact's own internal and pre-existing complexities, separate from the complexities of an archive. This is distinct from archival art practices that focus on specific histories and their misrepresentation or absence; and practices that critique the archival construct itself.

I undertake the research through the production of moving image and sound artworks that seek to adopt and critically reformulate the processes of commercial film production and the artefacts it produces (such as the location report and the screenplay). This manoeuvre responds to the notion of instrumentality, criticised in philosophical thinking about technology, and is further informed by a variety of sources and disciplines, including literary criticism, film theory, and pop-cultural discourses.

The artefacts located by this project are the material remains of non-technical aspects (communities, ideas, events) that have accumulated around the development of moving image and screen-based technological products since the late 20th century, primarily television, the Internet and the digital moving image. Their continued existence as digital files and second-hand products is not the result of an organised recognition of their worth, rather, they have accumulated in the wake of technological advancement as so much junk floating around at the margins of the archive. The intention of the project is not to rehabilitate

overlooked materials but to explore the idea that these unheroic fragments and their stubborn specificities actualise moments of lived experience entangled with technology.

We Are the Road pays close attention to the transformation of the document from record to material in the precise moment of new art production, which is understood to be an active situation in which complementary and competing ideas, impulses, and opportunities are at work simultaneously. My research seeks to formulate and negotiate new articulations for such a complex and multi-dimensional experience of the present. As such *We Are the Road* is aligned with Raymond Williams' assertion in *Marxism* and *Literature* (1977 p128) that 'we have indeed to find other terms for the undeniable experience of the present: not only the temporal present, the realization of this and this instant, but the specificity of present being, the inalienably physical.' Importantly, this articulation encompasses how the work I have generated connects to key works and ideas within the field of contemporary artists' moving image, making the moment of production a collapse of origin and destination, reader and maker, audience and producer.

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INTRODUCTION

In *An Archival Impulse,* written in 2004, Hal Foster identifies a resurgence of interest in archives exemplified by the practices of a disparate group of artists including Thomas Hirschhorn, Tacita Dean, Joachim Koester, and Sam Durant. In a 2015 update to the original list, he adds another 21 artists and notes he could easily add more. The work of each artist is distinct from the others but Foster notes what they have in common: 'these archival artists are drawn to historical information that is lost or suppressed, and they seek to make it physically present once more.'[1]

We Are the Road focuses on the artefacts themselves, not as means to reveal a history or to critique the notion of the broader archival project, but in their stubborn singularity. In this way, the artefacts precede the practice that engages them; one could say that the practice becomes archival as a *result* of the influence of specific artefacts, an influence that is sought out and encouraged. The work of this project is to articulate what this means in practice, and it does so, one artefact at a time. As such, the aspect of archival art practice that emerges through this study is characterised by the way in which the individual artefact is engaged with, rather than how it is used or what it is used for. What is at stake is in finding or inventing appropriate methods to appreciate each unique artefact based upon the artefact as a thing-in-itself; the forms it takes, the languages it uses, the networks of meaning that are attached to it, and its surprising details.

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[1] (Foster 2015) p52

The artefacts located by this project are the material remains of non-technical aspects (communities, ideas, events) that have accumulated around the development of moving image and screen-based technological products since the late 20th century, primarily television, the Internet and the digital moving image. I found them as a result of a specific inquiry into the contemporary video technology of High definition video, seeking to explore its effects on the artists' moving image. My enquiry was predicated on an understanding of technology that did not stand up to scrutiny and caused me to rethink my approach. The basis of my mistake, thinking of technology as merely tools, resulted in research into ways of thinking about technology that has come to significantly shape the project as it evolves.

In his 1987 account of the MIT Media Lab, ex-hippy and technology evangelist Stewart Brand stated: 'If you are not part of the steamroller you are part of the road.'[2] The sentence denotes a split between the designers, engineers, and industry professionals who are perceived as active, and an unflattering description of the consumers who are passive, crediting only the professionals with the ability to invent. Contrary to this assertion, *We Are the Road* is interested in the inventiveness of 'the road', where its productions, assertions of agency, inventions, and forms of knowledge become appreciable.

The study considers the connection between artists' video production and commercial filmmaking. The difference between the two fields is clearly established and yet commercial film ghosts artists' video to varying degrees; its conventions, protocols and processes provide established

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[2] (Brand 1988) p9

standards from which artists might diverge. The practice thinks through what is made possible for the artist by its relation to commercial film: what is shared; what can be disregarded; and what can be borrowed.

We Are the Road pursues its investigation through practice and this contextual document in the three stages outlined below.

STAGE ONE

I focus on approaches to the artefact, conceiving of the artefacts that have come into and been produced by the research as documents, following a simple description of the document:

One of the crucial properties of documents through the ages has been their fixity. The ability to mark surfaces in relatively stable ways has made it possible for people distributed across space and time to see the same images and thereby to have access to the same meanings or communicative intent.[3]

I am framing the material as documents for a number of reasons. In the first instance, it levels what I have made and what is pre-existing and found. It also levels the status of each document, calling for the slight to be taken seriously and for the well regarded to be taken at face value. This is not to suggest equivalences regardless of what each document is or does, or to unthinkingly promote the empty, but rather looks to specific material instances (the marked surfaces of the above definition) as potentially fertile even if they do not appear so at first glance.

Nineteenth-century historian Leopold von Ranke stated that he wanted to, 'as it were erase my own Self in order to let in only things that speak'.[4] It has been a long time since this self-erasure was thought possible. By considering the elements of the research as documents within an archival framework that presupposes a neutral position is a fantasy, the question of to whom and how the item is a document and what contexts and interests

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[3] (Levy 1994) p24
[4] (Spieker 2008) p6

are at play is determined anew in each case. My own preoccupations and the context of contemporary art practice play a dominant role and as such, the research seeks to articulate and make plain what these are, as they become known.

The method of identifying components as documents also produces a distance from the material, which is particularly useful when the document under consideration is of my own making. It avoids a discussion about 'what I was trying to do' and focuses on what I have done. I have elected to call the artworks I produce 'artwork documents' in the accompanying texts, and include information about the moment of making that is not accessible from a simple viewing of the artwork itself. This is because the accompanying texts are intended to lay bare the thinking and action that evolves through a relationship with the complex artefact, but results in something entirely new. To exclude such information and thinking in adherence to a self-imposed rule would be counter-productive, however, the approach to the material developed through the categorisation as document, attenuates all that follows.

Conversation is used as a model for getting to know the artefact and differs from an interrogative approach. It allows for the interplay of ideas and diversions, it admits that the other will only partially be revealed, that the exchange will be conditioned by the setting, have a mood, and that it may result in a disagreement or a joke. The notional conversation also gives up on a superior position of one party, for where the artefact is unable to speak for itself directly, it is also stubborn. The interlocutor must therefore remain attentive and agile, and vigilant of their expectations and desires. The good conversationalist is on the lookout for new ways of

questioning and engaging and these are equally found in theory, philosophy, practice, popular culture, personal experience and anecdote. The movement between, and overlapping of frameworks, enables the agility that is key to avoiding unrecognised predetermined agendas.

If the purpose of such engagement is to find out what one did not already know, one must be ready to discover what one does not expect. However, the expectation that what will be discovered will be complex, is reasonable. The artefact will already be part of a number of networks and have meanings attached to it that have nothing to do with the art practice that pulls it into its orbit. These are not troublesome details to be smoothed away, but the very grounds on which they are part of the world and potentially part of new art production.

I am conceiving of stage one in light of the documentary film edit, an example in which the long consideration of source material, of repeated watching, moving around, making connections, rearranging and sifting is an essential part of the process because what is actually there on tape (as opposed to what one hope or planned for) shapes and delimits what can be made as a result.[5]

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[5] Documentary filmmaker Frederick Wiseman frequently has high shooting ratios (the amount of footage shot in comparison to the amount of footage used) In the making of *La Danse* in 2009, he shot 130 hours of footage and used less than three. (Brown 2018)

STAGE TWO

The extended consideration of material in this research is also part of a process that creates new things. However, unlike self-identifying documentary, it is not caught in an ethical discussion about 'representing the real',[6] and as such, once the practice shifts gears from the consideration of the material into production of new material, the inventive aspect that is noted and muted in the earliest of documentary definitions, 'the creative treatment of actuality',[7] is accelerated and expanded.

The inventive and fictional characteristics of the artworks produced could appear to be in contradiction with the placing of the work in an archival context and with the ostensible logic of paying close attention to sources, however, what the research seeks to do is to understand the tension between the two modes, in which a notably inventive outcome is closely bound, structured and textured by forms that already exist and are in popular circulation.

Raymond Williams writes:

> In most description and analysis, culture and society are expressed in an habitual past tense. The strongest barrier to the recognition of human cultural activity is this immediate and regular conversion of experience into finished products.[8]

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[6] The title of Bill Nichols' book on documentary film. (Nichols 1991)
[7] A phrase coined by John Grierson in 1932. (Nichols 1991)
[8] (Williams 1977) p128

The consequence is the obscuring of the present in which more than fixed and known forms are at work, and indeed the fixed and known forms do not have the clarity or defined edges that, with hindsight, we can name. The term 'structure of feeling' is proposed by Williams in acknowledgment of this moment, in which new forms are forged; inarticulate, embryonic, practical, temporary, speculative and felt, that might develop into fixed forms but may just as well melt away.

> If the social is always past, in the sense that it is always formed, we have indeed to find other terms for the undeniable experience of the present: not only the temporal present, the realization of this and this instant, but the specificity of present being, the inalienably physical, within which we may indeed discern and acknowledge institutions, formations, positions, but not always as fixed products, defining products.[9]

In the 'undeniable experience of the present' the fixed and known, which William's identifies as, 'known relationships, institutions, formations, positions' is accompanied by everything that escapes; the affective, the particular conditions and locations, voices, associations, and feelings, which are relegated to the personal and subjective, and dismissed.

Williams notes the particular relevance to the work of art, which is undeniably a fixed and finished actual object, but that has come into the world as part of a formative and contingent process. It is produced in specific, lived moments that are open, particular experiences of simultaneously bringing into play ideas, associations, knowledge, humour,

[9] (Williams 1977) p128

musicality, intuitions, and so on. This is different from self-conscious improvisation, as it perceives the qualities valued in improvisation as ever-present, if unacknowledged and therefore invisible, regardless.

In stage two, I seek to detail the transformation of the artefacts into new artworks at the moment of production through the use of 'production notes'. These introduce the range of ideas, conditions and opportunities that have been extracted from the artefacts and folds them into each other whilst simultaneously looking to articulate what else they make possible.

The Grand Alliance, a complex and key work in this research, brings together and works through the artefacts and what has been learnt about them; conceptions of technology; and the structures, processes, languages and artefacts of commercial narrative filmmaking, which are challenged and re-formulated in relation to artists moving image by becoming a subject of it.

STAGE THREE

Stage three clarifies key ideas that have been produced by the research. It goes on to propose a shift in perception of the process of commercial film production that opens it up to artists' moving image practice, specifically through making available as sites of artistic production the artefacts generated by the production process, as it moves towards its ultimate destination, the finished film.

The three artworks in this section are positioned as open-ended conclusions to *We Are the Road* as they begin to synthesise and actualise, in practice, the lines of enquiry and findings pursued throughout the research.

SECTION OVERVIEW

THE FAILED STUDY

This section recounts the process and reasoning behind an attempted study of High Definition video predicated on finding a fixed definition of the format, and why the approach failed.

REFLECTIONS ON THE FAILED STUDY

I consider the assumptions about technology that did not stand up to scrutiny and recognise that my misapprehension is not uncommon. However, the failed study introduced me to the culture of electronic engineering and computer science through artefacts found related to the development of HDTV in the 1980s and 1990s, with particular focus on the United States.

DOCUMENT 1 - **SOMEONE WHO ISN'T ME**

This section considers a conversation on an online forum as a document that exists as an html file. A video, *Someone Who Isn't Me* (2015) and a performance of the same name, also 2015, were produced, however, in this section the focus and document in question is the original conversation.

I then focus on the authorial voice that is produced by the contributors to the forum, leading to a discussion about how one might engage with, as Paul Ricœur writes; 'people of flesh and blood to whom something really happened'[10] in a manner that is led by the forum conversation itself.

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[10] (Paul Ricœur, Blamey and Pellauer 1990) p118

DOCUMENT 2 - **MP3 EMMY**

A description of an excerpt from The 65th Annual Technology and Engineering Emmy Awards Ceremony, 2014, in which the MP3 format won an award. The scene is an example of the industry character that informs artworks produced in the course of the study. Foregoing an explicit analysis, the intention is to give the reader of this research a feel for the archive material derived from the search for a fixed HD standard.

DOCUMENT 3 – **VHS LIBRARY**

VHS Library discusses two artwork documents made during a residency at Ingmar Bergman's former home in Sweden. The text thinks about how the encounter with the institution and the missing (dead) Ingmar Bergman is conditioned by established notions of the archive, as well as an initial consideration of the screenplay, of what writing can describe in contrast to what images can show.

DOCUMENT 4 – **BEHIND THE LINES**

As with the MP3 Emmy, *Behind the Lines* is a simple description of a clip of archive footage taken from a 1985 broadcast on UK television. Television and film celebrities and experts discuss and attempt to describe the HDTV footage they are watching in the studio to the audience at home, watching on standard definition television sets.

DOCUMENT 5 - **STINKING BLUE CLOUD**

Stinking Blue Cloud is an artwork document that uses archive material in the production of something new. 'Production Notes' detail the simultaneous impulses, ideas and references that occupy the moment in which these are brought together in the formulation of a new work.

DOCUMENT 6 - **THE GRAND ALLIANCE**

The Grand Alliance is a large project structured around a screenplay in which the archival material relating to the development of recent technologies, in particular HDTV, is worked through in relation to theories of technology. The exhibited project existed over the web and in physical space and included moving image, sculptural and photographic elements, however, the discussion in the 'Production Notes' focuses on the making of the screenplay element as it appeared on the project website.

The Grand Alliance section also begins to investigate the connection between the apparatus of commercial filmmaking and artists moving image.

CLARIFICATIONS

This section pauses to clarify the key ideas that have emerged in the project so far, coalescing around key terms: Instrumentality, Junkspace, The Multitude and The Telic.

The key terms are arranged alphabetically as entries in a glossary of sorts, rather than as a linear discussion, as it is critical for the ongoing research that the relations between ideas remain mobile and responsive.

THE DIAGRAM

The diagram takes the timeline of moving image production (pre-production, production, post-production and product), and swings it upwards, turning it into a hierarchy with product sitting at the top. Through this apparently simple manoeuvre I use ideas deriving from technology and the archive, particularly instrumentality, to rethink an

approach to filmmaking in which the stages prior to the final product are perceivable as ends-in-themselves and thus newly available as sites for artistic production.

DOCUMENT 9 – **LOCATION REPORT**

An audio artwork that takes up the location report as an imaginative form rather than one that accounts.

DOCUMENT 10 – **PEOPLE TEST CAMERAS**

A video artwork constructed from YouTube videos of people testing cameras.

CONCLUSION

A summary report of the research findings, conclusions and a statement on contribution to knowledge.

DOCUMENT 11 – **WE ARE THE ROAD**

We Are the Road is a video that aligns itself with the viewer in the moment of encountering the moving image and functions as the open-ended conclusion to this study.

STAGE ONE

THE FAILED STUDY

My initial research proposal included the plan to study the High Definition (HD) video format. I would make a series of short digital videos focusing on, drawing out and testing HD's formal characteristics. This appeared to be a straightforward endeavour that would casually separate the technology from the content, I could use whatever footage I had to hand and not worry about an audience or whether the test videos would qualify as artworks.

Sometime between 2006 and 2012 HD became the dominant format for artists' video to the point where the use of Standard Definition (SD) became a specific decision rather than being neutral ground.[11] In a field reliant on technology for making and showing, the practitioner keeps up with the regular developments that impact on further making and showing. The proposed study would produce a working familiarity with using and producing HD video rather than the SD I was used to.[12] It is a

[11] The shift can be traced on the LUX artists moving image agency's online catalogue by looking at the original format of works by artists who were regularly producing during the period 2006 - 2011: In 2008, People Like Us [aka Vicki Bennett] made S*kew Gardens* on SD and *The Doors of Perspection* on HD in 2011; Rachel Reupke made *Containing Matters of No Very Peaceable Colour* on SD in 2009, and the same year, made *10 Seconds Or Greater* on HD; and Elizabeth Price produced *A Public Lecture & Exhumation* on SD video in 2006 and *At the House of Mr X* on HD in 2007. ("Collection - LUX" 2018)
[12] The most immediate differences between HD and SD are in the size and shape of the image; the SD specification used in the UK (PAL) is 720 x 576 pixels and an aspect ratio of 4:3; High Definition is most frequently 1920 x 1080 (although anything above SD can claim to be HD) and the aspect ratio is most frequently 16:9. The number of frames per second (fps) delivered to the screen also differs; SD produces 25 fps whereas HD frequently uses 50 or 60 fps.
Upgrading workflows and equipment to accommodate different types of media (such as footage from a mobile phone, webcam or professional video camera),

frustrating experience to be editing, and rather than move freely within the activity of composition, to be called to address procedural issues (although acclimatising to new software with online courses, user forums, YouTube demonstrations, user manuals, asking friends and so on is the usual approach).

HD's seductive qualities were powerfully employed in works such as *User Group Disco*[13] by Elizabeth Price and questioned in Ed Atkins' *Death Mask II: The Scent,*[14] but without experience of the basics of making work in HD, I remained a viewer of finished productions. The developments in formats created new opportunities in the production of work over and above keeping relevant; what potential new uses did it contain and what established devices did it render awkward?

My desire to interrogate the HD format also came from suspicion about the claims of newness that had trickled down from the hyperbole of advertising campaigns,[15] however, some of the claims also seemed to actually play out in the encounter of a well-installed HD video artwork. Given such a setting, the work did not seem to need to be good to be

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different output destinations (for the web, public screening or broadcast) always requires testing. Ascertaining different project and encoding settings, working out best practices and resolving issues means time spent on help pages and forums. There are frequently several answers to posted queries, none definitive and a process of looking up and comparing advice and creating series of video files called *test, test_1* and so on ensues. (Pedantic 2012)

[13] (Price 2009)

[14] (Atkins 2010)

[15] The Sony Bravia HD TV European campaign produced a video of 25,000 brightly coloured rubber balls being released and bouncing and rolling down San Francisco streets. An article on the campaign describes the decision to focus on the 'human benefit of each product' rather than the technical claims most campaigns focused on. 'For example, 'Colour Like No Other' sums up the human benefit of the technology within the Bravia.' ("Case Study: Sony Balls" 2018)

convincing because the HD image *is* bigger, smoother, more detailed, the blacks are blacker and the whites whiter, colours are more vibrant and movement smoother, crystal clear noise-free sound surrounds and infiltrates the body. This was a new experience in viewing artists' video at that time, an impressive experience more usually associated with the cinema.[16] This meant that if the artist sought to reference production modes that had previously had a higher production value than the consumer video camera, they could do so with the same media quality rather than with materials that signal its different status. In the regime that equates increased definition with increased quality, quality is limited to appearances at the surface of the screen. However, the quantifiable increased quality that is produced at a technical level promises and delivers other *qualities* that cannot usefully be accounted for in technical terms, such as the potential to change the artworks relation to the world of film and television, simply by looking and sounding more like it.

My starting points were to be canvas size, aspect ratio, the way in which the image is drawn,[17] and the image/sound relationship. Conceptualising the image/sound relationship has been a long-running aspect of my practice with a focus on voice; who is speaking? What is their status? By

[16] Work such as Laure Prouvost's, *It, Heat, Hit,* presented at Tate Britain was made cinematic by the scale and quality of image and sound, whilst maintaining the apparently casual, exploratory means of capture that the inexpensive camera makes possible. (Prouvost 2010) Whereas artists have frequently worked with cinema and television, it has been as a specific intervention rather than a levelling of ground. For example, David Hall's ten *TV Interruptions* for Scottish Television, broadcast in August and September of 1971. (Hall 1971)

[17] By 'drawn', I am referring to how the moving image as a surface is made to appear as in the 24 frames a second of film, the two fields that make up each of the 25 frames a second of PAL video and refresh from top left to bottom right line by line. Digital video works by registering change over short periods rather than redrawing from scratch in the form of discrete groups of pictures.

what means are these things established? A consequence of the compositing logic of digital video (the depicted space on screen can be constructed of different layers from numerous sources)[18] means that the space created on screen promises no singular indexical origin; when viewing a composite video image the sound has no obvious primary source, it may come from any of the pictured spaces, be a mix, or be entirely unconnected. The dislocation of sound from image is not a problem for the contemporary audience or maker, it is standard practice and indeed a positive attribute of digital modes of production and so to insist that something like 'truth in sound' is particularly desired would be perverse.[19]

Therefore, my point was not that the depicted space and corresponding sound (synchronised or otherwise), is a confection, but that the dislocation arises specifically from the logic and capacities of the technical apparatus. Furthermore, that early documentary film practice provides a precedent for the situation in which the specifics of technical apparatus has a consequence that registers in the status of the voice.

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[18] Lev Manovich famously writes: 'Born from animation, cinema pushed animation to its boundary, only to become one particular case of animation in the end'. His work details the reordering of the logic of making cinema that takes place with the digital, prior to which the indexical reality of the recorded (rather than constructed in a machine) held a privileged position: 'Cinema's public image stressed the aura of reality "captured" on film, thus implying that cinema was about photographing what existed before the camera, rather than "creating the 'never-was'" of special effects.' Noting that the digital economy of pixels renders all pixels equal, he concludes that: 'Digital cinema is a particular case of animation that uses live-action footage as one of its many elements.' (Manovich 1995) p6-9

[19] An exception would be in the field of audio forensics, recordings as evidence in court proceedings, for example, in which the authenticity of the recording is precisely what is at stake. ("Audio Forensics" 2018)

Before the 1960's, recording synchronised location sound was a technical impracticability and the 'voice-of-God' narration was developed as a solution.[20] Charles Woolf describes it as:

> Disembodied, this voice is construed as fundamentally unrepresentable in human form, connoting a position of absolute mastery and knowledge outside the spatial and temporal boundaries of the social world the film depicts.[21]

Bill Nichols describes the way in which the practices of an approach become increasingly apparent with use, he writes; 'an awareness of norms and conventions to which a given text adheres begins to frost the window onto reality.'[22]

In the case of voice-of-God narration, the position of absolute mastery described by Woolf became increasingly problematic in its didacticism and other modes, namely, observational and direct cinema largely replaced the practice.[23]

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[20] In *Representing Reality*, Bill Nichols identifies four modes of documentary representation including the expository mode, he writes: 'Expository texts take shape around commentary directed towards the viewer; images serve as illustration or counterpoint. Nonsynchronous sound prevails (expository representation prevailed before location sound recording in sync became reasonably manageable around 1960).' (Nichols 1991) p34
[21] (Wolfe 1997) p149
[22] (Nichols 1991) p32
[23] 'Voice-of-God commentary and poetic perspectives sought to disclose information about the historical world itself and to see that world afresh, even if these views came to seem romantic or didactic. Observational documentary (Leacock-Pennebaker, Fredrick Wiseman) arose from the availability of more mobile, synchronous recording equipment and a dissatisfaction with the moralizing quality of expository documentary.' (Nichols 1991) p35. The television programme, *The Camera That Changed the World*, explores this moment with

We are now returned to the situation in which a primary sound source arising from the singular recorded space cannot be assumed and this is also for technical reasons. In the first instance, it was due to a lack of technical capability, in the second, due to abundance.

These were my points of entry and whilst the proposed set of tests would not necessarily answer my questions or add much to my theoretical speculations on the voice, it would, to follow Nichols' analogy, accelerate the frosting of the window and get me behind the screen.

To begin, I needed a basic and stable version of what the HD format actually is. I looked at the HD pre-sets in Premiere Pro, the editing software I was using at the time and found over 100 (it currently stands at 311).[24] It contained a huge variety of settings although this did not unduly alarm me as editing software often contains options that can safely be ignored. I contacted the British Film Institute (BFI) asking if, and how, HD was defined in their database. I also asked for information on the earliest HD material held in the BFI collections. My request was passed to the Information Specialist team, who directed me to the library catalogue to search for 'High Definition' in a keyword search (a media format field does not exist). I found papers on the development of the HD standard, details of technical specifications that were legible only to engineers and trade magazines featuring articles that presented the same information in a more digestible form from the point of view of the trade to which it was

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regards to key documentary filmmakers, supporting Nichols assertion. ("The Camera That Changed The World" 2011)

[24] (*Premiere Pro CS5.5* 2011) and (*Premiere Pro CC* 2017)

addressed. A web search produced videos and help pages for people using HD products as well as adverts for new televisions and cameras which focus on how the product differs from its rivals rather than what it shares. Although not stated plainly anywhere apart from on Wikipedia, HD is basically any video specification higher than SD, meaning a denser image within the frame, or a denser amount of information over time.[25]

The problem with my initial plan was that HD does not really exist as a fixed, specified format in the way that 16mm film exists and an 'HD as HD' series of tests cannot work in the same way as the materialist 'film as film' project does; the basic premise is wrong.[26] It is defined in relation to a fixed point, SD, but is not a fixed point in itself. You cannot purchase blank HD although some memory formats are designed for this use; an HD tape is not essential to produce HD video (other memory formats work just as well), the tape itself is only ready for the image and this ready state cannot be played. The file does not pre-exist the image, even blank video needs to be rendered. The range of variables in recording devices and settings,

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[25] ("High-Definition Video" 2018)

[26] Although not expressly conceived of as a structuralist film project the proposed series of videos cannot help but refer to it. The term 'film as film' was coined by Peter Gidal in 1971 and was popularly thought to mean an investigation of the formal and material qualities of film such as the acetate, the frame, and the projection space. Writing in 1979, Gidal corrects this misinterpretation: 'This dangerous formulation of mine from 1971 was wrongly taken to mean that film's essential nature was the proper area of investigation for avant-garde/ experimental film. It was never up to the structural/materialist filmmaker to recover films' essential nature, i.e. film as film. If anything, it is *a* film's concrete existence which must interest; its possibilities of militating against transparency; its presentation/formation of processes of production which have as their uses meanings constructed by, through, and *for*.' It is, however, the first definition that informed the imagined series, seeking, as I was to address the technicalities of the format in the initial instance. In which case, the imagined tests might resemble the work of Gidal and his peers, but shorn of the expressly political agenda. (Gidal 1989) p20

camera qualities, bit rates, software, codex, compression, file types and so on make the location of a standard HD difficult if not impossible to locate; it is a black hole of increasingly complex technical specifications and variables being constantly upgraded. In short, there is no solid ground to test.[27] I seem to have discovered that the digital is different to the analogue, which is odd because I knew this already.

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[27] A solid ground can be elected and the process of testing along materialist/structuralist lines can proceed as shown by Simon Payne in work such as, *New Ratio* (Payne 2007), who follows the thinking articulated by Gidal in direct (and actual) conversation with him. (Gidal 2001)

REFLECTIONS ON THE FAILED STUDY

The question I was asking required a neat split between technological form and content. This converged with a broader frustration in casual conversations about technology in which technology was seen to be merely its latest products. Problems with technology were the problems with Facebook, Twitter trolls, and driverless cars etc. That a product might have positives and negatives, and that these were not necessarily mappable onto other products, reduced the conversation to a circulation between examples of good and bad. Initially, this appeared to have little to do with my research project but it also relied on ideas of technology that did not perform well under scrutiny. Further, as someone professionally engaged with technology (particularly with video editing applications) and not an expert on all things but certainly experienced in working through issues, that I could have such a misapprehension and not have noticed suggested that my misapprehension of what technology is, was actually a more embedded and general misapprehension.

The process I had undertaken began with looking at technical information that exceeded my comprehension to the extent that it meant nothing to me at all. I had less of a sense of distinction between formats and technologies after working through the material and concluded that the purely technical distinction appeared both too complicated and increasingly abstract to comprehend; and from the point of view of the producer and viewer of HD materials, too obvious to mention. However, as a by-product of the search for a definitive specification, I had gathered

a lot of material associated with the development of the digital HD television (HDTV) in the United States.[28]

What became evident was that the development of various new technologies and markets challenged the dominance of terrestrial broadcasters and manufacturers, prompting them to develop HDTV.[29] Whilst the US was no longer a large producer of television sets, they were investing in the emerging computing industry. If screen technologies were going to merge it was imperative that they were involved.[30] The motivation was not the beautiful image or the sharing of technological fruits, but of protecting market shares and jobs.[31]

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[28] The issue was international but material relating to the United States was more abundant and varied.

[29] This is contrary to the popular image of technology being an evolution in its own world that occurs as an almost natural process. This notion is examined by Raymond Williams in *Television,* in which he analyses what is meant by the statement, 'television has changed our world' with a number of further statements that begin with: 'Television was invented as a result of scientific and technical research.' (Williams 2010) p1-7

[30] For example, in 1985 a group of companies headed by Motorola made a request to the Federal Communications Commission (U.S.) for unused bandwidth (allocated at that time to terrestrial broadcasters), for two-way radio use. Earlier, in 1972, NHK, Japan's national public broadcasting organization, submitted a proposal to the Comité Consultatif International pour la Radio, the international broadcast standards body, for a study of HDTV based on their research. In the same year, a study group was set up by the European Broadcasting Union to research the uses of digital technologies in a range of aspects within broadcast media production and display. (Cianci 2012) e-book chapter 2

[31] The foreword to a United States government background paper written in 1990 states: 'High-definition television -HDTV as it is called- is linked with many other basic technologies important to the United States. The impacts of the development of HDTV will ripple through the U.S. economy: It will make us confront such issues as public policy dealing with manufacturing, educational and training standardization, communications, civil and military command and control, structural economic problems, and relationships between government and business.' (U.S. Congress, Office of Technology Assessment, 1990) pIII

The development of the agreed technical standard was played out internationally in commercial, educational, and military laboratories. Rival designs submitted to testing programs with the numerous national and international bodies, presentations were made to the public and heads of state, filmmakers were invited to make tests and decisions were made incrementally based on both technical performance and strategic manoeuvres. Key moments include: 'Hell Week' in November 1988 at the Days Inn in Springfield, Virginia, when the Advisory Committee on Advanced Television Service (U.S.) tested 13 early designs, and the formation of the Grand Alliance in 1993. GI, Zenith, AT&T, MIT, Sarnoff, Philips, and Thomson formed a consortium of companies and labs working on developing the HDTV standard and working system. In 1996 the Federal Communications Commission (U.S.) recognised the consortiums work as the standard for HDTV.[32]

I was attracted to the material as cultural material rather than for the specifically historical and technical information it contained; to the contexts, interests, cultures, institutions, communities and individuals involved. These not only related to HDTV, but to technologies and ideas that would feature on screens of all sorts and as augmentation or extension of screen-based activity. Publications, such as *Compute! Magazine* from October 1989, a popular computing magazine has an extensive article about HDTV, alongside articles about holography, speech recognition, and a quiz on how well you know your computer which includes a question on what you call it: Sir, Pal, HAL or 'I don't call it, it calls me…Master.'[33] It produces not so much a science fiction but a

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[32] (Cianci 2012)
[33] (Aycock 1989) p32-33

techno-fiction, in which the imagination takes what is real and projects what it might become.[34]

'Convergence' is the industry name for the merging of the computer and television screen. *A Public Lecture & Exhumation* by Elizabeth Price and the following artwork*, At the House of Mr X,*[35] makes use of the animated slide transitions Powerpoint offers, in particular, the cube spin,[36] and so marks the *same* convergence of the computer screen and the moving image screen. The cube spin references the culture it comes from but also appears as a device of potential value for artists' moving image, a discipline that does not want for more apparently sophisticated options. Compared to the work of Simon Denny whose projects take a technology such as Blockchain and explains it to the audience,[37] Price does not make a subject out of Powerpoint or cube spins but notices their presence as a

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[34] Techno fiction is, in fact, a genre that details advanced technologies as an essential part of the narrative at the expense of character development. Tom Clancy is the best known and successful of the techno-thriller, the largest sub-set of techno-fiction. (Ryan 1993)

[35] (Price 2006) and (Price 2007)

[36] In a cube spin, the image of the preceding and following slide is shown to be the side of a 3D cube that turns. Found in the 3D transition options as either 'cube left' or 'cube right', and in Premiere Pro as 'cube spin', the direction of spin decided once the transition is applied. (*Premiere Pro CC* 2017). Whilst the use of cube spins was not new (the transition was offered as standard by most if not all consumer editing software), it is interesting that in Price's work this derives specifically from Microsoft Powerpoint, invoking the corporate world and dry academic presentations through its own attempt to enliven them with animated visual flourishes. If the basic animations of Powerpoint borrow from the moving image, Price picks them up and takes them seriously, bringing them into a highly seductive video space. There is nothing ironic in their deployment in the work, they do not register as a loosening of the precise, one almost wants to say *deadly* level of control that gives the work much of its power.

[37] In *What is Blockchain?* Denny has produced a professional informational video explaining what Blockchain is, using computer animation and voiceover. (Denny 2016)

mode of moving image that is familiar to the audience as part of the wider visual language in which the work takes place, has meaning and has effect.

It struck me that the world of the electronics industry is similar to the art world: it has its big names, its conventions, its groups, communities, and individuals that coalesce around various concerns.[38] With hindsight, this is obvious. The archive material relating to the development of HDTV also contains numerous scenarios that could be described as televisual, as if those developing television and writing about television have watched a lot of television and it has affected the manner in which they remember and retell events. It is undoubtedly amusing to read the predictions, see the characters, moustaches, and graphics of the recent past, now all so hopelessly nostalgic, but there is more to it.

The accumulated HDTV materials relate to the production of the moving image through invention, collaboration and a shared language within a culture, and this mirrors the operations that take place in the productions of television producers, artists, and filmmakers, which also occur through invention, collaboration and a shared language within a culture. They share the problems of group work, of developments that come to nothing, professional rivalries, disputes, as well as high points and successes.

Any art installation that includes a video element or monitor will attract patrons who become lost in a trance while absorbing the 380 to 750 nm wavelength electromagnetic stimulus emitted by a display

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[38] To follow up on this idea I interviewed Professor Tim Ellis of Kingston University Department of Computer Science. The interview audio recording is included on the accompanying CD. (Ellis 2016)

device. Perhaps video imagery and the emission of photons activate nerves deep within the human species, with impulses routed through the soul to connect with the spirit, fulfilling an innate quest for illumination.[39]

So begins the preface to *High Definition Television, The Creation, Development and Implementation of HDTV Technology*, by Philip J. Cianci, an electrical engineer. One could take issue with his specific claims ('any' art installation?) but that would be to undervalue the expression of a certain joy and awe of the unarticulated image that the sentence reveals and the difficulty of finding a language or framework up to the task of its conveyance. The leaking of social, emotional, romantic, humorous, desirous, and idealistic impulses and motivations shadow the material gathered from the technical industries, resulting in an accidentally accumulated archive that takes such leaks and escapes from the ostensibly technical as its primary selection criteria.

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[39] (Cianci 2012) e-book preface

Injecting - - The PROPER Way to Cook Black Tar (if you can't see through your shot, READ THIS!) | Drugs-Forum.html[40]

This is an html file that contains text content and instructions as to its layout when opened in an Internet browser. The website drugs-forum.com is hosted by Shock Media Hosting[41] in the Netherlands. The web browser will understand the file because html is a standard developed by The World Wide Web Consortium, a group of leading industry organisations invested in maintaining and developing such standards, founded at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Laboratory for Computer Science [MIT/LCS] in collaboration with the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN) in 1994.[42] In addition to being in the Netherlands, the file is also to be found on my computer hard drive in Lewisham and quite possibly in other places too.

There is a jpeg circulating on social media showing that the weight of the Internet is about the same as a strawberry.[43] This is true if you discount all the cables and computers; it is roughly the same as saying the weight of the library minus the buildings and books; the weight of the Chinese language minus the brains; music minus instruments and so on. And on these (heavier than strawberries) hard drives the information is physically marked, rendered onto a surface from which it can be read. It is in code

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[40] ("Injecting - - The PROPER Way To Cook Black Tar (If You Can't See Through Your Shot, READ THIS!)" 2017)
[41] (Media n.d.)
[42] (W3.org n.d.)
[43] (Sociality 2013)

and you cannot see it without equipment but it is, in the end, little different from a typed page, which you can type twice and also store in The Netherlands and Lewisham if you so wish. The files, folders and index pages of websites proceed from informational hierarchies that have long been in use, which is not to say that the specificities of each new development in information technologies is uncoupled from what we can or need to say about the world, what activity might be registered, or what thought inscribed at any given moment but that at a basic level, the registering of information of one sort or another on a material ground is the constant when talking about documents.

The website, drugs-forum.com, aims to present unbiased, realistic information about drugs to counteract the mainstream media which it describes as mainly 'scaremongering, political propaganda and uninformed journalism'. It neither promotes the recreational use of drugs nor does it condemn those who use drugs this way. It is published to the public web as opposed to hiding on the dark web in an effort to achieve its goal of becoming 'a full-grown media phenomenon, with substantial impact on society'.

The thread we are focusing on, the document itself, remains open and if you sign up you can add to it, but nobody has since 2014. This is a strange sort of stasis for a document; it has not changed but it could. Its fixedness is unreliable but seems to be holding. The conversation it contains took place between November 2009 and August 2014 on the efficiency and safety of methods of preparing heroin for injection. This subject of substance misuse can provoke strong responses even before anything has been said and it is not my intention to trespass on individual, personal

responses. My interest lies in how the slew of opinions about the people contributing to the forum far surpasses what is borne out by reading the posts and in turn, how those opinions condition the text itself.

My previous attempt to address the forum text material has produced a suspicion that my motivation is to align myself with a hard-edged deviant cool by capitalising on other people's lives. Or that I am attempting to rehabilitate such lives by revealing aspects of activity that contradict the negative characterisations and narrative tropes associated with substance misuse, doing these unknown people some sort of ill-informed favour.[44] Perhaps the text is fundamentally inappropriate for the means I have to hand; the unknowable mix of cultural and personal associations for the audience and the field in which I attempt to take it on. But, for each objection, I find that the document itself is more than able to counter it, and further, that these points of difficulty are precisely where it proves itself so valuable. Perhaps my personal failure in itself contains the success of the greater case in which complication and difficulty cannot and should not be smoothed out. And this is not really about me.

The decisive point in these deliberations is the use of the term 'SWIM' in the text. An acronym for 'Someone Who Isn't Me', it is ostensibly used by posters to avoid self-incrimination. The forum rules inform users that SWIM is ineffective as a means to protect the contributor from prosecution, and even potentially functions as proof that the poster has something to hide and evidence of bad intent. The website has a campaign to stop the use of SWIM, citing the impossibility of covering the

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[44] See *SWIM (Someone Who Isn't Me)* on the accompanying CD, a work completed at the very start of this research project. (Collins 2015)

multitude of national drugs policies that might apply to users of the website, open to any nationality or geographical location, as well as the confusion that the term creates when read by new forum members. This is a collapse of legal and linguistic concerns. As a solution, the site recommends using the third person, attributing experience and activity to, for example, 'my lizard'. The website gives numerous examples of acceptable and unacceptable phrasing which effectively splits the author from their experience, suggesting a falsely disengaged reporting as a means of cover.[45]

Further complicating matters is the extended duration of the conversations matched with the awareness that laws change over time and that a legal post made at one point might well become incriminating at a later date. But the law that shows up in the posts and profiles is a fuzzy hybrid of perceived threat incorporating not just worries about law enforcement (variously well researched, guessed at, taken seriously and ignored) but also fears about a more general exposure as a socially stigmatised drug user. The fears may be non-specific or ambiguous but it produces an ongoing state of anxiety. No matter the perspective an individual might take on drug use, including that it ought to be considered legitimate, it might be personally necessary, it functions as an act of political defiance, it is dependent on circumstances or indeed that it is deviant with no redeeming reasoning possible, it takes shape in relation to its deviant status, to the ingested understanding and circulation of norms.

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[45] ("Help Reduce The Use Of SWIM On DF" 2018)

The document is not official in the sense that it does not qualify the legitimacy of a claim to a specific identity, property, nationality, access to rights etc., but its existence circumscribes and takes shape largely against a perception of the law, and socially acceptable behaviours, nonetheless. It remains difficult to pinpoint the exact subject of disapprobation. Drug laws describe specific substances, amounts, and contexts but never really seem to get to the point, which appears to be a condemnation of being useless to society, unproductive, a drain on resources. The laws fuss around the edges, causing untold misery and are as incapable of eliminating recreational drug use, as descriptions of intoxication are incapable of articulating the desire or drive to step out of sobriety.[46] It is the same frontier seen from opposing sides.

If names work to separate us out from one another, SWIM works in the opposite direction. Identifiers have been removed as a perceived necessity in order to contribute to the forum and so the accumulation of knowledge and experience can only be made in combination with erasure. SWIM de-authors the posts, eroding the differences between individuals, creating a third person that appears in different posts; SWIM becomes a very active member of the community, often contradicting, repeating, sympathising and encouraging themselves as SWIM replies to SWIM. But there is little point in interrogating the individual contributors and speculating on their motives or circumstances, they are not available to us, the personality that leaks out of the text is meagre and impossible to

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[46] Notable works that seek to describe or convey and intoxicated state include: Charles Baudelaire's *Hashish, Wine, Opium* (Stang, Gautier and Baudelaire 2009); René Daumal's *A Night of Serious Drinking* (Daumal 1979), Thomas De Quincey's *Confessions of an English Opium Eater* (De Quincey and Hayter 1971); and Daniel Tumbleweeds *The Museum Dose.* (Tumbleweed 2015)

distinguish from what might be a performance suitable for the forum context. [47]

The website is public and therefore the contributors have accommodated the knowledge that anyone might read what they have written by using anonymising usernames and attributing their knowledge to some general other, even if this has been done badly or inconsistently. This produces a latent request to the reader that they remain at the surface of the post and to take the contributed information at face value. A contract in which experience and knowledge is shared in return for refraining from an over-reading of the lives from which the experience and knowledge derives.

To post to the forum, *any* forum, is to broadcast from an isolated position without any certainty that what you have said will be heard, the most intimate of feelings in some cases trusted to strangers who have no obligation to respond and responses to which the original poster has little recourse. The payoff for such a risk is finding a sympathetic community, the release of expression for its own sake, and/or the sharing of relevant information.

In the face of social and judiciary law, the authority at work in the forum is the website and its administrators, and they have no teeth. The reputation system allows users to give points to posts and these accrue over time as a means to show how engaged and respected a particular contributor is. This does not translate to reputation outside of the forum, rather it creates a hierarchical structure that has meaning only within the community; it

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[47] The article *Discussing illicit drugs in public internet forums* details various aspects of using anonymising names. (Barratt 2011)

encourages or discourages behaviour and so mimics the social and judicial laws that create the need for, and form of, the forum in the first place. It is not a stretch to understand a desire to be intoxicated as the search for relief of some kind, including relief from the pressures to perform as a productive member of society. The reputation system also rewards productivity. It rewards those most capable of assimilating their behaviour to the context and most adept at employing the appropriate language and vernacular. It becomes a dispersed and faint hierarchy, a version of structures of real power, but one that has as its engine a rejection of what the operations of such structures is felt to cost.

The website itself aims to present information at face value, and we must take its lead and step back further. When viewed from a distance what can be seen, and where its weight lies, is in the overlapping, often contradictory, systems and closed circuits.

The document is as much about plumbing as it is anything else, containing details about where water tanks are to be found, how a combi-boiler works, the materials used in pipes and the conditions under which these dangerous materials erode. It is also about the processes of heating, cooling, mixing and distilling chemicals ready for ingestion, a bridging stage between plumbing and the body, exchanging pipes for veins with both on guard against impurities. The reputation system similarly fashions the conversation to promote desired elements over undesired ones inside the forum, as do social systems outside the forum in which the contributors are themselves the impurities. Broader still are the legal and law enforcement systems that remove undesirables from the streets, as the rhetoric goes. There are other systems where the notion of impurity is

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employed and capitalised on, including, but not limited to: popular culture which makes use of the drug user or dealer through a number of tropes, very rarely challenging the belief that these are bad people (unless the subject is a creative genius in which case the needs of the exceptional mind is humoured); black market economies in which drug users are customers without protections; commercial penal systems, such as in the United States, where incarcerated drug users are fuel for prisons with extra profit extracted through cheap labour programmes; the losses caused by a reduction in the number of fully functioning members of society are recouped for financial or political gain, made profitable by other means, a recycling of waste product.[48]

I admit to an admiration of the tactic SWIM embodies; to find a way to proceed in imperfect circumstances without much hope of a heroic victory, maybe it is a bit sneaky but it is an unfair fight. There is both sadness and comedy in denying oneself in order to function, an acceptance of the dominant forces and how one is forced to proceed daily, and a sense of self-preservation that must include and account for what it costs.

The website's approach is to stick with the facts, to take and present information at face value and in an earlier attempt to deal with the material, I picked up this strategy. I memorised and recited an edited version of the text before an audience of peers, staying resolutely with the text, lending my voice and not very developed capacity to memorise.[49] It

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[48] *The House I Live In*, a documentary by Eugene Jarecki explores the relationship between drug laws and the penal system in the United States. (Jarecki 2012)
[49] (Collins 2015)

was the most direct and literal way I could think of engaging with the text as it stood, by ingesting it into my physical body. I was also thinking about a comment made by Alain Robbe-Grillet talking about Roland Barthes, he said, 'when I love a writer, I tend not to analyse him, but try to learn him by heart. This seems much more important to me… It's a much more intimate contact because, when I analyse it, I always feel that I am eliminating the text.'[50]

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[50] (Robbe-Grillet and Corpet 2011) p2-3

DOCUMENT TWO - **MP3 EMMY**

A middle-aged man in a suit sits onstage at a grand piano in front of a heavy red curtain. He is readying himself to sing into the microphone as he begins to play the 1976 hit, *Piano Man,* by Billy Joel.[51]

It is the 65th Annual Technology and Engineering Emmy Awards Ceremony, at the Bellagio Resort on the strip in Las Vegas (the hotel with the fountains in front of it). It is September 2014.

The man plays the piano well and then he begins to sing:

It's nine o'clock on a Saturday,
The record store's closed for the night,
So I fire up the old itunes music store,
And soon I am feelin' alright.

His voice is okay, he can carry a tune but it is not particularly pleasant. He continues with another verse:

I know Steve Jobs can find me a melody,
With one dollar pricing that rocks,
I can type in a track and get album names back,
While still in my undies and socks.

Sell me a song you're the music man,
My iPod's got ten gigs to go,

[51] ("The 65Th Annual Technology & Engineering Emmy Awards" 2016)

I might prefer more compatibility,

But Steve likes to run the whole show.

I heard Desperate Housewives was great last night,

But I ate a bad piece of cod,

As I threw up my meal I said it's no big deal,

I will watch it tonight on my pod.

It goes on but never gets quite as good as the bit about throwing up cod again. He has increasing trouble with the high notes but makes it through to the end before walking to the centre stage microphone and announcing; 'Actually, Mpeg 2 really was a stroke of genius, it built on Mpeg 1 and then some.' He then presents the award for 'The Development, standardization and productization of the High Definition Serial Digital Interface' to Mpeg-2.

Built in 1967, Hammars was Ingmar Bergman's home until his death in 2007 and was designed to fit his needs precisely. It is now a workspace for invited artists, owned by an anonymous Norwegian benefactor who wishes the house to remain exactly as it was when Bergman inhabited it. This involves adhering to strict rules on shoes, where conversation is permitted, and where water may be drunk. The location of the house is kept secret by the islanders in order to prevent snooping. It is not a public space but a discreet component of the industry that has sprung up around his legacy.

Our induction to Hammars was a mixture of its story and its rules given by a woman whose family had long been involved with Bergman and his island buildings. She talked us through the door/key/shoe protocol and then through the rooms, pointing out where he had written in thick pen on tabletops and doors–an edit of his nightmares–small sections kept for posterity and other sections painted over. She told us about the slipping problems with the linoleum that Bergman had put in the bathroom; it struck me as very NHS. The VHS library was a mustard carpeted shelf-lined room with a couple of comfy chairs and a big TV. The rest of the bungalow was pine-panelled and low-ceilinged, there were a couple of tapestries and a meditation room. A used cotton bud had been left on his bed, presumably not Bergman's. Photography and filming are prohibited inside but we could write, talk and plan, she said. And we were not to let anyone in the building. If curious tourists or Bergman fans came

up to the window and demanded to be let in, we should tell them to fuck off.

We felt unsettled in the house. We sat in the living room; I was on a large sofa where the children had been allowed to sit. It was damp and hard through age and the sun was shining straight into my eyes. All the windows were sealed to stop the snoopers and to protect the remnants of the man, but the result was an atmosphere like a sickly sweat. The Swedes in our group talked about patriarchy in Swedish culture, they recognised what sort of a man Bergman was from what they knew of his films and life as a Swedish icon, from men they knew like him, from his wealthy background, and the nine children by different women. It wasn't unfamiliar to us English. We left, subdued and irritable with plans to return for a closer look at his VHS collection. (April 2016) [52]

*Please watch *VHS Library* ▎

The sound recording and video images matched to it were recorded on the same day with the motive of documenting the situation and conversation, and the text was written shortly after to record the impression, before it was forgotten. They are documents that describe the experience from the point of view of one participant (myself), partial, but admittedly and obviously so. Conversations and experiences do not usually produce such intentional documentation but rather they are consigned to fragments, notes or memory, experienced in the flow of life.

[52] (Collins 2016)
[53] (Collins 2016)

Both the text and video knowingly evidence a specific activity and register the information in a manner and format that can be accessed by others elsewhere or later with little explanation required. The imagined audience is familiar with contemporary art as they are the most likely to appreciate the predicament (the stuffy, reverential house of a dead master filmmaker), and value the gesture of the video made in response; a video of an audio recording casually critiquing the masters collection, in an archive of sorts that prohibits visual recording but does not mention audio recording (and we did not ask permission).[54]

The two parts are materially incommensurate as they stand. The text could be rendered on-screen or voiced at the start of the video; the conversation could be transcribed and images printed, but they are not and we must take this decision as intended. You could imaginatively, or actually, put them in a folder and shut down any unwanted interference that could take up residence in the space in-between, but as they are not it follows that intrusions into the pairing are not seen as such, it is not a closed circuit that can be polluted or corrupted by what exists outside of the two documents. In fact, it relies on an awareness of who Ingmar

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[54] 'the meaning of "archive", its only meaning, comes to it from the Greek *arkheion*: initially a house, a domicile, an address, the residence of the superior magistrates, the archons, those who commanded. The citizens who thus held and signified political power were considered to possess the right to make, or to represent, the law. On account of their publicly recognized authority, it is at their home, in that place which is their house (private house, family house, or employee's house), that official documents are filed.' This makes a connection between the law of the state and filmmaking, suggesting that although of a different kind, filmmaking has rules and that these rules are lodged with those who have 'publicly recognised authority'. As the home of a publicly recognised authority, Hammars becomes an archive. (Derrida 1998) p2

Bergman was, which is taken as a given and not explicitly described within the text or video.

A document is the single, complete unit. Both document/units function in isolation and as part of the pair; and together or apart, they are available to become part of further unknown groupings with hard, soft, or no borders all. No conflict, relational preference or particular commitment to the other is expressed or required.

Should the documents endure and become the subject of someone's interest at a later date, we have little idea of what questions they might be asking of them and what preoccupations might be conditioning their interest. We could speculate that they might find evidence of tensions between English and Swedish artists in the early part of the 21st Century, or it would work to support scientific findings that time spent on the island of Fårö produces depression, or that Fårö was once above sea level. Depending on the discipline and what constitutes evidence within that framework, all these things are possible.

My own preoccupation is with documents in relation to archives and archival art practice. Archives themselves began as the repository of legal and state documents and went on to also become a store of materials for historical research and these remain their two primary functions. Their validity is secured within these frameworks and so to draw them into artistic fields, even in the most straightforward manner, undermines these contextual stays. Put simply, archival art practice makes use of archival material or archival structures. What constitutes archive material, how archives structure and categorise material, and how the artworks make use

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of it is played out and complicated in the actual work. Such work relates to the practice of historians, seeking and elaborating on traces of histories, often untold or problematically considered minor; and/or challenges the notion of archives and their operations in themselves; what they are and what we want, expect or rely on them to provide, and the ways in which these things are made manifest.

Archives are constructed of documents, so when a material source enters into an archival orbit they become documents. Documents are material records, which could suggest that the designation of 'material' and 'document' are interchangeable, but this is only the case when viewed with the logic of the archive. A bag of cement is not a document but a material awaiting a specific use. But the bag of cement as a unit could be seen as a document because, as philosopher Paul Ricœur notes: 'any trace left by the past becomes a document for historians as soon as they know how to interrogate its remains, how to question them.[55] Ask a question about the building materials industry and the bag of cement becomes a document.[56]

The documents are produced unselfconsciously with relation to the archive, they are concerned only with the activity that generates them and not manufactured with an idea of completing an archive as an aesthetic

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[55] (Ricœur, Blamey and Pellauer 1990) p117

[56] 'Documentation was a set of techniques developed to manage significant (or potentially significant) documents, meaning, in practice, printed texts. But there was (and is) no theoretical reason why documentation should be limited to *texts*, let alone *printed* texts. There are many other kinds of signifying objects in addition to printed texts. And if documentation can deal with texts that are not printed, could it not also deal with documents that are *not* texts at all?' (Buckland 1997) p805

project in itself. This would be something like faking it; documents ought to be original and have an authentic quality that cannot really be an essential property of the material, but rather is perceived by the archivist (used here to denote the person who is connecting, gathering and asking particular questions). The archivist, in turn, is concerned with the topography of the collected materials; where they came from, when, as if with enough documents allocated to the right place the activity that generated them might be resurrected. The logical endpoint of this project is a sort of mania for fixing knowledge, as if one were trying to evidence that what has come to pass was inevitable and therefore, what will come to pass is foreseeable.

The archivist also represents the institution, either the institution that produced the documents (an in-house archive) or the institution that collects and preserves them (an archive constituted around a question). When seen from a distance, the archive itself documents the preoccupations, values and rationale of the institution.

The document is the single unit, and a collection of units/documents is potentially an archive, becoming an archive once brought together by a question or an institution that traces the networks in which it is held in place/ holds a place.

This schematic is all very well, but it relies on having knowledge of questions, institutions, and what constitutes the single unit. The archive and the document are co-creative, but what happens when neither are defined? When one actually encounters materials and situations that are probably archival, discernible from secondary factors such as a concern

with the past and a pronounced care for materials that remain, for rules, for restricting access but also lack the explicit designation of archive or a catalogue, the administrative registering, naming and categorisation of the single units in which the archives values can be known? If there is no need to map the topography because the materials actually remain in the same place as they always were?

VHS Library contains an audio recording of the conversation of five women artists browsing Ingmar Bergman's VHS library at his home, Hammars, on Fårö Island, a small island off Gotland Island in the Baltic, where Bergman's movies, *Persona* and *Shame* were filmed.[57] The people talking are myself, Choterina Freer, Anna Kinbom, Rut-Karin Zetergren, and Sonia Hedstrand; Choterina and I are English, the others are Swedish. We are chatty, talking over each other in parts, as we wander around the room spotting films we know, and making not very good attempts at describing what the films are about. It is embarrassing to listen back to. The recorded conversation is overlaid with video images of Hammars from the outside, a collection of repeated medium-wide static shots that circle the building in daylight, with one shot looking out to sea. The text describes the visit to Bergman's home the day before the recording took place, written from recollection a shortly after.

Everyone knows who Ingmar Bergman was; a Swedish man (1918 – 2007) and an important filmmaker but his name designates more; despite his death, he remains an authorial figure greater than the fact of his existence and the work he produced. To find myself afforded the opportunity of staying at his house for a couple of weeks confronted with Bergman, the

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[57] (Collins 2016)

physical man now dead but nonetheless an active agent, was to encounter all three at once (the dead man, the body of work, and the continuing presence) in an almost overwhelming collapse of mechanisms, some of which had nothing to do with him.

The local Bergman industry had been revealed to us during a group residency at the Baltic Arts Centre the previous year and provided funding opportunities for us to meet face-to-face again, our personal financial circumstances in London and Stockholm promoting an interest in Bergman that might otherwise have passed us by. The broader cultural policy of the Gotland region, made up of Gotland Island and Fårö, seeks to make the most of its cultural heritage, a mixture of film, as represented by Bergman, and the remains of its significant military history which includes the cold war during which much of the islands were off-limits to civilians. Indicative of this effort is a vast former military hangar, turned into the Kustateljén film studios. Kustateljén is not directly linked to Bergman, but the cultural agencies at work on Gotland, including the film studio, are linked to each other in pursuit of the cultural policy. Meeting other artists who have stayed on the islands, we discovered they had met the same people and been guided towards the same places and opportunities. We fit into and had an activating part to play in this structure, our presence as international artists was enough to fulfil our structural function. Any other obligations were harder to discern.

The young writer, who was also being hosted by the Berman Estate, began writing at Bergman's desk early each day and said little. His discipline, the books and notes in folders that he carried with him, and his seriousness, appeared reverential. Perhaps he was delving into some

unanswered question about Bergman's life and work, such as the place of animals or tapestry in Bergman's oeuvre, or writing in Bergman's style, or building a narrative around a minor character from a Bergman film. These projections of a compliant participant are not necessarily negative but they are inverse to questions of what is possible when working in relation to a known figure, with material that has status and has attracted significant scholarship: What is meant by the designation 'Bergman' and what might I be able to do in relation to it? On what grounds could I engage in a conversation of sorts, as equals, presumptuous, as this might seem?

I watched various Bergman films in preparation for the visit including, *Shame*, for which I also read the screenplay.[58] I was caught by the pairing of the screenplay and the film, each containing both more and less than their counterpart, as text and moving image utilise their specific capacities to say what cannot be seen and to show what cannot be sufficiently described. We understand that the screenplay is a necessary part of the process of creating cinema, an early stage to be moved through on the way to the desired moving image product. However, *Shame* has been published as text, it has passed a threshold in which the text is granted autonomy, a value in and of itself other than as a tool. Its publication means it has been considered for presentation to a public, looked back upon from the outside, and a sufficient audience has been imaginatively constituted. It is reasonable to assume that this audience consists largely of Bergman and cinema enthusiasts and the text explains or reveals something of his process.[59] The narrative, the unfolding of an emotional

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[58] (Bergman 1968) and (Bergman 2002)
[59] (Korte and Schneider 2000)

and psychological drama between a man and woman trying to survive in the vicinity of an ever closer but unexplained war, is consistent between both; it is definitely the same thing. The scenes described and shown coincide most of the time; some different locations have been used and some dialogue cut.

A radio, employed in the screenplay to narrate aspects of the nearby war, is not in the film and no other device is taken up to reintroduce the lost information. The information is by no means complete in the screenplay; we do not know who is fighting or for what reason, rather, we hear that an armistice has been broken, tales of violence against the civilian population, and dancing music. During the closing scenes, as the couple are in a small boat at sea with a group of others, awaiting the outcome of their drifting and doomed attempt to escape, we learn, via the radio, that the rain and sea are polluted and highly dangerous. This is followed by the closing lines of the screenplay: 'On the seventh day a storm blows up, and there is a heavy rain. The survivors slake their thirst with the poisoned water.'[60] Without the radio, there is no poison. It must have been decided during the making of the film and/or the edit that this was no longer needed as explicit knowledge. It is embedded but unannounced in the nightmarish drinking of the sea water, which we all know makes you even more thirsty; the salt is a poison of a different kind. Things evolve in the making; an edit seeks out and removes unnecessary duplication, what image and time can do takes over from what the text forecasts. Before its removal, the radio had acted as a tunnel between the text of the screenplay and the moving image, inserting one means of informing, telling, into the regime of showing that the moving image prizes, before it

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[60] (Bergman 2002) p191

was closed off, stranding the characters and audience alike, more completely.

Nonetheless, the screenplay, now published, exists differently than as an exhausted plan for a film.

Bergman is missing from Hammars because he is dead. The harder the house, the Bergman Estate, and the Bergman Museum try to mark his life, the more dead he seems. The dent in the sofa seat produces this feeling most clearly; its negative space recalling a photographic negative or the shadows cast by bodies blocking nuclear explosions. The nearly 44 square miles of Fårö island is an extended secular shrine, the landscape becoming a set of locations; one can almost not tell if Bergman or the rocks came first. The house rules worked as stage directions, his authority as a master filmmaker merging with his authority as master of the house, conditioning our behaviour and framing our spontaneous thoughts and actions as structured improvisations.

I attended an artist's talk by Amie Siegel earlier in the year. She presented *Fetish*, [61] a video made in response to a visit to The Freud Museum in London where she had chanced to see the staff cleaning Freud's rooms. She returned to film it. Very high resolution, static, close shots show staff carefully cleaning Freud's objects, brushing the small figurine of a goddess with a soft brush, then carefully cleaning Freud's couch, removing the cushions and layers of coverings, vacuuming each with a modified vacuum cleaner and then carefully putting it all back, layer by layer. It was all so *Freudian*. It was only after I had left the gallery that I

[61] (Siegel 2016)

began to wonder if there was anything you could do at the Freud Museum that would not be Freudian?

Our conversation in the VHS library was caught in the palpable presence of Bergman's absence; our activity defined by the prohibition on recording on camera and our conversation, chatty rather than expert, attempted to assert our living voices and our irreverence in defiance, the work taking place in the act of speaking in that oppressive situation rather than in the actual words said. With hindsight, I wish that we had been better able to tell the film's narratives; I imagined we could have made a new text like *The Decameron* or *The Arabian Nights*; a collection of stories from popular culture recorded in the shadow of death. This imaginary missed text would have been a version of the film created by the film, an extension of the screenplay to film trajectory, further encompassing the specifics of the film's release, its actors and the associations that accumulate around the actual film and its actual release. But we do not really get there, we only describe a few films and then only say what they are about rather than what the narrative is, and these are not the same things.

What we do in our casual conversation is ask questions of the collection of tapes as if it were an archive in its own right: how is it organised? What format is it on and how does the VHS format correspond time-wise with the rise of DVD? What themes or groupings emerge? What does this tell us about Bergman and how does his life, specifically in this place, his home, create the character and status as an archive of the collection? It is by no means certain that it is an archive proper, it does not announce this officially anywhere and the estate's explicit intention is to create a space

for people to work in the production of new things rather than study Bergman himself; despite this, the pressure of his presence would require an act of will to ignore it. The edit of his night time writings on walls and tables, also unexplained, means that we can not be sure that the collection has not been edited too. Or rearranged, breaking the original topography of how one title relates to another, which would tell us nothing about the films but would tell us about how they were used by Bergman in his alive state. The documents in this collection, mass-produced commercially available VHS tapes, complicate matters further by being full of their own complexities–rabbit holes of innumerable contingencies that each ask to be taken as whole worlds. It is also impossible to discern whether these films were part of Bergman's unselfconscious working process, halted where they were at his time of death, or whether they were entered into the library with the intention of becoming a composed collection? Did Bergman anticipate the study of his life and work in this way?

His will stated that he wanted everything sold off to the highest bidder,[62] so all this speculation about his intentions appears unfounded, and his VHS collection is possibly no more than the films he bought and might want to watch again. However, the spontaneous line of questioning in our conversation and my response to the visit, as recorded in the text, revealed that we were oriented to the house and the island as if it were an archive, officially instituted or not. The archive was co-constituted by a body of materials, a site and an institution of sorts, in combination with the ways in which we felt positioned in relation to it; the idea that it was information, that it revealed something about the past, the positions we

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[62] (Bradshaw 2009)

felt able to take up and how the expectations of those positions preceded us.

The video and text do not make use of Bergman's filmmaking or writing style, but the place of speculation, of acting without full knowledge, as well as the mixing of descriptive registers in an effort to locate and get across different forms of information, presence and thought, is characteristic in both Bergman's work and our project: the war that is unexplained in *Shame*; the hidden rationale of the VHS collection; the edited writing on Bergman's table; the poorly described narratives of the films in his collection; the lack of images from inside the home, and finally, the absence of Bergman himself.

DOCUMENT FOUR - **BEHIND THE LINES**

On screen is a mid-1980s television studio with nine people sat in tubular steel and pale leather chairs on two levels around a small hexagonal space, one side open to the audience and camera.[63]

The camera is on the man on the right of the group, the presenter:

> *Let's see what our guests thought here in the studio, some of them seeing it for the first time. Sitting next to me is Anne Diamond of TVAM, what did you think of HDTV?*

> *I was a little frightened actually. What struck me at first was when you see pictures of people, it is really as if they are in your own home, actually in your living room… You can see every little hair on a girl's face, you can see the little lines, the little crinkles, all of the little spots, that's a bit frightening.*

She carries on, she is worried about how she will look, about lines and wrinkles, the ones smoothed out of the image revealing the ones on her face, on her deteriorating human skin. This is not a frivolous concern for a woman in the media. Her outfit is sympathetic to the subject; a voluminous and symmetrical, medium-cut blouse composed of triangles of fabric, some black, some blue screen blue and some a speckled black and white reminiscent of television snow.

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[63] ("Behind The Lines" 1985)

Richard Last, TV Critic from the *Daily Telegraph* gives his opinion next. He is very well spoken with grey hair, grey beard, specs and a grey suit. He is impressed by the image, it's almost 3D, and feels as though he could "almost reach out and touch the people". He reminds us that as he is seeing it in a studio and that there are no lines, no flickers; the image is not being transmitted. Then he says:

> *As I understand it, it (HDTV) means junking every bit of equipment now in use, from the studio camera to your television set and my video recorder, whether that is justified in the short term…to get this fantastic quality, I don't know, I would personally rather see some of the money spent on improving programmes.*

News and current affairs presenter Alistair Stewart (blue shirt, red tie, black helmet hair) is a bit boring, he says the image is brighter and sharper etc. It cuts away to Anne Diamond's momentarily stern face during his comments; they must have had to edit him down.

Fern Britten appears on screen. She is glowing in a fuchsia pink ruffled blouse. She has been seduced by the image and describes this seductively. Her voice is high, soft and musical:

> *I experienced hues of colour and depth of field and the immediacy that I have never experienced before in the cinema or on television… I normally can't see the difference but actually I could, I could see that this is connoisseurs' television, this is real, this is fantastic, I feel as if I have opened the windows at home and I'm looking at the real world, marvellous, connoisseurs' television.*

Paul Donavan, a man in a dark grey suit and burgundy tie, does not get an introduction other than his name. Perhaps he was someone in the 1980's.

I think it is as perfect a picture as I will ever see. I am just sorry that everyone watching this at home cannot be here to appreciate it.

The director of *Defence of the Realm*, David Drury, looks like a film director, attractively rumpled, like an explorer, wearing an expensive but worn-in linen shirt in blue. He is concerned that news programmes will need to use it responsibly, "because if you take stuff in Beirut for example…I mean it's actually going to be quite horrific."

STAGE TWO

DOCUMENT FIVE - **STINKING BLUE CLOUD**

*Please play *Stinking Blue Cloud*

Stinking Blue Cloud is an audio artwork document made from a number of other documents in such a way that the other documents are no longer accessible; they have been broken down, fragmented, and become pliable new material. There is something disrespectful in this and I am fine with it.[64]

The new document is a collage; things have been cut out of pre-existing documents and the sense of those other biographies hangs on but cannot be reconstituted with what remains. The particular forms (in this case the instructional text and the narrative text) let us know that there are other spaces, other publications that shape and gives texture to the elements, that identifies one part as different from the other. This is different from the edit, in which the cuts are meant to recede, to give the impression of a coherent space, of a single diegetic space. Here, the edges are visible; what is not included is lost and the loss is neither hidden nor evidence of failure.

It is no longer productive to question this particular item as a document through its material presence, the case can be made easily enough but misses the movement that has occurred from the pause to sit with the media, to learn it, to consider it carefully; to putting into play what has been learnt. This mode is inventive, fictional, humorous and free of obligation.

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[64] (Collins 2015)

PRODUCTION NOTES

1. Polygraph examinations work with narratives that are already known, their status as fact or fiction is decided by the body's (assumed honest) response in the re-telling that happens within the examination. The re-telling that takes place is then occupied with generally hidden, or secondary concerns, that accompany an encounter with a narrative as experienced over the duration of its telling. The activity of being an audience or reader is heightened within a polygraph exam as the examinee is implicated and will potentially suffer consequences. It also produces a graph, the complicated immaterial moment of response rendered material, frequently as evidence in a literal, legal sense. The scientific method, much challenged as pseudo-science, nonetheless makes claim to confirm concrete truths.

The sections of text giving advice on how to ask questions in a polygraph examination setting were extracted from a telephone interview with Terry Ball, an experienced polygraph examiner in the US and owner of Ball & Gillespie Polygraph, their chosen domain name, lie2me.net.[65]

2. Shadowing the work is Salman Rushdie's reading of *Concerning the Bodyguard* by Donald Barthelme, on a New Yorker fiction podcast[66]. The 1978 short story is told entirely in questions that speculate on the character of a bodyguard in relation to his 'principle', the man he is protecting. The principle is an important man of power and the plot that

[65] Terry Ball, telephone interview with Jenna Collins, June 13, 2014.
[66] (Barthelme, Rushdie and Treisman 2011)

emerges in the speculative questions about what the bodyguard knows and thinks, and about the nature of his interactions with the principle, tells the story of a state in which power is about to change hands. The mood is dark and tense, the narrative of the political struggle held at a remove, submerged within the questions. Rushdie's intonation and pace influenced the vocal performance of *Stinking Blue Cloud.*

4. The information about the questions, taken from the interview with Terry Ball, is given immediate examples which tells a version of Plato's ship analogy, read in Plato's version but also in Badiou's re-write.[67] This is further informed by the sinking of the Exxon Valdeez and the descriptive terms and turns of phrase used by those who took part in a television programme about the disaster.[68]

5. The characters and their actions in the ship analogy are taken as the crime being tested by the polygraph exam but there is a deliberate mismatch between the logic of the questions asked (the logic of truth extraction and admissibility as evidence) and the logic of narratives aiming to describe and involve an audience or reader, in which colour and feeling contribute to the success of the telling, aspects that escape the capacities of the polygraph.

6. The state, the law, reason, is mirrored by the use of a march; and the drunken, careless, poetic, is mirrored in the waltz. These are incompatible time signatures. The notion of the law which enters the practice is not

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[67] (Plato and Lee 1987) and (Badiou 2012)
[68] ("Oil Spill - The Exxon Valdez Disaster" 2009)

specific laws or judicial systems, but a sense of the law as the background of rules.

7. The music was made on a set up with a Casio keyboard (beats and chords) going through a Korg Ribon Synth (for distortion) into a portable PA speaker (plays the music out loud). On the table in front of the PA is a Zoom microphone pointed at the speaker (to capture the sound), which goes into an audio interface (converts the analogue sound to digital) that then goes into Adobe Audition (sound editing software) that records it all, including the small break in the signal between the speaker and the zoom where the space of the recording (the kitchen) enters into the recording.

8. This workspace, pieces of equipment, cables, and the production of a wave image on screen strikes me, as I am occupied with making the music, as reminiscent of what I imagine the set-up of a polygraph examination is. The capturing devices and the operator writing a graph in which psychological stresses and calm become physical and are made visible; an image that matches loud and quiet sections of an audio file. It was also reminiscent of (what I imagine) is the scenario of the captain's deck on a ship, I am the captain, my tools around me—my monitors and my controls. I am imagining workspaces, and further workspaces come to mind, those in *School Is a Factory*, 1978-80 by Allan Sekula, particularly the image of the computer programmer whom Sekula describes in the text element of the artwork as 'solemn'.[69] He looks at the camera flatly as he stands sandwiched behind a shelf of huge, open binders and in front of wardrobe-sized computing machines. The ceiling and its grid of ceiling lights can be seen receding through a glass partition and another room

[69] (Sekula 1980)

housing wardrobe-sized computing machines. That he is standing, leads me to the final in the trail of associations, and Walter Murch, Hollywood Editor of *The English Patient*, and *The Conversation,* among other hugely successful movies, describes how he rigged up his editing equipment so he could stand at it rather than sit:

> Editing is a kind of surgery - and have you ever seen a surgeon sitting to perform an operation? Editing is also like cooking - and no one sits down at the stove to cook. But most of all, editing is a kind of a dance - the finished film is a kind of crystallized dance - and when have you ever seen a dancer sitting down to dance?[70]

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[70] (Murch 2001) p44-45

DOCUMENT SIX - **THE GRAND ALLIANCE**

*Please view The Grand Alliance newsprint documentation

The Grand Alliance is a composite of different media.[71] Its central focus is a screenplay of five scenes published on a website over the month of April 2015: framed photographs of holograms that partially block a gallery door; a print out of the screenplay (a different layout to the web version) on the gallery wall, and a collection of cheap chairs adorned with large circles, columns, and electricity spikes made of wood and insulating polystyrene, arranged in groups, also in the gallery. There were two videos and several images embedded on the screenplay webpage. The exhibition was open on the 28th and 29th of April 2015. *The Grand Alliance* was stretched awkwardly across media and spaces and took place over time.

In taking this form, *The Grand Alliance* tests the method of addressing the practice as documents. It was never a single unit document and significant aspects of the work were not registered on a material ground. With hindsight I can see it is almost designed to resist archiving, to make categorisation and capture as difficult as possible, as if to force the limits of these processes into revealing themselves. The installed and online elements were never in the same place at the same time, putting the audience in the position of an editor before they have begun cutting; all the material is there to be considered, to notice elements, gestures and to speculate on how, although in different registers, they might be part of the same thing.

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[71] (Collins 2016)

Rather than being poetic or non-existent, the narrative is rather emphatic but also sufficiently bad that readers easily resist being drawn in.[72] In fact, the readers are warned not to bother: 'although we will neither get to know nor care about THE SPECIAL GUEST, he is the narrator and the only identifiable character in the piece.'[73] The narrative is not the main thing in *The Grand Alliance* nor is it a special thing that everything else acts in support of; it is just perhaps the biggest thing. It is one of a number of ways in which the archive material, gathered in the search for a fixed HD standard and the ensuing inquiry into how technology is considered, is transformed.

Accounting for *The Grand Alliance* after the fact produces not a single unit document but rather a catalogue of manoeuvres of thought and artistic action that is not confined to any one single material element and therefore the cataloguing must attempt to recognise and articulate the simultaneous agents and their actions in *The Grand Alliance* for the first time. It must also be attentive to how the thinking that develops through the period of production and display (both occurring at the same time) is registered in the work.

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[72] For Peter Gidal, narrative is to be moved away from, as it is a means by which thought is captured and trained by the dominant ideology. In the construction of narrative film the mechanics of its making and showing are hidden and thus his interest in making present the mechanics and removing the narrative as a political act. (Gidal 1989) In contrast, my interest is in showing both on an equal footing as a means to see narrative as an object. This was explored in the video *Someone Who Isn't Me* (Collins 2015) in which I posted questions about a described, rather than told, narrative to an authors' forum, and let the responses shape and mark the description that appears in the video. (*Someone Who Isn't Me* is included on the accompanying CD).

[73] This was written in *Scene One*, and as I posted each scene as soon as it was completed, the statement remains, even though he only turns out to be the narrator of the history of HDTV and not the other elements that evolved as the writing went on.

I have previously described *The Grand Alliance* as a networked artwork and the elements as nodes, but this suggests a mechanical set of relations and well-considered space between the elements, which is not the case. The partial distribution via the web, and over time, means that engagement was only minimally under my control. I have toyed with the idea that it was itself an alliance, but after some consideration, I have decided it was a crowd, an unruly group made up of individuals, a collection of details that respond equally to the centrifugal and centripetal possibilities that open up. These are nonetheless held together as they arise from the same line of enquiry despite having no obligation to obviously demonstrate that fact.

Now that the exhibition has been taken down the artwork no longer exists. The printouts are now in a battered roll and the framed photographs wrapped in bubble wrap, in Lewisham; the chairs are in the attic. The website has been moved to the gallery projects' archive page and broken links have been found and fixed twice, but it seems only a matter of time before the constituent elements are left to drift further apart and collapse totally. Photographs of the installed exhibition were taken and a conversation about the work, had during its making, has been transcribed and added to a composite paper document that approximates the website.

I have a confession to make. In the original version posted to the website, THE SPECIAL GUEST was called *Jack Diamond*, the name of an electronic gambling game that I was interested in at the time but that did not go on to become part of the work. The name is awful and embarrassing, so I

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have changed it. The purpose of the paper version of *The Grand Alliance* is to relay the project and given the opportunity, I can't help but make the past just a little better. The paper version I have given you is only an approximation of the project and so I decided it would be okay but I am also aware that the justifications I have for making a better story is the same, or at least similar, to cheating archivists the world over and I quite enjoy this idea.[74]

The decision to work my way through the material and related research in the form of a screenplay struck me as appropriate since I was dealing with screens. I refer to text in the left-hand column of the screenplay as 'image text' as it describes what is seen, as well as location and character descriptions; the text on the right of the screenplay is referred to as 'audio text' and describes what is heard. The layout is derived from *Pickpocket* , a screenplay by Robert Bresson, after having considered a number of layout protocols.[75] *Pickpocket* was the only one that splits the sound and vision into different columns; the others use one column and a mixture of capitals, bold, and italics to denote the different sorts of information. In the *Pickpocket* layout, I immediately recognised my own primary conception of video in which image and sound are essentially separate streams that are sometimes brought together, rather than as image and sound that are sometimes separated.

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[74] The translator's note in *'I, Pierre Riviére'* discusses the problem correcting the original text as written by the poorly educated accused of the title and decides against it. As the author, I have both an investment in changing the name and the authority, but the issue has arisen through my own insistence on a document/ archival framework. (Foucault 1982) p.53

[75] (Bresson, 1981). Other layout possibilities include Liam Gillick's *McNamara* (Gillick 2009), Susan Sontag's *Duet for Cannibals* (Sontag 1970), Pier Paolo Pasolini's *St Paul* (Pasolini and Castelli 2014), and Ingmar Bergman's *Shame* and *Persona.* (Bergman 2002)

PRODUCTION NOTES

1. The five scenes in summary:

Scene One: The Reunion: In which we are introduced to the two principal locations, a film studio and a shopping centre, and to the main character, THE SPECIAL GUEST, as he begins a speech.

Scene Two: gravel and Tar: In which shoppers give their opinions on a new television standard and amateur inventors are laughed at.

Scene Three: Conference Call: The Students plan their presentation on thinking about technology.

Scene Four: The Grand Alliance: THE SPECIAL GUEST reminisces about the Grand Alliance of companies that developed HDTV in the U.S. and an animation takes place.

Scene Five: The Demonstration: A new format is revealed in a public demonstration at the Lewisham Shopping Centre and THE SPECIAL GUEST leaps from the top of a set of stairs on wheels.

2. The main source of historical information is a student essay,[76] despite the availability of more academically reliable sources (which confirm what the students report),[77] but as the research has shifted from technical information to historical information, to social and contextual information, the hierarchy of expertise has faltered. As students, they are in training and have the freedom to be wrong (I do not know if these students passed the course), but in using a literally unqualified source, *The Grand Alliance* gives up its claim to be an accurate historical account.

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[76] (Alvarez et al. 1999)

[77] (Cianci 2012) and (Ota.fas.org 1990)

3.'HDTV: An Engineering History' was group written by four students: Salvador Alvarez, James Chen, David Lecumberri, and Chen-Pang Yeang in 1999. The essay was found on a Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) course website through a Google search. The search result leads directly to the essay as a pdf, from which the latter part of the URL can be deleted to get to the course front page.[78] 'The Structure of Engineering Revolutions' ran between 1997 and 2001 and was archived at some later point. The website that can be found via the pdf has a pale lemon background, a poor quality jpeg of the first transistor and the overall design style is early web. The students' essay has been archived in 'Previous Projects' on the archived website. The course asks students to consider an integrated understanding of the development of technologies, an approach that includes technical, economic, political, and cultural perspectives. The archived website has become the very material it originally sought to stand outside of and draw conclusions from. If I were to read the course materials (still available on the website), I would be able to study the website 'correctly', meaning, paying attention to and analysing the material in accordance with the logic the course itself promotes. It is a temporal *mise en abyme,* and this looping of references plays out throughout *The Grand Alliance* as a key destabilising tactic.

* Please watch *The Reunion*.

4. *Scene One* begins with a video, *The Reunion*, which automatically plays when the webpage is loaded.[79] This functions as a title sequence/ theme tune as visitors return for the next instalment, posted on average six days

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[78] (Mindell 2001)
[79] (Collins 2016)

later. The video is an extract of a screen recording of my first visit to the MIT course website.[80] The video examines a group photograph of a 25th reunion party taken in the daytime and in what appears to be a classroom; the date of the photograph itself is absent. The video looks around the photograph, enlarging the image and yet gaining no more detail of the 72dpi resolution image of the party. The screen recording method (in which the computer makes a video recording of the desktop), means that the role of the camera as the recording device is taken by the computer, which is also producing the subject that is being recorded (the photograph on the website). If seen as documents, the new document (video) is being made by the process of looking at the old document (website) and they are touching as this happens. The image is enlarged rather than zoomed in upon, and the panning across the screen, usually a swivel or physical travelling of the camera, is actually more of a movement of the subject in which my hand, via the proxy of the cursor, is seen to be doing all the work. The conjoined camera/image comes to rest on a pink balloon that looks like a boob, lying on the floor.

5. A psychedelic rock soundtrack by *The Cosmic Jokers, a* 1970's German group accompanies the image in the video. The story goes that the musicians in *The Cosmic Jokers* were unaware that they were in a group. Brought together by a visionary producer at jam sessions and plied with LSD, the music they made was recorded, mixed and released without the

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[80] *The Reunion* is an extract from a much longer video (over an hour). I recorded my first in-depth exploration of the site as I knew that I had found something interesting and wanted to keep hold of that sense; recording what caught my eye in real-time effectively made me aware of what I was paying attention to. I was also conscious that despite still being online some 15 years after the course ran, it may vanish at any time.

musicians knowledge. One of them found out (he heard a track in a record shop and asked a store worker who was playing) and sued. I cut the music to include the lyrics, 'the magicians, colours, lights, sounds, joy', also without permission.[81]

6. The screenplay text begins in The Hangar, a location modelled on the Kustateljén Film Studios, a repurposed military hangar on Gotland Island in Sweden. The Baltic island has recently secured its status as a cultural region, based in part on Ingmar Bergman who began making films there in the 1960's and later became resident on the smaller island of Fårö just to the north of Gotland itself.[82] Prior to this, the island was more important to the military and military buildings of various eras that dot the Islands; the Kustateljén Film Studio is one of them.[83]

I visited the Kustateljén Film Studio in 2016. In reality (as opposed to the version that appears in the screenplay) it is full of filmmaking equipment: stage sets, false walls on wheels, curtains, scaffolding, ladders, trolleys, tripods, telescopic poles, stands and mounts of indistinct purpose, lights, rolls of coloured acetate, reflection boards, cardboard boxes, flight cases of varying sizes, cables, cameras, and microphones. Its walls and ceilings are painted black and rooms have been constructed at the edges for offices, costumes, props, make-up, and other necessary activities. The scale of the place is overwhelming and the filmmaking apparatus it

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[81] The history of the band is disputed and the fullest account is on a defunct webpage conserved on the Internet archive. (Web.archive.org, 2003)
The lack of permission is an artistic act but one that awaits its completion in being asked to take the video down, which I will do.
[82] (Executive office Region Gotland 2011)
[83] During the Cold War large parts of the island were off-limits to the public although remilitarization is currently on the agenda. (Milne 2015)

contains is out of reach of video artists except in exceptional cases.[84] I could not imagine a circumstance in which I would have such equipment and space at my disposal, but neither could I imagine what I would do with it.

7. Multiple pieces of equipment and operators working in concert bring the studio apparatus to life. The lexicon of film production, of direction and communication between specialists, is required to make this happen. This is largely absent from artists' operations for whom, what is made possible by the large apparatus of the studio is not longed for and out of reach, but irrelevant for the different sort of activity.[85] Commercial and narrative filmmaking is different in scale, processes, and intention to contemporary video art in manifold ways and so the technical and conceptual apparatus of commercial moving image production, although

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[84] *Soy Mi Madre* by Phil Collins is one such exception. Filmed in a commercial film studio in Mexico City using well-known television actors and all the equipment sets, cameras on tracks etc. that are usual for television and film production. Commissioned by the Aspen Art Museum, the work engages with and addresses the largely Latino and immigrant domestic workers of the city through the popular telenovela's produced in Mexico; in this way, the form is also the subject and so establishes itself as an artwork in part about television made through television. (Collins 2008)

[85] For example; *Escape Vehicle no.6,* by Simon Faithfull sends a chair into the upper atmosphere attached to a weather balloon and records the transmitted video feed from the sky (Faithfull, 2004); *The Girl Chewing Gum*, by John Smith is a single shot of Dalston High Road with people and traffic passing by, the camera occasionally zooms in and out or pans, this is accompanied by a voice 'directing' the activity seen. It is evident that the footage was recorded prior to the text and this is the works conceit. If the directions were in fact directions, the number of people, organisation and financial backing would exceed the single credit, John Smith, the film in fact has. (Smith, 1976); *and '3 (buh buh buh) proposal for a collating machine'* by Lucy Clout which features the artist alone in an empty studio talking about and mimicking a collating machine (Clout 2008)

in some instances shared, remain somehow exotic. With this in mind, the film studio and its technical and communicative apparatus formulated itself as a subject and a material rather than as an invisible support.

8. The Kustateljén Film Studio, however, fell short of a romantic notion of the film studio in part because what actually filled the space were Swedish teenagers attending a filmmaking summer school. They were doing what teenagers do, including appearing to be disinterested in what they were supposed to be learning and their socialising differed from what one imagines would be the focused activity of filmmaking. The ostensibly commercial film studio was being utilised for educational and social purposes; a library contained books for young adults and the staff were planning for the expected influx of unaccompanied refugee children. The repurposing that began with the military building being turned over to the film industry, continued to less defined educational and social purposes which were further supported by hiring the space out for commercial and cultural events with little relation, if any, to filmmaking. I wondered what sort of filmmaking they were teaching the students and imagined it was different to what they were making on their mobile phones or consuming on YouTube.

9. *Scene One* is set in a version of this location, at an imagined industry event. THE SPECIAL GUEST begins a speech that traces the development of HDTV in the States and he reveals himself to be an unlikable and arrogant man with little regard for the consumers of his products. Halfway through the scene, the directions state: 'We stop looking at THE SPECIAL GUEST and our focus begins to drift'. This is the exact moment the

historical details move to a secondary position within the work and the research as a whole.

10. The speech continues in the audio text whilst the image text describes leaving the main event and wandering off to look at the edges of The Hangar and the equipment stored there (supplementing the film studio equipment is a drinks machine lying on its side, leaking, and heart-monitoring devices. These are remembered from the National Palace of Culture in Sofia, Bulgaria, visited in 1998. It is also a huge multipurpose municipal building, which I had not thought of in years). The split between the audio and image that takes place here makes use of the particular screenplay layout and the voice of THE SPECIAL GUEST as he keeps talking is a voice *off* rather than a voice *over.* The spatialisation on the page is sympathetic to splitting the image and sound sources. A voice *over* would come from a space outside of the world the film depicts, but the voice *off* is just elsewhere.[86] This is a collage or convergence of imagined spaces, both produced and held in relation to each other in the mind of the audience, which is able to conceive of the split but singular sequence through their existing knowledge of the moving image.

11. The image text contains camera and edit instructions that vacillate between appearing as directions (such as, 'cut from black', or, 'THE SPECIAL GUEST produces a thick stack of prompt cards from his pocket'), and descriptive statements that comment on what is being seen, giving

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[86] The source of a voice heard 'off', while not visible within a given shot, is assumed to originate within a proximate visible field-off frame but from a space contiguous to and a time continuous with the depicted action. In contrast, voice-over comes from elsewhere…and may entail the hierarchical relation of a voice to other sounds as well. (Wolfe 1997)

the impression that what is being described has already made it to screen (for example, 'It is unclear what this news segment would be about but it does not feel very complimentary') and suggests the relationship of the narrator to the moving image project being described is somewhat detached. The directions often use 'we', occasionally slipping to 'I' and at one point, 'someone', conflating the position of production, (making things happen), with the position of the audience (those receiving) and a third party of no fixed position.

12. Beneath the text of *Scene One* is an image, a pile of columns, gridded globes, and electricity spikes drawn in heavy black, computer-generated lines. The different shapes are very loosely derived from the logos of the agencies involved in the development of HTDV. The columns are drawn from the governmental creation of the legal context, the globes refer to the various electrical engineering corporations and labs, and the electricity spikes come from the moving-image producers, broadcasters and makers of the product. In part, they are treated as objects rather than logos, as if they have weight and bulk and are arranged in the manner of equipment in storage. However, in places, the columns are transparent, creating a crosshatch effect. By placing the image at the bottom of the dividing line that runs vertically down the page, the group appears like a cartoon that contains a narrative as if the logo, diagram, objects, have taken the spatialisation of the page seriously, slid down the line and crashed at the bottom of the page that has become a floor.

13. The Lewisham Shopping Centre location is based on the Lewisham Shopping Centre in South London, an ostensibly commercial space used for other ends and populated by the consumers that THE SPECIAL GUEST

so disdains. Individuals work on laptops in the coffee shop on the central plaza (called 'Coffee' until Starbucks took over in 2017), excel spreadsheets and Facebook open. Staff wearing NHS lanyards from the large hospital nearby have meetings in the other café (which have better tables for groups); carers and their clients wander around and teenagers mess around. As a large structure that is in actuality multipurpose, it is akin to The Hangar. The difference is that the users of a shopping centre are consumers and audience, the passive receivers of products, or at least, generally imagined as such.

14. THE SPECIAL GUEST refers to 'Hell Week' in *Scene Two*. From the 14th to the 18th of November 1988, the Advisory Committee on Advanced Television Service (ACATS) judged the proposals for an HDTV system, testing them for technical and scientific feasibility.[87] It was a moment in which invention was rendered into material form, a staging post between the imagination and its ultimate products. In the student essay, they write: 'The proposals greatly varied. Some proposals were serious, viable, and from large corporations, while others were proposals from individuals of a system they threw together in their backyard.' The screenplay exploits the opportunity provided by the background historical material to imaginatively consider how a notion of quality might be materialised and registers a difference between amateur and professional approaches.

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[87] 'From November 14 through 18, at the Days Inn in Springfield, Virginia, thirteen proponents presented their ATV proposals to the ACATS Working Party on Systems Analysis (WP/SP1) chaired by Birney Dayton. Two eight-hour sessions a day, interrupted by a visit to the only restaurant in the neighborhood, a rib joint, reminiscent of military basic training. Peter Fannon called it "Hell Week," and the appellation stuck.' (Cianci 2012) e-book chapter 4

The first of the imagined amateur submissions is four existing television sets taped together and covered in flesh-coloured, rubberised paint. This demonstrates an understanding that quality is related to screen size and uses what is to hand to approximate the improvement, but the notable invention is the introduction of a flesh-coloured surround. This refers to how the set occupies the home environment whilst also being vaguely reminiscent of medical devices, hinting at a notion of television as an intrusion or prosthetic. The second design suggests a holographic set that can beam different channels into each eye. This misunderstands how holograms work, but recognises that visual perception is part of the dynamic and does understand that holography is a technology that does something to it. The third design is in effect a complaint against the payoff of advertisements for content on commercial television in the form of a remote control that speeds up the adverts.[88] And finally, a range of 'magnifying glasses, panels and cushions' designed for sitting nearer the screen or enlarging what is already there.[89]

Although laughed at by the electrical engineering industry professionals in the screenplay, the designs contain and address knowledge about how televisions occupy homes from the perspective of consumers of televisions and audiences of programmes. The amateur designs locate a perceived problem standing in the way of a higher quality viewing experience and in this they identify a different site of quality to the experts. High Definition is understood as image quality; image quality equates to the physical and contextual viewing experience, and viewing experience opens onto both

[88] A dynamic critiqued in *Television Delivers People* by Richard Serra and Carlota Fay Schoolman in 1973. (Serra and Schoolman 1973)
[89] The Japanese carried tests on screen size, distance, angle etc. in their early research for the HD standard. (Cianci 2012)

programming and the dynamics of audience and producer, established by a business model that offers up viewers to advertisers.[90]

15. The apparent dumbness of the amateur designs contrast with the small black object produced from the pocket of THE SPECIAL GUEST, he is enthralled by it although admits that he knows nothing about what is inside it or how it works. It is an object of desire, a document that refuses to be read. It absorbs the beholder's projection, containing all imaginable possibilities whilst never being required to perform anything other than its opacity. The object occupies the position of the black box, a physical manifestation of technical knowledge that becomes opaque once its effectiveness has been fully accepted. Despite a belief in their superior rationalism, the industry professionals are subject to a romantic longing that escapes their calculations.[91]

16. The students' use of the term derives from Donald MacKenzie's work on the history of nuclear missile guidance in which the black box displays only input and output interfaces. Applied to the development of HDTV, it

[90] The arrangement based on the exchange of attention for content has persevered and become the primary model of the Internet. Ethan Zuckerman, the man who invented the pop-up ad apologised in a podcast for how his invention led to this arrangement. "Back in the 90's, the idea that the internet should be free to use but ad-supported, like TV or AM radio, that idea almost died. But, instead, Ethan came up with a fix - the pop-up ad - and it saved that model. The pop-up kept this idea of an ad-supported internet clanking along for a few more years, which was long enough for all of us to agree, without even knowing it, that the web should always be free to use and the price of that freedom should be ads."(Goldman and Vogt 2014)
[91] This returns to the quotation at the start of Cianci's book on the development of HDTV that ends with: 'Perhaps video imagery and the emission of photons activate nerves deep within the human species, with impulses routed through the soul to connect with the spirit, fulfilling an innate quest for illumination.' (Cianci 2012) e-book preface

is the way in which the different parties involved were able to protect their designs and intellectual property (split into sections including, transport system, encoding, receivers and so on) whilst working collaboratively. The students order the various elements on a scale of 'black-boxness', the level to which the technology could remain discrete whilst communicating the relevant signals and data to the other parts of the system that were being developed by rivals. In the context of commercial electrical engineering, black-boxness is prized as a means of protecting profit and it is also a model for paranoid collaborations.

17. *Scene Three* is a group of students discussing a presentation they are about to give which is an introduction to ways of thinking about technology. The image text describes looking at a teleconferencing machine, the source of the audio, which is a device that brings together and overlays multiple places. The audio text describes the conversation.

What follows is an expanded version of the scene. The information contained, although not particularly difficult, has been of critical importance to the research project.

Scene Three: Conference Call

Morning in a tiny room nestled into the eaves of The Hangar, painted black. On one wall is the photograph of a piece of graffiti done inside a shabby institutional building, presumably for young people, it might be an educational facility or something to do with the law. On the opposite wall, an A4 laminated printout reads: 'necessity is the mother of invention is the

mother of necessity is the mother of invention is the mother of necessity is the mother of...' and so on, filling the entire page in a block of text.

A triangular teleconferencing device is balanced on a pile of old files on the floor, its green light is slowly blinking, indicating that a conference call is in progress. GROUP OF STUDENTS (five in total) can be heard chattering away on connections of varying quality. Somewhere in the compressed audio space of the meeting, a dog is barking and rain is falling. The students are discussing a seminar presentation they will be delivering about technology.

On a clear line a loud voice takes charge of the chatter, STUDENT ONE:

> I'm going to read through the text as it stands so far. Then we go on to the exercises with images.

> So. The received conception of technology is that it is a tool. It stands by as a means to an end to be picked up and used and so it follows that it can be put down again, put away. Conversations about technology tend to focus on new technologies and specific technological products, conflating technology in general with the singular iteration and its effects: Facebook influencing elections, driverless cars and the loss of jobs, fitness trackers and health paranoia, and so on. The products that seem most characteristically technological are the ones that have somehow overtaken us and led to outcomes that we have not foreseen and do not recognise as new forms of familiar operations. The anxiety this produces can be seen exemplified in the Frankenstein narrative in which the roles of master

and slave (man and machine) are reversed, which is predicated on the belief that we are indeed masterful tool users, as without this notion the switch of roles becomes unthinkable.

This is not to say that the effects of particular technical products and the anxiety produced is unfounded, but if technology is something other, and something of a threat, ought we not know our enemy better?

At a basic level, technics are anything that has been invented; they are the material supports that hold human knowledge, memory or capacity outside of the body. Technics as that which has been invented and that which exteriorises the human, is the specific term used in the various approaches examined in Frederica Frabetti's Software Theory and the wider field. Frabetti writes in chapter one: 'it can be said that human beings 'exteriorize' their memory into technological objects, which in turn are nothing but memory exteriorized.' End quote. This broad category spans from the earliest of stone tools to the most advanced quantum computers. Things that do not register as technological, such as jugs or shoes are part of the world of things, technical objects, or as philosopher of technology, Frabetti says that philosopher Bernard Steigler, describes them: 'organised inorganic matter' that populate our environment. She says he also describes three types of memory: genetic memory that is held in our DNA; individual memory as the registering of actual experience; and technological memory, 'which preserves the experiences of past generations in the tools and language we inherit from the past, and therefore is an 'externalized',

shared memory.' The archaeological study of lithic technology, the earliest of manmade stone tools, tells us about the society that produced them; in this way they register memory that far surpasses the lifespan of the individual maker and culture that produced them. Steigler also makes the distinction between technics such as pots and shoes, that were not made for their usefulness, to archaeologists, and mnemotechnics, which are specifically designed for the holding and transmission of memory and knowledge over time and space, which emerge later and are exemplified, for Steigler, by cinema. Importantly, this figuring of technics includes language and writing, which extends our ability to communicate thought and knowledge further than the confines of our bodies or lifespan and it enables us to encounter the experiences of others. If technology as an exteriorisation is prosthetic, an addition to, or extension of the human body, mnemotechnics extends this exteriorisation to encompass more than the physical aspects of what it means to be human.

Before following up on some of these ideas I want to return to the current situation in which technics are thought of as tools, without the richness that opens up with the closer inspection as begun above and look at the origins of such a state.

For Plato, techné (translated from ancient Greek as skill or craft as opposed to epistmé, meaning knowledge) was associated with the rhetorical skills of the Sophists and his objection was that the writing of arguments which were then learnt by heart was specifically a craft, one need not have knowledge of the subject in order to deliver a

convincing speech.

In Phaedrus (written around 350BC), Plato's objection becomes clear. He makes his case in this dialogue using a speech written by Lysias (a rhetorician), which is read to Socrates by Phaedrus. He describes something he has 'heard', the god Thamus, King of all Egypt, telling the god Theuth, inventor of a written language, that rather than impart his invention to all Egyptians: 'Their trust in writing, produced by external characters which are no part of themselves, will discourage the use of their own memory within them. You have invented an elixir not of memory, but of reminding.' Plato's concern is two-fold: that the process of exteriorising is in effect a draining away of knowledge in which human capacities atrophy, and the appearance of wisdom where there is none. Specifically, in relation to the Sophists, the ability to appear wise and deliver convincing speeches can be used for dubious political aims, employed in order to gain power or advantage rather than discover true knowledge.

As the founding moment for the Western understanding of technology, the rejection of craft as mere tool emerges and largely remains. Frabetti says: 'the devaluation of technology was made by Aristotle through his definition of a technical being as something that does not have an end in itself…the exclusion of technology from philosophy has been formed on the concept of instrumentality: technical knowledge has been interpreted as instrumental and therefore as non-philosophy.'

In summary, technics are tools, which can be used by those who have

no wisdom and do not seek it, who may, in fact, have bad intentions or motivations. Technology and craft are the opposite of knowledge and wisdom and have no ends in themselves. Frabetti uses the term 'mere tool' to identify the mindset that devalues technology and conceives of it as purely instrumental.

The alternative is to understand the human and technology as co-constitutive; we make each other.

André Leroi-Gourhan was a French palaeontologist and a frequently cited source for rethinking technology. He proposed the idea that humans evolved incrementally in a sequence of developments that took place in conjunction with the development of technics, such as the moment humans began to walk on two legs their hands were freed for tool use, and once tools for cutting were available the mouth was no longer needed to tear at meat and was free to develop speech, language developed the brains capacity for communication and so on. Each development introduces the possibility of previously unimaginable developments. There are probably many other ways things could have gone, but the chain is not something we can backtrack on.

STUDENT ONE breaks off from reading and asks:

How does that sound, so far?

SOMEONE says:

Yeah, fine.

STUDENT ONE continues:

From there I think we still need to say something about how technology has unintended consequences, and that needs to be expected as a condition of developing technologies; it's like people are surprised every time, but has there ever been a technology without unintended consequences? Perhaps we could add that to the exercises, ask them to sit in groups and find something that had no consequence…I bet there are loads of things but none of them are still around…Anyway… Then we need to say something about technology being a pharmakon, the poison and the cure, like we have ruined the environment with fossil fuel technology, but we can invent some new technology that will make it better; this could follow on from the last line we have about not being able to go back. I was wondering if we should include the whole thing about technology all feeling so inevitable but that a thing is only possible once it has been done. I thought we could use the quote from Bergson from philosophy to make this point, where the journalist asks him what the future great works of literature will be, and he says:

'I said, 'the work of which you speak is not yet possible.' - 'But it must be, since it is to take place.' - 'No, it is not. I grant you, at most, that it will have been possible. ' 'What do you mean by that?' - 'It's quite simple. Let a man of talent or genius come forth, let him create a work: it will then be real, and by that very fact it becomes retrospectively or retroactively possible. It would not be possible, it

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would not have been so, if this man had not come upon the scene. That is why I tell you that it will have been possible today, but that it is not yet so.'

The we go on to the group exercises with the photographs of the objects.

End Scene.

18. Halfway through *Scene Four* in which THE SPECIAL GUEST is talking sentimentally about the formation of the Grand Alliance (the companies that collaborated on HDTV development) the image cuts to a visual sequence. It is an animation of the logos simplified into columns, gridded globes and electricity spikes, the same shapes used in the illustration at the end of *Scene One*, and so the reader has the all the information they need to generate the animation in their imagination, thus throwing production of the moving image back onto the audience. This moment opens up the decision to use the screenplay form for *The Grand Alliance* on a deeper level.

19. If we imagine, for a moment, that one wants to present a moving image of a vast tanker explosion seen from a distance, how might one make it? For a few people in the world, they could possibly get an oil tanker and blow it up while recording. I cannot do that. I do not know anyone who can do that, and it also seems a bit reckless; things would die. One could use footage of a tanker that had blown up and repurpose the imagery but how many tankers have blown up whilst coincidently being

filmed? Do oil tankers actually explode in real life? It is entirely possible that the image of an oil tanker exploding, that we are each picturing, comes from a film, perhaps different ones, styled for the shot. With a bit of post-production knowledge, explosions and smoke could be added to footage of a tanker that was doing fine, one could make a model and stick a firework on it, 3D animate it, draw a crude animation or, describe it.

This presents a sliding scale of production in terms of cost and access, from the most elaborate, involving many different agencies, technical apparatus and professionals, to the least, pen and paper. The amateur designs in the previous scene hover near the bottom of the scale and the professionals near the top. Although no characters fare very well in *The Grand Alliance*, an allegiance with those at the lower end is evident, taking the form of presenting those at the top as arrogant, dismissive, and certain of their worth. By contrast, those at the bottom are somewhat opaque. Their preoccupations are not imagined as special but this does not result in a capitulation to the passive role assigned them, rather, they choose to not give their full attention (reflected in the direction in *Scene One* that we become bored with the speech). This is not to suggest that the expertise of the professionals is any less, but that an apparent lack of prized expertise does not equate with an intelligence void. This is tricky ground and one must avoid making ridiculous general statements about who has intelligence and who does not, that really is not the point, rather, *The Grand Alliance* recognises and makes space for the capacity to question and make sense of the world through what is present, the ability to imagine new configurations from what is available, and the imagination to negotiate imperfect situations in order to just keep going. These capacities are not specific to any field of knowledge and *The Grand*

Alliance increasingly focuses on where they are evident in non-specialist forms.

The Grand Alliance's allegiance to this notion plays out in the use of the screenplay form that produces filmic plans, but in this instance, has no hope of becoming a film. It is a failure before it even begins and yet it persists. This could be seen as merely a poverty of means, but in the same vein as the amateur designs, it has its advantages, most obviously, that I can, in fact, blow up an oil tanker, things can die and do so casually: a lack of access cannot stop me.

20. This sounds like the screenplay might be a subset of literature[92] but rather it is writing under the influence of moving images; it can only be thought as a result of the moving images that precede it, which are themselves the result of the mechanics and apparatus (including mechanical apparatus) of making images move. This writing needs film and television in order to cohere: it explicitly asks the reader to think in terms of image and the ways in which movement generates narrative (however elaborate or reduced) and is constructed over time, with sound, in a rectangle; it requires the lexicons, conventions, and rhetoric of images as they are deployed in moving image; in the movement created by edits and transitions between images, the build-up of sequences, of montage, the parallel presence of what is seen and what is heard. Calling upon such devices to structure the work is to be reliant upon the reader's familiarity with those conventions (readers become audience or viewers even), it is at

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[92] In *The Published Screenplay: A New 'Literary' Genre?* Barbara Korte and Ralf Schneider discuss the place of the screenplay as literature. (Korte and Schneider 2000)

once a specialist and broadly legible language and producer of images, on film, or in the imagination.[93] The moment at which *The Grand Alliance* describes an animation emphasizes this idea. In terms of minimal material means to create, writing and animation are equivalent, limited only by imagination and a basic command of readily available tools.

21. Screenplays organise and mark the site of images to come, a point precisely before images, and it is the document of all decisions made up to that point that are to be included; it contains only that which is going into the production proper, which is to say, the film *on* film. And if the screenplay as document is shaped by its presumed ultimate destination and relies on a general filmic imagination, it is also shaped by the mechanics of production. Instructions for lighting positions, camera angles, framing and movements, as well as cuts and fades. These take up space on the page along with character descriptions, locations, and dialogue, if they become subservient to the delivery of the narrative or message of the film once made, at this stage, they occupy the same plane.

22. Pier Paolo Pasolini's Screenplay, *St Paul*,[94] was fully intended for production but never secured the funding, almost certainly due to Pasolini's political stance and record of provocative work in the context of

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[93] 'There is one precondition for a successful reading of a screenplay, however: like the blueprint reader, the general screenplay reader needs a certain amount of film-reading competence to make sense of a screenplay's many filmic directions (for camera positions, cuts, etc… With general readers, this special competence is doubtless on the increase providing an important precondition for a successful and aesthetically pleasing reading of the screenplay.' (Korte and Schneider 2000) p97
[94] (Pasolini and Castelli 2014)

Italy at that time.[95] Despite having little hope of taking the work into production, the screenplay shows how the practical and financial considerations, including how he might entice funders, enters the text. He writes:

> The ship is already far away, sailing toward the high seas.
> *Internal dissolve.*
> The ship is but an imperceptible point on the blue.
> *Fade.*
> (This scene will be filmed in real life, 'stolen' as one says in cinematographic jargon: therefore extras are not necessary, but only the three actors).[96]

I find this small extract moving. Having been preoccupied with it for a couple of years after grabbing it quite carelessly to make a point, it escapes me what exactly it is about it that exceeds its role and resonates. My response is subjective, revealing my own romanticism but I shall try and trace some of the movement of thought as an example of how screenplay writing can traverse languages, structuring impressions and associations that are productive of a scenario (for want of a better word) that has a character other than a scene on film or writing without access to filmic language.

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[95] In an article for online magazine, The New Inquiry, poet Eileen Myles introduces the publication of *St Paul* by Pasolini, describing it as 'a dream of a film' (Myles 2014) whilst Pasolini describes the screenplay as 'a form that wants to be another form.' (Korte and Schneider 2000) p90
[96] (Pasolini and Castelli 2014) p33

The four lines move so quickly between the image of the boat far away, which means small, fragile, faded in the undefined, liquid ground. It is romantic and expansive, an open image which is then almost inhaled by the instruction, 'internal dissolve'. An accident of filmic jargon in proximity to an image of a boat that might dissolve into the sea, or so far away that vision dissolves into a blur, but that at the same time is made internal and brought close, the internal of the inside of the body, the film and the imagination, of ultimate proximity brought about by the image of the boat passing out of reach. And then this repeats, the boat is further away and as it is lost the internal space dims to nothing; what would it be to dissolve internally? What would it be to fade? And then, in brackets, a statement in the future anterior (this will have happened), scaffolds the scenario, pinning it in place with the mechanics of how it will have been achieved. In this case by theft, a particular sort of extraction which casts filmmaking as a process of extraction in general. The mechanics of an imagined budget leading straight to an almost mournful intuition about what it costs, in all senses, to make anything at all.

And while writing this I am also thinking of the film, *A Voyage on the North Sea* by Marcel Broodthaers.[97] Still shots of a photograph of a small sailboat, then of a painting of a larger sailboat and details of the painting, the sails, the water, the canvas, and then another photograph of a small sailboat, this time in front of a city, all interspersed with page numbers. It feels like *The Reunion*, it is a flat look, but a searching one.

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[97] (Broodthaers 1974)

23. The screenplay is then somewhere between literature, film, a set of instructions, and budget. All of these influence the screenplay that expects to become a film, and they keep their place accordingly, but for a screenplay with no hope, these become grounds for new arrangements and entanglements that transgress the balance of the different registers resident in the screenplay document. Such consideration of the screenplay's relation to its neighbouring forms could suggest a worry about its ontological status and how this impacts its legitimacy, but *The Grand Alliance* is concerned only with what is extant and therefore, what is material for new arrangements. That the screenplay is able to provoke moving images that are particular to film but requires no serious financial outlay or professional clout is enough, *The Grand Alliance* is not only relaxed but excited by the screenplay's minor and indeterminate status and assumes license to play with what this makes possible. It is free to leak and to multiply. The only constraint lies with the ambitions that the writer has for it; as an indeterminate form, these are to be discovered and invented.

24. None of the screens featured in *The Grand Alliance* are concerned with the cinematic, either within the narrative, the artwork, or the presentation of the artwork. The screens are that of the television, the computer, the mobile phone, and in *Scene Five*, the screen of an automated solicitor and a large monitor on a trolley. These are not the screens of dreams.

25. The final scene begins at the industry event after some time has passed. The speech continues but THE SPECIAL GUEST'S handle on the words is greatly affected by alcohol. As he continues, the scene changes

to the Lewisham Shopping Centre. Someone is demonstrating a vegetable spiraliser and the screenplay notes that the produce is beginning to smell. Information about smell in scene-setting, where it has no visible impact or narrative function is entirely redundant and this slight straying into a sense that film cannot account for directly, clarifies to some extent what it does account for: things that can be seen or heard; any sensory experience outside of this must be translated into image or sound.[98] This is followed by a demonstration of a new screen technology to a haphazard bunch of shoppers and the scene continues to switch back and forth from location to location.

26. In the Industry event, THE SPECIAL GUEST keeps drinking, pulls a set of stairs on wheels to the front, and continues his speech from the top, until he leaps. Although the text ends at this point, a single electricity spike is shown at the bottom of the page, as if fallen, and by implication, THE SPECIAL GUEST has died, or injured himself badly, which seems more likely as it is less dignified.

In the Lewisham Shopping Centre, the demonstration suffers a similar collapse as again the audience refuses to give their full attention. The image text describes a montage of shots of the scene and comments directly on the edit as a failure. This departs from the idea that the screenplay originates a film, as to include the failure of a sequence by design would be perverse and yet, *The Grand Alliance* does just this. The criticism describes mundane failures and solutions faced by editors of a whole industry of recorded content: news items, local programmes, charity projects, small business promotional videos, market research compilations

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[98] Attempts have been made to introduce smell to film. ("Smell-O-Vision" 2018)

and so on. This intermediate ground of production is neither entirely amateur nor professional. The non-film that nonetheless orientates *The Grand Alliance* is not a new wave masterpiece, a Hollywood blockbuster, an avant-garde turning point or contemporary video art, but rather exists in the realm of intermediate content production, the sort of un-heroic media that is so ubiquitous as to be almost invisible. And if *The Grand Alliance* makes use of cinematic languages but abandons them without conscience, this is a reflection on this intermediate realm, which also both borrows and invents, out of necessity.

STAGE THREE

CLARIFICATIONS

What follows is a clarification of key terms and ideas that have arisen in the previous sections, emerging from the specifics of the artefacts I have been working with and the artworks that have resulted. I am electing to focus on concepts that could not have been named or predicted at the start of the study and as such, I could not have expected to be exerting the influence they now do.

The terms are perceived as glossary entries, arranged alphabetically rather than as a linear discussion as it is critical for the ongoing research that the relations between ideas remain mobile and responsive. In *Notes on Camp*, Susan Sontag writes: 'Any sensibility which can be crammed into the mold of a system, or handled with the rough tools of proof, is no longer a sensibility at all. It has hardened into an idea.'[99] A sensitivity and a sensibility are different but being responsive is similarly the essential quality at work. At this stage in the research I am articulating the key concerns and their theoretical references whilst refraining from hardening them into a single idea. Sontag continues; 'To snare a sensibility in words, especially one that is alive and powerful, one must be tentative and nimble.' The glossary as a form is at least *more* tentative and nimble than an argument.

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[99] (Sontag 1987) p106

INSTRUMENTALITY

William Lovitt, translator of Martin Heidegger's 1954 essay, *The Question Concerning Technology* explains that, 'essence' refers to what endures over time; in the case of technology, it is not what can be fathomed from any single technological object but is that which persists through technology's many varied iterations. In short, Heidegger concludes that the essence it is not to be found in the specific functions of the most typical of technological objects, or in the most common attributes but in the habitual mode of thinking about technologies, which understands them as mere tools and means to ends rather than as ends-in-themselves. This is the instrumental mode of thinking.

> Everywhere we remain unfree and chained to technology, whether we passionately affirm or deny it. But we are delivered over to it in the worst possible way when we regard it as something neutral; for this conception of it, to which today we particularly like to do homage, makes us utterly blind to the essence of technology.[100]

The instrumental mode of thinking places objects, materials, activity, people, and so on in relation to what they are for in a sequence of uses, and so dominant is this mode of thinking that it becomes almost impossible to think in other ways. Heidegger recognises that this has not always been the case but has taken hold with the advent of what he terms 'modern technologies' and we can understand this as industrialisation. The difference lies in what is now familiar as an ecological argument; prior to industrialisation we made use of natural resources as they appeared, tapping into them if you will as they continued in their operations. Since

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[100] (Heidegger 1977) p4

industrialisation however, the technology we make has turned its attention fully onto the process of extraction. This recognises materials through their importance to further process. The focus on extraction and stockpiling interrupts natural (for want of a better word) processes, and values things not for what they are but for what they are for.[101]

This is further complicated by the fact that things *are* indeed useful and so to understand things in this way is not wrong exactly. What Heidegger is interested in is the other perspectives that are possible, not to fully replace the instrumental mode of thought, but to temper its excesses. Through a series of ever-deeper investigations into the terms and ideas that the instrumental mode of thinking is based upon he shows how the instrumental mode has led to an orientation to the world that perceives all things in it as resources (including humans) to be exploited in a continuing chain of exploitations.

Against Interpretation, written by Susan Sontag,[102] in 1964 does not name instrumentality, but effectively describes it as it is applied to art. The charge is that since Plato and Aristotle, art has defended itself in terms of how useful it is; for Plato, it was a poor imitation of an imitation and therefore useless, and for Aristotle it might be therapeutic and therefore displaces its value to its effects on health.

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[101] The extraction of oil and its stockpiling for innumerable uses is the obvious example.
[102] (Sontag 1987) p103

Transparence is the highest, most liberating value in art–and in criticism– today. Transparence means experiencing the luminousness of the thing in itself, of things being what they are.

Arguments for and against art's usefulness continue, the Turner Prize victory of Assemble being a just a recent case in point.[103]

For Aristotle, Heidegger and Sontag (in varying ways) the instrumental's other is the thing as an end-in-itself.

JUNKSPACE

In the introduction to *Junkspace*, Hal Foster describes the 2002 text by important Dutch architect Rem Koolhaas as: 'foretell(ing) the present, which is to say that it calls on us to recognise what is already everywhere around us'. By paying attention to recent artefacts that are neither special cases nor of particular importance, I am also trying to recognise and articulate what is already everywhere around us. Koolhaas writes:

> Junkspace is what remains after modernization has run its course, or, more precisely, what coagulates while modernization is in progress, its fallout...Although its individual parts are the outcome of brilliant inventions, lucidly planned by human intelligence, boosted by infinite computation, their sum spells the end of the Enlightenment,

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[103] As Morgan Quaintance writes in response: 'Instead of looking to (these)... instances of actual socially engaged practice, or even awarding the Turner Prize to the Granby Four Streets CLT and not their employees, the Turner judges have seemingly made a hollow, tokenistic gesture of pseudo-radical intent, instrumentalising a depoliticised architectural collective in order to drive home a point about 'useful art'. (Quaintance 2015)

its resurrection as farce, a low-grade purgatory…Junkspace is the sum total of all our current achievement; we have built more than did all previous generations put together, but somehow we do not register in the same scales. We do not leave pyramids.[104]

Koolhaas's text is a dark and surreal critique of the state of architecture after modernism approached through its details. He identifies neo-liberal impulses and growth since the late 1980's as the generator of the forms we now live with. The built has become a continuous process of renewal that is pursuing the logic of capital at all costs, ever complicating references until they are mere decorative husks of meaning providing ever diminishing returns. It is the remains of post-modernism in which the problems with its project are exposed, in the details of huge retail centres that coalesce around a skeleton of air-conditioning.

This research is limited to the sphere of the moving image and proposes a moving image Junkspace. This is a means to engage with the tangle of things that make up the moving image that has been subjected to and produced by the same cultural, economic and social stresses and impulses as architecture.

Importantly, Junkspace *feels* like the most accurate description of all things film and video. The spiralling complexity of finding a definition for HD is just one example of the way in which any point of entry, any object, bleeds out into the furthest reaches of the activity as it continues to multiply, converge and complicate. Moving image Junkspace is a handle

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[104] (Koolhaas and Foster 2013) p3-4

that recognises its continuity with the far reaches of its activity and the precise historical moment in which it sits.

There is no theory of everything that can connect Powerpoint slide transitions, footage from police bodycams in court and on social media, near death disasters feeling 'like a movie', screen sizes on mobile phones, legislation on copyright, famous actors committing suicide or sexual assault or becoming UN ambassadors, childrens' cartoon characters morphing into homicidal maniacs or porn actors on YouTube, a broken video camera from 2004 in the cupboard, photographs of young filmmakers holding clipboards and pointing whilst fulfilling their prestigious commission, the tilt of a flat screen in the corner of a pub, the awareness that someone next to you is filming on their phone, filming on your phone discretely, boxes of VHS tapes offered to passers-by outside houses in the rain, buffering pauses, repeats on T.V., wedding videos, CCTV, montages of people falling over, moving adverts in tube stations, the clarity of your new laptop screen, videos of how to pronounce 'Heidegger', videos of how to pronounce 'Sontag' delivered in a computer generated voice, the feeling that you might be able to press pause on things, like conversations, that do not have a pause function, and so on. It is too much, better to understand it as the moving image Junkspace made of innumerable details of both equipment and the experience it generates rather than produce a dry schematic that is either impossibly complicated or a complete fantasy of order.

A moving image Junskspace describes the complex of agents with its looping and leaking expansions and details, its ability to absorb manifold expressions and to make visible both hard and soft apparatus, its multiple

means to capture, generate, edit and distribute; to collapse the distinction of amateur and professional and the predominance of the intermediate that emerged in *The Grand Alliance*. From this point, I can begin to recognise what is sedimented in moving image Junkspace; actions, gestures or practices that correlate to some of the ideas I have been working with; to find what might already have meaning or what could be newly activated to produce it.

> Narrative reflexes that have enabled us from the beginning of time to connect dots, fill in blanks, are now turned against us: we cannot stop noticing–no sequence is too absurd, trivial, meaningless, insulting. Through our ancient evolutionary equipment, our irrepressible attention span, we helplessly register, provide insight, squeeze meaning, read intention; we cannot stop making sense out of the utterly senseless.[105]

When put this way, narrative impulses have extended from storytelling as a way of learning how to be a socialised human into a generalised capacity that has become work. Trained to understand that a story leads to a payoff, its component parts become means in relation to ends; we do the work of piecing them together, regardless of any final satisfaction. This appears to confirm the dominance of the instrumental mode of thinking.

On first reading the text I noted that it contained a criticism that could be put to my research, particularly where it focuses on details and situations of the unheroic, the very appearance and proliferation of which seeming to indicate to Koolhaas that all has failed. But I do not share Koolhaas's

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[105] (Koolhaas and Foster 2013) p34-35

pessimism; I am not as disappointed as someone who built what they now despise and look to the crowd, the audience, and find a less obedient group of individuals.

THE MULTITUDE

Crowds are formed in different ways for various reasons, active crowds come together to do something together such as protest, celebrate or share; or are brought together to wait for a bus or at a shopping centre for example. An audience is considered a passive crowd, and a demonstration is an active crowd. A crowd is a gathering of individuals that becomes a body in its own right. The consensus view from social psychology is that individuals in a crowd lose some of the inhibitions that would normally moderate their behaviour and so crowds, mobs in particular, are traditionally a cause for concern: 'The crowd state and the domination of crowds is equivalent to the barbarian state, or to a return to it.'[106]

This research invokes a number of crowds, both fictional and found, objects and people as audiences, viewers, consumers, producers and ad-hoc communities. It understands the crowd as a variant of the collection or group, and uses it as a way to conceive of artworks consisting of different elements, such as *The Grand Alliance*, that are characterised by a certain unruliness. The crowd is un-authored, collectively authored, problematically authored and/or unstable.[107] Legitimacy is partial, subjective, and/or temporary.

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[106] Within the field of social psychology notions of the crowd originate from Gustav Le Bron's 1895 work, 'The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind'. (Le Bron 1996) e-book chapter IV
[107] Bergman's library for example.

Archival artefacts are sourced from a crowd of materials rather than from a collection or official repository. The artefact does not particularly 'stand out from the crowd' as a leader or an outlier, but rather it is a 'face in the crowd'. It might be instantly attractive to another individual, sparking desire.

Through a reading of Thomas Hobbes, Paolo Virno differentiates between the competing concepts of 'the multitude' and 'the people' as formulations of the relationship between individuals and power, and the figuring of social and political groupings and relations in Europe during the 17th and 18th centuries.[108] Simply put, 'the people' are constituted in relation to the state in which individuals transfer some of their natural freedoms to the state in exchange for protections; for example, the people submit to the laws of the state in order to be protected by the state through law. In contrast, Virno describes the multitude as:

> a plurality which persists as such in the public scene, in collective action, in the handling of communal affairs, without converging into a One, without evaporating within a centripetal form of motion. Multitude is the form of social and political existence for the many, seen as being many: a permanent form, not an episodic or interstitial form.[109]

The Multitude was feared as the rabble. The barbarous crowd therefore suggests itself as a manifestation of the multitude. Key to its negative characterisation is the notion of the 'state of nature' derived from Hobbes,

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[108] (Virno 2010)
[109] (Virno 2010) p21

the condition of life for individuals who are not the subjects of states, who have not exchanged their freedoms for protections. They are under constant threat and live in fear, they are unable to construct anything enduring and unable to cultivate because they are unable to rely on the continuation of the conditions of any given situation.

Through the notion of the multitude, the negative assumptions about the crowd are put into a wider context even as they remain negative. The agency of the crowd, which I have identified in *The Grand Alliance* as a refusal to pay attention, appears as a reasonable response to a general failure of meaning that is exemplified by the architecture that Koolhaas describes.

THE TELIC

The telic is the ordering of operations in a scheme of means and ends, such as the stages of film production: concept > pre-production > production > post-production> product (the film).

The desired end product shapes the selection and particular way in which the means are used, as much as the means and the ways they have been used shape the end. If any means are arrested and taken as ends-in-themselves, the end shadows the means, regardless.

Heidegger challenges the dominant instrumental mode of thinking by recovering pre-Socratic inflections on how the process of making a thing, or rather, how a thing comes into being in the world, is understood. A thing is made to reveal itself through a collaboration of materials, known forms, the culture that delineates the forms use, and the maker who

considers all these things and brings it into the world. This reads as a sequence of releases and collaborations across different types of agents that reduces the dominance of the human maker in the full constituency convened by the process.[110]

Heidegger notes that the maker *causes* changes to the material in the movement towards the final form, but that cause is understood to mean *to be responsible for*, rather than, *to have an effect on*. It is not a guilt-ridden responsibility, but a generous one.

In the formulation of causing as to be responsible for, I recognise a sense I have in the practice. I am responsible for the set-up of the experiment, the selection of forms, materials and equipment, but have no particular end product in mind.[111] The end result is a collaboration or conversation with

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[110] This mode of bringing a thing into the world is concerned with things made with intention by humans, in contrast to other ways of things coming into the world, such as the way in which a plant makes a flower. Heidegger does not wish to do away with the instrumental mode of thinking, rather to temper it with an awareness of other ways in which things come to be in the world.

[111] This is most obvious in the music I produce (the music that features in the video and sound work is of my own making), perhaps because I have a low skill level. I might select a key or a tempo, or a set of chords and begin. I record the music I am making, but I am not pursuing something that sounds like something I have hummed to myself or attempting to create a particular production sound, rather, I set up, press record, press a key and start to respond to what is coming out. This relates to Graham Harman's response to the question of whether it is the man or the gun that is dangerous. Harman responds with: "When the gun and the person come together they create a new object: it's the armed person. It is a new object from either the gun or the person, and that new object is dangerous in a way that the other two themselves are not." (Geoghegan 2012) podcast, comment at 29:30

the elements (this often makes it impossibly difficult to say what a video artwork is 'about' as I am not 'trying' to say something).[112]

Embarrassingly enough (it is so hopelessly romantic), I admit to the impulse to release sounds and images from their work, a sort of emancipation. I experience this as a sort of longing that keeps me looking and making. It happens rarely; when it does it, whatever the thing is asserts itself before I know what is going on, I am forced to catch up with it. That things in the world surprise me is not in itself a surprise, nonetheless, it is thrilling. Working out precisely what the elements are in a surprise cannot lead to a formula for repeating it because the surprise comes from its singularity. What I can do is think about what I mean by being 'forced to catch up with it' and it has to do with running contrary to the instrumental, when I do not know what it is for, I just know that it is.

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[112] In the production of the audio work, *Stinking Blue Cloud* I had a real sense that I was somehow releasing the march and the waltz pre-set, letting it out of the cheap plastic container that is a child's Casio keyboard, encouraging it to feel out and occupy the space it created.

THE DIAGRAM

At this stage in the research, I am looking for a method in which the numerous details and themes that have been explored can come into relation with each other in such a way as to make the production of new artworks, informed by what has been learnt but not employed to illustrate it, possible.[113] How does what I have discovered become a model for practice? My proposition is simple and best shown as a two-stage diagram.

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[113] In the essay, 'Epistemology of the line', Sybille Krämer writes: 'Diagrammatic inscriptions, among which we include graphic artefacts ranging from notations to diagrams to maps, are media that provide a point of linkage between thinking and intuiting…By means of this interstitial graphic world, the universal becomes intuitable to the senses and the conceptual becomes embodied: the difference between the perceptible and the intelligible is thus at the same time bridged – and constituted. (Krämer 2009) p1

Diagram One

PRE-PRODUCTION	PRODUCTION	POST-PRODUCTION	PRODUCT

PRE-PRODUCTION - the development of the concept, script writing, casting, location scouting, raising funds, planning visual styles, getting the team together etc.[114]

PRODUCTION – acting, shooting, lighting, sound recording etc.

POST-PRODUCTION – reviewing the media produced, selecting and rejecting versions of what is actually there, shaping the product and adding music, effects and titles.

PRODUCT – the final render of the film, the transference of the composition of sound and image files to a single, flattened material ground and the project's completion.

Diagram One shows the trajectory, from left to right, of a standard filmmaking process. It resembles a timeline, the order is fixed as the semi-discreet exercises in means and ends accumulate, moving progressively closer to the projects constituting desired end; the completed film.

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[114] A visit to the Stanley Kubrick Archive at the University of the Arts London revealed that these stages have been used to organise the material. I was interested in pre-production artefacts, which are less visible or discussed than on-set activities, often the subject of memoirs and 'the making of' additions to commercial DVDs too numerous to mention, the edit which is a contained activity that I know well, and the finished film is evident in the finished film. What I found in the pre-production files for *Dr Strangelove* were location reports, rough notes on ideas, newspaper clippings, letters from actors requesting parts, contracts with various workers such as electricians, carpenters and caterers. (Kubrick 1958) SK/11/2

This is a simplified scheme relating to an imaginary fiction film, a documentary would perhaps replace 'acting' with 'observational filming', but both amount to a performance that takes place in front of a recording device and results in material. Non-broadcast videos, such as an advertisement for a small business, also follow this series of stages and where they do not, it is not through intention but error; something needs to be shot again because the sound recording is found to be bad in the edit, or a clearance needs to be found after the product has been made public because of a complaint, or a factual error.[115]

In theory, a break occurs between each stage of production and with it, the nature of what is possible changes. Initially a different story might be told, a different actor or location might be used, but once decided upon and in production, the possible variations move to the ways in which what has been gathered might be made to perform. In the post-production edit options are further reduced and limited to what has been captured, and finally, no more options; the film product becomes a statement of what was intended and a record of the compromises and opportunities that arose during each stage of production.[116]

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[115] There are numerous exceptions and deviations from this model such as Mike Leigh's screenplay *Secrets and Lies* (1997), written in post–production for the book sales market. The dialogue, resulting from improvisation and shaped in the edit, did not pre-exist this stage. (Leigh 1997) However, the standard model is what is at stake here.

[116] Walter Murch describes the necessity of the break between production and post-production: 'If you have been on and around the set most of the time, as the actors, the producer, director, cameraman, art director, etc., have been, you can get caught up in the, sometimes bloody, practicalities of gestation and delivery. And then when you see the dailies, you can't help, in your mind's eye, seeing around the edge of the frame you can imagine everything that was there,

physically and emotionally, just beyond what was actually photographed. "We worked like hell to get that shot, it has to be in the film." You (the director, in this case) are convinced that what you got was what you wanted, but there's a possibility that you may to forcing yourself to see it that way because it cost so much–in money, time, angst–to get it.' (Murch 2001) p23

Diagram Two

PRODUCT

POST-PRODUCTION

PRODUCTION

PRE-PRODUCTION
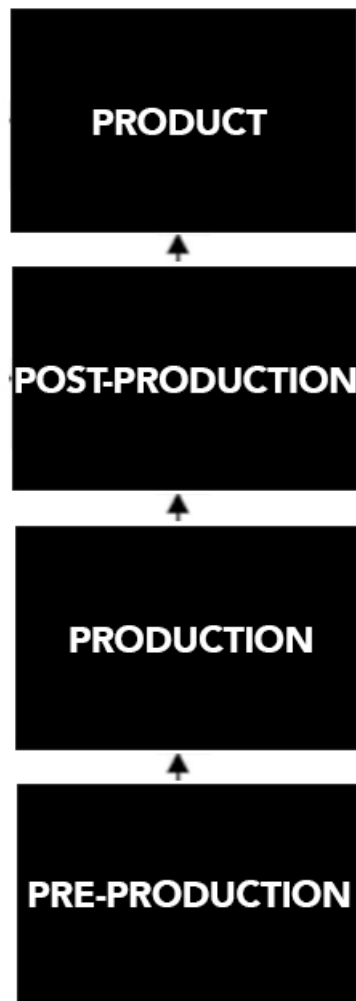
In *Diagram Two* the trajectory has become a hierarchy.

Following this shift, I was immediately struck by how the inevitable drawing in of possibilities; the condensing and crystallising motion of the film project described by *Diagram One*, no longer exerted any power. I had been finding it difficult to account for my interest in moving image production before its final rendering out as a finished work, a formulation

that awkwardly refers to the thing that it is not. It suggests a sort of longing for the cinematic that was out of my reach, or appears as a complaint against film, but neither of these two reasonable suppositions are accurate. By turning the sequence into a hierarchy the bracketed stages and the forms and artefacts they produce are no longer being called to lead anywhere.

I imagine an alternative to the two diagrams in a moving image form: a long wooden pole is lying on the ground with the four stages painted on loosely nailed signs. A crowd of artists arrive (the location is some sort of dusty hill) and proceeds to hoist the pole up, with the PRODUCT end at the top. As the pole is raised, the wooden signs swing unevenly and settle horizontally, still legible. At the halfway point the four stages are loosening themselves from their place in a timeline, from their instrumentality, which has the same sort of pull as gravity.

The activities and constituent minor products of film production are being released into the sphere of contemporary art as the pole rises.

It now makes sense to work with the location report, the screenplay, the camera test or edit notes as ends in themselves. Whilst pressure is still felt in relation to the overall project, a notional finished film product, the extraction of an element is no longer a pause in a specific journey but a location of more or less supposed importance. These locations can now be occupied and explored, uncoupled from their immediate workload but not abstracted from the processes that shape them. If instrumentality is imagined to be like gravity in its inevitability, in its underlying, all-encompassing draw, the release of the filmic activity into a hierarchy is

only a partial release (like gravity, it can never be entirely escaped). However, conceived as a hierarchy rather than a stage in a sequence that demands to go forward, the stages relation to the instrumental appear more clearly conceivable and an attempt to re-imagine what it is that we are making and the ways in which we are responsible for what is made become possible.

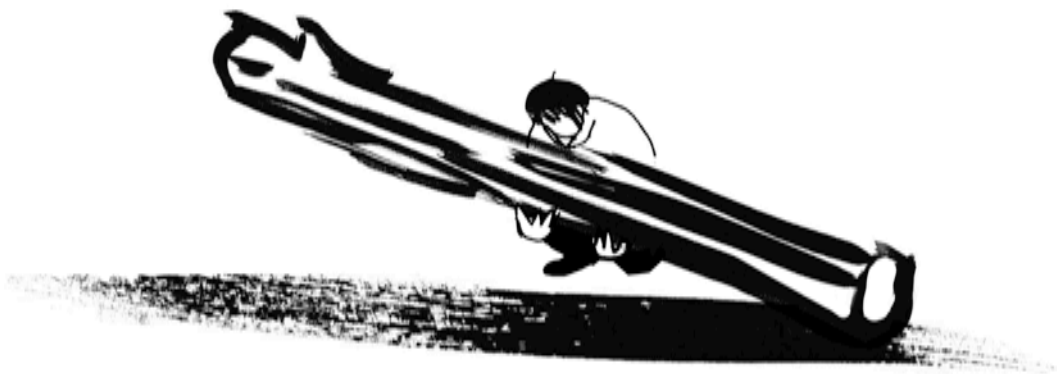Diagram as moving image as illustration 1

Diagram as moving image as illustration 2

Diagram as moving image as illustration 3 (reverse angle)

DOCUMENT SEVEN - **LOCATION REPORT**

As an artwork made after the diagram, *Location Report* is more at ease
with the instrumental, as if now released from its influence, demonstrated
in a rather literal sense by wasting time: *Location Report* is an audio
artwork document that has as much silence as sound.[117]

It is to be played in the office or studio, or wherever the listener works in
order that it becomes embedded in that environment for the duration it is
playing. The document goes back to the office, the place where
documents are produced.[118] The narrative element describes someone at
work, although not in an office, and this time not in a café in Lewisham
Shopping Centre, or on the Captain's Bridge, but in a bar on a short pier
somewhere that 'could be Germany, but not France.'[119] By being played in
another workspace, and in describing a fictional working situation,
employment emerges as a new subject. *Location Report* records the
sound of work, the sound of the pen writing down a summary, or
extraction of the thoughts of the person writing the report. These
utterances are a record of the moment of writing, which frames 'writing' as
a verb rather than a noun.

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[117] (Collins 2018)
[118] Sven Spieker identifies a triad of spaces of importance to the document: 'the
office, where the records are produced; the registry, where they are kept as long
as they circulate; and the archive itself, where they are stored in perpetuity.'
(Spieker 2008) p21
[119] This is a line in *Location Report*.

Further, by being played in another work situation, it potentially disrupts the activities taking place, spreading a distracted inefficiency that is characteristic of the crowd.

*Please play *Location Report*

Location reports are notes from site visits in which an actual place is assessed for its potential to stand for a fictional place within a narrative framework; a bald assessment and a projection overlaid. The reality of the place is asked to measure up to an imagined one; architectural details and decoration, light, sound, layout, landscape and types of vegetation might prove the deciding factor to use or not use a place tempered with power supply, parking, access and gaining permission. A kind of prospecting that seeks to extract images, sound and a convincing sense of place rather than minerals, but not so different in the end.[120] An extract from one in the British Film Institute archive reads: 'I have a feeling we might well find something interesting in Ireland...Another possibility is The Isle of Wight - around the Cowes area (or is this too cliffy?)'.[121] 'Too cliffy', is typical of the language found in these documents.

The *Location Report* text is an imaginative expansion of an excerpt from *St Paul*, a screenplay written by Pier Paolo Pasolini, completed as a text in 1977 that never became a film.[122] Pasolini described the film script as a, 'Structure that Wants to Be Another Structure',[123] specifically a film.

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[120] ("Notes On Properties" 1974), ("Report On Bristol Visit: Location For Mr Lodge" 1980), ("Location Research Overview" 1973), ("U.K. Location Report" 1972), ("Good Views [Location Research]" 1988), (Parker 2001)
[121] ("Collections Search | BFI | British Film Institute" n.d.)
[122] (Pasolini and Castelli 2014)
[123] (Korte and Schneider 2000) p90

Location Report is also a text written in relation to film, but one that does not want to become another structure.

Released from the desire to be a film, *Location Report* begins to explore a potential attachment to physical materials. The word 'render' which is tied to the later stages of video production swerves toward 'rendering' as a hardening of surfaces (which is in itself is a curious way of conceiving of finishing up a video project), and building materials and processes enter the text: 3-d modelling, aggregate and dissolving concrete, (dissolving being another filmic term and one that is part of Pasolini's text). In addition, an overheard conversation is laid over objects in the imagined bar, as if the conversation were a skin rendered onto a 3-d object.

The location that is produced by the text is itself an aggregation of remembered places: Margate and Folkestone in a general sense; a beach, bar, toilet block and bus stop somewhere in Portugal; a pub and a road Dungeness; and a booth in the Weatherspoons pub in Lee, South London.

DOCUMENT EIGHT - **PEOPLE TEST CAMERAS**

People Test Cameras is an artwork that takes place in the edit.[124] The material is YouTube videos of people testing cameras; zooming in and out, using the different lighting or speed settings, sometimes with a commentary and sometimes with an unconnected conversation taking place nearby. Viewed with the teleological notion of moving image making, the videos come from the beginning of the process. When viewed with the proposed hierarchy in mind, they come from the bottom.

The clips used have creative commons licences. The YouTube camera testers permit the reuse of their images, provided they are credited and the resultant work is made available again with the same license. They are, and it is.[125]

The videos sit at the bottom of the hierarchy not only because they are tests, but because there is an astounding mass of them and many have

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[124] (Collins 2018)

[125] I keep two in mind references for the ethics of using Internet Video. *Versions*, by Oliver Laric, and *Massage the History* by Cameron Jamie, both made in 2009. Both artworks are about video and image subcultures co-created with the Internet. Jamie treats them seriously and re-shot and re-worked his video about young black men dancing erotically with living room furniture in otherwise empty middle-class homes. Whereas Laric built *Versions,* around an apparent serious consideration of the images he was working with but just extracts what he needs for his argument and then moves us swiftly on with a voice-of-God voice over. A text on his galleries website informs us that the voice is a female actress asked to put on a computerised voice: 'Versions is accompanied by a computerized-sounding narration – a voiceover that is actually the recorded voice of an actress instructed by Laric to mimic the stilted diction of text-to-speech software.' (Wiley 2012)

been viewed thousands of times. The videos are increasingly being produced by companies but, scroll down the list after a search for 'camera test' on YouTube and individuals the world over are pointing their new video recording devices out of windows to see how they perform. The videos are familiar to anyone who has ever used a camera for the first time. What is produced collectively creates a forum of moving images, a chunk of moving image Junkspace.

There is no need to uncouple the clips from an imagined future production because there isn't one, instead, there is either an imagined future situation in which one might want to record something: a wedding, a holiday, a something to sell on eBay; or there is no future considered at all and the videos are simply people playing with equipment. The cameras being tested are not part of the filmmaking industry but indicate the return of the amateur inventors of *The Grand Alliance*. The videos are structured by the equipment that is being tested and often make use of the language provided by the companies in the returning struggle to put into words what images do.

I made the edit over a year after I started watching the videos; by this point I had tuned into the way in which the older camcorders with their optical zooms produced footage that goes into the landscape by moving closer or enlarging, whereas the newer footage, recorded on mobile phones, encourages a flatter look but it offers a slow motion mode. This mode creates a different sort of proximity or means to occupy what is being looked at. Mobile phones are also more robust; there is no need to zoom into a toilet (or maybe it's a bucket of water) with a lens when you can put the phone in the water and record yourself looking back. The test

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that takes place here is how waterproof the device is rather than what the image quality is like or how far it can zoom, but the test is still guaranteed but the successful production of an image.

The images have a wandering quality, despite being contained by the testing at hand. What is seen through the lens is initially alighted upon as a demonstration of the lens; it could be anything that the tester is able to look at (the moon features a great deal and it is an ideal object in this context: well lit (sometimes) and very far away). In the moment of testing a plastic and metal thing held in the hand up to the eye, the world crashes in, only in the form of a crab, cow, moving water, the moon, a domestic globe; chosen for convenience these things are looked at for a beat or two longer than seems necessary. Whatever has caught the eye is present as both an image that can be captured and an object/thing that cannot. But in that moment a flip can be seen taking place, from the technical or practical, to the sublime.[126] The footage hovers around this border and occupies the moment in which both concerns are equally present.

It is an active moment much like the active moment of the edit, which in this case also figures as the moment of making an artwork. The declaration of the simple premise at the start of the work is given in the title, *People Test Cameras*, and this means there is nothing to be worked out as such. The end, or the ostensible point of the video is given away before it has

[126] The sublime here is as used by Paolo Virno derived from Immanuel Kant. Virno writes: 'According to Kant, when I observe a terrifying snowslide while I myself am in safety, I am filled with a pleasing sense of security mixed together, however, with the heightened perception of my own helplessness. Sublime is precisely the word for this twofold feeling which is partially contradictory.' The helplessness is the general sense that one has avoided danger, this time, but that a fear of danger in general persists. (Virno 2010) p31-35

even begun and so the duration of the video is relieved from delivering a message, telling a story and so on. A short time into the video, and as this opening declaration appears to hold true, the viewer can relax and view the images as ends in themselves.

The edit is entirely obvious to the audience, and follows visual connections, similarities and themes as they arise. The edit is responsible for the way in which the elements come together and show themselves, and for suggesting connections. I am also inviting the audience to sit with the source material and see what it is in the same way that I have been sitting with documents and artefacts throughout this study. The camera testers are looking; I am looking; the audience is looking. We are all looking together.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this research was to develop an approach to the artefact in which its specificities would be actively productive of the direction and form of the artwork that resulted. Differentiated from practices that utilise artefacts as evidence by the degree to which the unexpected specificities (the exact ways in which a thing operates in its precise setting) are actively sought out and pursued over the ostensible informational content (such as details that contribute to historical narratives).

Documentary film editing provided a model of a practice dependant on the specifics of its media in which the narrative is found in what is actually there as opposed to what was hoped for or expected.

The task of the early stages of the research was to formulate a method for appreciating what one did not expect to find. I employed a strategy of framing a range of artefacts as documents and engaged in an extended discussion of their performance as such. I sought to keep close to the ideas that arose from the artefacts themselves, attempting to refrain from supplementing the encounter with external concepts or theories.

The artefacts did not readily suggest themselves as documents; they were not particularly stable or well defined. Persisting with the question became a method of rigorous engagement, in which it was necessary to remain open to what was being discovered. It also produced a sustained reflection on the notion of the document as that which constitutes the archive. It was found that the unstable quality of the artefacts as documents further destabilised the notional archive; when the artefact was

rendered as a document, as much escaped as was captured. In addition, there was a surplus that resisted being registered. However, this surplus could find an articulation in the production of artwork that declines a strategy of quotation in favour of a fictional and inventive approach, in which the peculiarities of an artefact (such as the particular form of conversation found in an internet forum) can be explored and extended.

The task of the second stage was to consider how the artefacts, if not directly quoted, took their place in new artworks. Raymond Williams describes the particular work of art, which is a fixed and finished actual object, but one that has come into the world as part of a formative and contingent process.

I employed 'production notes', a register of influences, ideas and practical concerns that crowd the moment of art making. It was found that the surplus (identified as that which escapes the document) of the now familiar artefacts (following a period of study as documents), shaped the artwork that was being made, even when the artefact itself was not present.

The final stage sought to clarify, conceptualise, and synthesise the different lines of enquiry contained within the study.

The decisive influence of the specific artefacts deriving from the development of HDTV and adjacent, screen-based technologies, on the study as a whole, was two-fold: it introduced me to the activity of production and invention related to the moving image but not the moving image itself, and it necessitated research into conceptions of technology.

Commercial filmmaking and artists moving image have different aims and conceptual frameworks, they are further distinguished by the superior technical equipment, scale of investment, and combination of specialist skills that characterise commercial production. Recent developments in digital video technology have reduced the distance between the two at the level of image quality; they simply *look* more alike, whilst at the same time, schemes such as The Jerwood FVU prize award artists with funding and support to connect them with the advantages of commercial filmmaking practices.[127]

The screenplay form (itself suggested by the televisual quality of the artefacts, the particular flamboyance of the culture exemplified in the name, 'The Grand Alliance' of the consortium of companies working toward the HDTV standard in the United States) emerged as a means to question the assumption that what access to commercial modes of production offers the artist is necessarily advantageous. Furthermore, the screenplay is a form that evokes images specifically conditioned and structured by the moving image without the need for an actual image rendered onto material ground. The screenplay thereby circumvents the problem of lack of access, and turns it into an advantage.

The overwhelming tendency to think of things (documents, cameras, oil fields, people and so on) as merely means to ends, described as the instrumentalist mode of thought, emerged from my research into conceptions of technology. The alternative to the instrumentalist mode is to conceive of the thing as a thing, or end, in-itself.

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[127] ("Jerwood/FVU Awards" 2018)

I applied the critique of instrumentalist thinking to both central lines of enquiry: to the artefact and to artists moving image, and through this manoeuvre, I arrived at the key findings of *We Are the Road*.

The first outcome is the development of an archival art practice that is premised on the artefact as a thing-in-itself. Following this figuring of the artefact, the concentration on its internal and pre-existing complexities become appreciable through an extended, open, and responsive engagement with it. This makes possible artworks that are archival, yet characterised by fictive and inventive strategies based upon what is surplus to the artefacts useful, quotable, and evidentiary properties.

The second outcome is the conceptual reconfiguration of the process of commercial moving image production from a sequence of events into a hierarchy. The result of this is that the artefacts and forms produced by moving image production (location reports, equipment tests, the screenplay etc.) become available as sites of creative exploration and production that are specifically conditioned by the process of commercial film production from which they derived, but not beholden to it.[128]

Finally, *We Are the Road* champions a distinct model of practice-based research in the contemporary art field. I deliberately approached the

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[128] Foregrounding aspects of production which are typically concealed is an established strategy in creative practices. Of particular relevance is the video work of Stephen Sutcliffe who does not so much make use of (or instrumentalise) this approach as to fully and unselfconsciously inhabit production as a site in its own right. (Sutcliffe 2017), (Sutcliffe 2013) and (Sutcliffe 2003). Therefore, *We Are the Road* does not suggest the discovery of this approach, rather it begins to trace a conceptual framework derived specifically from the interaction between notions of technology, the archive in contemporary artistic practice and artists' moving image.

making of the PhD as I approach making artworks, conceiving of 'making' itself as neither a simple nor settled matter. My ambition for *We Are the Road* (considered in its entirety) has been to render manifest what has emerged as at stake and at play in its making.

I have sought to articulate the moment of making described in the abstract as an 'active situation in which complementary and competing ideas, impulses and opportunities are at work simultaneously.' Therefore, the following artwork, *We Are the Road* functions as an open-ended conclusion. This is the proper place to conclude the study which itself has been one such 'active situation'.

DOCUMENT NINE – **WE ARE THE ROAD**

The narrated text that moves through *We Are the Road* is another aggregation.[129] It contains experiences, primarily of the moving image and their effects including: sitting in the waiting room of a large hospital and being aware that the person sitting next to me was recording the scene on their mobile phone; and of a visit to Ingmar Bergman's house, in which filming was not allowed and yet the place was haunted by the moving image, not as image, but as the home (and possibly the archive) of a master of the medium of sufficient status so as to be able to direct the behaviour of visitors from beyond the grave.

Additional textual material references adjacent technological products: holography, speech recognition software, heart-monitoring devices, microphones, and hot-drinks machines, as well as an architect who had taken LSD in order to experience what a psychiatric care facility felt like to a disorientated mind, in order that he might design one better. [130]

The text also introduces elements of the filmic language of the screenplay. *The Grand Alliance* (from which sections of the *We Are the Road* text derives) explored the potential of this format and tested its boundaries, and *We Are the Road* is an attempt to bring what was discovered back to the screen. The moving image and sounds no longer support each other in the way they did before.[131] The relationship in which the screenplay is

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[129] (Collins 2018) The term 'aggregation' emerged from *Location Report*.
[130] (Donaldson 2013)
[131] Before the research in general and the diagram in particular.

'burnt up'[132] in the production of the film has been renegotiated and the technical language of the screenplay, in this case 'internal dissolve', takes up a poetic, or even emotional, role in the demise of the main character during the climax of the video.

I looked for a copy of Marguerite Duras' 1977 film, *Le Camion* (*The Truck*). It is Duras and Gerard Depardieu reading through a screenplay written by Duras. They are sitting in a domestic setting, lamps and plants and a round dining table, reading from the scripts in a slow, serious way. Depardieu looks a bit awkward or maybe embarrassed by the whole thing. This is intercut with film of a truck travelling across France. The version I could get my hands on was a YouTube posting of the entire film (over an hour) with English subtitles.[133] I settled down to watch. At 13 minutes the audio slips out of sync by few seconds and continues to do so every 13 minutes. It has subtitles burned onto the image, which rather than making the sync slip less of a problem, increased the confusion: Depardieu is talking but the image of a truck is on screen, my French is not good but good enough that I instinctively try and work out what he is saying; or the sound of the truck with the image of Duras talking, and subtitles below either following or preceding the audio, it is hard to work out in the moment of watching; or Depardieu is seen to be talking and Duras' voice is heard; or a word heard that I think I know comes on screen and I feel like I have achieved something, but maybe it's just a word that is one expects, given what they are talking about. The characters in the screenplay they are reading are entirely lost to me as I try to process what is going on. I

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132 'In the words of a German screenwriter, Jochen Brunow, the film scenario is entirely 'burnt up' in the production process.' (Korte and Schneider 2000) p90
133 (Berius 2016)

give up, download the video file, correct it and then render out a new in-sync version and discover that I, like Depardieu (or so I imagine), find the scenario he is taking part in excruciatingly self-conscious. I am left wondering if Depardieu has permitted this response in the viewer. As the reader of the text, he works as an audience of sorts, embedded in the film, both inside the film and outside of the narrative it is telling. Through his apparently genuine comment on the scenario, displayed in gestures and facial expression, *Le Camion* also has two audiences.[134]

In *We Are the Road* there are two moving image works in operation: the one described and the one seen. There are two locations occupied: the film studio and the shopping centre and there are two audiences in attendance; the voice that narrates their viewing experience in voice over; those who are watching the completed production.

The character of the man giving the speech is loosely coupled with a video image of a hologram of former United States president Ronald Reagan (1911-2004). The video was found on an eBay listing, and I have worked on it to rid the image of its background and cropped it so only the lower half of his face is visible but the swivelling and tilting movement that holography produced in the effort to capture its effects on camera, remains.

Ronald Reagan was not sought out but returned on a search for videos of holograms. Holography was expensive to produce in the 1980s and there

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[134] I am also left wondering if my 'corrections' are in fact a display of ignorance. The film is experimental but in very specific ways that are legible, and the sync slip does not seem to be part of the experiment.

are a limited number of subjects of which there are videos. The Reagan
hologram image is coupled with the words of Stewart Brand, taken from
his 1987 book detailing the activities and culture of the MIT Media Lab.[135]
Stewart Brand was one of the Merry Pranksters described on page one of
Tom Wolfe's *Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test,* written in 1968, it says: 'Stewart
Brand, a thin blond guy with a blazing disk on his forehead too, and a
whole necktie made of Indian beads. No shirt, however, just an Indian
bead necktie on bare skin and a white butcher's coat with medals from the
King of Sweden on it.'[136] A hippy turned proponent of the Californian
Ideology, 'a mix of cybernetics, free market economics, and counter-
culture libertarianism',[137] in the California of Reagan's governorship (1967
to 1975) and the America of Reagan's presidency (1981 to 1989).

Reagan, as the president of the Screen Actors Guild (a union for actors)
during the 1940s, was instrumental in the formation of the television
industry[138] and has an interesting relationship to the audience; known to
them through the moving image and then directly elected by them to the
bigger stage.

'Although we will neither get to know nor care about this man, his likely
death is the climax and end of the film' says the narrator early on. The
audience is not being given a story containing suspense. The occupation
of time without narrative payoff is formally repeated through the playing
of clips forwards and then backwards. This is a disruption of the moving
image that is intended to go forward and develop, instead, it is held at the

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[135] (Brand 1988)
[136] (Wolfe 1999) p1
[137] (Barbrook and Cameron 1995)
[138] ("Ronald Reagan's Last Movie" 2017)

same place and the clips become atomised artefacts, documents even. This is also the case in the images of photographs that show spaces that have been mirrored. An altered photograph is useless as an evidentiary document and so becomes an end in itself.

The images of mirrored spaces are derived from photographs of the technical apparatus and architecture of the Kustateljén Film Studio in Gotland, Sweden that features as one of the locations in *The Grand Alliance*. The images show fictional (through the mirroring) spaces made from a space that creates fictions. And so to some extent, the images are the sort of things that the film studio is meant to produce albeit in a different register. The images are printed on photographic paper at Boots in Lewisham Shopping Centre; as I get them back I go to the coffee shop called 'coffee' and look at them. I record this looking.

The height of the shopping centre structure is reminiscent of the height of the Kustateljén Film Studio. As I look through the camera on my phone whilst sitting in the noisy café at the space rendered in the altered photographs, I am encountering both spaces at once. They seem continuous and in fact are continuous in the video image that is being recorded. I am recording it in slow motion, 60 frames a second rather than the usual 25, as if this gives me the chance to take it all in; I am imagining the slow version as I record the real time version, I also imagine that if it produces interesting footage I will return and do it again. I am testing for a future production not realising that this is the moment of production. Relieved of such a particular task, I follow the image, drifting upwards to the shopping centre's glazed ceiling as I think of the height of the space in the film studio. Following the image in a mode similar to the makers of the

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YouTube camera test, with a similar limited goal, allows the image to escape instrumentalisation at the moment of production; the image is not for anything in particular other than a way of concentrating on the spaces in the moment. This brings other escapes into view. The escape offered by the cinema maybe, but more so the escape of *The Man Who Flew into Space from His Apartment,*[139] an installation made in the New York studio of Ilya Kabakov, of a room with a hole in the ceiling and dangling straps on springs, the aftermath of someone catapulting themselves out of their room through the ceiling. I had seen and recorded a jumping contraption for children that had been in the shopping centre atrium the previous summer. Through this connection, the grid of the shopping centre ceiling become the grids of sweet wrappers and bits of paper strung up neatly in other works by Ilya and Emilia Kabakov,[140] representing the bureaucracy and the archive, or rather, shaming the bureaucratic logic for the gulf between all that it imagines that it can capture, and all that escapes.

Please play We Are the Road

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[139] (Kabakov and Kabakov 1985)
[140] (Kabakov 1987)

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RESEARCH OUTPUTS

RESEARCH GROUPS

Centre for Useless Splendour (2014 -2018)
Contemporary Art research Centre Kingston School of Art, London.
Active research group of PhD researchers and staff engaged in monthly discussion and seminar presentations of contemporary art practice.

We Are Publication (2014 – ongoing)
Kingston School of Art, London.
Collaborative projects with current Contemporary Art Research Centre researchers and Alumni, exploring publication for artist researchers.

Do We Know Our Problems? (2016 – 2017)
Monthly meeting of research based artists discussing projects and research cultures. Convened by Dr Nina Wakeford, Goldsmiths College, University of London. Contributions from researchers from The Royal College of Art, Central Saint Martins, Oxford University and Kingston University as well as artists working outside of the institution.

RESIDENCIES

Malongen Residency
Collaborative residency culminating in a two-day symposium 0s+1s Collective:
Collins, J., Freer, C., Hedstrand, S., Kinbom, A. and Zettergren, R.
01/06/16 – 30/06/16 The Nordic Art Association, Stockholm, Sweden

The Bergman Estate (former home of Ingmar Bergman)
Collaborative research residency with 0s+1s Collective: **Collins, J**., Freer, C., Hedstrand, S., Kinbom, A. and Zettergren, R.
02/03/16 – 30/03/16 The Bergman Estate, Fårö, Sweden

Baltic Arts Centre,
Collaborative research residency, with 0s+1s Collective: **Collins, J**., Freer, C., Hestrand, S., Kinbom, A. and Zettergren, R.
Visby, Gotland Island, Sweden. 13/06/15 - 20/06/15 Baltic Arts Centre, Visby, Sweden

PRACTICE OUTPUTS

We Are the Road (international festival screening)
13/10/18 London International Film Festival, BFI, London

Stinking Blue Cloud (national radio broadcast)
25/07/18 BBC Radio 3 Late Junction

In Conversation (performance)
Collaborative live performance, **Collins,J**., Rekab,A.
04/07/18 The Stanley Picker Gallery, London

Anne-James Chaton / Andy Moor (duo) + Jenna Collins (performance)
17/06/18 Cafe OTO, London

Visual Sequence (radio broadcast)
13/03/18 – 31/03/18 Radio Space Borealis, Bergen, Norway

Visual Sequence (radio broadcast)
09/11/17 Radiophrenia, Glasgow, Scotland

We Are the Road (radio broadcast)
18/10/17 *Broken Dioramas*: Radio Quantica, Lisbon, Portugal

The Legacy Complex (exhibition)
0s+1s Collective: **Collins, J**., Freer, C., Hestrand, S., Kinbom, A. and Zetergren, R.
Project funded by Kulturbryggan £10,000 for research, development and
exhibition. Additional support from the Baltic Contemporary Arts Centre and
Gotlands Konstmuseum
18/02/17 – 23/04/17 Gotlands Konstmuseum. Visby, Sweden

We Are the Road (video and newsprint installation)
Additional funding from the AHRC for English to Swedish translation
18/02/17 – 23/04/17, *The Legacy Complex*, Gotlands Konstmuseum. Visby,

Cadavre Exquis (publicaton)
Erinyes Collective: Bliss, J., **Collins, J**., Elderton, M., Jones, H., Palazzolo, A.,
Policarpo, D., Tolmie, C. and Woodham, N.
SALT Magazine, Contemporary Art and Feminism, Montez Press, London
2017, Issue 9, *The Furies*

Cadavre Exquis (performance)
Erinyes Collective: **Collins, J**., Elderton, M. and Policarpo, D.
Invited by the Altai Collective and SALT Magazine
27/01/17 Dyson Gallery, Royal College of Art, London

The Grand Alliance (online residency and solo exhibition)
01/04/17 – 29/04/17 Quick Millions, London

Legacies in The Legacy Complex (symposium presentation)
The Legacy Complex Symposium co organised by 0s+1s Collective, funded by Kulturbryggan
28/06/16 The Nordic Art Association, Stockholm, Sweden

Reading Records (workshop)
Reading group presentation with Cattle, R., **Collins, J.**, Eichelmann, V.
16/05/15 Five Years Gallery, London

Someone Who Isn't Me (international festival screening)
13/03/16 Akbank Short Film Festival, İstanbul, Turkey

Someone Who Isn't Me (International festival screening)
17/10/15 BFI Southbank, London

*Experimenta Shorts (*screening and talk)
Chaired by Helen Dewitt, London Film Festival Experimenta Programmer
12/10/2015 BFI Southbank, London

Why Do Things Have Outlines? (performance)
Collaborative live performance, Cattle, R., **Collins, J.**
20/08/15 *Plague of Diagrams*, ICA, London

Demolition Tape 8. (performance)
Collaborative performance, Carr, P., **Collins, J**.
16/08/14 Modern Art Oxford, UK