

**Story of elsewhere; not these people, not this place**

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**This thesis/dissertation is being submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the University for the award of PhD.**

**Please note - Story of  
Elsewhere Exhibition  
Catalogue – Visual  
Documentation CD – Large  
Landscape book - are all not  
available – Please contact the  
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**Story of elsewhere; not these people, not this place abstract.**

*Story of elsewhere* is made up of a number of interlinking parts, namely: a text component, a series of video interviews, an exhibition (also described as the thesis statement) *Story of elsewhere* at the Stanley Picker Gallery in February of 2011, the book, *Large Landscape*, included in the Picker Gallery exhibition, and additional exhibition based materials a poster and a catalogue. All of these components of the work are linked and, together, act as re-mediations of the narrative of the work, its genesis, realization and its forms of expression. The central aspect of the exhibition is a series of video interviews that relate a number of stories – of elsewhere. *Large Landscape* consists of a series of interlocking pieces that transforms hand written diary accounts into fiction, thoughts written at the time of realizing the work, notes about the making of the work, the intertwining of literary reference with imaginative interpretation, and anecdotal accounts - some of which are developed into detailed reportage.

In addressing this multiplicity of narrative form, comparisons are made between the act of reading and that of writing, between seeing and hearing, between thinking and feeling, between fact and fiction, between dreams and reality, between stranger and native, and between place and individual. In the exhibition there is an interpretative authorial voice re-presenting what is heard with what is read, a shift between what is spoken of and what is portrayed. In *Large Landscape*, the process of reading takes the form of a written description of events. This array of formats is employed throughout to suggest the pervasive quality of narrative across experience. Plans of the future, recorded occurrences of the past, and compositions of the present are evoked through prose, scripting, description, memoir, folklore, commentary, and imagery. The methodology of collecting all this information ranges from interview to fabrication, from observation to intervention, and from complex engagement to simple expression.

Within the framework of contemporary art practice and theory, *Story of elsewhere* proposes distancing as a means of drawing nearer. Presenting the paradox of the idea that remoteness can produce proximity, a process is revealed that exposes previously hidden connections and associations – to oneself, to a place, and to another. This process, employing the language of memory, allows for a defamiliarization where new understandings emerge.

My aim is to explore ever-shifting understandings of place, to offer an examination of the experience of witnessing place, to unpack the complications of subjective experience through the re-telling of remembered occurrences, memories that manifest through stories and that engage the interplay and paradox of language and naming, and to consider the inherent connections within memory of associations between the conscious and the unconscious.

The connections between the different forms of the work: prose, scripting, description, memoir, folklore, commentary, and moving imagery, all interact to produce a subconscious cross-referencing. This mirrors the world we now inhabit with a pace and complexity where this kind of multiple mediation of internet, TV, text, video, film, etc., is pervasive and in a sense inescapable. Referencing becomes chaotic - we each find a way of navigating these elements in tandem or we select particular forms of mediation that align with how we connect and identify ourselves with others and with place.

*Story of elsewhere* seeks to address questions surrounding the place of individual experience in our complexly interrelated world, where place and images of places carry an overabundance of meanings. If the contemporary world is one where the fluid nature of individual memories easily overlaps with cultural memories, how do we come to know each other and ourselves in this landscape? In engaging with *Story of elsewhere* it is my ambition that the viewer might answer such questions - to explore new ideas concerning self-knowledge, learned knowledge and knowledge that is sponsored by experiencing seemingly unconnected narratives, presented in multiple forms, in an investigation of place and association.

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### **Story of elsewhere; not these people, not this place introduction.**

A traveller journeys to places away from home. Within foreign cities, set in public spaces, she records private memories of travel experiences from local people and commits them to video – these are stories of elsewhere. Many of the stories come from an on going series of short videos. Sometimes, one or more of them form a single projected work. Sometimes they form an installation of multiple projections.

The thesis statement installation includes and references a larger experience at play – one produced internally to the stories, between where they are set and where they are recorded, and one produced externally to the stories, from the connections between them. The two sites, that of the visual setting and that of the oral telling, combined with the unfolding relationships among the different stories, set up an interior and exterior interactive exchange – within and between stories. This discourse involving site and narrative extends from the personal experiences and memories of the storytellers to the viewers of the installation. They are not this place, not these people.

In the thesis statement exhibition, the videos are installed in such a way to heighten the disorientation and interruption of the discourse. This interruption is as presented through the writing of Walter Benjamin's descriptions of Baudelaire's flâneur<sup>1</sup> or in his work *One Way Street*.<sup>2</sup> It describes the movement from one idea to another as depicted in the meandering within a city, or the shift from one piece of writing to another for the reader. It echoes the interactivity of the internal mind's unconscious associations with conscious action. The manifestations of experience through memory force viewers to negotiate the functions of artistic intention with chance association.

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<sup>1</sup> Benjamin, Walter. *The Writer of Modern Life, Essays on Charles Baudelaire*. Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006.

<sup>2</sup> Benjamin, Walter. *One Way Street and Other Writing*. London: Penguin, 2008.

Experience here refers to the actual observation of facts or events, of some thing or some event gained through involvement in or exposure to that thing or event.<sup>3</sup> Within this work, experience is both a subject examined and an event made manifest in reading the text, seeing the exhibition, and the activity of remembering one when engaged with the other.

The supporting text sets out the artistic and theoretical context, in both historic and contemporary terms. Practically, in one guise, it arranges a character driven narrative (the traveller's) to guide the reader through the experience of the text. This consists of an initial interpretive essay followed by descriptions of the exhibited work. These descriptions offer a different style of writing, opposing that of the traveller's narrative. Where the latter writing comes from one point of view, the former descriptions attempt an approach where clarity is the primary objective. This writing moves from the general to the specific, incorporating more and more detail as it progresses. As a result, the last section of the written thesis, *Story of elsewhere* – technical elements and background circumstances in detail, is a pared down report of the exhibition, *Story of elsewhere*, complete with diagram. The diverse styles of writing actually cover the same territory – they are pictures in words of various elsewheres, but the form taken to relay these experiences travels across various approaches.

The approach in the body of the written thesis *Story of elsewhere* presents a protagonist, the traveller, telling of her attempt to travel elsewhere. Her story is relayed in the third person point of view – in effect introducing two perspectives: that of the traveller and that of the writer, who is not the traveller, describing the traveller's experience. This suggests a separation between writer and traveller, author and actor, introducing ideas of fragmentation and deconstruction. It also evokes classical telling of tales where events are depicted as happening to another after being relayed many times over. And so the engaging of the reader begins, proffering information tucked within a story that offers the pleasure of the narrative.

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<sup>3</sup> *The Oxford English Dictionary*. Clarendon Press: 2 edition 30 Mar 1989.

Subsequent to that comes the portrayal of the exhibition *Story of elsewhere* in writing. Here the tactic is one of explanatory description. It presents an experience of the exhibition from an individual perspective. The language employed hovers between something very clinical in its methodology with an account of the space steeped in the effect of the work on the author. The writing begins from a sense of nothing – the first line, “The room is semi-dark; the light is dim but the space is not completely black” suggests a starting point of the dark, the unknown. The effect creates a sense of disorientation, not only of the question of where we are and what is there but also from the previous style of writing. It is a jolt out of the comfortable narrative pleasure of the traveller’s tale.

In a continuation of the aforementioned disorientation, *Landmark Videos* – seven videos in writing, order based on their inclusion in the exhibition *Story of elsewhere*, take an even more minimal tactic. After an initial section of technical information in the style of the previous writing, what follows next takes on the script format and is also an interpretation of an event or experience. Again, a textual alternative is proposed for something that also exists visually and experientially. Here, the sequence of events is deliberately left ambiguous. In truth there is no confirmation that this script is a record of an interview or was the script actors followed. This position of relativity indicates the existence of more than one reality; in fact it is an assumption of as many notions of truth as there are outlooks.

Overall, *Story of elsewhere* travels between subjective and objective knowledge. Memories, thoughts, imagination, the stories we tell ourselves and the stories we tell others, our empirical understanding of the world, all this and more encompasses subjective knowledge. It is what Marcel Proust’s involuntary memory<sup>4</sup> refers to. It is the intuition of the flâneur,<sup>5</sup> it is the subconscious in action. Inherent in this subjective knowledge is the individual perspective, the singular point of view. On one hand a limitation to any other understanding of reality, on the other a committed presentation of one particular reality.

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<sup>4</sup> Proust, Marcel. *Remembrance of Things Past*. Volume One Swann’s Way Within a Budding Grove. Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1987.

<sup>5</sup> Benjamin, Walter. *The Writer of Modern Life, Essays on Charles Baudelaire*. Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006.



Appositely, objective knowledge, as Bergson presents in *Matter and Memory*,<sup>6</sup> is an attempt at fixing a permanent record of something. It employs a standpoint of omniscience, derived from an outlook that traverses across multiple views. As demonstrated in this writing throughout, there is the conscious activity of finding, recording and presenting stories, and there is the unconscious outcome of the telling of those stories. There is the event relayed through the tangle of personal predisposition and there is the attempt to present that event factually, as evidence of truth. Within this there lie notions of authenticity, and, reality. Unpacking these intertwined workings elicits a confused experience, rich in complexity and associations that is the navigational suggestion for this thesis.

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<sup>6</sup> Bergson, Henri. *Matter and Memory*. Cosimo Classics: 2007.

## Story of elsewhere; not these people, not this place

A traveller is trying to go elsewhere, to a different place, somewhere unfamiliar. She is looking for a place that is other to her. A dilemma becomes immediately apparent – as soon as she's somewhere else it ceases to be anywhere but here. Whatever's strange is soon familiar. You can see the problem: how to defamiliarize a place, or how to extend its strangeness, or how to return a place's original strangeness to it. Of course the obvious difficulty is that wherever she goes she brings herself along. In attempting to get somewhere unfamiliar she always ends up faced with what is most familiar.

She thinks about the connection between what is familiar and what is not. It appears that they are intrinsically linked, one with the other.<sup>7</sup> To become familiar a place becomes known, understood, at least to some extent. Conversely, to become strange a place must somehow be made unfamiliar, become unknown. Following this line of thought, it must be forgotten, unremembered.

In unpacking the idea of un-remembering, she considers the possibility of memory as a recurrence.<sup>8</sup> Remembering then becomes a second manifestation based on an initial experience. In this way, remembrance doubles experience. In order to forget, the traveller begins by singling out the instance furthest removed from the occurrence; the memory.

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<sup>7</sup> Freud, Sigmund. *The Uncanny*, from *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*. New York: Vintage, 1999. <<http://www.homepage.mac.com/allanmcnyc/textpdfs/freud1.pdf>> p 4. In his essay on the uncanny or *unheimlich* Freud points out the way in which the meaning of the word *heimlich* “develops towards an ambivalence, until it finally coincides with its opposite, *unheimlich*.” This argument demonstrates how what is secret becomes conflated with what is familiar, and what is uncanny with what is ordinary.

<sup>8</sup> Benjamin, Walter. *The Writer of Modern Life, Essays on Charles Baudelaire*. Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006. pp 172 - 174. In discussing Henri Bergson and his work *Matter and Memory*, Benjamin describes the structure of memory as decisive for the philosophical structure of experience. He argues that “where there is experience ... certain contents of the individual past combine in the memory...”. This can be seen as a case where the ‘contents’ of experience recurs in the memory, thereby constituting a second experience.

Her tactic – to use the remembered experiences of others. She will ask others for their memories of places. Because they are not her own impressions, she reasons, they should maintain a degree of strangeness, of otherness.

In appreciating another's point of view she must rely on the translation between experience and language. She recognizes the difficulty of interpreting what is lived into words. It raises a potential for slippage, loss, and an alteration of meaning.

Recounting an experience hinges on a convergence of many different recollections. Someone telling their story relies on remembered encounters, whether that which has been lived and is in the moment being remembered, or that which is being remembered from moments of previous telling, or a combination of these things, and others as well. There are influences that range from childhood recollections to cultural histories to the particulars of the physical body.

Traversing this gap, connecting to another's experience includes both conscious and unconscious activity. There are involuntary conditions; what comes to mind unbidden. And then there is the purposeful way of selecting and choosing what to tell. There is often an intermingling of the two, an unconscious effect on a conscious choice or the reverse. The motivation behind a decision to reveal or not reveal a particular moment of an incident may remain hidden on any conscious level. What might appear to be a random selection may well have unacknowledged activity behind it. As well, an unintentional option may be deliberately employed.

Complicating this endeavour, the stories must be of others' engagement with the strangeness of places. The traveller is after what is out of the ordinary, that which describes just what is unfamiliar about an unfamiliar place; its very elsewhere-ness. She is in pursuit of others' memories of experiencing the

otherness of places. She is looking for remembered occurrences not of an everyday kind. Yet, what is not ordinary is hard to pin down. There are processes at play, ones that continually result in transforming what is singular into the everyday and the everyday into something singular.<sup>9</sup>

Attempting to locate elsewhere through the experiences of others seems to lead repeatedly to paradox. What is ordinary merges with the unusual and what is strange is soon confused with the familiar. There is instability and contradiction here.

The traveller looks to previous guides.

In both *Nuit et brouillard*<sup>10</sup> and *Hiroshima mon amour*,<sup>11</sup> Alain Resnais imparts the memories of experience rather than actual past existence. Presented with the problem of how to film incomprehensible suffering, Resnais acknowledges this difficulty within the films themselves. He points out the impossibility of comprehending something so large by turning to the memories of the experiences. In this way, he privileges those who are remembering, over the events. Consequently, he comes closer to accessing the full extent of the situation – from a removed position.

These films contrast large historical narratives alongside smaller stories, pitting the past against the present. In *Hiroshima mon amour*, the city is portrayed not just fourteen years after atomic bombing; it is shown immediately following the devastation as well. It is spoken of in the moment of assault and over a decade later; it is a then and a now in the time of the film.

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<sup>9</sup> de Certeau, Michel. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984. de Certeau's investigation of the everyday lies in the way it is practiced. He concentrates on the activity of everyday experiences moving from one use to another. His examination of the ways in which people reappropriate offers a means with which to navigate through place and thought. According to de Certeau this happens repetitively and unconsciously.

<sup>10</sup> *Nuit et brouillard*. Dir. Alain Resnais, Argos Films, 1955. Written by Jean Cayrol and Chris Marker, translated as *Night and Fog* (with subtitles).

<sup>11</sup> *Hiroshima mon amour*. Dir. Alain Resnais, Argos Films, 1955. France-Japan, 90 min., written by Marguerite Duras.

The memory of the past is at stake from the onset of the film. Part of the opening sequence, a type of travelogue of images of the city, is shown with Marguerite Duras' text on the soundtrack: a voiceover dialogue between a man and a woman. The man claims the woman sees nothing and she replies she sees everything, that it all exists. She speaks of seeing the city and he negates all her claims. At one point she even cites filmed evidence that seems to be the imagery on the screen at that moment. He continues to tell her that she sees nothing, that she has made it all up.

The woman compares this seeing to the illusion that exists in love. She says that this illusion is what you believe you will never forget, just as she believes she will never forget what she sees in Hiroshima. She says that, like him, she has memory and knows what it is to forget. He tells her she doesn't know what it is to forget.

This way of addressing memory and its relationship to reality presents a complexity of subjectivities. There are the contrasting points of view of the two speakers, which together with the imagery – alternating from deliberately illustrative to intentionally disparate – heighten awareness of the possibility of other perspectives. Perspectives that must include the filmmaker and the bodies of influence involved, such as funders and distributors for instance. This carries the potential for leading on to an examination of viewers' own motives and allegiances, conscious and unconscious affects, which encompass memory.

Resnais' approach diverges from contemporary works of art that employ invented histories and personae, fabrications meant to confound fact and fiction. This current contemporary moment, though sympathetically argued by many artists, succumbs to limitations that bear the danger of halting engagement. The work of Walid Ra'ad or Kutlug Ataman displays perspectives often overlooked or outside of the mainstream. Ra'ad, for example, through invention, builds poetic works that offer perspectives on the lives of the people of Beirut during the time of the Lebanese wars. By way of such

fictional creations as the *Atlas Group*,<sup>12</sup> his work combines archiving and documenting with poetic imagery and conceptual humor to captivate. And it does. Yet, the understanding that these are falsehoods, though beautiful, runs the risk of shutting down involvement. Characters such as Bachar<sup>13</sup> lead to questions surrounding their actual existence, often at the cost of any other connection with the work. This existence of a culmination of sorts may act as a door closing on further investigation or thought.

Similarly in Kutlug Ataman's work the deliberate confusion between actors and non-actors carries the potential for overshadowing everything else in the work. In the video installation *Beggars*<sup>14</sup> the plight of the subjects, the problematic of exploitation, the relative position of the content against the backdrop of a commercial gallery, all seem to be neatly answered by the suggestion of those portrayed potentially not being what they appear to be. The investigation shifts to a question of authenticity, cutting off any other exploration.

Resnais' complication of memory and reality, feeling and truth, offers a rich vein within which to work. The lovers in *Hiroshima mon amour* come to know each other through the places they are from. In fact, at the end of the film they name each other by these places: Hiroshima and Nevers. In doing so they embody living memories of places. Futile though their attempt may be, the lovers suggest an assertion against the inevitability of forgetting imposed by time.

*Nuit et brouillard* is Resnais' documentary on the history of the Nazi death camps. Again, this work contrasts the past with the present. It also, again, presents a kind of travelogue, set in the present of the film, alongside scenes of the former Nazi use of the camps. The images of the present portray a serene, almost bucolic vision of the countryside. The derelict buildings could pass for old barns, the neglected fences, though more substantial than what

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<sup>12</sup> Ra'ad, Walid. *The Atlas Group*, <http://www.theatlasgroup.org/>

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, Ra'ad, "Souhil Bachar was the only Arab hostage to be held captive with the American men who were kidnapped and detained in Lebanon in the 1980's."

<sup>14</sup> Ataman, Kutlug. *Beggars* (2010), Thomas Dane Gallery, London

you might normally find, could be for cattle or sheep. The meadows are green and the sky is blue; there are wildflowers and trees. This diverges radically with the black and white still photographs and film footage of the death camps as they were. Much of this documentation comes from the archives of the Third Reich, which extensively recorded the details of their own atrocities.

The response of *Nuit et Brouillard* is to witness. Chris Marker's text refers to the camera as a "visitor to this place, calling the steps taken through it "our steps". Not only is this experience an act of witnessing, but through the camera, the viewers of the film become those witnesses.

The traveller remembers being shown *Nuit et brouillard* a number of times in various institutional settings when she was young. It deeply affected her. Strangely, all the screenings she saw were in German, not the original French. In fact for many years she thought the actual title was *Nacht und Nebel*, (the name of the Nazi directive implementing forced disappearances, and from where the title of the film comes). She believes this further disconnect, from French through German to English, contributed to her experience of the film's power in portraying the past.

In both films, Resnais interlaces documentary with narrative style. Documentary can be defined as that kind of filmmaking that relies on the presentation of facts and information over the telling of a fictional story, yet this carries a certain amount of elusiveness.<sup>15</sup> As a practice documentary hasn't any fixed territory.<sup>16</sup> The documentary presents a story based on actual experience but the alterations that occur in conveying the actual experience easily result in fiction. Imparting an experience must take into account the inevitable acts of construction and reconstruction.

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<sup>15</sup> Nichols, Bill. *Representing Reality*. Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1991. pp 12-13

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, Nichols, p 12 "Documentary as a concept or practice occupies no fixed territory. It mobilizes no finite territory of techniques, addresses no set number of issues, and adopts no completely known taxonomy of forms, styles, or modes. The term *documentary* must itself be constructed in much the same manner as the world we know and share."

Just as the notion of documentary can be called into question so can that of fictional narrative. Narrative, as perceived in terms of film consists of those structures with a beginning, middle and end that relate to presentation – development – climax – resolution. This consideration of narrative distinguishes it as a representation of a journey, with change built in.<sup>17</sup> In contrast, narrative as constructed or discussed within art, can be relatively static. Here narrative can be seen as a portrayal that may not embody development but offer a proposition to an audience.<sup>18</sup> In other words, change is not necessarily built in and narrative may consist solely of the presentation of facts and information – which connects it more closely with the earlier definition given for documentary.

The result, in Resnais' films, extends the way in which these approaches are not exclusive to each other. Here, in both documentary and narrative, similar choices must be made, such as the inclusion or exclusion of information, the particulars of point of view, and other editorial decisions. The use of multiple types of storytelling becomes a process that points to itself, emphasizing the distance of the audience from the initial experience, suggesting again, that moving away from an event establishes a greater understanding of it.

The idea of a remove, a distance, might at first appear counter-intuitive to engagement. California Professor of German and Critical Theory, Gerhard Richter, makes the assertion that gaining distance from an experience allows for a weightier perception of what is presented.

Only by so doing can we begin to fathom the truth of that idea or object, that is, the way in which it is en route away from us.

This procedure asks that we remain close to the presented object or idea by departing from it.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Branigan, Edward. *Narrative Comprehension and Film*. London: Routledge, 1992. pp 4-8

<sup>18</sup> Krauss, Rosalind E. *Passages in Modern Sculpture*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1981. pp 7-10

<sup>19</sup> Richter, Gerhard. *Thought Images: Frankfurt School Writer's Reflections from Damaged Life*. Stanford: Stanford Press, 2007. p 58



Here is a view of things as fluid and fluctuating. It references the way in which experiences recede into the past. And it suggests distance is not necessarily a deterrent to insight but that it might be an opportunity for investigation, through a kind of instability. In finding inconsistency you might be able to gain access, footholds in which to begin to grasp what is going on.

A departure can be seen as an interruption: a break in continuity, a shift of attention. It incites strangeness and acts as a technique for making what is familiar less so. Like the disturbance Roland Barthes refers to in the punctum of the photograph,<sup>20</sup> the interruption suggests punctuation that references heterogeneity. This interference creates a co-presence of two discontinuous elements, not belonging to the same world. And in doing so it allows for an opening up. The interruption introduces a potential association: a new connection to be made. It also suggests a myriad of possible links.

The traveller visits a museum.<sup>21</sup> It is an unusual place – a cabinet of curiosities harking back to an earlier time. At one point she finds herself before a vitrine of madeleines. They lie in a dish behind glass in what appears to be a defunct corner of this seemingly forgotten museum, looking stale and unappetizing. It is a display on *Remembrance of Things Past*.<sup>22</sup> In particular it is a reference to the narrator's anecdote of being transported in his mind, through the taste of the madeleine, to a previous time when as a young boy he was given the little cakes for a treat.<sup>23</sup> She imagines, in the future, any mention of Proust or his book will cause her to think of these specific madeleines set out in a vitrine at this unusual museum.

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<sup>20</sup> Barthes, Roland. *Camera Lucida*. London: Vintage, 2000. p 23

<sup>21</sup> Museum of Jurassic Technology, Culver City, CA

<sup>22</sup> Proust, Marcel. *Remembrance of Things Past*. Volume One Swann's Way Within a Budding Grove. Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1987. Also known in English as *In Search of Lost Time*.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, Proust, Overture

At first, in the story there is just the sensation, recognition.<sup>24</sup> It is only through determined effort, or rather an exercise of non-effort that the connection is actually made to the past, to a previous moment or moments of madeleine eating.<sup>25</sup> The narrator engages in a great deal of struggle to reconnect the physical sensation, caused by tasting the cake, to its origin. He tries to force his mind back, to force the association to manifest. Then he lets go and allows his thoughts to wander where they will, hoping the memory will pop up of its own accord. Finally, five paragraphs after the initial sensation, it does.<sup>26</sup> In effect he distances himself from the experience to allow it to usher forth.

Proust posits that this story of involuntary memory<sup>27</sup> suggests an experience of deeper engagement than that produced from a voluntary memory. Accidentally being transported to the past would seem to offer greater intensity than deliberately trying to remember a moment from childhood. The suggestion develops that the latter kind of memory, intentional and of the intellect “retains no trace of the past”.<sup>28</sup> Even though this addresses the quality of the experience of the memory, it also looks to the quality of the initial experience that is being remembered.

Writing on the nature of experience, Walter Benjamin proposes that voluntary and involuntary recollection need not be considered mutually exclusive.<sup>29</sup> He argues that the degree of engagement with a memory does not arise from the way of remembering, whether intentional or not, conscious or un-

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p 48. “And soon, mechanically, weary after a dull day with the prospect of a depressing morrow, I raised to my lips a spoonful of the tea in which I had soaked a morsel of the cake. No sooner had the warm liquid, and the crumbs with it, touched my palate than a shudder ran through my whole body, and I stopped, intent upon the extraordinary changes that were taking place. An exquisite pleasure had invaded my senses, but individual, detached, with no suggestion of its origin.”

<sup>25</sup> Benjamin, Walter. *Illuminations*. London: Pimlico, 1999. p 157. Proust calls this an involuntary memory the significance of which is that the memory retains a trace from the past experience

<sup>26</sup> Op. cit., Proust, p 50. “... And suddenly the memory returns. The taste was that of the little crumb of madeleine which on Sunday mornings at Combray (because on those mornings I did not go out before church-time), when I went to say good day to her in her bedroom, my aunt Léonie used to give me, dipping it first in her own cup of real or of lime-flower tea.”

<sup>27</sup> Op. cit., Benjamin, *On Some Motifs in Baudelaire*, p 157

<sup>28</sup> Benjamin, Walter. *The Writer of Modern Life*. Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2006. p 175

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., Benjamin, *The Writer of Modern Life*. pp 175-176

What is important is the imbedded-ness of the experience to begin with. He suggests that one way this imbedding occurs is through storytelling.<sup>30</sup> For him storytelling is crucial to forming experiences that may later resonate as memory.

As the story of the madeleine is of a memory, it centers on recall, recurrence and repetition. Attention is paid to instances of resemblance and similarity. How the taste is the same taste and the scent is the same scent. It isn't the eating of the madeleine now, nor before, that is important. It is the fact of the recognition, and the experience of connecting the moments, past and present. It requires observation to see the connections between experiences over time. This is more than noting a unique sensation. It involves examination and study. The observed experience allows for consideration and analysis, and for the making of connections.

Uncovering these connections demonstrates the ordinary becoming extraordinary.<sup>31</sup> Here inhabiting simultaneous places and moments creates a strange sensation, one that disturbs the experience of the present. It is a way of making strange; of an experience that might otherwise be quite ordinary, becoming unfamiliar and distant.

Through observing and distancing, memories can be relayed, thereby telling a story. The storytelling effects conscious recollection. The story comes from an experience, whether immediate or removed, turned into further experience: that of learning the story.<sup>32</sup> This occurs as a continual commitment to memory of a narrative, coupled with the desire to repeat it to another. It is a process of assimilation. Each teller adds the script of their own hearing

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., Benjamin, *Illuminations*, The Storyteller, p 89

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., Benjamin, *Illuminations*, The Image of Proust, p 200 In a quote from Max Unold "Proust managed to make the pointless story interesting. He says: "Imagine, dear reader, yesterday I was dunking a cookie in my tea when it occurred to me that as a child I spent some time in the country." For this he uses eighty pages and it is so fascinating that you think you are no longer the listener but the daydreamer himself."

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., Benjamin, The Storyteller, p 83

of the story, framing and reframing the tale as they incorporate their experience. So the story and its telling become a living thing, always made relevant to the present.

There are tricks and techniques employed to immerse the tale in the present while advancing the narrative. But none of that would matter without being able to engage the listener. The traveller appreciates the importance of capturing the audience's attention. To investigate this she tests the opposite. She tries reading the unreadable: *The Nam*.<sup>33</sup>

*The Nam* is a description of six American Vietnam war films in their entirety: *Apocalypse Now*, *Born On The Fourth of July*, *The Deer Hunter*, *Full Metal Jacket*, *Hamburger Hill* and *Platoon*. These movies were all made under the aegis of Hollywood Cinema and as such have been widely marketed and seen. They carry cultural recognition that rewards the viewer/reader of Banner's *The Nam* through recollection. It is very likely that most people have seen at least one of these films at least once, making the pleasure of detecting and recalling that memory available to them while reading *The Nam*.

Banner relays the stories from the point of view of someone watching the films in the moment.

Something whirs inconspicuously in in front of it. The eyes blink and I think they blink left. The background still passes behind, faded out behind the face. More copters, big faded ones. The eyes definitely look left, and then right, blinking more, the face is totally expressionless, the landscape fires up, it's unclear what's upside down now.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Banner, Fiona. *The Nam*. Frith Street, London, 1997. *The Nam* is a 1,000 page book that describes the plots of six Vietnam films in their entirety. From <<http://www.fionabanner.com/vanitypress/thenamhb/index.htm?i08>> "It has been described as unreadable"

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., Banner

Cues such as the double “in” in the first line and the use of “I think” reveal this as being written in the moment of watching the film. As you can see by this brief excerpt, the descriptions are an onslaught, immediate, visceral and constant. There are no paragraph breaks, no indentations, no page numbers. There is just the cover, a title page and the text. The films flow from one to the other seamlessly, without indication or fanfare. In fact, outside of supplementary material about the work, the names of the films are never mentioned in the book itself. Nor is the fact of the material coming from any film source.

There is no inclusion of the fact of a film screen, and there aren’t any references to the use of a camera. The description does not come from the scripts used to film the movies, but from the immersion in the visual experience of watching. In ignoring the conventions of standard scriptwriting, the work instigates disorientation. It creates an experience of confusion. Rather than constructing a tunnel-like isolation, it allows access to times and places outside of itself. This remove from the established language actually allows the work to more closely access the experiences of the stories being told. In reading *The Nam* there is the sense that the action of the plots is being described by someone who is there, continuously relaying what is happening around them.

This is an experience in itself, one that conflates and confuses the place of the film, with the place portrayed in the film, and with the place of reading. The transcription translates the source material of the films to the text of the page in a way that attempts to capture the time and place of viewing the films in the cinema, which in turn attempts to capture the time and place of particular moments in Vietnam during the war. All the while, reading *The Nam* makes its own time and place that acknowledges and exploits the gap between experience and words.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Bury, Stephen. “A Sort of Portrait.” *Art Monthly*, Issue 287, 2004: “Her project is not one to produce the archetypal Vietnam War movie script with all plots and all conceivable permutations reduced to some simple, structuralist formula, but to create an ambiguous space parallel to the films, distant, separate, at the same time both inside and outside filmic space, defying both narrative conventions and the vaunted immediacy of cinema: this is an intermediate zone where transcription becomes translation and repetition mutates into re-creation.”

Banner offers a way to traverse the gap between language and experience with what is immediately, and literally, at hand – writing. Through her urgent descriptions without explanation she disorients. She insinuates confusion with the, often contradictory, information she gives: “It moves slowly but it is gone quickly.”<sup>36</sup> And she chooses sensory details that convey feeling as much as information: “The music’s getting hotter and the face is hot too.”<sup>37</sup>

What she writes exemplifies reading that inhabits an analogous place to the source material – experience.

But perhaps following the role of language in relation to experience is merely a side journey, one that threatens to obscure the true direction. The traveller begins to worry she’s gotten off-track. She is, after all, engaged in an attempt to find an unfamiliar place, somewhere different, elsewhere.

She decides to look at the word place. Place comes from the Latin ‘platea’ meaning courtyard, open space, broad street.<sup>38</sup> Its derivation suggests it comes out of people’s relationship to the way they live, to their built environment. It can be defined as a particular portion of space, a locality or a location with a particular use. Whereas the term space refers to room, or area, or distance, or even stretch of time, place is specific and local.

From this you can appreciate place as multiple and varied. Place can be a particular geographical locality such as a town, country or region. Place can be the house or other type of accommodation where somebody lives, a building or area where something in particular happens or is located, a particular point in something, for example, a book, film, or story. It can be the position or location where somebody or something belongs, an opportunity to study at school or university, somebody’s social position or rank in an organization, somebody’s responsibility or right, especially one arising from who the person is or the status he or she has. It can be a job or position, it can be somewhere for somebody to sit, for example, at a table during a meal or in the

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<sup>36</sup> Op. cit., Banner

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., Banner

<sup>38</sup> *The Oxford English Dictionary*. Clarendon Press: 2 edition 30 Mar 1989.

audience of a theatre, it can be the position of somebody or something in a rank, sequence, or series, second position in a race, it can be the relative position of a particular digit in a number.

The traveller looks at these words. They occupy a place. This particular place has black marks on white. Her fingers tapping a sequence of keys on a computer keyboard makes these marks. These keys are tapped at a desk before a window in a flat in the northwest of London. All of these places: the place of the mark, the place at the desk, the flat, London, and on and on, the traveller imagines all exist right now. Simultaneously. Or perhaps you, reading these words, at your place, look here at this black mark on white, while at your house your cat sleeps on a chair, and the number 55 bus stops on Oxford street, and a wave rolls ashore at a beach, and on and on. It seems exhausting but all of these places are experiences, and all of these varying and different experiences are experienced. You are experiencing reading about these experiences. Actually, truth be told, since she's using a laptop the traveller has abandoned the desk and, with one leg bent the other stretched out, she half reclines on a couch.

The traveller reaches for a book by Georges Perec:

I would like there to exist places that are stable, unmoving, intangible, untouched and almost untouchable, unchanging, deep-rooted; places that might be points of reference, of departure of origin:

My birthplace, the cradle of my family, the house where I may have been born, the tree I may have seen grow (that my father may have planted the day I was born), the attic of my childhood filled with intact memories ...

Such places don't exist, and it's because they don't exist that space becomes a question, ceases to be self-evident, ceases to be incorporated, ceases to be appropriated. Space is a doubt: I have constantly to mark it, to designate it. It's never mine, never given to me, I have to conquer it.<sup>39</sup>

Again here is an encounter with instability. Place seems to travel from one thing to another, from being everywhere all the time to being intangible and inaccessible. Even the term place in the first paragraph switches to the term space in the last. For Perec place refers to a particular experience while space describes something more general and unknown.

From this place can be considered a process. A process that engages experience through language and naming. This is how place can be seen as always under construction, unfixed, ever-changing and continually written into being.

The traveller remembers an artwork by Stan Douglas that reflects on this fluid nature of place. It is a video installation of Nootka Sound on Vancouver Island in British Columbia, Canada.<sup>40</sup> The work, set in the late eighteenth century, imparts conflicting tales: one is told by José Estéban Martínez, the commandant of the site's first Spanish occupation, then known as Yuquot. Another is told by his captor, the English captain James Colnett. Each of them believed he had the right to claim land already occupied by a peculiarly 'absent' third party, Chief Maquinna and the people of the Mowachaht Confederacy.

In monologues derived from historical documents and their personal journals, the delirious Englishman alternates between recollections of

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<sup>39</sup> Perec, Georges. *Space, Species of Spaces and Other Pieces*. London: Penguin, 1999. p 91

<sup>40</sup> Douglas, Stan. *Nu•tka•* (1996)



his capture and the fantasy of escape, while the Spanish commander betrays signs of paranoia as he becomes increasingly uncertain of his ability to dominate the region.<sup>41</sup>

The two image-tracks play in two continuous takes from a vantage point across the bay. One image-track, visible on the even raster lines of the video projection, interweaves with the other, shown on odd raster lines. The interlaced images are mostly in continual motion, panning and tilting, presenting various features of Nootka Sound – but they briefly come to rest, and into exact registration, on six occasions. At these moments, the uncanny apparition of a landscape subject to conflicting winds and opposing tides is seen and the bay is clearly represented. Concurrently, you hear Colnett and Martinez describing their respective delusions in exact synchronization using exactly the same words.<sup>42</sup> As the narrators go their separate ways – “recounting their contempt for one another and inability to endure the situation in which they find themselves”<sup>43</sup> – the interlaced image also pulls apart. Outside of the six synchronous moments, the narratives, like the images, are blurred, doubled, and at the limit of legibility.

In interlacing the two images of sea and cliffs on the same screen, the work creates an effect of two indistinct landscapes, hovering over each other, continually adrift. As the video loops, the two separate, disembodied voices drift around the space, creating sensory confusion. One man seems to speak from the right side while the other is heard from the left. This aural disorientation echoes the recounting of the two opposing narratives told about the same place: the video projection of the bay.

Douglas’ artwork portrays a single place as multiple, coming from distinct differences that lie in the experience of a subject or subjects. This is not to suggest a denial or elision of a distinction between truth and fiction. Rather it offers a fascination with the nature and limits of human knowledge. At

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<sup>41</sup> Douglas, Stan. *Nu•tka• Exhibition Catalogue*\_Toronto: The Power Plant: Contemporary Art Gallery, Fall 1999.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., Douglas. “excerpts from Gothic and colonial literatures of Edgar Allan Poe, Cervantes, Jonathan Swift, Captain James Cook and the Marquis de Sade.”

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., Douglas.

certain moments truth may be situationally unknowable, but that is quite a different matter from claiming that truth does not exist or is entirely relative.<sup>44</sup> What is important is the examination of the situation at hand and an engagement with the complex relations involved. In Nu•tka• this manifests as those instances of visual and aural synchronicity. They show moments where similarity erupts out of what is oppositional.

Looking at the conditions of a subject's experience in this way, suggests traditional notions of space and time as unifying forms that can be understood as imposed by the subject.<sup>45</sup> The concept these conditions shape might be the same as the conditions of actual experience. This concept would not be a wraith-like abstraction of an experienced thing, but a real system of differential relations that creates actual places, times, and sensations.<sup>46</sup> The woman in Resnais' *Hiroshima mon amour*, speaks of the illusion that exists in love. Even though she calls it an illusion – she also says it exists, it is. In Nu•tka•, contradictory as they may be, Colnett's experience of Nootka Bay is no less real than Martinez' which is no less real than Maquinna's. Rather than engaging in a confrontational agenda over the truth or validity or authenticity of conflicting experience, Douglas indicates it might be far more interesting to investigate the surrounding conditions, the differences and similarities, and the interrelationships. Resnais' woman compares the love illusion to seeing, suggesting the necessity of observation. Understanding experience then, can be said to hinge on observing moments and places; observing, like the witnessing Marker writes of in Resnais' film.

The act of observing has many cultural manifestations. The mid 19th century brought about the urban observers and chroniclers known as flâneurs.<sup>47, 48</sup> Their city strolls are unplanned journeys, directed only by the (subtle or obvious) surrounding geography and architecture, influenced by place and observation. The flâneur transforms the external street into an interior place, a kind of home that invites strangeness to be part of it.

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<sup>44</sup> Morris, Errol. *The Anti-Post-Modern Post Modernist*. Lecture, <http://errolmorris.com/content/lecture/theantipost.html>

<sup>45</sup> Deleuze, Gilles and Parnet, Claire. *Dialogues*. Columbia: Columbia University Press: 1977. Actual and Virtual

<sup>46</sup> Deleuze, Gilles *Desert Islands and Other Texts*. Semiotext(e): 2003. p 36

<sup>47</sup> Op. cit., Benjamin, *The Writer of Modern Life*, p 98, "In the flâneur, the joy of watching prevails over all."

The opportunity to engage in this flâneurship came from a position of relative wealth and privilege. Over time, as the city and the crowds changed, this activity of watching was adopted and became integral to varying social agendas. The psychogeographers of the Situationist International<sup>49</sup> advocated an unplanned journey through a usually urban landscape. Called a *dérive*, this excursion lets the subtle aesthetic contours of the surrounding architecture and geography subconsciously direct an individual with the ultimate goal of encountering an entirely new and authentic experience. Here, the *dérive* offers an alternative to what can be seen as the dehumanized modern world. It asserts individual freedom into the often consumerist segregation of the city. The punk movement of the 1970s and 80s later adopted many of these ideas.<sup>50</sup> The radicalism of this kind of observational engagement is expressed in the combining of subjective and objective knowledge.

Associations and intuitions guide this combination of subjectivity and objectivity, expressed through the act of roaming and meandering. These associations can act as a bridge between the instinctive and the deliberate. The reliance on randomness encourages accidental encounters and leads to unforeseen connections. It exemplifies the intertwining of conscious with unconscious activity.

The traveller stumbles across a quote in Italo Calvino's *If On A Winter's Night a Traveller*,<sup>51</sup> this is the book she reads at night before falling asleep.

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<sup>48</sup> Skinner, Cornelia Otis. *Elegant Wits and Grand Horizontals*. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1962. p 19 "There is no English equivalent for the French word flâneur. Cassell's dictionary defines flâneur as a stroller, saunterer, drifter but none of these terms seems quite accurate. There is no English equivalent for the term, just as there is no Anglo-Saxon counterpart of that essentially Gallic individual, the deliberately aimless pedestrian, unencumbered by any obligation or sense of urgency, who, being French and therefore frugal, wastes nothing, including his time which he spends with the leisurely discrimination of a gourmet, savoring the multiple flavors of his city."

<sup>49</sup> Debord, Guy-Ernest. *Introduction to a Critique of Urban Geography*. 1955. <<http://library.nothingness.org/articles/SI/>>

<sup>50</sup> Marcus, Greil. *Lipstick Traces*. London: Picador, 1997.

<sup>51</sup> Calvino, Italo. *If On A Winter's Night A Traveller*. London: Vintage, 1998,

If a book truly interests me, I cannot follow it for more than a few lines before my mind, having seized on a thought that the text suggests to it, or a feeling, or a question, or an image, goes off on a tangent and springs from thought to thought, from image to image, in an itinerary of reasonings and fantasies, that I feel the need to pursue to the end, moving away from the book until I have lost sight of it.<sup>52</sup>

Calvino's narrator eloquently expresses the productivity and pleasure of the associative process. He elicits a way in which thinking manifests and comprehension is arrived at. This demonstrates yet another instance of a moving away from in order to more fully grasp a complexity of understanding. Like Proust's involuntary memory, the frisson comes from an unanticipated relationship dredged from the depths of the unconscious. And also like Proust's ensuing struggle to connect the memory to its original impulse, the associative process engages in lateral thinking to gain access. Allowing thoughts to wander creates a series of interruptions that move from one connection to another, forming relationships as they progress and building a kind of system.

Richter refers to Benjamin's collection of writing in *One-Way Street*,<sup>53</sup> as a systematic non-system. This is a textual work that portrays the movement of a journey through a city, with an associative journey through ideas.

. . . arranged according to a systematic non-system, as if situated along a city street in which individual Denkbilder<sup>54</sup> become the individual shops, signs, buildings, and urban sites at which readers may interrupt like leisurely flâneurs on a promenade.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., Calvino, p 254

<sup>53</sup> Benjamin, Walter. *One Way Street and Other Writings*. London: Penguin, 2008. pp 48 - 115

<sup>54</sup> Op. cit., Richter, p 13 "... the Denkbild wishes to speak only of that about which one cannot speak. The Denkbild therefore works to create an image (*bild*) in words of the ways in which it says what cannot be said. It is a snapshot of the impossibility of its own rhetorical gestures. What it gives us to think (*denken*) is precisely the ways in which it delivers an image (*bild*) not only of this or that particular content, but always also of its own folding back upon itself, it's most successful failure."

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., Richter, pp 45-46

This “systematic non system” references the associative agenda that guides the flâneur on her travels, travels through the city and travels that in more contemporary terms, encompass a global perspective. It accurately portrays the interwoven activity of unconscious thought with the conscious. There is most definitely purposefulness in the use of intuition. And there is instinct in the approach to intention. The chance occurrence shares validity with premeditation, and correlations between things can reflect a broader representation.

Employing a reliance on encounters led by the chance occurrence of association is part of a larger engagement with connections. Hannah Arendt writes of Benjamin:

He was concerned with the correlation between a street scene, a speculation on the stock exchange, a poem, a thought, with the hidden line which holds them together and enables the historian or philologist to recognize that they must all be placed in the same period. . . . Strongly influenced by surrealism, it was the attempt to capture the portrait of history in the most insignificant representations of reality, its scraps, as it were.<sup>56</sup>

Here again techniques of distance and removal take on the work of increasing access to truth. This is an emphasis on relationality and processes. It encompasses a broader context that embraces connections and associations.

In between the flâneur and the dérive there was an organization in the UK called Mass Observation.<sup>57</sup> Begun by a poet and journalist, a Surrealist painter, a documentary filmmaker, and an anthropologist, Mass Observation aimed to create “an anthropology of ourselves”<sup>58</sup> by recording everyday life

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<sup>56</sup> Op. cit., Benjamin, *Illuminations*, Introduction, p 17

<sup>57</sup> Crain, Caleb. “Surveillance Society The Mass-Observation movement and the meaning of everyday life.” *The New Yorker*. September 11, 2006

<sup>58</sup> Mass Observation, [http://www.massobs.org.uk/a\\_brief\\_history.htm](http://www.massobs.org.uk/a_brief_history.htm)

in Britain through a panel of around 500 untrained volunteer observers who either maintained diaries or replied to open-ended questionnaires. In addition there were also paid investigators to record anonymously people's conversations and behavior at work, on the street, and at various public occasions including open meetings, sport, and religious events.<sup>59</sup> These observers acted as recorders, attempting to capture the everyday existence of their own lives and the lives of those around them.

What began in the flâneur as the idiosyncrasies of the middle class gentleman, in Mass Observation became an attempt, albeit flawed,<sup>60</sup> at a democratic understanding of the working class. In both situations the notion of everyday observation encompasses assumptions and social mores that often remain hidden and unconscious. Within the unspoken and often unacknowledged social conventions, political agendas, and aesthetic fashion, the Mass Observation movement included a reliance on randomness and association to attempt to uncover an experiential picture. They then presented their observations through documents that result in depictions of associative connectivity.

Jennings's "film" begins to unspool in the second chapter. It's around midnight on the eve of the coronation. Euston train station, in central London, is already crowded. There's a "man drinking beer and eating sandwiches in a telephone box." In the snack room, another man and his fiancée are playing a game with rolls on the counter. She "says that it is a prejudice that one should always sleep at night time. He begins to sing *Night and Day You Are The One*." As the observer notes, "Everybody here is talking to nobody in particular," and there's a sense of plenitude and humanity — of warm chaos. On the Underground, grownups unscrew light bulbs and, when the train goes into a tunnel, make animal noises. At 3:15 A.M., a prostitute solicits the observer: "I say 'You look as if you've done enough for to-night.' Reply: 'None of your sauce, me lad.'" The reader feels as if he were eavesdropping on an enormous, citywide party, all the more

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<sup>59</sup> Madge, Charles & Jennings, Humphrey eds. *May the Twelfth, Mass-Observation Day-Surveys 1937, by over two hundred observers*. London: Faber & Faber, 1937. pp 89-92

<sup>60</sup> Op. cit., Crain & Jennings, The three initiators of Mass Observation came from an educated and privileged class, even though all three ended up having to struggle to make a living, and at times were accused of slumming, in addition, during WWII, Mass Observation reflected the darker tendency of surveillance towards the curtailment of individual right and freedom.

appealing because the typical partygoer is both in and out of the game — playing along with the mass-produced artifice around him while a practical, ironic self survives inside. Thus, during the service, while no one is looking, an usher at Westminster Abbey smokes a cigarette in the King’s state coach.”<sup>61</sup>

As always with Mass Observation, the human eye caught telling details. In 1938 before former British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain announced from a window in Downing Street that he had brought back from Munich a promise of “peace for our time,”<sup>62</sup> he stretched out his arm to silence the people cheering below. An observer noted, “Several in the crowd appear to take this for a Fascist salute and stretch forth their arms likewise.”<sup>63</sup> Jennings suggested it was no accident that the search for the meaning of everyday life led to history.

“Mysteries reside in the humblest everyday things,” he said; they are a kind of legacy, and the poet, by examining them, can extract “an idea of ‘what I am’ from the past.”<sup>64</sup>

This focus on the everyday, on what is familiar, excavates what is thought to be known but might not be quite as understood as imagined. It is an example of making strange that, which is recognizable. It employs the distance of reportage, documenting through individual experience that doesn’t forget it is a retelling of an experience. Gaining this distance offers an opportunity to examine and engage with the experience. It is a chance to explore possible associations and connections and revel in the extraordinary strangeness of everyday experience.

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid., Crain & Jennings, p 2

<sup>62</sup> Chamberlain, Neville. *Peace in our Time*, Speech given in Defense of the Munich Agreement. 1938. Chapter 36.  
<http://www.wwnorton.com/college/history/ralph/workbook/ralprs36.htm>

<sup>63</sup> Op. cit., Crain & Jennings, p 4

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., Crain & Jennings, p 5

On the night of November 30, 1936, London's Crystal Palace — the iron-and-glass home of the Great Exhibition of 1851 and a triumph of Victorian capitalism — burned down. Madge, then twenty-four, had been mixing with England's Surrealists, who, following Freud, saw significance in accidents, and he started to wonder if there could be a meaning in the destruction of such an iconic building. Perhaps, by documenting events that shook public consciousness, one could make society aware of its unexamined myths and fantasies, and thus free to change them.<sup>65</sup>

Complex relationships between subjective and objective knowledge exist and are inseparably intertwined. Through these processes, the traveller connects with associations of the conscious and unconscious mind. She witnesses stories of remembered experience that engage the interplay and paradox of language and naming. Through the technique of distance, the language of memory allows her to un-know a place, to make it strange, in essence, to forget it. These unfamiliar places, always under construction, unfixed, ever changing and continually written into being, become elsewhere.

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., Crain & Jennings, p 1



### ***Story of elsewhere – an exhibition in writing***

The room is semi-dark; the light is dim but the space is not completely black. Speaking figures project onto the walls brightening the room. The voices of these people are heard in synchronization with their images.

Sometimes these portraits project one image at a time, sometimes more than one image at a time. The video portraits play within dark grey borders that are painted on the walls. The large bands frame white squares that the videos appear inside of. The video is projected from one framed white square to another – around the room. Sometimes more than one projection plays at a time but they do not play all at once.

Some of the walls the videos project onto jut into the space and must be navigated around by the visitor. Some of the projected video portraits sit side-by-side; some play across from each other at various angles. It is not possible to see all the projected video portraits at one time – in part because they are never playing all at once, and in part because of the placement and orientation of the walls on which they are projected.<sup>66</sup>

Sometimes a speaker's image freezes and the image of a different speaker begins projecting on another wall, in another grey-framed white square. This second projection that interrupts the initial storyteller starts out as a still image for a moment. Once the image unfreezes this new speaker relays a snippet of their story. The image freezes again for a moment then returns to black, leaving an empty square, framed with the grey borders. Meanwhile the image of the person in the first projection unfreezes and resumes speaking. In this way the stories and their interruptions move around the space.

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<sup>66</sup> See diagram p 82

The images of people in the projected video portraits speak of their experiences traveling. They each speak of a different place such as Mexico City or Edinburgh. They each stand before the image of a known landmark that is not the landmark identifying the place they are speaking about. For example, in the projected image of a woman telling of her visit to Rio de Janeiro, she stands before the image of Big Ben in London; or a man speaking of a trip to New York stands in front of St. Basil's onion domes in Moscow's Red Square.

The people portrayed in the videos speak a variety of languages. Some speak in English; one speaks in French, one in German, one in Russian and one in the Mandarin dialect of the Chinese language. Sometimes they use English words even when they are not primarily speaking in English. Sometimes they speak English with an accent from another language. All of their stories are translated by text in the bottom third of the projected image.

The text at the bottom of the image slides across a black background from left to right as it presents the place where the image is recorded, and the place being spoken about. Subsequently, as the text progresses in translating the speakers, the titles pop on and off. Each translated video has a different colored text; one uses blue, one yellow, one pink, etc. The text is in English. It reiterates the story being relayed by the person in the video from a third-person perspective. When the individual speaks a language other than English the text presents what that person is saying in English and additionally alters the pronouns "I", "me", and "mine" to "he/she" and "his/hers" etc. When the individual speaks in English the text does the same thing. For example, when the image of a Frenchman says "J'ai mangé beaucoup" the accompanying text reads "He ate a lot" and when the image of a British woman says, "I like walking" that accompanying text reads, "She likes walking".

Some of the projected speakers relate tales of their physical experiences, some of their inner reality: their thoughts and feelings. Many refer to an experience of being in a film or watching a film. Some of the videos are more of a dialogue with the voice of an unseen woman who questions the speaker to illuminate the account further. Some of the storytellers ramble, speaking of one thing and then another following an associative flow of thoughts. Some relay a structured narrative; some reveal the individual speakers' dreams, desires and fears and some do not.

The points of interruption are selected from their relationship to each other. They are chosen either directly from a word, such as passing, or a subject such as movies, or indirectly through an association of ideas, such as the perceived profundity of an experience by two different storytellers. For example when a woman in Shanghai wonders if the girl she saw in Edinburgh riding a horse was an authentic Scottish lass she is interrupted from across the room by a German man in Berlin telling of his frustration when seeking something “real typical”<sup>67</sup> in Buenos Aires at a tourist spot.

A second room adjoins the semi-dark room. This room is bright, with white walls. It is lit by colored fluorescent bulbs, which elicit tinted light of pink, yellow, green and blue within the space.<sup>68</sup> The colors from the lights bounce off the white walls, diminishing in intensity.

A freestanding white wall stands immediately to the right upon entering this second space. A flat video screen hangs in the center of it. The video playing on the screen is an image of a long stretch of green grass, bordered by trees on either side, culminating with the Eiffel Tower in the background. This video footage seems to be playing out in real time, as people in the video picnic and mill about on the grass. Over the course of the video many of these people stand between the camera and the tower in order to photograph the tower, thereby interrupting the view presented here.

The room also includes a long table: a board sitting on two white trestles. Three copies of a large landscape book<sup>69</sup> sit upon the table, two copies of which are open revealing different pages of black text on a white background. The third shows the front cover of the book, a white background with a black line drawing of the thumbs and forefingers of a pair of hands, one facing out and one facing in, touching fingers to thumbs, creating a framing device.

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<sup>67</sup> Barnet, SE. *Buenos Aires in Berlin told by David Buob*. (2011)

<sup>68</sup> Tantra, Sintra. light installation, part of *Politics of Seduction*. 2010. <http://www.sintatantra.com/>

<sup>69</sup> Barnet, SE. *Large Landscape*. Blurb: 2011.

***Landmark Videos – seven videos in writing, order based on their inclusion in the exhibit *Story of elsewhere****

In the first room, the exhibit includes some of the videos from the *Landmark Videos* series. The *Landmark Videos* are an on-going series of short videos, less than five minutes each. They are individual works and they are also parts of a series that incorporate some or all of these individual works. They are projected video with audio. They are an installation of multiple projections or they are a single projection. Some are a standard rectangular shape with a 4:3 aspect ratio and some are the wider 16:9 aspect ratio. When they are projected, the 16:9 ratio videos are bordered with black stripes, letterboxed, and the 4:3 videos are not.

The videos all begin in black, followed by text fading up, or sometimes sliding in. Sometimes the text is white and sometimes it is colored. It is a plain sans serif font and large enough to be read clearly. If the black were divided into thirds vertically this text would fill the middle third of the image. If the black were divided in half horizontally this text would sit at the mid-point. The first line of text to appear gives the names of two cities, where the first one is said to be “in” the second, for instance, “Edinburgh in Shanghai”.

As this text remains, an additional line of text appears beneath it. This text always begins with “told by” followed by a person’s name. In some of the videos a third line of text appears imparting the name of a translator or translators. All the text fades to black or slides out and an image appears.

In the videos, the action primarily occurs within the frame, the frame itself rarely moves. It is mostly stationary although in some instances the frame moves slightly or for a moment. There are images of people and buildings and nature. In all of them the image of one person is close, though some are closer than others. These video portraits reveal a person’s head and part of their upper body, though some include more of the body than others.

The scenery behind them is different in each video. Some are of buildings, some statues, some signs, some boats, and in some rivers and hills as well. All of the videos portray daytime exterior. Some of the lighting reflects full sun and some the shadows of early morning or late afternoon/early evening. In many the presence of the wind is apparent. There are often also images and audio of people passing by, sometimes seen and sometimes heard and sometimes both seen and heard.

A landmark stands in the background of each video. These iconic visual representations, images that can be recognized internationally, signify each particular place where the video is recorded. They are places of gathering, particularly for visitors and tourists. They often incorporate a plaza or promenade where people congregate. There is often a convergence of many different languages and cultures.

The videos play background sounds of people and nature in the city, including the sound of human voices, birds, machinery, music, traffic, water and wind. There are two prominent voices: one from the individuals foregrounded and one from a person not seen. The unseen voice is female. It asks a question or questions. The question is actually a request of the person in front of the camera to tell a story of their travels. Each person asked, complies in various ways and tells a story of his or her experiences. Each experience is different although some similar things happen to the different people.

*Edinburgh in Shanghai told by Christine Zhao translated by Guan Rong and translated by Jeffrey Noles combined*

(It is black. Then in the center of the black a line of pink text slides across from left to center. It is a plain-looking sans serif font. It is large enough to be read clearly. If the black were divided into thirds vertically this text would fill the middle third. If the black were divided in half horizontally this text would sit at the mid-point.)

TITLE TEXT

Edinburgh in Shanghai

(Beneath it more text slides on.)

TITLE TEXT

told by Christine Zhao

(Beneath that another line slides on.)

TITLE TEXT

translated by Guan Rong and translated by Jeffrey Noles combined

(Sound becomes audible.)

OFF SCREEN WOMAN'S VOICE

So what I'd like you to tell me,

(All the text slides off right leaving black and the voice continues.)

OFF SCREEN WOMAN'S VOICE

is a story,

(An image emerges from the black. It is bounded on both the top and bottom with black, each strip smaller than a quarter of the size of the rectangular image itself.)

(The image is of a woman with long dark hair, CHRISTINE ZHAO. She smiles, and the voice continues.)

OFF SCREEN WOMAN'S VOICE

about visiting another place

(CHRISTINE nods.)

(She is in front of a late afternoon/early evening dark blue sky but there is still enough light to see her face. In the distance behind her the Shanghai Customs House along the Bund is lit up. The image shifts down revealing a scene of the Huangpu River behind her, with the riverbank along the Bund. White lights twinkle and flash from the opposite shore to the right of her. CHRISTINE looks up and slightly to the right. She speaks.)

CHRISTINE

You want Mandarin or Shanghai dialect?

(Text appears at the bottom of the image. It is in English, one to two lines at a time, it seems to translate her speech but employs a third person perspective.)

**ON SCREEN TEXT**

She asks if she should use / a Mandarin or Shanghai / dialect

**OFF SCREEN WOMAN'S VOICE**

Your choice

(CHRISTINE looks off.)

**CHRISTINE**

(quietly)

Yes okay.

**OFF SCREEN WOMAN'S VOICE**

What are you more comfortable with?

(After a pause CHRISTINE answers.)



CHRISTINE

Maybe, I think, Mandarin

ON SCREEN TEXT

she thinks maybe Mandarin . . .

OFF SCREEN WOMAN'S VOICE

You're more comfortable with Mandarin than Shanghainese?

CHRISTINE

(gestures with her hand)

Yeah, with this story

ON SCREEN TEXT

with this story

(There are sounds of indecipherable voices in the distance, perhaps of children. In the background behind her, a barge slowly floats past along the river.)

OFF SCREEN WOMAN'S VOICE

Okay, okay good

CHRISTINE

Yeah.

(CHRISTINE continues speaking in Chinese, as the text carries on in English.)

ON SCREEN TEXT

When she was in England / one time / She travelled to Scotland / She first went to Edinburgh with friends / then they left the city / and went out / they passed a small village, / actually not their destination / But they stopped there / to do some shopping

(Another barge begins its journey along the river from the left to the right, in the path of the previous one.)

ON SCREEN TEXT

When they got out of the car — / the roads over there / are very narrow / they saw a very tall and / strong horse / walking with little half steps

(CHRISTINE gestures with her hand to indicate the stepping.)

ON SCREEN TEXT

Astride the horse was a / very small girl — / she looked only 3 or 4 / years old

(Closer to the far shore a small white boat with blue lights slowly moves along the water from the right side towards the left. CHRISITNE and the text continue.)

## ON SCREEN TEXT

She was the riding alone and had / a very precise riding posture, / and she was wearing / special riding clothes and hat

(CHRISTINE gestures towards her head.)

## ON SCREEN TEXT

She was really / a lovely little girl / but she was riding alone / She suddenly thought of / *Gone with the Wind*, / where the female protagonist / was named Scarlet

(A night bird or perhaps a bat flies through the sky and away.)

## ON SCREEN TEXT

At the time, / she started to wonder / if this was an authentic / young Scottish girl, / perhaps someone who / maintained / the special / traditions / of Scotland / and this was the way she lived

(The sound of voices around CHRISTINE has risen in volume a bit and then a flash goes off, as if from a camera, lighting her up for an instant.)

## ON SCREEN TEXT

She says she felt she was / beginning to understand / this place. / But then she also felt / a little puzzled / A little later they strolled / to a small church / by the side of a river / She doesn't believe it was a / famous church, / but it still was / very interesting

(Another flash goes off.)

ON SCREEN TEXT

— the thing that attracted / her most

(Closely behind her a large boat with strings of blue lights along its decks sails past from the left to the right. There is a whooshing sound as it goes by. She continues her story.)

ON SCREEN TEXT

was that the ancient church / was only half intact / while the other half had / lost its roof / and it was open / for tourists to take a look / They stepped through / the windows / into the inside of / what felt like / some ancient ruins / She stood in the room, and / sunshine fell on her / from above

(CHRISTINE gestures with her hands and looks up while the blue lit boat continues its' course behind her.)

ON SCREEN TEXT

she looked out — of course / there wasn't any glass / in the windows — she could see the small river / It was very shallow, / and in her imagination, / she thought she saw / cobblestones shine and twinkle under the sun / She felt there was a voice / calling to her, / She doesn't know if it was / an illusion, / but she felt there was an / indistinct voice / trying to talk to her

(The last of the boat with blue lights leaves to the right and a barge begins in its wake from the left.)

**ON SCREEN TEXT**

She suddenly felt she'd come / under the spell of that place / she thought is this the / Scotland of her own mind? / She had an idea at that / moment . . . / .  
.. whether or not she should . . . / . . . she wanted to live / and stay at Scotland. / Perhaps become a shepherd / and walk the hills / feeling the mysterious  
/ strength / of an exchange with nature

**CHRISTINE**

(in English)

That's the story

(CHRISTINE smiles.)

*London in Prague told by Michal Pechoucek*

(It is black. Then in the center of the black a line of yellow text slides across from left to center. It is a plain-looking sans serif font. It is large enough to be read clearly. If the black were divided into thirds vertically this text would fill the middle third. If the black were divided in half horizontally this text would sit at the mid-point.)

**TITLE TEXT**

London in Prague

(Beneath it another line slides on.)

TITLE TEXT

told by Michal Pechoucek

(Both lines slide off right leaving black. Sound becomes audible.)

OFF SCREEN WOMAN'S VOICE

What else, when you were in London, what else did you see?

(A moment into this question an image emerges from the black. There is the smiling face of a young man, MICHAL PECHOUCEK. He sits, leaning back against a stonewall, one knee up and an arm resting on it. A continuous stream of passers by walk past him, some look at him some don't. There is the sound of them and their indistinct voices; one voice in Czech has a singsong quality to it. In the far distance behind him the green dome at the end of the Charles Bridge can be seen. Poking out just behind him, one of the bridges soot-covered statues of robed figures pops in and out of view.)

MICHAL

(speaking in English with an accented voice)

Yeah, I have seen my favorite painting by Manet

(While he speaks text appears at the bottom third of the image. It is in English. One to two to three lines at a time, it reiterates his speech, but using a third person perspective.)

## ON SCREEN TEXT

He says when he was / in London he saw / his favorite / painting by Manet.

(MICHAL continues, as does the text.)

## ON SCREEN TEXT

Called / *A Bar at the Folies-Bergere*, / He tells me that it's in a / private collection

(A person behind him takes a photograph in the direction of the green dome. The text continues.)

## ON SCREEN TEXT

and this is his favourite / painting / and that was the reason / he visited London.

(When he says, "visited" he pronounces the "v" as a "w" so it sounds like "wisited.")

## OFF SCREEN WOMAN'S VOICE

How did you get to see it?

## MICHAL

(uncomprehendingly, leaning forward as he speaks)

How did you get?

OFF SCREEN WOMAN'S VOICE

(trying again)

Because it's a private collection, how did you get to see it?

(There is no text at the bottom during this exchange.)

MICHAL

No no no no, It's a private collection but it means I must pay for it

(The text starts again.)

ON SCREEN TEXT

He says that being in a / private collection meant / he had to pay to see it

OFF SCREEN WOMAN'S VOICE

Oh I see. So how was that when you saw it?

MICHAL

Finally I saw it

ON SCREEN TEXT



finally he saw it.

(MICHAL'S face is expressive as he speaks, his hand sometimes moving the hair from his eyes as the wind blows it.)

OFF SCREEN WOMAN'S VOICE

Was it different than seeing it in a book? To see a reproduction?

MICHAL

(before she's done speaking)

Of course, of course totally different. But all our favorite paintings are totally different in real

ON SCREEN TEXT

Of course, of course, / it's totally different than / seeing it in a book / but all our favourite / paintings / are totally different in real.

OFF SCREEN WOMAN'S VOICE

And why is that your favorite painting?

(MICHAL leans far forward, in an attempt to understand the question.)

OFF SCREEN WOMAN'S VOICE

(repeats the question slower)

Why is that your favorite painting?

MICHAL

(leans back)

It's a long, long story

ON SCREEN TEXT

He says that it's a / long, long story why / it's his favorite painting

OFF SCREEN WOMAN'S VOICE

Tell me

(There is a pause.)

MICHAL

(speaks slowly)

Because . . . / for me . . . it's a . . . / cinematographic piece

(MICHAL pronounces the "c" of "cinematographic" like a "k.")

ON SCREEN TEXT

Because . . . / for him . . . it's a . . . / cinematographic piece

MICHAL

There is a lot of . . . / connections with . . . / photography even in cinematography

(Again he pronounces the “c” as a “k.”)

ON SCREEN TEXT

He says he likes / this situation / because / there is some relation between / painter / and the model / between man and woman / and between reality / the real image / and the image in the mirror / this is very mysterious / painting / at the first glance, he says / it's very ordinary / and the second reason is / it's a general / kind of painting. / He says he means how / it's painted / it's very simple / kind of painting.

OFF SCREEN WOMAN'S VOICE

So, tell me the story of when you went to see it in London.

MICHAL

When?

OFF SCREEN WOMAN'S VOICE

(speaks a bit slower)

Tell me about going to see it in London.

**ON SCREEN TEXT**

He says he just . . . / arrived . . . in London . . . / to see it was / the one reason / he went to London

**OFF SCREEN WOMAN'S VOICE**

(laughs)

That was the one reason you went to London

**MICHAL**

Yeah, I think it's a good reason.

**ON SCREEN TEXT**

Yeah, he thinks / it's a good reason.

*Rome in Los Angeles told by Linda Besemer*

(It is black. Then in the center of the black a line of green text slides across from left to center. It is a plain-looking sans serif font. It is large enough to be read clearly. If the black were divided into thirds vertically this text would fill the middle third. If the black were divided in half horizontally this text would sit at the mid-point.)

**TITLE TEXT**

Rome in Los Angeles

(Beneath it another line slides on.)

TITLE TEXT

told by Linda Besemer

(Both lines slide off right leaving black. Sound becomes audible.)

OFF SCREEN WOMAN'S VOICE

What was the coolest thing you did?

(A moment into this question an image emerges from the black.)

(There is a woman with short brown hair and glasses, LINDA BESEMER, in a tan windbreaker standing just to the right of center. She leans her right elbow against a waist height chain link fence that is mostly hidden behind her. There are dark green hills behind her, the furthest of which has a plateau at its summit; beneath this are the barely discernable letters of the HOLLYWOOD sign. There is a blue sky in the late afternoon sunlight. There is the sound of cars and people and wind.)

LINDA

(speaks in English, gesticulating with her hand)

The absolute coolest thing I did in Rome was,

(At this point text appears at the bottom third of the image. It is in English. One to two lines at a time it reiterates her speech, but using a third person perspective.)

ON SCREEN TEXT

She says that the absolute / coolest thing she did / in Rome was

(While the text continues this translation, LINDA goes on to tell her story.)

LINDA

(using both hands to gesture with)

one night / they were showing a / brand new reprint of / Fellini's *Roma*

(The entire scene shifts slightly to the right and a thump is heard. In the distance behind her to the right, along the fence, people can be seen walking)

(She continues, as does the text.)

ON SCREEN TEXT

and they showed it outside / during the summer / in the Circus / of Maxus Essentius

(Again the scene shifts slightly, this time to the left.)

(She continues, as does the text.)

ON SCREEN TEXT

It's outside of town but it's / basically one of the few / fairly intact circuses / where they used to run / the horses around

(LINDA uses her hands to make circles in the air.)

ON SCREEN TEXT

So you're sitting in / Maxus Essentius in this circus / and then there's this scene / in Roma where / prostitutes supposedly hang out

(LINDA uses her fingers to indicate quotation marks.)

ON SCREEN TEXT

in this particular scene / So there's these prostitutes / walking around the circus / and you're sitting there / and you're sitting in the same / place that the movie is about / And you turn around and

(LINDA turns her head away, looking behind her, in the direction of the HOLLYWOOD sign and points.)

ON SCREEN TEXT

cuz she turned around to / look for the prostitutes / that were in the film / that she was seeing / It was the coolest fucking / thing that she'd ever seen / because she'd seen all / these films before / but that she was actually / sitting in, not the scene, / but the actual place but / had this totally / . . . confused . . . / relationship / between the screen / and also this / conscious awareness / of her suspension / of disbelief / because she was really / turning to look / for the prostitutes / who were entering the screen / but the space, where she / was, was behind her. / It was totally wild. / And that was her absolute / coolest experience in Rome.

(There is the sound of a short, quick car horn.)

*Buenos Aires in Berlin told by David Buob*

(It is black. Then in the center of the black a line of purple text slides across from left to center. It is a plain-looking sans serif font. It is large enough to be read clearly. If the black were divided into thirds vertically this text would fill the middle third. If the black were divided in half horizontally this text would sit at the mid-point.)

TITLE TEXT

Buenos Aires in Berlin

(Beneath it another line slides on.)

TITLE TEXT



told by David Buob

(Both lines slide off right leaving black. The sound of voices and faint music becomes audible and an image emerges from the black. It is bounded on both top and bottom by strips of black, each roughly a quarter of the size of the image itself. The image is of a man, DAVID BUOB, standing before the Brandenburg Gate while people behind him mill around the plaza. He wears large round glasses, a lavender button-down shirt and a dark zipper jacket. Initially he looks down but soon raises his gaze directly forward.)

DAVID

um, no basically I am really bad in visiting the spots you have to visit.

(He speaks English softly with a slight accent and small pauses between words. He nods his head while he speaks.)

(While he speaks text appears at the bottom third of the image. It is in English. One to two lines at a time it reiterates his speech, but using a third person perspective.)

ON SCREEN TEXT

He says that basically / he is really bad at visiting / the spots you have to visit

OFF SCREEN WOMAN'S VOICE

Well, you know, a cultural spot

(DAVID tilts his head to the side while listening.)

OFF SCREEN WOMAN'S VOICE

I mean, you know, a cultural location,

DAVID

(interjects)

Yeah,

OFF SCREEN WOMAN'S VOICE

or a landmark location, doesn't necessarily mean, something that . . .

DAVID

(nods and looks off to the left)

this was something I had probably experienced when I was,

(holds his hand to his mouth and burps silently)

last year in,

(looks down)

in uh,

(pauses, finally looking up)

Buenos Aires, in, in Argentina

## ON SCREEN TEXT

This was something he / probably experienced / when he was, / last year in . . . / Buenos Aires, in Argentina / a stupid example but . . . / he was . . . / his wife's sister lives there / and she has lived there for / 5 years in Buenos Aires / and she knows the spots, / basically the spots to eat / and he was always saying / Ah, he wants to have a real, / a typical . . . / restaurant where / Argentines . . . / you know . . . like where / you have the big steak / where you have the / real local food / and so / of course she . . . / lead them to these places / like they didn't necessarily / go to the McDonalds / and the Starbucks, / which is there / and to the . . . / no he means . . . / over time / he had the feeling / she'd say / oh no David wants / something really typical, / so he was already thinking / ok this is also some kind of / going to these / touristical spots / looking for the real typical

## OFF SCREEN WOMAN'S VOICE

It's a problem isn't it

(DAVID continues speaking, as does the text of his words.)

## ON SCREEN TEXT

He means it's like . . . / the problem being like . . . / on these . . . sites / wanting of course . . . / not going to . . . / where it says / typical Argentinean food / where all the tourists / are going, but going / to a bar where / of course you can / meet the normal people / going there / having some dinner / very late, at eleven o'clock / or something they go to the / restaurant / having dinner maybe / at twelve o'clock / But he means . . . / at least . . . / yeah, he means . . . / he had . . . / sometimes a but of a / strange feeling that he / wants to see these / typical things / and of course people / probably / notice that he is not / a local person so . . . / even probably . . . / in Buenos Aires it's not, / it's quite / ok with the European / face, he means there's / other countries in South / America where it's / very much more difficult / or where it's much more / obvious that you're / not a local

*New York in Moscow told by Victor Melamed translated by Juljia Svetlova*

(It is black. Then in the center of the black a line of blue text slides across from left to center. It is a plain-looking sans serif font. It is large enough to be read clearly. If the black were divided into thirds vertically this text would fill the middle third. If the black were divided in half horizontally this text would sit at the mid-point.)

TITLE TEXT

New York in Moscow

(Beneath it more text slides on.)

TITLE TEXT

told by Victor Melamed

(Beneath that another line of text slides on.)

TITLE TEXT

translated by Juljia Svetlova

(Then all the text slides off right leaving black. Sound becomes audible.)

OFF SCREEN WOMAN'S VOICE

(faintly)

Please tell me a story of being somewhere else

(A moment into this request an image emerges from the black. A man with very short hair, a short beard and small, round glasses, wearing a coat with a turned up collar, VICTOR MELAMED, stands directly in the center. Behind him is the expanse of Red Square in Moscow bordered to the left by the onion domes of St. Basil's Cathedral and on the right by the Kremlin clock tower. The light is brightest on the left side and comes from behind leaving VICTOR'S face more in shadow. There are a few lone figures in the background and the sound of the wind in the square.)

OFF SCREEN WOMAN'S VOICE

(faintly)

Please tell me a story from somewhere else

(VICTOR nods his head making a shshsh sound with an intake of breath. The scene is not completely still but just slightly moving around, sort of swaying, the whole time. VICTOR speaks in Russian and text appears at the bottom third of the image. It is in English.)

ON SCREEN TEXT

He was lucky / enough to visit / New York in 2006

(VICTOR continues to speak in Russian, while the text beneath continues to appear in English. One to two lines at a time, it seems to translate his speech but using a third person perspective.)

**ON SCREEN TEXT**

and it was perhaps the / best thing to happen to him.

(There is the sound of a church bell followed by the sound of a siren.)

**ON SCREEN TEXT**

He says that Moscow had / already become quite / a European city / in which it was possible / to find almost anything.

(VICTOR shifts his weight from side to side as he speaks and sometimes gestures with his hands. His gaze moves as well, looking off into the distance sometimes. There is the sound of a bang or crash from somewhere.)

**ON SCREEN TEXT**

Except of comic books / and free jazz.

(There are more banging sounds and the beep beeping of a vehicle backing up in the distance.)

**ON SCREEN TEXT**

He says that literally, / there was only one single / place where you could listen / to free jazz / but that in New York / it was everywhere. / He walked around the city / with his new friend, / and he felt everywhere / something was going on.

(A loud bang is heard as a woman walks past behind VICTOR near the bottom of the image. Then there is the sound of more church bells and another woman walks past in the same place, but going in the opposite direction.)

ON SCREEN TEXT

He felt that if they went / down into any basement, / they would meet Charles / Mingus or someone like that / He thinks perhaps there were / other things going on, / but they just passed by him.

(Figures in the far distance pass, they appear quite small.)

ON SCREEN TEXT

But he knows there was / a lot of jazz for sure / On his first day in New York / he got to see 3 concerts / by his favorite musicians / He says that it is / impossible to forget that.

(There is the sound of another church bell pealing.)

ON SCREEN TEXT

He says the most interesting / thing is that he was / travelling for 20 hours, / and the first concert he went / to was Ken Wondermark, / who is a very severe musician / But, he sat in the first row / and fell asleep / And in his head something / like atomic war happened / because the music was so / very severe and tough / He says that he went all / around New York with his map / which had all the best / comic bookstores marked on it

(There is another crashing bang sound.)

**ON SCREEN TEXT**

He got bloody blisters, / 4 on each foot

(Again there is the peal of a church bell.)

**ON SCREEN TEXT**

and brought 15 kilograms of / comic books back home / He also brought back some / incredible acquaintances / he made

(VICTOR makes that shshsh sound again with an intake of breath.)

**ON SCREEN TEXT**

Since then he has been to / UK and Germany, / but it wasn't the same / experience / It couldn't compare.

(There is more small banging sounds in the distance and more beep beeping of the backing-up sound.)

**ON SCREEN TEXT**

Such an atomic explosion / that trip was, he says

(There is the sound of the church bell again.)



## ON SCREEN TEXT

It was incredible how / New York was like the one / they show in movies / All those banal things: / those skyscrapers and / yellow taxi cabs / In reality, it was exactly / like that / And he had a feeling like he / was in the movies / But not like if he was / filmed, it was more like if / it was projected on the screen. / Absolutely unbelievable.

(Again there is the sound of a church bell.)

## ON SCREEN TEXT

It was incredibly cool / in New York.

## VICTOR

(in English)

Thank you

## OFF SCREEN WOMAN'S VOICE

(in Russian)

Spasibo

(VICTOR bows)

## VICTOR

(in English)

You're very welcome

*Rio de Janeiro in London told by Deirdre King*

(It is black. Then in the center of the black a line of orange text slides across left to center. It is a plain-looking sans serif font. It is large enough to be read clearly. If the black were divided into thirds vertically this text would fill the middle third. If the black were divided in half horizontally this text would sit at the mid-point.)

TITLE TEXT

Rio de Janeiro in London

(Beneath it another line slides on.)

TITLE TEXT

told by Deirdre King

(Both lines slide off right leaving black. The sound of traffic and wind becomes audible.)

OFF SCREEN WOMAN'S VOICE

Alright, so tell me, tell me a story of visiting another place, other than here

(A moment into this question an image emerges from the black. It is bounded on both top and bottom by strips of black, each roughly a quarter of the size of the image itself. A woman, DEIRDRE KING, stands before the large edifice of The Palace of Westminster, her image is just to the left of center and the tower of Big Ben is just to the right of her. To the right of Big Ben is a street leading to some greenery while a row of Victorian buildings lines the opposite side. Large dark clouds loom on the left while small white puffy ones dot the blue sky on the right. She adjusts her windblown hair out of her face.)

DEIRDRE

(in English)

Okay, well I'm going to tell you a story about . . .

(While she speaks text appears at the bottom third of the image. It is in English. One to two lines at a time it reiterates her speech, but using a third person perspective.)

ON SCREEN TEXT

Okay, / she's going to tell me a story

DEIRDRE

visiting . . .

ON SCREEN TEXT

about visiting

DEIRDRE

with this huge figure of Christ on top, just standing like this

(She holds both her arms out from her body.)

ON SCREEN TEXT

Anyway, she says, it's in / Rio de Janeiro / and it's the big / sort of pointy, hill, / mountain / with this huge figure of / Christ on top / just standing / like this

(She goes on and as the wind continues to cover her face with her hair.)

DEIRDRE

And um, so yeah, so we were visiting a very dear friend of mine who's lived in Rio for years and he was taking us around all the sights

ON SCREEN TEXT

So they were visiting / a very dear friend of hers / who's lived in Rio for years / He was taking them around / all the sights

Deirdre

So, and we went up there

ON SCREEN TEXT

So they went up there and

DEIRDRE

what I think's called . . .

ON SCREEN TEXT

what she think's called

DEIRDRE

Sugar Loaf . . . something . . . Mountain?

ON SCREEN TEXT

Sugar Loaf / something / mountain?

DEIRDRE

(laughs)

Anyway it's in Rio de Janeiro

(The wind blows her hair right over her face so at times only her mouth and chin are visible.)

DEIRDRE

and, it's the big sort of pointy hill or mountain

(She uses her hands to describe it and pushes the hair out of her face.)

DEIRDRE

And,

(She pulls her hair back again.)

DEIRDRE

I don't know why, I think

ON SCREEN TEXT

She doesn't know why . . . / she thinks . . .

(She pauses for a moment.)

DEIRDRE

I find Rio

ON SCREEN TEXT

She finds Rio . . . / a fascinating place

DEIRDRE

A fascinating place, and, and it's

ON SCREEN TEXT

And . . . / and its . . .

DEIRDRE

I really connect to the sea there

(Her hair blows back over her face.)

ON SCREEN TEXT

She really connects to / the sea there

DEIRDRE

For some reason it's just got the soul of, I don't know you, you, I can, he had a beautiful flat just looking over Copacabana Beach

(She turns her head to the right allowing the wind to blow her hair from her face and gestures out that way.)

ON SCREEN TEXT

For some reason / it's just got the soul of / she doesn't know . . . / you can, she can . . . / he had a beautiful flat / just looking over / Copacabana Beach

DEIRDRE

and these windows right onto the onto the ocean it was beautiful

**ON SCREEN TEXT**

and these windows / right onto the onto the ocean / it was beautiful / but you could just sit there / and you could just / feel yourself pulled

(She gestures with her hands moving away from her body.)

**DEIRDRE**

pulled by this beautiful sea um, so in a way that encapsulated Rio for me and then

**ON SCREEN TEXT**

pulled by this beautiful sea / So in a way that encapsulated / Rio for her and then / She didn't really register, / visually / except on postcards, / but in reality she didn't / register Sugar Loaf Mountain

(She makes a quick gesture of the mountain with her hands, and again pulls her hair back out of her face.)

**DEIRDRE**

but then, then we were up it and you know just standing, in the skirts, of this huge Christ figure,

**ON SCREEN TEXT**

but then they were up it / and you know just standing / in the skirts / of this huge Christ figure

(The wind is very loud for a moment and she pulls her hair back from her face again and continues.)



DEIRDRE

and it's like you know like one of the seven wonders of the world or something you always want to see how big the toe is of the Colossus that was at Rhodes or something and it's sort of like that you can actually see how big the bigger toe, big toe of Christ was there. So, and yet it's funny that I pick that out to think about Rio

ON SCREEN TEXT

and it's like you know like one of the / seven wonders of the world / or something / you always want to see how / big the toe is of the Colossus / that was at Rhodes or / something, and it's sort of / like that / you can actually see how big / the big toe of Christ was / And yet it's funny / that she's picked that out / to think about Rio / because / it wasn't physically / what her link into / Rio was at all / the feeling of the / pulse of Rio / it was not at all that / But for some reason, / she's chosen that way in / through Sugar Loaf and, / standing in the skirts / of Christ / by his big toe or something / it's quite funny

(DEIRDRE laughs and once again pulls her hair back, holding it that way for a moment.)

DEIRDRE

But talking of that, it's, also just reminds me of being in, um, with my sister in, and my husband, and my nephew, in Paris.

ON SCREEN TEXT

But talking of that / reminds her of being / with her sister in / and her husband, / and her nephew / in Paris and she / hadn't been there / And they all wanted to / go up the Eiffel Tower / and up the Arc de Triumph / and she said actually she / doesn't really like going up / that much / She doesn't have a penchant / for seeing things from up

DEIRDRE

I like being, I like feeling the ground with my feet,

(She raises her arms in the air above her head.)

ON SCREEN TEXT

she likes being . . . / she likes feeling the / ground with her feet

DEIRDRE

I like walking

ON SCREEN TEXT

She likes walking, she likes / being at ground level

DEIRDRE

I like being at ground level you know. Yeah, that seems really important to me

ON SCREEN TEXT

that seems very important / to her

DEIRDRE

I think that's why I chose Sugar Loaf because it was not

(She laughs again. She pushes back her hair again.)

ON SCREEN TEXT

It seems very / significant to her

*Mexico City in Paris told by Matthieu Mingasson translated by Amy Mingasson*

(It is black. Then in the center of the black a line of turquoise text slides across left to center. It is a plain-looking sans serif font. It is large enough to be read clearly. If the black were divided into thirds vertically this text would fill the middle third. If the black were divided in half horizontally this text would sit at the mid-point.)

TITLE TEXT

Mexico City in Paris

(Beneath it more text slides on.)

TITLE TEXT

told by Matthieu Mingasson

(Beneath that another line slides on.)

TITLE TEXT

translated by Amy Mingasson

(Then all the text slides off leaving black.)

(Sound becomes audible.)

OFF SCREEN WOMAN'S VOICE

Could you tell me a little bit about or tell me a story about some landmark or some monument . . .

(There is the sound of a siren in the background that eventually fades away.)

OFF SCREEN WOMAN'S VOICE

that you visited in another place, in another city?

(A moment into this question an image emerges from the black. A man with short hair, a dark jacket and a white shirt, MATTHIEU MINGASSON, stands directly in the center. Behind him is the towering facade of the church of Notre Dame of Paris. The daylight is even and what can be seen of the sky is white. The sounds in the background are of birds and, sometimes faintly, indecipherable voices. MATTHIEU's glance is a little to the left, he nods his head.)

MATTHIEU

(in French)

D'accord

## ON SCREEN TEXT

She thinks that's why / she chose Sugar Loaf / because it was not . . .

## DEIRDRE

I don't want to be up there

(Her hair flies into her face yet again.)

## ON SCREEN TEXT

she doesn't want to be / up there

## DEIRDRE

I want to be down on the ground

(She laughs.)

## ON SCREEN TEXT

She wants to be down / on the ground

## DEIRDRE

Seems very significant to me

(He looks off to the right. At this point the scene shakes a little bit for a brief moment, and text appears at the bottom third of the image.)

ON SCREEN TEXT

(in English)

Okay, he says

(MATTHIEU returns his gaze to the spot just a bit to the left of the center and continues to speak in French, while the text beneath continues to appear. One to two lines at a time it seems to translate his speech but using a third person perspective.)

ON SCREEN TEXT

In 1998 he went to Mexico City / for one week

(Sometimes the heads of passers by travel past the bottom, one of which to the left is taking a photograph of the church.)

ON SCREEN TEXT

One morning he went out with / his friends to get some breakfast / and they stopped at a / Mexican restaurant, a Cantina . . . / and he ate a lot. / He had burritos and fajitas . . . / and Mexican food is very rich, / and it's especially very spicy / So yes, that's what he had.

(At this point long rays of sunlight begin to shine down from behind Notre Dame. One ray angles from the top, past MATTHIEU's head to the bottom right corner.)

## ON SCREEN TEXT

And a little bit later on / they decided to go to the / Anthropological Museum of Mexico / which is a magnificent place / very beautiful with a / patio in the middle / an open area with a / very big modern statue / representing the evolution / of human consciousness

(The rays of light have gotten brighter and now the longer one sometimes looks as if it's slicing right through the side of his head.)

## ON SCREEN TEXT

It's very interesting / It's really a magnificent place / And when you enter, / on the right, / there's a section on the art / about the seers of ancient Mexico / There were Aztec, / Toltec and Mayan statues / and these statues are / very very impressive / they're about life, death, / the universe . . .

(There is the sound of wind and crackling that almost makes it hard to hear MATTHIEU for a moment.)

## ON SCREEN TEXT

they're very powerful statues / you need to have / some guts to see them / you have to be able to handle it / And he looked and looked / at the statues / and it was really wonderful / and extraordinary . . . / a bit like being in / another time, another place . . . / but right when they were / about to leave the museum / He suddenly felt some bizarre / movements in his stomach

(There is the sound of a laugh from the OFF SCREEN WOMAN'S VOICE.)

## ON SCREEN TEXT

and he ran to the bathroom . . . / and for a half an hour / he was on the toilet in the / museum bathroom because / — this wasn't possible — / he couldn't control it at all / It was horrible. / And he kept asking himself, / "What is going on? / What is going on?" / He couldn't keep this / breakfast that he'd had.

/ And if he hadn't put all his / energy into getting rid of this / Mexican breakfast / He would have been / furious with himself / But he couldn't even be  
furious / because he was so occupied. / So, someday if you go / to the Anthropological/Museum of Mexico, / eat a small, light breakfast. / That's his  
advice.

(MATTHIEU pauses, nods his head once, and looks directly forward.)



### ***Story of elsewhere* – technical elements and background circumstances in detail**

Three freestanding walls were constructed for the exhibition. These walls were made of a single sheet of standard MDF board<sup>70</sup> making up the front of each wall with another sheet split down the middle vertically, becoming the sides. Timber studwork,<sup>71</sup> screwed to the back and sides, was used for support. A variation was made for one wall, which was built double-faced, using two whole sheets of MDF, one for the front and one for the back, joined with pieces of studwork. The faces and sides of the walls without the grey bands were all painted white. The rear of the single-sided freestanding walls remained unpainted and the building work was exposed.

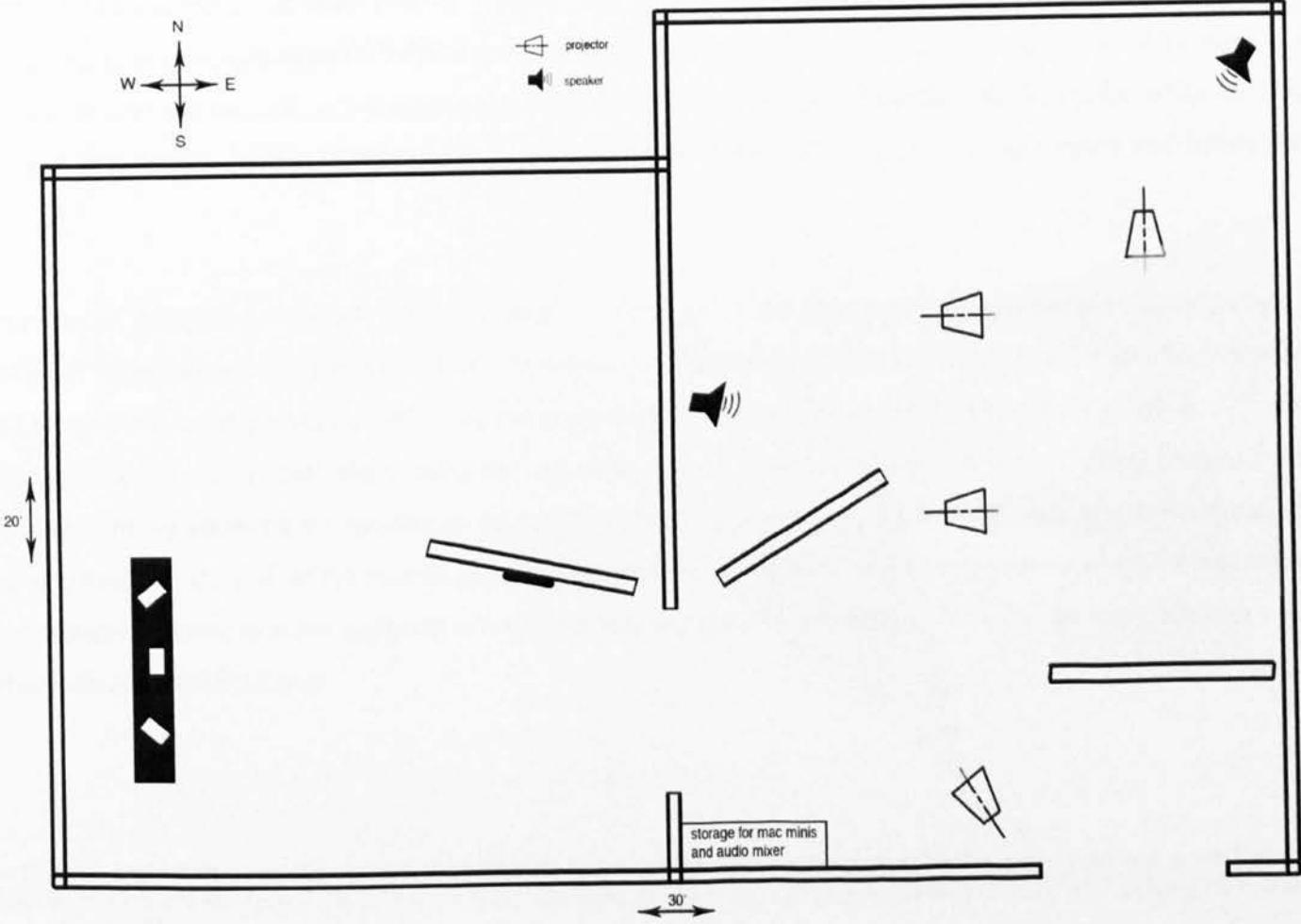
Upon entering the space the visitor encounters one face of the double-faced wall painted white six feet in front of them. This wall juts halfway across the room. Looking to the left of this wall the visitor can view the front surface of another freestanding wall, positioned at an angle towards them, with an image projected onto it within the painted grey bands. Walking towards this wall exposes the viewer to two more projected images within grey bands to the right on the east wall of the gallery.<sup>72</sup> They sit side by side. Further entering the space to the right and turning in this direction the viewer then can see another projected image within grey bands on what can be called the back of the wall initially encountered upon entering the space.

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<sup>70</sup> 2440 x 1220 x 12.0mm

<sup>71</sup> 38 x 63mm x 2.4in

<sup>72</sup> For purposes of both installation and this document, North has been decided upon as the direction faced upon entering the gallery. All other directions comply with this.



The individual videos projected in the semi-dark room are synchronized around the space through a freeware MAX/MSP/Jitter 5<sup>73</sup> application called MultiScreener.<sup>74</sup> The videos are edited onto four reels that include black slugs to make up for the duration of videos on opposing reels, thereby making each video reel a frame accurate duration of twenty-seven minutes and thirty-three seconds (27:33:06 RT). They were edited on a Mac PowerBook using Final Cut Pro and output as uncompressed FCP/Quicktime movies. The videos were then loaded onto Mac Mini computers, one each, connected to each other via Ethernet. Within the MultiScreener application, one of the Mac Minis is designated as the server while the others become clients. The server plays its movie and also sends position information over the network. Each client “listens” to the server and subtly adapts its movie playback speed to stay in sync.

The full twenty-seven minutes, thirty-three seconds and six frames of projected video runs in a loop affording a viewing experience without beginning or end. When an individual video begins to be projected on one wall, the three other wall projection sites are inactive, appearing black. As the video projects and a relayed story unfolds, at particular points in the narrative the image and sound freeze. One second before this image freezes another frozen image of another speaker, set in another place, projected on another wall, comes into view. The two frozen images overlap for two seconds and then the new image begins to move allowing the speaker portrayed there to relay a snippet of their story, lasting a few seconds. During this time the first video projection remains frozen. At the end of the second projected speaker’s interruption, that image freezes again for three seconds and then returns to black. Then one of two things happens; in some instances a third interruption appears on another wall; and in some instances the initial video projection resumes. The program continues on in this way.

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<sup>73</sup> MAX/MSP allows individuals to build their own software. Initially begun for use with audio, it uses visual graphics that mimic analogue patch bays allowing for the construction of computer code without having to write out the code itself. It is specifically designed to allow for interactivity with external devices ranging from instruments to sensors. The Jitter plug-in adds the ability to work with video.

<sup>74</sup> Poff, Zach. Designer. New York digital media artist and educator. <http://www.zachpoff.com/software/>

The *Landmark Videos* have been recorded in cities around the world with a variety of equipment. Following an order based on the equipment used, the videos entitled *Rome in Los Angeles told by Linda Besemer*, two minutes and forty-four seconds (02:44:10 RT), *London in Prague told by Michal Pechoucek*, three minutes and fifty-eight seconds (03:58:11 RT), and *Mexico City in Paris told by Matthieu Mingasson translated by Amy Mingasson*, three minutes and thirty-four seconds (03:34:24 RT) were all recorded using a Sony DVCAM DSR-PD100A with an ECM-670 external microphone in NTSC format. Various standard locked-off tripods were used throughout.

*New York in Moscow told by Victor Melamed translated by Juljia Svetlova*, three minutes and thirty-seven seconds (03:37:09 RT) was recorded with a Sony DCR-TRV-20E, in PAL format, belonging to Neil Chapman.

*Edinburgh in Shanghai told by Christine Zhao translated by Guan Rong and translated by Jeffrey Noles combined*, four minutes and forty-eight seconds (04:48:22 RT), and *Buenos Aires in Berlin told by David Buob*, four minutes and eleven seconds (04:11:05 RT) were both recorded with a Sony HDV 1080i/MiniDV HandyCam in PAL format with an external microphone, presented in standard definition.

*Rio de Janeiro in London told by Deirdre King*, four minutes and thirty-seven seconds (04:37:17 RT) was recorded using a Sony HDR-FX-7E in PAL format with an external microphone, presented in standard definition.

Following the order in which they were recorded, *Rome in Los Angeles told by Linda Besemer* and *London in Prague told by Michal Pechoucek* was initially exhibited in 2004 as part of “CertainTraces: Dialogue Los Angeles / Prague”, at the Pomona Art Museum in Claremont, CA and the Museum Kampa in Prague, Czech Republic. *Rome in Los Angeles told by Linda Besemer* was also exhibited in 2004 as part of “the sneeze . . . a featured film”, at the Gazon Rouge Gallery in Athens, Greece and in 2007 at the Iziko South African National Gallery, Capetown, South Africa.

*Rome in Los Angeles told by Linda Besemer* was recorded in Los Angeles at the Griffith Park Observatory on February 3, 2003. The speaker, Linda Besemer, had recently returned from an extended stay in Rome, so was likely to have experiences to relay. The opportunity to tape her arose as subterfuge for her surprise birthday party. She told her story for the first time while being recorded, and then only once. It was shot in one uninterrupted take. These conditions surrounding the story: that of being initially unknown to me and shot in one long take, set the precedent for the rest of the series.

*London in Prague told by Michal Pechoucek* was recorded in Prague on the Charles Bridge facing the old town on August 14, 2003. It was recorded particularly for inclusion in the previously listed exhibit and entailed a specific trip to Prague for it. Michal Pechoucek is a Czech artist whose number came from a list of potential contacts from the curator of the exhibition. After a number of unsuccessful attempts with others, Michal agreed to participate. I met and recorded him the next day.

*Mexico City in Paris told by Matthieu Mingasson translated by Amy Mingasson* was recorded in Paris before Notre Dame Cathedral on July 21, 2004. Matthieu Mingasson, and his translator wife Amy Mingasson are friends of a friend I was traveling with. I met them two days before recording Matthieu.

*New York City in Moscow told by Victor Melamed translated by Juljia Svetlova* was recorded in Moscow in Red Square before Saint Basil's Cathedral on October 14, 2008. Victor Melamed, a Moscow-based artist, was contacted through his email address received from a friend of a friend, Juljia Svetlova. This approach was initiated after scheduling a trip to participate in "IN TRANSITION: Cultural Identities in the Age of Transnational Flux" at the Ural State University in Ekaterinburg, Russia. The detour to Moscow was made solely to meet and record Victor, lasting only a single day. Juljia Svetlova agreed to also translate the resulting story.

*Rio de Janeiro in London told by Deirdre King* was recorded in London on the Westminster Bridge in front of the houses of Parliament on November 8, 2008. Deirdre King is a London artist who has previously exhibited in Los Angeles. Through her Los Angeles exhibition she came into contact with a friend who passed on her name as part of a list of London-based artists to meet.

*Edinburgh in Shanghai told by Christine Zhao translated by Guan Rong and translated by Jeffrey Noles combined* was recorded in Shanghai on the Pudong side of the Huangpu River in front of the Bund on April 11, 2009. Christine was part of a group of academics working in conjunction with the Kingston Fine Art MA class project that I had been invited to join. Upon meeting her at the beginning of the Shanghai trip, Christine Zhao agreed to be recorded. The recording then came close to not taking place. On the last day of the journey it only came about as the result of a confluence of location, equipment and subject. The two translators were reached through a call out to friends via email for potential translators. Both Guan Rong and Jeffrey Noles, friends of friends, responded and both their translations were used. As these translations were different they were combined.

*Buenos Aires in Berlin told by David Buob* was shot in Berlin at the Brandenburg gate on the eastern side on March 30, 2010. David Buob is a Berlin-based artist I met in September 2009 at “Transient Spaces – The Tourist Syndrome” symposium in Lithuania sponsored by uqbar, Berlin. The trip to Berlin was made particularly to record David, one other participant from the Lithuanian symposium, and a poet whose name came from a friend of a friend.

Back in the gallery, again to the right of the viewer is the open doorway into the second space. This is a light space. There is a slight cast of color bouncing off the white walls: pink, green, yellow and blue. This comes from the colored neon tubes installed along the top of the room at four places as part of the light installation by Sintra Tantra.<sup>75</sup> This work was hosted as part of and within the exhibition: the colored lights corresponding across rooms

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<sup>75</sup> Op. cit., Tantra.

to the colored text in the video projections. Standing immediately to the right alongside the entry is the face of another freestanding wall. Turning to the right to face it the visitor encounters a flat screen video monitor hung just above the mid-point of the wall. It is a 22" monitor playing the video of the Eiffel Tower and those visiting it.

This video was recorded on a Sony HDV 1080i/MiniDV HandyCam. The footage is not presented in HD here. It is in 16:9 ratio and therefore letterboxed. The taping took place with an unknown make of tripod on the 14th of May 2010. It was recorded specifically with this installation in mind.

To the viewer's left, in front of the west wall of this room, there is a long rectangular table. It is an unpainted sheet of MDF resting on two white metal trestles. Upon it lie three copies of a hardcover, large landscape oriented book, entitled *Large Landscape*.<sup>76</sup> It has a white cover with a black drawing and glossy white pages with black text. The copy on the left lies open to a page where a single line of text in a 12 point New York font crosses the middle of the left page as well as the facing page on the right. The copy on the right lies open to a page covered with text, as well as small drawings and diagrams. This text is shown in a font simulating handwriting but of the same size as the other. The copy in the middle is closed revealing the front cover. The drawing denotes a line representation of the thumbs and forefingers of two hands, one facing out, one facing in, touching fingers to thumbs, creating a framing device.

*Large Landscape* was produced through the online publishing site Blurb.<sup>77</sup> The book begins with a single page of written dialogue. This dialogue is a variation of the final scene from the film adaptation of William S. Burroughs' book *Naked Lunch*.<sup>78</sup> The next twenty-one pages relay diary excerpts from a journey. The descriptions alternate between first-hand observations made while traveling on various means of transport such as boats, trains and

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<sup>76</sup> Barnett, SE. *Large Landscape*. Blurb: 2011. 13" x 11"

<sup>77</sup> <http://uk.blurb.com/>

<sup>78</sup> *Naked Lunch*. Dir. David Cronenberg, Canada, UK, Japan co-production, 1991. 115 minutes, written by William S. Burroughs and David Cronenberg.

airplanes, and those made while reading and re-reading the final segment of Paul Bowles' novel *The Sheltering Sky*, called Book Three, The Sky.<sup>79</sup> The endnotes in *Large Landscape* point out the relationship between Cronenberg's film, the screenplay which is based on both Burroughs' book and his autobiography of time spent in Tangiers, and Bowles' book, of an at least partially, autobiographical account of his travels in North Africa. The next twenty-eight pages of the *Large Landscape*, impart the experience, one line per page, of a man telling a story from his journey to India, while sitting before a campfire during a Dorset summer evening.

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<sup>79</sup> Bowles, Paul. *The Sheltering Sky*. New York: Penguin, 1949.



**A short conclusion**

Through the experience of engaging with this work, in reading the writing and visiting the exhibition, an evolving sense of place has been evoked. At times limitations have been employed, subjecting the reader/viewer to written imagery and visual text, all to serve the nature of fluid connectivity, and to embrace the power of associative thought. Confusion and frustration may have been evoked but also engagement and enjoyment. Within this work these elements sit, each one alongside the other, infiltrating through porous borders, opposing and becoming, all at once. Many formats and styles have been employed along with a continuum of methodical documentary on one end to diary entries on the other. In this way, the understanding of a place has been presented as part and parcel of individual identity, identity within a relationship to others. This could be how we find out where and who we have become.

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