How To Do Things With Cameras

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PhD Thesis

Kingston University

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Abstract

The primary site for this research is artistic production, through exhibitions and performances presented in galleries between 2008-2012. The written thesis closely examines the large body of practical work I have made (documented and presented here on a DVD) through discussions with Dean Kenning, a viewer to all the artworks submitted. This is combined with a contextual analysis reflecting on the research behind and ideas provoked by this practical work.

The research aims to create an encounter with the photograph or video where the lens-based image, still or moving, is not a window onto a world but operates as a presence sharing the viewer's time and space. I name this changed manner of encounter a *live mode of address*. I begin the thesis by describing video and films I feel go beyond providing a description and are experienced as a presence. Through looking at the work of Spartacus Chetwynd, John Smith, Laure Provoust, and Ryan Trecartin, I locate reasons for why my concept of a live mode of address happens. I then bring together the different ways it works and greatly expand its limits and possibilities through my own art making.

The thesis operates within the field of fine art yet I am challenging the consumption of lens-based images within wider visual culture. This enquiry does not set out to change how the camera works, or question our conventional understanding of what a camera does; its mission is to change how we encounter what it produces. How can I, as an artist operating with a camera - a machine that can only repeat, describe and represent things from the past - engender a live mode of address between a viewer and a lens-based artwork? It is through the production of artwork that this question is explored. In this thesis the artworks are examined in the order they were made, as each one evaluates and takes forward research and ideas present in the previous work. They build on each other to form a cohesive and staged investigation, culminating with my exhibition *TO DO* (2011) Matt's Gallery.

J.L. Austin's theory of performative speech is an important theoretical tool for this thesis. In his series of lectures *How To Do Things With Words,* Austin asked whether words can produce a reality rather than describe one? I pitch this question not to words, but to the lens-based image and the title of my thesis *How To Do Things With Cameras* reflects this performative investigation. I go on to examine how the performative use of the camera impacts on a live mode of address and, through considering work by artists including Vito Acconci and John Baldessari, how this must stretch beyond the making of the work to incorporate the artwork's installation.

The major element of this PhD submission is the exhibition *TO DO* (2011) at Matt's Gallery, London. Bertolt Brecht's 'Learning Plays' are considered alongside production for this exhibition. *TO DO* (2011) produces a live mode of address and my examination of how this operates reveals a complicated exchange between the artwork and viewer. The experience of the lens-based images within *TO DO* (2011) are cut up, fractured, interrupted, non linear and different for each person viewing. They are without limits; they have gone beyond the frame. I describe this as being 'lifelike' – how we experience the world. The term lifelike is normally attached to appearances, which I outline as being the wrong target. A live mode of address has an important relationship to lifelikeness, once lifelikeness is redefined to mean a quality of the encounter.

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DVD Instructions

There is a data DVD included as part of this PhD thesis. It can be found on the inside of the back cover. You will be asked at certain points within the text to watch a video on the DVD. The videos are quicktime movie files, which are to be opened and played on a computer. If you don't already have quicktime player it can be downloaded from:

http://support.apple.com/downloads/#quicktime

Please temporarily transfer the files to your computer, and play them from this location rather than the DVD, this will ensure smoother playback.

DVD Contents

1. *Holes: A Lecture,* video, 20 minutes, documenting the performance at the Stanley Picker Gallery, London, 2012.

2. *Chasing Animals,* series of videos, 8 minutes in total duration, and installation shots of the gallery presentation at The Agency, London, 2010.

3. *LOST,* HD video, 20 minutes including installation shots from Cell Project Space, London, 2011.

4. *Brecht Play with Video Costumes,* video, 2 minutes. A short extract. 2009.

5. *TO DO,* video, 14 minutes, documenting the exhibition at Matt's Gallery, London, 2011 and installation shots.

Introduction

When we see a video or photograph we identify it as coming from the past; we understand that someone, somewhere hit a button and that the still or moving image produced is an indexical description of something that has happened. I believe 'things' made by cameras, photographs and videos, are constrained by their relationship to the record; they are strung up by facts, interrogated through results, and made to drag the past around, like an iron ball chained to their ankle. Battling this has been the drive of my art making. Since studying photography almost twenty years ago I have sought to unpick and rupture the camera's 'honest' relationship to reality. In my view this relationship to reality is confused with the indexical nature of the photographic image as set out by Rosalind Krauss:

> Every photograph is the result of a physical imprint transferred by light reflections onto a sensitive surface. The photograph is thus a type of icon, or visual likeness, which bears an indexical relationship to its object.[1]

This practice led enquiry does not set out to change how the camera works, or question our conventional understanding of what a camera does; its mission is to change how we encounter what it produces.

Paulo Freire wanted to change education from being understood as a system of banking, where an expert or teacher banks their information into the empty mind of the non-expert or student. The student passively receives the information. Freire wanted education to be a process of problem solving between teacher and student, both of them operating from a position of curiosity. Both perceive reality not as naturally fixed but as humanly transformable. 'Liberating education consists in acts of cognition, not transferrals of information'. [2] Freire wanted education to be an act of production.

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[1] Rosalind Krauss, *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (The Mit Press, 2002), p.203.
[2] Paolo Freire, *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Penguin Books, 1996), p. 60.

A photograph or video always contains information. Vilém Flusser writes, 'as objects, their value is negligible; their value lies in the information that they carry loose and open for reproduction on their surface.'[3] When faced with this we have a narrow range of responses. We are to acknowledge that we have received information - that we have read it. Our response to the photograph or video is re-actionary. The photograph will always be a representation which leads us back to a referent; our job is to deduce what the photograph or video is of. Our job is to re-cognise. To do this we enter the time and space of the photograph; this is where the referent is; this is where we need to be in order to read the image.

> The familiarity of the codes in 'realist' texts (especially photographic and filmic texts) leads us to routinely suspend our disbelief in the *form* (even if not necessarily in the manifest content). Recognition of the familiar (in the guise of the 'natural') repeatedly confirms our conventional ways of seeing and thus reinforces our sense of self whilst at the same time invisibly contributing to its construction. When we say 'I see' (what the image means) this act simultaneously installs us in a place of knowledge and slips us into the place as subject to this meaning [...] All the viewer need do is fall into place as subject.[4]

An act of cognition would be an encounter with a presentation, something new to us at that moment which shares our time and space. Rather than reading and recognising a representation, an act of cognition is a *live* event. This is easy to imagine within Freire's education context, two people working something out neither one is an expert in. An act of cognition, or encounter with a presentation through a photograph or video, is more difficult to envision. A photograph and video will always be of something that has already happened. Despite real time digital manipulations, the camera can only repeat things that already exist. Yet the camera can additionally be utilised for strange angles, blurring, and close ups. The camera's capacity to offer us things in a way we haven't seen before is the starting point for my research, and my subsequent understanding that, as well as content,

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[3] Vilém Flusser, *Towards a Philosophy of Photography* (Reaktion Books, 2000), p.56.
[4] Daniel Chandler, *Semiotics for Beginners,* 1994
URL http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/Documents/S4B/ [Sept 2009] (My italics)

the form of the photograph and video needed to be corrupted. Keith Moxey writes the following in relation to recent ideas of certain art historians:

> In the rush to make sense of the circumstances in which we find ourselves, our tendency in the past was to ignore and forget 'presence' in favour of 'meaning'. Interpretations were hurled at objects in order to tame them, to bring them under control by endowing them with meanings they did not necessarily possess. Works of art are objects now regarded as more appropriately *encountered* than interpreted. This new breed of scholars attends to the ways in which images grab attention and shape reactions for they believe that the physical properties of images are as important as their social function. [5]

Kevin Moxey draws attention to the manner in which images act upon the viewer. I cannot change a photograph or video from a representation to a presentation, but I can explore how to give these lens-based images *presence*, so that they are encountered before they are mined for meaning. The aim of this research is to create an encounter with the photograph or video so that the lens-based image, whether still or moving is not a window onto a world but operates as a presence sharing our time and space, that is to say, in the here and now. In this way we do not first attend to what it documents, but begin by understanding it as an experience. It is primarily not information; our address to the camera's products is shifted. I name this changed manner of encounter a *live mode of address*. When faced with a photograph or video we become vessels of reception. The artwork created for this research asks how we might instead be positioned as producers. How can I as an artist operating with a camera - a machine that can only repeat, describe and represent things from the past - engender a live mode of address between a viewer and a lens-based artwork?

> Nothing can resist the force of this current of technical images – there is no artistic, scientific or political activity that is not aimed

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[5] Keith Moxey, *Visual Studies and the Iconic Turn*, Journal of Visual Culture, 2008, issue 7, p131. (My italics)

> at it, there is no everyday activity which does not aspire to be photographed, filmed, video taped. For there is a general desire to be endlessly remembered and endlessly repeatable.[6]

The photographic image dominates every aspect of life. Unless we have photographed something we might not even feel like we were actually there. Like the child who needs its dinner cut up, we need our lives cut up into small rectangular pictures; bite size chunks which we can automatically consume. I think we would prefer it if everything was an image, because images are so much easier to get down. Vilém Flusser declares that we are a function of the camera:

> People taking snaps can now only see the world through the camera and in photographic categories. They are not 'in charge of' taking photographs, they are consumed by the greed of their camera, they have become an extension to the button of their camera.[7]

The problem, from my perspective, isn't the viewer and how lazy he or she is, passively consuming images; the problem lies with the things we are given to look at. I approach this from the side of a worker, from the side of production. My research methodology consists of a set of approaches invented to force an active encounter or live mode of address with cameras and the things they make. I am operating within the field of fine art, specifically making work for the gallery, yet I am exploring the consumption of images within wider visual culture.

The primary site for this research is artistic production, presented through exhibitions and performances presented in galleries between 2008 -2012.[8] I have written this contextual analysis after this body of practical research has been undertaken. This runs the risk of keeping the writing held within the role of

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[6] Vilém Flusser, *Towards a Philosophy of Photography* (Reaktion Books, 2000), p.20.
[7] *Ibid* p.58.
[8] It is vital that the artwork made within this research be encountered through public exhibition, where it can function and be tested against the same realities of contemporary art making the art of other artists cited in the research is subject to. This does however put the research at the mercy of external forces such as limited opportunities and funding for exhibitions.

description. The thesis could be limited to a retrospective account, which would contradict the performative methodologies of the practical investigations. Therefore I have undertaken approaches within the writing which maintain a relationship with the 'live mode of address' it seeks to elucidate. Firstly, the thesis includes chapters that contextualise my research, discuss my thinking and sources, such as artworks. It was important that the examination of artwork from other artist's stems from art I have actually seen and been present at.[9] The emphasis here is to provide an account of my experience in front of an artwork, rather than provide descriptions of the artwork. Inspired by notes made in real time as artworks unfurled in front of me, I write evocatively in the first person to force the reader into and through my live encounter with the artwork.

The importance of the actual physical encounter leads me to not include images within the text. The installation context, such as scale and spatial layout, aspects that this thesis goes on to consider, are obviously salient to the personal experience of an artwork. Images of the works discussed could only provide the reader page sized visual representations. What is presented to the reader is my felt experience encompassing the installation and its effects. It is hoped they might seek out their own physical experience with the artworks discussed.

Secondly, in claiming that this body of artwork makes an original contribution to knowledge, the question must arise: Where is this knowledge manifested? I maintain it must manifest in the viewer, in the action of the work *on* the viewer and ultimately in the exchange *between* the artist, artwork and viewer. I can write and describe my intentions and thinking for the artwork, but can that really offer an analysis of the art in action? I could write what I had planned for the work, but it would only be in the act of viewing that my intentions could be tested. Therefore the three chapters of this contextual and source analysis are interrupted with transcripts of discussions between myself and Dean Kenning.[10] In each

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[9] A list of exhibitions, events and performances attended is included in the bibliography.
[10] Dean Kenning is an artist and writer. He attended all the exhibitions submitted as part of this research. For the purpose of the discussions he was a viewer, not an expert. He did not research into the theories examined here in this contextual analysis, nor did he approach the conversations through his own research. Dean and I commented and responded to the art, as we worked through ideas together.

conversation we discuss a contributing work to this investigation. Dean encountered all the cited works in the flesh, and together we work out the affect of this experience. The discussions did not take place immediately after his encounter with each art work but alongside writing this thesis and after all the works have been made. This meant I have a clear over view of the works, and understand their place in the research. In this thesis the chapters and the discussions run parallel to each other and there are inevitable echoes as I describe or discuss the same problem in two different ways. Rather than unifying or fixing an answer they allow for different modes of engagement with the research and its undertakings. The artworks sought to change the encounter with the information a camera provides, making it a site of *potential* rather than a retrospective record. My intention is that the written thesis should reflect this open approach, this problem solving process. The discussions with Dean were a tool of discovery. I said things I did not foresee and found unexpected ways into my work. More than being detours however, these discussions provide new mainlines to my thinking, approach, and ambitions, elucidating my commitment to the enquiry. The discussions emit a vitality that is crucial within the context of this PhD. They are unedited and raw. These are the direct transcripts. They have a live mode of address.

Following this introduction, you are to watch documentation of the first work, *Holes: A Lecture* (2008 – 2012). The documentation of this work is from its last performance at the Stanley Picker Gallery in 2012; the performance lecture was first made and performed in 2008. This work formed the starting point of my research, introducing my conceptual approach to being behind the camera, and indicating how I might go on to change the viewer's position in relation to this. In the following discussion with Dean Kenning, I describe this work as containing the DNA for the PhD, the culmination of which was the exhibition *TO DO* at Matt's Gallery London, in 2011. This exhibition is the major element of the PhD submission. The works, discussions and ideas presented in this contextual analysis are in chronological order outlining my methodological approach and research towards this 2011 exhibition. Each artwork is not an isolated output, rather it evaluates and takes forward research, ideas and questions present in the previous work. Each artwork

is a stage in the ongoing research process, building in to the enquiry and making sense of the work that preceded it. For example during the *performance Holes: A Lecture* (2008-2012) I physically interact with the equipment. On reflection after the performance I realised by moving slide projectors during the event, I force the equipment to take part in the images they are projecting and staging. Observing this within the work led me to stretch and complicate the idea into the question - How might a camera take part in the images it is producing when it is recording a video? I use this question as the starting point of the *Chasing Animals* (2008 – 2010) video series. The practical works build on each other to form a cohesive and staged investigation, culminating with my exhibition *TO DO* (2011) Matt's Gallery.

Chapter One reflects on video and film works from Spartacus Chetwynd, Laure Prouvost, Ryan Trecartin and John Smith in order to define the key concept *Live Mode Of Address.* Within the footnotes are web links to these works. Although made using cameras, I make the claim that these works go beyond their descriptive duties and engender a presence or live, active encounter. This chapter explores how and why a live mode of address happens. Smith's explicit demonstration of process within a work, along with Prouvost's frantic collaging of moving images and Chetwynd's split screens, are all discussed through this critical lens.

Chapter Two, *How To Do Things With Cameras,* considers the address of art works that make their mechanics explicit. Self-reflection in art leaks out, triggering a viewer to also self reflect: the here and now is experienced. A major part of this creative enquiry has been to develop processes in which the camera can take part in the images it produces. The research then goes beyond a simple referencing of the camera (glanced in the mirror). It now demands that the camera has agency within the images. The video series *Chasing Animals* (2008- 2010)[11] is the next required viewing from the DVD provided. Drawing on J.L.Austin's theory of performative speech, and considering the work of Vito Acconci and John Baldessari, I suggest these works do not record what is in front of the camera. These works cannot come into being unless there *is a* camera. It is at this point, when the camera is in the work, that it cannot produce something we would read as a document. It can no

[11] *Chasing Animals* (2008- 2010) is series of short videos that I started before officially embarking on my PhD, but finished within the research and exhibited as part of it.

longer maintain an external viewpoint in respect to the scene. *Chasing Animals* (2008 – 2010) and its installation in the gallery furthered my understanding of the performative use of the camera. Although this turns out to be not enough to achieve a live mode of address - the exhibition needs to have agency too.

The shift to installation and exhibition was brought about in the next work up for discussion with Dean Kenning: *LOST* (2009 – 2011). Exhibited at Cell Project Space, London in 2011.[12] *LOST* went 'beyond the frame', (a term discussed in Chapter Two) and it could be argued it made the frame disappear entirely. The discussion of this work reflects on the close proximity the viewer is forced into with the screen and the close proximity this forces between the viewer and me. The viewer is up close and personal.

Chapter Three, *Ideas To Do,* starts by reflecting on my video production[13] of a Bertolt Brecht Lehrstück or 'Learning Play', undertaken to provide a meaningful way for me to research this particular series of Brecht works. Brecht's 'Learning Plays' are significant to this research, and working through one provoked important conceptual developments in my practice. In the 'Learning Plays' all audience members are participating as actors in the play. This is a radical rethink of how a play might work. The play becomes not an outcome to be watched but as a process to be entered in to. The 'Learning Plays' collapse the distinction between audience and actor; they synchronise the viewer and artist.

The idea of theatre is developed further through the discussion of Ian White's recent essay *Performer, Audience, Mirror: Cinema, Theatre and the Idea of the Live,* which considers 'what is liveness?' in cinema by thinking about the accepted liveness in theatre. We interestingly don't agree. White looks for the answer in art made within the genre of expanded cinema, and although useful to this research, I struggle to find my live mode of address there. The chapter's title stems from thinking that accompanied the production of work for exhibition *TO DO* (2011). There is video documentation of this work. The discussion with Dean investigates

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[12] *LOST* (2009 – 2011) was impossible to capture with video documentation due to the nature of its installation. Provided are still images and the video itself.
[13] *A Brecht Play with Video Costumes* (2009) is interestingly unresolved. It was a useful research tool and important step in stretching the function of the camera. The DVD includes a short extract.

his responses to my ideas within the exhibition, which moves beyond the frame by physically placing the viewer behind the camera, and producing a live mode of address.

Finally the conclusion sign posts how my understanding of a live mode of address developed through making the work *TO DO*. There is a gap between how we experience something and how we look at a photograph of that experience. What if I could reverse the taming of reality undertaken by cameras and use the cameras to deliver a wild presence we don't recognise, one without a wide-angle vista or horizon, that is close up, fractured and chaotic? This does not provide an all encompassing conclusion to these ideas, as they will continue to be explored in my art practice long after this PhD gets left on the shelf.

Please now watch

Holes: A Lecture

on the DVD provided.

Discussion One: *Holes: A Lecture*

12/09/2012

START AUDIO

Emma: I'm ready to start, Dean.

Dean: Okay, Emma. So we're going to talk about your performance 'Holes', which I saw at the Stanley Picker Gallery. The first thing that I wanted to ask you about, is the way that you use the technology of images, that is cameras and also the projecting equipment in the performance. So you are showing a series of images, throughout this performance, and usually we see images in a particular way and our attention isn't drawn to the actual equipment, the actual cameras. Whereas in your work the camera seems to be a very active presence. Would you like to respond to that?

Emma: This PhD, or my research, makes the mechanics of the work explicit, or more precisely, makes the camera take part in the image that it produces. In the 'Holes' performance the slide projectors, which are projecting the images, are moved occasionally and made apparent. The reason I do that, is because I believe that it engenders a different type of effect on images, compared to when we don't see the equipment. When we are aware of the presence of the camera or equipment, the first thing is that we're less able to associate the images with human vision. We're aware instead that it's the machine that has made the images. I'm keen to promote the fact that a camera does not see the same as a human eye. I think this is a misconception we have, where we

understand the making of images to be similar to the processes of our vision, and this manifests in us reading the images in a certain way.

If we can get to grips with the fact that a machine took these images, then that might put more doubt into our encounter with the images. We might not understand them to be natural or true. Mentioning natural there, brings me on to another person who is keen for things not to be assimilated as natural, that is Brecht. He used the idea of making the mechanics explicit, or making the process explicit to shatter illusion and to make sure that we weren't too engulfed by illusion. He was importantly worried that, if we encounter something, in his case a play, and in my case an image, we might get caught up in it, seduced by its illusions and then not question it. But if we understand it as a construction, something that has been made, an artifice, then we are less ready to collapse into it or contemplate it. So one of my desires is to always, more than just reference the camera, to actually make the camera take part in what it is producing.

Dean: I mean, this first question, it was quite vague and broad. It raised a lot of things. You raised a lot of things there.

Emma: I know. I don't think I've finished either actually, but yes, go on.

Dean: Did you want to make another point? Please make another point and then we will come back to it.

Emma: Okay. It's just, and maybe I'm just making the same point, the projections in Holes are very big. The screen is three metres by two metres, at least and when confronted with a big image we might fall into them. Scale is often used to make us small against the image and we kind of fall into the

image, and it puts its arms around us and we collapse in a puddle at its feet.
But when we use a projection, we actually can see directly, the source of the image, so that the image is coming out of this quite small slide projector, and I am interested in that. So that by moving the slide projectors, again it's preventing us from falling into them. So it crushes the illusion and we become very aware, that they are slides, and not windows on the world. But also, yes okay. Carry on and I might think of something else in a minute.

Dean: Alright, I just wanted to...

Emma: I've got it. I've got something else.

Dean: Okay, go ahead.

Emma: I want to say that, being reflective or making work that reflects on its own making, can sometimes lead to quite dry work where you might get stuck in a feedback loop around structuralism. The reason I want to make people aware of the equipment, is to heighten awareness of themselves. So by raising awareness of the equipment and the artifice, I somehow force the viewer to become aware of themselves. There's no escape. They can't run down an illusionary cul-de-sac, or contemplate and get lost in some detail. It's about being brutal, and I like being brutal and kind of ugly in a way. It's more than just like a glimpse of a camera in a film in a mirror, more than a formal manoeuvre. It's more inelegant than that, and I like that. Can I say like?

Dean: I really get that in your work, that you are doing something to draw awareness about the apparatus, but it doesn't seem like an exercise in...

Emma: An exercise.

Dean: Yes, exactly. It doesn't seem like a conceptual exercise, caught up in some kind of circuit. Where the liveness seems to come up is in the presence of yourself, as well as the technology.

If I might, I wanted to just bring us back to the actual performance 'Holes'. It begins with, we have the apparatus set up and we have the projector, which is going to play a role, as some sort of actor within this, and we will come on to that. We have the screen. On the screen you're projecting a number of photographs and taking a very central role in presenting what these are. Now these photographs are of holes, which you might want to say more about. But you're describing an experience. You begin by describing, this first photograph of a hole you took, when you were at Croydon College. So we have a picture of, not simply the picture itself. But we have a picture of you, with the camera, doing something. We are taken back to this experiential moment. So I wondered if you wanted to talk about, what some of these concerns have actually been about, the awareness of the equipment, the lightness and so on? How what is specifically playing out at the beginning of this performance 'Holes', takes us back to your experience.

Emma: I mean, the big problem for me, at Croydon College, when I was studying photography, is, I was really really stressed out, all the time. I found it really stressful. I couldn't remember all the techniques and how to work the camera, - this is way before digital photography. I was very clumsy and it was just, the stuff that goes in to make a photograph, is very separate from the photograph that we often see, especially in my

photographs. I mean, it's very stressful being out on the street with a camera. I was sweating a lot. It's a very conspicuous activity actually. People notice you the moment that you've got a camera. I mean this is partly what I go on to explore later. That the camera causes things to happen, because we notice when someone's got a camera. Especially then, this was a big camera. So there has always been this kind of failure for me, of images to really capture some kind of human effort. Human effort and human failure. At Croydon College, I, against the odds, managed to take some photographs of some holes. I was interested in holes, in the fact that a hole is an absence, i.e. there is nothing in a hole. Yet when we photograph it and print it out it becomes a presence on the surface. There was a lot of printing going on, so photography was a very physical process as well. I remember the stench of the chemicals and being in the dark. You had to be in the dark, I hated being in the darkroom with a load of strangers. So when you make this photograph of a hole, on the surface of the photograph it becomes a presence. There's no physical difference between that hole and the face next to it. The photograph itself can't differentiate them; it doesn't care. A bit like the photograph is indifferent to the stress I'm going through. I became a collector of holes. Then interestingly, another thing, I should stop saying interesting. But then another aspect for me was, how do you collect holes? How do you own holes? Holes are unownable. They have to stay where they are. But I could photograph them. So I was using photography to own something, and archive it. I think that's a common type of camera usage. That we think we own the things that we are photographing. At the beginning of the 'Holes' lecture, I talk a bit about this, about my frustrations with Croydon College, and also of being a student of photography. Also the extreme effort I had to go to, to photograph the first hole, which is

actually a very boring photograph. This is a photo of a hole in a shed roof. What you can't know is that I'm standing on a ladder; swaying, sweating, swearing. My dad is at the bottom of the ladder, swearing, not so much sweating, and it was just such a rigmarole; very stressful. But you, the viewer, will never know this, because this sort of magical land, behind the camera, never gets seen or heard.

Dean: But actually we do know that, don't we, because you explain it in the lecture. So this is the interesting thing. There's a certain nervous energy to your presentation. So already, as an audience we are sympathetic to your exposure, in front of all the people. At the same time, we are sympathetic to the story you are telling, about the, not the photo itself, but your experience of taking it under duress and under these kind of slightly stressful situations.

Emma: I mean, giving a performance is stressful in itself. So I'm using the stress, the nerves of the performance and throw it into the nervousness, as it reminds me of being up the ladder, with all the people watching me taking the photograph of the holes. So I transfer the nervousness, and use it to recreate a situation. I mean being nervous is important to me. I don't affect nerves, but the truth is I am nervous, and I was nervous then as well. I was exposed then, up the ladder, and every time I am behind a camera, and I am exposed, in front of the audience there. I force together these two different times through the same emotion. I think that charges the whole situation up with a liveness, which I think is infectious. It's a bit like when you shouldn't show fear in front of dogs, because they can sense it. Well the audience or the dogs can sense it, and then they get nervous as well. They think 'Oh God here we go, we've got a right one here. Something might go wrong here, she's a bit all over the place...' So

maybe they get a bit on edge, because they are waiting for something to go wrong, because I am waiting for something to go wrong too. Although actually it's very precise, but it shows the contradiction.

Dean: So there's an empathy and a taking you into the experience of taking the photo, rather than getting absorbed by the image, which we're used to as viewers.

Emma: Exactly. I want to talk about the act of photography, yes.

Dean: Can we take a break?

END AUDIO

START AUDIO

Emma: Action.

Dean: Take two. Okay. So I wanted to come back to the experience I had of looking at the images as you were going through the various holes. It was interesting, because you started off with apparently real holes, so these were like holes in physical things, like holes in walls, and holes in the ground and so on; holes in objects. Then we shift to black objects, which of course are what the holes show up as on the actual photo, as you were talking about before. But we've already learned to look for the holes, so we're reading these, and we're producing these holes as viewers, and we're aware that we're producing them. We're enjoying the fun of that, and the joke of that, and the fact that we're creating these things that don't exist, but we're producing them ourselves. Then, after that,

there's another stage, where we're not even looking at holes that you happen to have found and photographed, but we're dealing with these fake holes which are hanging from the sky, and seem to be hovering in front of the camera. Again, there's a very humorous aspect to that. It's like you're playing games with us, but we're playing the games along with you at the same time.

Emma: Well, yes. There is a serious side to it, which is that... What I'm trying to do is: I start by showing you normal photographs i.e. photographs of a hole, and then I go on to show you some different types of images, and through those different types of images I ultimately want you to re-evaluate your reaction to normal hole images. Hopefully we've gone on a bit of a journey. So you're actually questioning what you think is a normal image. I'm just constantly trying to erode the apparent - well, the indexical relationship to the real. I'm constantly trying to destroy the representative and descriptive capacity of images. So yes, I start by showing you some holes. Then I show you some things which aren't holes at all, but you are convinced that they are holes. So that's already quite interesting, that I've got you to agree to the fact that a cat and a dress on a line is actually a hole. Then I show you a piece of black cardboard covered in velvet, which is dangling off a pole, and I say 'Actually, if you'd been there, at the time these images were taken', and this is something I'm constantly having a go at; the idea that we could see what the image is of if you'd been there, 'you would not have seen anything like what this image looks like. Because it's only the camera that sees black velvet as pure black.' Also, you'd have seen a bloke holding a pole with a piece of cardboard dangling off. It's only a camera lens which turns this black velvet into this dark hole. My question to the viewer is 'When does this image exist?' It doesn't exist then, when I took it. It

only exists now, and that, of course, must mean that it's live. It's a presentation; it doesn't represent anything that was with the scene at that time, so it must be a presentation. Then I do something further than that. I show slides with holes cut in, and I actually say something like "Oh, the holes have come from the real world to be with us, so the holes have been moving through these different types of temporality. There were some holes. Then the holes were in our mind, when I showed you a cat that was like a hole. Then the hole was in the camera, and now the hole is in this room. Then I go on to cut a hole in the screen. So the holes are marching, like they're all coming; they're making their way...

Dean: Into the real world.

Emma: Yes, they're coming in.

Dean: Into the space.

Emma: It's like the lecture calls forth the holes. Like in Lord of the Rings or something, when they call forth the trees. This calls forth the holes, and they come marching in. I really like that. I mean that's really important. But conceptually, basically all I've shown you is a series of images. They're all the same stuff, but we approach them all very differently. It's complete nonsense, really, that you think that a picture of a chair in front of a skip is a hole and by demonstrating to you the artifice of our relationship, or the fragility of our relationship to the image, or to the real I hope to get you to apply these ideas to other images.

Dean: I think you've put your finger on a really important aspect, here, which is that your lecture is a lecture because it's demonstrative. Like you are doing things, and then explaining

the process behind them, so we're aware of what's happening and how it happens.

Emma: Yes. What we're discovering together is types of looking at images. You think it's about holes, but actually it's about types of looking, and the types of looking that a camera, particularly, forces on us. We've all gone through a process together; we've come out thinking about that. I mean, I don't know. Loads of people come up to me afterwards, and say 'I keep seeing holes.' People have emailed me saying 'There's a great hole down the bottom of my road; do you want to come and photograph it?' Maybe that wasn't exactly what I was aiming for but it means they are thinking about the lecture. It's affected something.

Dean: It's a bit like paranoia, then. You've made everyone a bit...

Emma: Well, or they just become very aware of holes, yes.

Dean: Reminds me of the John Smith film about the tower.

Emma: The good thing about what he does in that is there's a point where he just shows blackness, and you don't know whether you're on the inside or the outside. You don't know whether you're on the outside, zoomed into the outside, or you don't know whether you're actually inside, and I too play on this moving of the viewer behind the image; in front of the image; in the image. Normally we're only in front of images.

Dean: I think that point where the image being projected is actually a hole in the slide; that is really the point where the penny drops; that this is - although we all know it somehow, we kind of alienate ourselves from... Sorry, that's the wrong expression, completely. The fact that this is a very small

image of a hole being projected, because we're focused on the actual projection, but as soon as you recognise that this image now is - which appears as quite a big hole, is coming from what must be a tiny hole, you become aware of the whole scale that's being involved within the space, so the image itself becomes spatialised, in a way, within the setting.

Emma: Yes, that's good, that you think that; yes. Everything is trying to demonstrate the art of - is trying to point towards artifice; Yes.

Dean: Then we end up, as the holes go through the various levels of...

Emma: Mediation.

Dean: Yes, unreality, to enter our space and come shooting through, and you end up by saying we're all holes. You address the audience, and you call us holes, which is - just say what you mean then...

Emma: Well, maybe visual culture sees us as holes, to try to tip great swathes of image detritus, or image into. We're like big, open-mouthed holes, waiting, and sucking up all the images around us. I call you holes when we're at the peak of going through the images very quickly. There's about 160 images total.

Dean: Which is surprising actually, because you don't think it's that many. I mean when I'm thinking back, I'm thinking there are maybe 50 images at the most, you know? So I am surprised that...

Emma: No, it's about 160, maybe more. There's a point where I show 20 real holes – this is in the middle – back-to-back. We kind of reach this crescendo of 'Just give me another hole, give me another hole, give me another hole', and 'Is this ever going to end? How many holes has she got?' - 'We just want - please, let's just have the next hole.' So course, the whole audience – and me as well – become a hole into which I'm just shovelling this stuff in.

Dean: This is slightly to do with our desire to suck up all these holes, turns us into holes, because we've become obsessed. It reminds me, when you said that in the performance, it reminded me - I don't know if you had this in mind at all, but there's a famous quote by Nietzsche, when he talks about -

Emma: I don't think I had that in mind, but go on...

Dean: I think it's something like 'Beware of monsters lest you become a monster, and if you stare into the void, the void stares into you.'

Emma: Woah, yes.

Dean: It's a slight feeling of that with... through obsessively hunting out these things, which are not holes at all, but we're now seeing to be holes, we've changed.

Emma: Well you don't care anymore. You don't care; you just want the next hole; you don't care where it comes from or what it looks like.

Dean: Well this is emphasised in the performance when you talk about becoming a hole hunter, and hunting for these holes. Of course, the fact that these holes don't really exist, except,

in the sense that you are going out specifically to photograph them.

Emma: Well I put various images in front of you, and you either seek out the real hole within the photograph, or construct one from the content. You hunt them down.

Dean: Yes, that's the thing, because, in a sense, as viewers, we're doing the same as you. Because we're being presented with a series of photos, where the subject of the photo, in this case, isn't immediately obvious. Depending on the image that you're showing us, it's more or less obvious. So we become active viewers. In that sense we seem to be doing something very similar to the process. At the very moment during the performance, we're doing something very similar to the process that you were undertaking, as you actually took the photos themselves.

Emma: That is very good that you say that, because, that is really important to me. That is one of the main strategies that this PhD has enabled me to produce. I am trying to synchronise the behaviour of the artist, with the behaviour of the viewer. So there's a collapse of temporality. For me, this is what engenders a live mode of address. It's like we're both producing and presenting at the same time. I re-visit this idea throughout my research, I do it again, in 'Chasing Animals'. I do it in all the work across the PhD. It's important in terms of the effect it has on the viewer. But it's also, for me, politically important as well. What it says to the viewer hopefully is there's no big art magic to learn about it. It means that me and the viewer could possibly be the same person, or are interchangeable. It means that there hasn't been some big secret thing that I've done as an artist. There's no big secret that's taken me ten years to learn, in a secret school called

The Art School. I've not come out with all this secret art knowledge. But, it means that, quite simply, the viewer can be there when the work is being made. That is for me, very powerful, because we often encounter art works as outcomes and as end products. I'm interested in how an artwork can be a live process that gets entered into by the viewer. Art that has this liveness has immediacy. It also has this idea of something unfolding in front of us. So that's what I do, I look at the way I was behaving when I was making the work and try and get the viewer to behave the same.

Dean: So when you're talking about a political aspect, it seems that you're talking about a usual, fairly kind of passive consumption of images that we're used to, in the sense that something exists, originally. Then we are being presented with a representation of that thing that exists. So in that sense, we are just there to take in what's already happened. Whereas with this case, with the holes, it becomes obvious that the hole hunting - the hole wouldn't necessarily be something that you would look at, as the image itself. It's only because our attention is drawn to this, that we become engaged in an active process, and viewers become producers themselves, of an image.

Emma: I've got to stop because the battery has run out.

END AUDIO

START AUDIO

Emma: Right, it's recording okay?

Dean: Okay. So do you want me to pick...?

Emma: Yes, well maybe. I think what you were saying, is that, when we encounter representations. Well this is my interpretation of what you are saying... Because the representation is transmitting information, our response to it can only be to say 'Yes I've understood and I've registered what you're saying, thank you very much.' That's it; it's a very simple transaction. Paulo Freire, is actually writing about education. But he says something like... I can't remember exactly off the top of my head. That education should not be a transferal of information; it should be an experience of cognition. What he means by that is, the teacher normally just stands in the class, and they're the expert, they've got the information and then the student is an empty vessel. The teacher banks all the information into the pupil, and the student just has to go, 'Right, thanks very much, I've received your information and I understand it.' So there's no chance for the student to act on the information or produce it themselves. That's the drive for this PhD or for this work. It's, how can I create a more active encounter with images produced by a camera, which are notoriously or even scientifically understood to be representations and descriptions coming form the past? How is this going to work when we have a programmed and habitual response to the products of a camera, which is to receive the information transmitted? I think there's a lot of territory to cover. Obviously there are a lot of artists that are working, as I say in the lecture, to stretch the medium. But it seems a particularly difficult problem, to make lens based representations actually strike the viewer as presentations.

Dean: So the way you work, to make the images function with an active live mode address in a sense collapses the distinction between yourself and the person who is viewing the image.

They're doing the same, in a certain kind of way. It's not you on one side producing, and them on the other side. Or us on the other side.

Emma: When we see a photograph, we still, even though there has been for years and years stuff written about how well photographs are manipulated etc, we understand it as what we would have seen, had we been there. So there is this collapse. That's one kind of collapse, i.e. that's what we would have seen, had we had been there, with the camera at that time. That's one side of the image. If the image is like a line in temporality, but I want to put us both the other side – no forget it, I can't explain it.

Dean: Well you are drawing the viewer closer to yourself, not through the mediation of an image, but by bringing the equipment to the fore. So we're involved with you. We're not involved with the photograph, so much as we're involved with your act of acquiring that particular photograph.

Emma: One thing I do in the 'Holes' lecture, is, I say 'the idea that a photograph shows you what you would have seen, had you been there, for me is ludicrous. If you were just walking down the street, you would not have seen a lot of those holes. Because actually, you have to really hunt out those holes. So you never would have seen them. I had to, to bring them to you, I had to undergo a procedure, or I had to put myself through a process of hole hunting and that's what I share with you this process, and that's what you end up doing, undertaking the process

Dean: Okay, and there seems to be another sense in which the audience, the people watching you perform this, feel quite close to you. That's the way that your personality comes

across. You've talked about your presence and your nervousness and that kind of thing. There's a sense that you're not, as an artist you're not at a distance from the audience. You are yourself. Your relating of your experiences, your human qualities - your warmness and your humour and so on, comes across as well to collapse that distance. I wonder what you thought about that?

Emma: Yes, I suppose.

Dean: I mean you were talking before about there not being any great trick to taking a photo, anyone could do it in a way. You just happen to be one of these people.

Emma: Yes, one of the reasons I'm undertaking this research, is because – well I'm interested in the notion of control, and I go on, later to make work which is a bit out of control, maybe overwhelming, which I think is a very useful strategy or method in trying to engender a liveness. The reason I'm using myself, and telling you about myself, is it's chaotic and messy. I'm an artist and I like taking these pictures of holes. But I'm not a scientist that likes taking pictures of holes. It's a very sporadic archive. I give up finding holes at some points, and start making my own holes because I can't find anymore. Or I cheat, and I use other things as holes. So it's all a bit, not haphazard, but precarious. It's all a bit precarious and uncertain. Because it's an artwork, it's not a, I don't know, it's not a scientific experiment. It's an artwork, and that means when it's uncertain and precarious, it means it's open. It makes it open, and one of the reasons I'm interested in doing all this work, is because I think that images are too closed. The way images are circulating in visual culture; it's closed. So I'm open and I'm very interested in making work that's open, and messy and real.

Dean: Yes, I think that really comes across as well. It's not one of those works where you feel like you know what's going to happen at the end, from where it starts off. In fact it's quite, it kind of chops and changes. I mean on the one hand it is very cleverly worked out and there's lots of jokes and puns and interesting things that you do with the equipment in terms of visual jokes as well. The script is very structured. But the other side of that is it does seem quite on edge, and quite true. I mean there's a point where you actually physically move the projectors, you push the projector. So that's a very unslick thing to do. But it's very effective in its crudity. There's no way that you're trying to hide the mechanism behind the trick there. There's a real material, physical crudeness to it.

Emma: Yes, I don't even get somebody else to move them.
(Laughter)

Dean: Then you move on to, there's something going on the whole time, between the visuals and between language. For example - and this is maybe where the performative element would come in, in the linguistic sense of the term - the very fact that it's called 'Holes' makes us find points in these images which eventually, well quite soon actually, are just things which happen to be black, which we can now read as holes because we've had this very short training in hole detection. Throughout it, you are playing language games between the words you use, and the images.

Emma: Yes, I mean I'm quite proud of the script actually.
(Laughter).

Dean: There's a point where you stop talking about holes and you start talking about the slides, we become very aware.

Emma: One of the things that I'm most proud of is throughout the lecture is the way I emphasise the fact that it is a lecture by calling for slides, which is what I remember from being in lectures years ago. It's not like that now, but they called for slides. So I'm calling for the slide, I say the word, well, you know, you were there, but I repeatedly call for the slides. At that moment, that word 'slide', is not in the lecture. I don't know where; where is that word? It's functioning differently to the other words that I'm saying. Then there's a point where I suddenly start using the word slide within my normal speech. The person changing the slides was just told, 'Change the slides every time I say the word slide.' So the word slide is suddenly brought in and it functions as a kind of, it's like a hole, like where it goes through...

Dean: The slide's something which is...

Emma: It's just been drilled through, the word slide.

Dean: It's something which was absent from the content of what you are saying and suddenly it becomes present.

Emma: Yes.

Dean: In the same way that your holes become present.

Emma: Yes, exactly. Yes, just by slightly changing the context, maybe it wasn't something that you noticed previously, me calling for slide. Then suddenly it's very much, with us, immediately, or present with us exactly. Yes, I love all that.

Dean: Of course 'slide' was very much operating as a performative in the sense that, what's his name?

Emma: Austin.

Dean: Austin would talk about. Slide was a pure signal for someone to do something. Then suddenly slide, stops acting as a command and starts becoming a verb. So you talk about 'we're going to slide into this', 'you've got to slide', 'you slide into the holes', and so on.

Emma: Yes, exactly. It moves from a noun to a verb, which is exactly what I'm asking photography to do, or the camera to do. I want the camera to go from producing nouns to producing verbs.

Dean: The funny thing is as well, the slide then... it still carries on, being this trigger, but it's incorporated within the lecture.

Emma: Yes, and my aim is, I mean maybe you will agree with me, is it adds a sudden hysteria to the performance. Maybe you thought that you knew what the performance was. It was going to be this woman talking - she calls for slides, the slides come up. Then suddenly, it changes again and we're all slipping and sliding.

Dean: So the calling for slides is very much like a rhythm within the piece?

Emma: Yes.

Dean: Then suddenly this rhythm gets interrupted and instead of being a demarcation between one point and another, it gets

incorporated. This is where we get sucked into the hole, so to speak, because we've lost our frame.

Emma: Yes, I accuse you, within that speech, where I start using the word slide differently. I accuse the viewer of actually being like a hole addict. Or in fact, ultimately being a hole themselves. As we spoke a about, I make quite a dirty insinuation.

Dean: Yes. So, I wondered if, maybe to finish we could talk a little bit about the spatial set out of the performance itself. You've talked about this as a lecture. It very much is a lecture. I mean it would be hard to categorically say this was a parody of a lecture, because in a way you are telling us stuff. We are being taken through something. You are standing up. But unlike a conventional lecture, you're doing things like... you're moving equipment around. You're not standing at a place where everyone can see you from the same angle. You are sometimes behind the screen, you are sometimes in front of the screen. There's a point where you do a special pause for documentation and somebody jumps out and starts taking pictures of you. So I wondered if you could comment on this aspect of the performance, and maybe in terms of how that relates to the liveness that you're interested in?

Emma: Yes, we are now discussing this after I've gone on to make a lot more work, including 'To Do'. So I can now, very clearly, see ideas that are in an embryonic stage within the Holes lecture, that I really go on to push in later works. I mean, it sounds a bit cheesy but I see the holes lecture as the DNA of the PhD. So one thing I was thinking about is, when you go to see a live performance, the biggest problem you have is 'Where am I going to sit?' Because I want to see it; I need to see it. I'm quite short, so maybe it's always a bit more of a

problem for me. But I, quite often, would move around a lot within the gig or whatever it is, or the art performance before it begins. Because I want to see it, and I'm trying to get the best seat. I don't do this in front of a painting, so it's quite particular to a live experience. This problem of where you're going to sit, or where you're going to stand. I think my interest in the issue with the holes, was not to play on this, but prey on this. Make it impossible for you to find a good place to sit. Because they're all good places.Then I go on to really get in to this idea of offering multi viewer points on to the work and really push it later on with TO DO. But that is the germ of that idea. So I set up a screen, which is double sided. And although you can guess what's on the other side, you don't really know 100%. Dean, I don't know if you were thinking that through it ...? I don't know, anyway, that was the idea. I walk around the screen, so sometimes you get the real me, on your side, or sometimes you get the shadow of me. So I become an image, I become a live image, as opposed to a live me. So that's interesting as well. And then if they were being projected on the wall, we might understand it as a window or something. But as a screen we understand the image much more as a thing and this objectification of the images. This again is something I go on to think about later as it's kind of a sculpture really. Not least, because I end up cutting a hole in the screen. So I treat the screen as an object, not as a hole. I make the screen that's showing holes, an object, by cutting a hole in it.

Dean: Can I say something about that?

Emma: Yes.

Dean: That part when you cut the hole in it. There's a really nice bit, where you cut the hole in the screen, which, you could say, is

an obvious thing to do. It's not like totally unexpected. It's almost like what you would expect. Then you look through the hole and wave and say hello or something, which is a really nice touch. I think in your work, there's always this tension, which makes it endearing, it makes it interesting. Where there is this capacity for embarrassment or for corniness or for slightly groany kind of puns. Or really that feeling that, although your work is very well thought through, and very engaging in that way, it's never polished, it's never rehearsed to the extent that you are a distance. You always feel very much that you are present and you are there. Again that's a very engaging quality.

Emma: Yes, I mean we spoke a bit about it before. But it's just not my job, as an artist, to present polished artefacts. My job as an artist, is to set up approaches. If I'm presenting polished things, it would really limit me in being able to work with an audience, or work with a viewer

Dean: Okay, yes. Can I make a quick call? - I've just received my important phone call.

END AUDIO

Chapter One: Live Mode of Address

There are some lens-based artworks that do not strike me, as a viewer, as relaying pre-recorded information. Certain video, film or photographic works can produce a live encounter, without them being a performance. They generate a presence rather than provide a reference. It is not that I get confused and think the films are actually a window onto an event that is happening now, but more that the work strikes me as bringing something new into existence. They have what I will call a *live mode of address.* I have also noticed there are, within the works, different aspects and reasons for this experience. A live mode of address has a complex range of switches to flick to achieve its affect. Not all the works described below flick all the switches. It might not even be the intention of the artist that this is how I experience the work. However, it is my intention to try and define what a live mode of address is, through looking at works in which I find it present. I will then bring together the different ways it happens and further explore its limits and possibilities through my own art making.

In 2009 as part of the Tate Triennial at Tate Britain[14] Spartacus Chetwynd presented *Hermitos Children* (2008)[15]. A large wall of televisions transmitted a looped 20-minute video. Big hand sewn cushions were laid out for us to sit on. We were to relax and watch. This was hard as the cacophony of video, multiplied and split across the monitors, forced me to twist and turn, penetrating any sense of calm, which is appropriate as the work was subtitled 'The Case of the Poisonous Dildo'. Chetwynd's video is a pilot for an imagined TV detective programme. The protagonist, Joan Shipman, solves sex crimes. The surreal narrative, and weird characters wearing flamboyant hand made costumes, travel through different scenes on the trail of a criminal who has committed murder by means of a poisoned dildo. This dildo was part of a sexy see-saw, strapped to the seat. Someone tried out the ride and wound up dead. The absurd video is played on each individual

[14] *Altermodern,* Tate Triennial, Tate Britain, London 3rd February – 26th April 2009
[15] Spartacus Chetwynd's video *Hermitos Children,* that was displayed over the large wall of 33 television can be seen here http://www.ubu.com/film/chetwynd_hermitos.html [May 2011]

television, starting at the same point on all the screens. At the centre, the video works differently as it is split across a section of large monitors. Given the amount of televisions present, the playback could be much more complicated, but Chetwynd has a story to tell. So I settled down to find out whodunit.

Spartacus Chetwynd is a performance artist, who works with a large community of friends and family who are participants (actors, dancers) in her live events. She uses fabric and paper maché to make detailed and inventive sets, props, puppets and costumes. Chetwynd puts on shows that often retell events from history or classical myths, merged with characters from popular culture such as *Jabba the Hut* (from Star Wars). Chetwynd also makes videos; she has to in order to document her performances. At a recent artist's talk[16] Chetwynd spoke of her frustration with video documentation. She had always been disappointed on seeing the footage of her performances. It never came close to the sensation of being there. Elaborate performances, when filmed with one wide-angle camera recording the room, came back as boring and contained. The limits of the frame suggest a limit to the performance, when it had actually been experienced as dangerously out of control. She deduced that elaborate performances require elaborate filming and editing. One of Chetwynd's solutions to the problem of this kind of dead documentation is to use the split screen. Chetwynd hopes that the split screen will allow for different view points to take place simultaneously, that the intimate details of the performance can be caught in close ups which are screened next to more general shots of the mayhem and noise.

Chetwynd's plan within *Hermitos Children* (2008) was to utilise documentation from a variety of her performances made in 2008. At each of these, she managed to film a short scripted passage knowing she would put this into the video *Hermitos Children* (2008), along with the unscripted performance documentation that would be co-opted as action scenes. She achieves, therefore, a compendium of documentation of performance works, but one that doesn't announce itself as a record. It is rerouted and transformed. This shift in context results in something new being made. The numerous televisions initially create confusion, and this is

[16] Chetwynd gave an artist's talk accompanying the Turner Prize 2012, at Tate Britain, 3rd October 2012

similar to the experience of being an audience member at Chetwynd's performances. Peggy Phelan who decried the documenting of performances, insisting 'performance's only life is in the present', defined a performance as a 'unique and spontaneous event that can't be adequately filmed'.[17] By means of multiple screens, Chetwynd's video can't be adequately watched. The action of viewing is made physical as we turn from one thing to another, and this mimics our behaviour at one of her performances. We address this work *as if it was live.*

The idea of splitting is apparent in John Smith's film *A Girl Chewing Gum* (1974).[18] Smith's film is now an iconic artwork. Screened in cinemas and galleries, the work is also available on DVD. I have seen it large and small. Sound and image are split. It presents the simple but effective device of changing the tense of the voice-over. Black and white real time footage from a high street in Hackney, London is overlaid with a voice, which rather than describing the scene, strikes us as being perhaps the director calling forth the everyday action that takes place. The camera is mostly static, pointing onto the busy street. A man speaks and things happen. 'Slowly move the trailer to the left, and I want the little girl to run across now' he asks, and on cue the real people (or are they actors?) perform as instructed. These commands are in the present tense; things are happening now. The affect is a sense of contingency. After the first few minutes of believing the scene is really being directed we cotton on to the work's artifice, making us think about the process of directing and the process of noticing. We become aware of ourselves looking.

The camera is not still for the whole film, sometimes it pans up, or across, or shakily zooms in on a clock face. The voice behind the camera instructs these things to happen, but rather than using the technical terms 'please pan upwards' he says 'I want everything to sink slowly down' which is the visual effect of a camera panning up - the frames' contents move down. Instead of asking for a 'zoom in on the clock' he commands the clock to 'move jerkily towards me,' which is exactly how a shaky zoom appears. The workings of the camera are presented as physical changes to elements of the scene. The result of this is a sense that the frame is the world, compounded by the voice-over speaking as if it is all there is, as if off to the right

[17] Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked The Politics of Performance* (Routledge, 2006), p.146.
[18] John Smith's film *A Girl Chewing Gum* can be seen here
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=57hJn-nkKSA [March 2013]

there is no more world but a space with a queue of actors (or are they real people?) waiting to come in from the right. This is how mainstream cinema operates so it is significant when the film turns to a queue outside a cinema. Then things start to unravel. The man with the turban does not come in when asked. The sound stops for a moment as boys cross the road. The dentist continues on his way home, he clearly *does* exist outside of the frame. Important information about Steeles, the company whose offices we look at, is mixed with a misunderstanding about how the job advertisements are to be read. Facts suddenly mingle with the personal. The man with the turban shows up, but now the man behind the camera has revealed he's not even at the scene, he's 15 miles away and we realise we are not at the scene either. Suddenly the film becomes an image and we are together with the artist looking at it. Suddenly it becomes a bit sinister. A man has robbed a bank, and there are alarm bells ringing, ones in the film and ones in my head. The documentary status of this film is undermined.

Another work where the artist provides a voice-over is Laure Prouvost's video *It, Heat, Hit* (2010) which I saw at Tate Britain in 2010[19]. The video was 6 minutes long and looped. It was projected, very large in a black room, and the sound was very loud. I have got a viewing copy, which gives me an unusual position of access and one I'm not very sure is helpful. I can now study the film intently on a small screen on headphones. I can easily stop and pause the film. Prouvost's work is made to obfuscate reading. It is fast, rapid, cut up, and confusing. It does not make sense. I left the work at Tate Britain disoriented, something which watching it closely now on a laptop, with my finger on pause, does not happen. My new access to the work would maybe be helpful if I was set on understanding what the film *means*; yet I am interested in what the film *does*.

Looking at notes made at the Tate, the important thing this film does is overwhelm you. It is too loud, confusing, and quick. It is immediate, dangerous, messy and alive. Subtitles provide texts which directly address the viewer, and which now I can quote but I would never have been able to scrawl down these subtitles if I was just relying on my time watching the video at the Tate:

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[19] *It, Heat, Hit,* (2010) Laure Prouvost, Art Now Lightbox, Tate Britain, London, 6th March – 2nd May, 2010

> This 6 minute film requires all your attention, each detail of part 1 will be essential to part 2. The characters in the film are glad you are here to join them, they would do anything to get your attention. They are desperate for you to engage: They need you to exist. If you do not collaborate they will ask you to leave the room on the 6th minute.

The video puts me under pressure. I was ordered to pay attention to 'part 1' as it was important for 'part 2, which we never get to see. I believe part 2 is what happens when you leave the gallery, dazed and confused, but invigorated and susceptible to detail. Prouvost's 'part 1' video alters our perception of the 'part 2' world outside. As with *Hermitos Children* (2009) there is a story that we could try and follow, but I can't follow it. Mood changes are reflected through music and images get more violent; a vicious dog appears, and fires smoke and burn. This is a visual stream of consciousness - many conceptual doors open, and then slam shut.

Like Smith's jerky zoom and Chetwynd's raw performances, the hand of the artist is immediately present and not polished away in a bid to appear slick. The works maintain spontaneity (even though there must have been a huge amount of labour undertaken to complete them all) by refusing to look seamless. Prouvost's work for example is littered with spelling mistakes, as if the subtitle has just been said and there was no time to check it. As if a subtitle is ever just said? But that is the compelling effect; this work is not rehearsed. The written words stutter out, sometimes with only one word on the screen. They are more seen than read. Sounds, image and text are interchanged. 'BUT YOUR LEG GOT' appears on the screen, followed by a few seconds of footage flashing up showing a carrot getting noisily chopped. Other times there are no connections between the images and the words. We get quick glimpses of kicking horses, someone smoking, or chucking a tissue in a bin. I get the impression that sometimes the script took inspiration from footage the artist already had, the random surplus of always carrying a camera around. And sometimes the footage needed to be shot to communicate something specific. The elements of the work are in flux, they might mean something, they might mean nothing and the effect is that we can creep from our mission to

understand the artwork and just let it be itself. The video resists stability, and goes on to create an experiences that wavers, vacillates, surprises; it is uncertain. I am uncertain. The speed that Prouvost chucks out images means I barely register them, yet like subliminal advertising they get smacked into deep parts of my brain. Contemplation is not an option. I cannot own and mull over these images, I just stand there and take the hits. This relentless velocity, and the viewer's attempts to keep up, ironically (again) resonates with Phelan's description of performance. Used to attempt to lock up performance, and prevent it mixing with other media, Phelan writes:

> In performance art spectatorship there is an element of consumption: there are no leftovers, the gazing spectator must try to take everything in. Without a copy, live performance plunges into visibility - in a manically charged present – and disappears into memory, into the realm of invisibility and the unconscious where it eludes regulation and control. [20]

The word consumption is apt. Prouvost employs all my senses: flashed in front of me are things to smell, touch, taste, and amongst the speed and confusion I really do feel like I've inhaled or gulped down an image. At one point the voice whispers, 'You want to caress the image', and there is much to feel; slimy sludge in ponds, soft feathers, wet unidentifiable food. The video gives me haptic vision. This is a very immediate sensation. I can touch these things with my eyes.

Ryan Trecartin's video installation *Any Ever* (2007 – 2010) goes even further than Prouvost in re-orientating our experience of visually consuming art. This is its subject too, a complicated and critical probe into modern consumerism. The exhibition is unified in that its disruptive form emphasizes its disturbing content. My first encounter with Ryan Trecartin's work was at the The Power Plant, Toronto in 2010[21]. The experience has stayed with me; it was maybe how I might feel if I met an alien. I did not recognise it or know what it was. I kept asking myself 'what is going on?' I couldn't decide, let alone evaluate whether I liked it or not. I felt

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[20] Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked The Politics of Performance* (Routledge, 2006), p.148.
[21] *Any Ever*, Ryan Trecartin, The Power Plant, Toronto, 26th March – 24th May 2010

flattened by a relentless force, which knocked me back. I remember I actually felt disgusted; it was all too much.

Trecartin's seven part *Any Ever* (2007 – 2010)[22] brings together videos made from 2009-2010. It is a maze of seven rooms, which Trecartin refers to as 'containers', each room contains a video projection and furniture from which to sit and watch. There was, for example, an office, an aeroplane, a bedroom. Each room is elaborately decorated and furnished. The rooms were well lit. There is attention to details such as appropriate types of flooring for the different scenes, and freedom to touch, lean on, lay on and otherwise use the furniture. We could sit at the desk, in the plane seat or lie on a bed and try and take in the video. Trecartin writes his rich and complex scripts and then, like Chetwynd, films the works with a group of friends who all play parts, including himself. Trecartin and Chetwynd bring grotesque characters into existence. Chetwynd relies on the energy of performance to disseminate her carnivalesque creations. Trecartin utilises digital video effects, ones that are often associated with the 1980s, to transmit his chaotic vision. Images are frenetically layered, spun, rippled, and everything happens very very fast. Where Prouvost uses collage to create a random confusion, Trecartin's work is meticulous and obsessive, making it more sinister. These are horror movies, which deeply speak of the shallows of consumerism and how the internet is messing with our identities.

Trecartin has a lot of friends, and they all crowd into the video. They all look very strange, colourfully made up, they exaggerate body movements. They might be smashing up a house, or they might be lounging near a pool. They are often using cameras - filming is witnessed as an everyday activity like cooking. 'I love learning about myself through other people's products', shrieks a bright face, covered in purple body paint and wearing a ginger wig. 'Remember back when time was money', a yellow character chimes in. 'I've been a CEO since birth. I'm looking for a group dynamic'. Their shrill vocal tones travels upwards at the end of the sentence, the inflection of youth is nailed and familiar phrases are twisted and sent back to me mangled. All the voices are sped up; they sound ridiculous. 'I'm touch screen sensitive' someone calls out 'I don't believe in my face, but I have messy dreams. I

[22] Ryan Trecartin's videos that form the installation *Any Ever* can be seen here http://www.ubu.com/film/trecartin.html [March 2013]

need to be more con-fi-dent. You know? In my life ... no more fake blood for me, I want the real thing.' It is not that Trecartin describes a world completely unknown to me - I can place elements of it, but it is all so sickeningly corrupted. I had to adapt myself to the new vision this threw me into. It was a conceptual rollercoaster that loop-da-looped me out of myself. The excessive intensity meant this was outside of my experience. I cannot recognise this work, I can only cognise it. It was like nothing I had ever seen before.

Within all these works, all made with a camera, I find a live mode address. These works escape from the clutches of their photographic making and rather than forcing us through to their referent, their time of making, their 'what has been', we experience the work on our time and in our space. I have the sensation it is happening now and it is happening to me. The works cannot truly sever the links to the past, but the links become unimportant. It is the time and experience of watching that is the priority, not when and where it was made. Each work does this through strategies that make its information base unreadable. They go some way to frustrate them being read as a document. Chetwynd's split screens fracture the video and mimic the mayhem of her performances. Smith's tricky voice-over confuses the tense of the video, making it the present. Prouvost addresses the audience and then collages us into signifier confusion. Trecartin's overwhelming speedy edits, make something new, something we are only seeing for the first time. Nothing is complete or stable. Rather than travel through a transparent screen to the content of video, we come up against the video and encounter it as an object. It is immediately in front of me. All the works have presence.

It is worth noting that there have been live events that have happened immediately in front of me, that didn't have a live mode of address. A recent performance by Eddie Peake, entitled *Amidst A Sea Of Flailing High Heels and Cooking Utensils, part 1* (2012) at Tate Modern,[23] was a meticulously choreographed dance routine where the slick dancers perfectly synchronised their gold-painted nubile bodies. I overheard someone in the audience criticise the event as not being 'live' enough. I understood what they meant but I'm sure Peake would have taken this as a

[23] *Amidst A Sea Of Flailing High Heels and Cooking Utensils, part 1,* Eddie Peake, The Tanks, Tate Modern, London, 21st July 2012.

complement. This performance was so scrubbed and polished, so structured and disciplined it became a surface; maybe we were watching a computer-generated animation, devoid of any life? Indeed in an online video interview accompanying the performance, Peake outlines hopes he has for this works: 'I'd like to think that the audience is left with a set of images in their head.'[24] We are knowingly pushed by Peake into a position of detachment. This is a spectacle where our reaction and purpose it to observe; we are vessels of reception. There is not a process for us to enter into. This is fixed.

John Smith's film delivers an explicit presentation of a process, which synchronises the viewer with the artist. Smith would have watched the film we are watching in order to script the voice-over. We are positioned with the act of production. John Smith sets up a process, but the film's content depends on who will walk down the road next. The image is out of his control. Chetwynd's, Prouvost's and Trecartin's works are differently precarious, one blink and we might have missed something. Due to their detail, these works are contingent on the attention of the viewer and will vary accordingly.

Many video works from the 1970's employ video's ability to provide live feedback. This is unquestionably live. I am interested in lens-based works where the content has unquestionably already happened. Through conceptual and physical ideas the videos or photographs rupture the link with the past. Video and photography become material to work in, rather than on. You can get stuck into it, rather than polish the surface. This is something else which links all the above works. All the artist's hands are made dirty from touching their work. They are all in their videos. Smith and Prouvost are voice-overs, authenticating their presence behind the camera. Trecartin and Chetwynd are in their videos, covered in strange make up and performing. To the viewer it speaks of a desire to collapse distance and connect with us eyeball to eyeball.

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[24] TateShots, *Eddie Peake*, July 2012,
URL http://www.tate.org.uk/context-comment/video/tateshots-eddie-peake [January 2013]

Please now watch

Chasing Animals

on the DVD provided.

Chapter Two: How To Do Things With Cameras

During the 1950's, J. L. Austin introduced the notion of performative speech through his series of lectures *How To Do Things With Words*. Speech had been thought of as descriptive, offering facts that could be found to be true of false. Austin noticed that there were types of statements that don't describe but *do* things. 'I promise you I won't eat all the biscuits'. There are words such as 'promise', 'bet', 'declare' that I actually have to say in order to carry out the task inherent to the sentence. 'I bet you she eats all the biscuits'. Here language creates the reality it describes. I actually undertake an action with words. 'These linguistic phenomena which Austen termed "performatives" could best be interpreted as actions rather than being decoded as meanings'.[25] They are *reality producing* rather than *reality describing*. Austin's theories around performative speech have been an important tool for examining the artworks that make up this PhD.

Since its invention we have assigned the camera the job of describing. We understand that the camera relays visual information that truthfully describes the scene it depicts in the images it makes. Descriptions can be verified and checked against the referent. Actions, however, don't have a referent and cannot be true or false. If a camera's outputs were not interpreted as descriptions, but instead were experienced as actions, would this engender a live mode of address? Can Austin's demands for language be aligned with my demands for a live mode of address? How can a camera produce reality and not describe it? Maybe, as with performative speech, when the camera is being used to do something. A camera therefore needs an action to undertake.

Chasing Animals (2008 – 2010) is a series of five videos. Filmed in Wales, I would have my video camera with me at all times. Travelling around I came across a range of animals; sheep in an open field, wild ponies on the moor, seagulls on a beach, geese by a pond and rabbits all over the place. Each time I saw a set of different animals, I set myself the task of creeping up on these animals, trying to capture

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[25] David Green and Joanna Lowry, 'From Presence to the Performative: Rethinking Photographic Indexicality' in David Green (ed) *Where is the Photograph* (Photoworks and Photoforum, 2003), p.52.

them looking at me, then running at them with my video camera. This was executed with varying degrees of success, taking into account factors such as fear (I'm very scared of horses), rough terrain and bad weather. The videos are reasonably stable until the animal sees the camera, whence the chase begins and the image gets thrown about as the camera goes into pursuit. The animals don't always look in the direction of the camera and it is hard to tell where sea gulls are even looking. There is mostly visual chaos, far removed from the careful high definition of nature documentaries. They are a series of attempts that result in blurred, noisy, jumpy videos, although I think in all of them you understand my mission. The *Chasing Animals* (2008-2010) videos are in real time and unedited. They were exhibited in 2010 at The Agency Gallery, London.[26] Displayed on cube monitors, placed on wood plinths, the videos were on a loop.

Through nominating a process that explicitly has a camera as its engine, the *Chasing Animals* (2008 – 2010) videos aren't evidence of something happening, *they are the thing happening*. Rather than the camera and its recording capacity remaining external to the content of the work, it *is* the content of the work. Yet rather than the camera filming itself, appearing in the film, it films its presence via its influence on the scene. It records the movement and impact it has on a landscape, and it offers itself up though the difficulties of capturing these things. My starting thought for this work was a desire to make something where the camera crashed into the images it was producing, where the subject of the video gets destroyed or damaged by the camera's presence. If we could think more of the camera as an active, rather than passive, recording device we would be more alert to the influence the camera might have on its outputs and therefore counter them more actively ourselves. If we don't think the camera is passively slurping up reality, laid out on a plate for it, but performing an action that has repercussions - that it could change or even damage what is in front of it - then we might think differently about the camera.

A similar aesthetic is found in Steve McQueen's video *Catch* (1997). McQueen's short video is made by playing catch with the camera. It is thrown between him and

[26] *Running and Standing*, Emma Hart and Melanie Stidolph, The Agency, London, 10th January - 19th February 2010.

his sister, as each one catches it, they it briefly point it at other. The motion of the camera renders the same type of images as when the camera is being used to charge at animals. Blurry lines and strips of light flash past as the camera spins out of human control. T.J. Demos writes in his essay on Steve McQueen:

> Even though the indecipherable lights and streaking colours index things in the world, the camera's inability to record them in any legible way reflexively elicits the specificity of video's technical support by touching on its very limits.[27]

He goes on to comment:

> This materialization results from the dislodging of signifier from referent, which estranges both, and from the subsequent rupture of the viewer's identification with the camera's vision, breaking its naturalisation as a form of human perception.[28]

This break with human vision is important. As outlined in *Holes: A Lecture* (2008-2012), cameras are not an equivalent to the human eye. The photograph is an index of the light present at the scene it photographed - light rays were reflected from the objects and landscape in front of the camera, bounced into the lens and fell on a sensor which took a precise record of this. A mechanical apparatus was present in a place, affecting (even destroying) the subject it goes on to record. It opened and closed a small mechanical hole for a split second. The problem with this is not the science - this is absolutely what happened - but how that indexical relationship has lent on our understanding of the photograph, pressurising us to always ask 'what's it of?' when we could ask 'what's it doing?'

In both *Chasing Animals* (2008 – 2010) and McQueen's *Catch* (1997) the videos are doing things rather than describing things. How we respond to an action is different to how we respond to information. Actions and descriptions have a different temporality. Rather than looking through the work to the content, we

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[27] T.J. Demos, *The Art of Darkness: On Steve McQueen,* October, Vol.114, Autumn 2005, p.67-68.
[28] *Ibid,* p.68.

physically experience the work. Although they potentially have a live mode of address, the display of *Chasing Animals* (2008 – 2010) was very different to *Catch* (1997). *Chasing Animals* (2008 – 2010) was played back on four television monitors and *Catch* was projected very large. *Chasing Animals* (2008 – 2010) was not made with an exhibition opportunity in mind, yet this missing consideration – how the work is to be displayed - might be its biggest contribution. On subsequently being offered an exhibition, my quickly arrived at mode of display was to play the videos on 21" cube monitors, with purpose made plinths which had legs (like animals). The videos became human sized, and could be walked around, but this encroachment into space was not enough. The *Chasing Animals* (2008 – 2010) videos slunk firmly back into the screen. They were encountered as evidence of a past event. They were caged by the television frame.

I was introduced to Austin's work through the essay *From Presence to the Performative: Rethinking Photographic Indexicality* by David Green and Joanna Lowry. Green and Lowry's essay is written in 2003 and takes its cue from the hysteria induced by the shift from silver based photography to digital technology, a move then cited as 'the death of photography'. It was felt photographs would forever more be manipulated (as if they weren't before?) and photography's mainline to the truth, strapped-up on its indexical workings, would collapse. Finally, at last, we would need to reconsider our reliance on the objective nature of the photograph. Sadly this hasn't happened, but happily the photograph didn't die. It is alive and kicking. My research, along with Green and Lowry's, agrees with most camera users in not differentiating between digital and silver based film and photography. Green and Lowry argue that instead of the digital revolution prompting a rethink of photography's indexicality, it is Austin's notion of 'performativity' that provides a reason to look again. Through Austin, Green and Lowry offer another way of understanding the photograph's indexicality, which they test out against the documentary use of photography by many conceptual artists in the 1970s.

> It will be obvious that our extension of the notion of the performative statement to include the photographic act is intended to foreground the idea of a gesture, a matter of pointing to something, that is similarly grounded in the specificity of a

> particular time and place. Yet, what is important here is that in formulating the issue in these terms, we must avoid the trap of inadvertently reinstating the idea of the photographic document, that is as the truthful record of something that *has* happened [...] Performativity we are arguing was central to the use made of photography by the conceptual artists not so much for the fact that it provided the spectator with an indexical trace of the real through the recording of the event, but because it deictically invoked the real through 'pointing to' the event and, in effect, declaring it to be the case.[29]

The gesture of pointing at something is tied to a particular time and space in the same way taking a photograph is. We usually point at things that we are aware of, but it is the act of pointing that brings the object pointed to into our experience. A pointed finger will always direct us towards something. Green and Lowry propose the photograph 'designates the real, rather than representing it'. The camera has recorded not how the world was, or how we would have seen it had we been there, but what happened when the camera was pointed at something and declared it to exist. Declaring something to exist, brings that thing into existence. Declaring is a performative act. The camera is *in* the world, transforming the world it points towards; it cannot remain outside of a scene, remotely witnessing.

In arguing that conceptual photographers of the 1970's such as Douglas Huebler and John Hilliard used photography performatively, Green and Lowry write, 'furthermore, the photographs themselves were not merely the residue of that process but constituted its actual realisation.'[30] This resonates with *Chasing Animals* (2008-2010), where the camera is not recording an event; it is the event. In *Chasing Animals* (2008-2010), the camera charges into the space of the frame, it does not glide over it. The camera is removed from the eye; I am running looking down into the camera. The camera becomes closer to a force to follow, rather than a machine to see through.

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[29] David Green and Joanna Lowry, 'From Presence to the Performative: Rethinking Photographic Indexicality' in David Green (ed) *Where is the Photograph* (Photoworks and Photoforum, 2003), p.57 - 58.
[30] *Ibid*, p.49.

One of the examples Green and Lowry use in presenting their theory raises questions as to my alignment of the performative use of the camera and a live mode of address. Made in 1969, Robert Barry's *Inert Gas Series* is a series of photographs taken in California. If the title is not read, they might be seen to be a series of black and white landscapes. But once *Inert Gas Series: Helium, 1969. On the morning of March 6, 1969, somewhere in the Mojava Desert in California, 2 cubic feet of helium were returned to the atmosphere*, has been taken in; we get it. Barry sets free, or says he sets free, inert gases in to the atmosphere and then takes a photograph of them. The inert gasses are invisible. They can't be seen by the naked eye or registered by lens-based technology. We do not know if the photographs are really photographs of gases being released or not, for us there is no difference visually between these two things.

> While providing us with the indexical trace of the moment of the gas's release they also gesture towards the impossibility of recording it, and our attention shifts instead towards the act of photography itself as the moment of authentification. Thus the photograph is not intended so much to denote the inert gas that cannot be seen, as to point us towards it and in that process of pointing declare its existence. The intended effect of the photographic statement is to produce our belief in the existence of this invisible phenomenon, rather than simply witness it being there.[31]

I would have used John Baldessari's work as an example of the performative use of the camera, more exciting and richer in terms of the questions raised by my research. From 1972-1973 Baldessari made many works using a ball and a camera as his materials. *Trying to Photograph A Ball So That It Is In The Center Of The Picture* is the best example for this analysis. It has the word 'photograph' in the title and is structured and made through the viewfinder of a camera. The camera creates the arena in which the ball game takes place - without the camera there would be no event because the work needs the camera arena to play in. This work throws up the idea of photography as an act and it lands, smack, into the viewer. Robert Barry's

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[31] *Ibid*, p.50 – 51.

Inert Gas Series (1969) by contrast is a clever test of the photographic document, but the camera is there for the sole purpose of documentation. In Baldessari's work the camera creates the space in which the art happens. The split second capture of the camera provides something we would not have seen if we had been there looking skywards without a camera. It is only the camera's framing and shutter speed that produces the idea. Baldessari had a much looser hold on what the images would look like; he doesn't need them to look a certain way. He can wait until after they are made to see what they bring forth. It is out of his control. Barry, on the other hand, has set up the whole situation (bought the right gases etc.) and he knows exactly what it will look like before he begins. Baldessari's series is a collection of attempts that build on each other to reveal the struggles and difficulties with undertaking this action. The notion of series is central to the idea. Barry's series does not accumulate to impact on the idea. Nothing is further gained from seeing more than one of them. Margaret Iverson commenting on Green and Lowry's writes that there is more to performative photography than the declarative pointing of Robert Barry. 'Rather, the camera is treated like an instrument of discovery, such as a telescope.'[32]

The eponymous artwork of this essay by Iverson is Vito Acconci's *Following Piece,* an artwork made by following someone. Made in 1969 Acconci is classed as being in the same conceptual art generation as Baldessari and Barry. Iverson writes:

> I conclude that the condition under which photography became acceptable to this generation of artists was as part of a performance executed with a set of instructions or simple brief.[33]

As well as the use of the camera another difference is whether there is a process being undertaken where the results or outcome are unknown. Whether the brief is initiated to find something out, or whether it is to prove something. It is Barry's tight grip on the outcome of his *Inert Gas Series* (1969), his certainty of what will happen, that ensures the viewer discovers nothing, they just acknowledge his clever idea. If they don't then it will be the viewer that got it wrong, not Barry. There is

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[32] Margaret Iverson 'Following Pieces' in James Elkins (ed) *Photography Theory* (Routledge, 2007), p.93.
[33] *Ibid*, p.96

nothing at stake for Barry. In complete contrast Acconci's brief for *Following Piece* (1969) demands he relinquishes control.

> Acconci set himself the task of following a randomly selected stranger walking in the street while remaining unobserved. The task ended when the person entered a private space. The performance was repeated everyday for three weeks in October 1969.[34]

Yet these simple, but risky, instructions do not mention a camera. Iverson says the photographic element of this work was an 'afterthought', the camera was not being used as a tool of discovery but as a way to disseminate the following performance. Any photographs that I have traced of this work have been from a later stage in the project when Acconci employed a photographer to follow him following people. These would be accompanied with hand written timetables of what happened. Even in this work, there seems to be a gap between the performative action of the work and the more passive action of viewing. Yet the description Iverson offers of performative photography sounds exciting, it sounds part of a live mode of address:

> What distinguishes this work is its reorientation of the use of photography away from recording something constituted in advance and toward using it as an instrument of analysis, discovery or measurement.[35]

Iverson describes two more Acconci works, which seem to resonate more with this description. *Blinks* (1969) is an instruction piece, where Acconci walks down the street and takes a photograph every time he blinks. The camera reveals something Acconci did not see. For *Lay of the Land* (1969), Acconci lies down (one version is made in Central Park, New York) and removes the camera from his eye, placing it instead to look out from his feet, knees, stomach, chest and head. Moving the camera from being in front of the eye, so what it points at can't be verified or witnessed, is important. (I did the same thing in *Chasing Animals.*) The resulting photographs are unforeseeable:

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[34] *Ibid*, p.99
[35] *Ibid*, p.101

> The photographs collaged together become, then, something more like the result of an experiment, rather than the representation of an object. This is close to Austin's definition of an utterance that does something rather than reports it, or as Acconci nicely put it 'not of an action, but through an action.'[36]

Austin's *How to Do Things With Words* is a series of lectures brought together and published in 1962. Not originally perceived as a book, the lectures trace and work through Austin's ideas as he himself works things out. The book is a journey rather than a summary and there are twists and turns. The last one being that Austin went on to understand that his simple and clear definition of performative speech 'doing something by saying something', is not very precise. When we say 'there is a horse' we are not just describing something, we are making a statement and making a statement is *doing* something. Austin concludes we are always to a lesser or greater degree doing something with words. Then there is the thorny issue of saying something, but meaning something else. For example 'Are there any biscuits?' is often intended to not elicit a yes or a no, but to actually get the biscuits passed over. Austin broke it down into further definitions: 'Locution' refers to the literal meaning of a sentence; 'illocution' refers to the desired effect the speaker wants to achieve; and 'perlocution' refers to the *actual effect of the utterance upon the audience.* In their essay, Green and Lowry casually dismiss the impact of 'perlocutionary force':

> In other words one of the most important strategies adopted by conceptual artists can be thought of as a speech act (whether that act carried what Austin called 'perlocutionary force' – that is whether anyone believed what they were saying –is, of course, another matter entirely).[37]

They are only looking at this from the point of view of the artist; the affect on the viewer and the encounter of the work or its perlocutionary force is unfortunately

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[36] *Ibid*, p.101

[37] David Green and Joanna Lowry, 'From Presence to the Performative: Rethinking Photographic Indexicality' in David Green (ed) *Where is the Photograph* (Photoworks and Photoforum, 2003), p.53.

dismissed. Yet it is here that I think a live mode of address along with its relation to performativity is to be further defined. To have an affect the work has to reach beyond its own frame of reference and enter the viewer's time and space. I need to feel its perlocutionary force. I am not sure that any of the works above, even the performative *Following Pieces* (1969) and *Chasing Animals* (2008-2010) have perlocutionary force. The nagging voice of indexical convention can always taint our encounter with videos or photographs. Our understanding of how photography and video works, will limit every time our response to lens-based work. Even when looking at Baldessari's *Trying to Photograph A Ball So That It Is In The Center Of The Picture* (1972 – 1973) made so clearly through action, the fact that they are photographs of a certain size on the wall can be a barrier, if I let it, to feeling the perlocutionary force of his action. I see a lens-based image and always think I understand what it is and how it was made. I automatically try and frame it by asking 'what's it of?'

Describing the projection of Steve McQueen's *Catch* (1997) on to an entire gallery wall, T.J.Demos writes:

> Catch produces a physical experience of nauseas disequilibrium, where the sudden shifts from stasis to jarring movement dislocate one's sense of stability. The video's visual distortions counter the illusionistic basis of conventional forms of the medium, and its emphasis on the physicality of the spectator countervails the disembodied, passive subject of classic cinema's virtual experience.[38]

This action of the camera renders a work that is raw and immediate, that leaves the time and space of its making (its ties to this were already broken by the camera referring to its own vision and not describing a scene) and enters the viewer's time and space of viewing. This work has a live mode of address, as it chucks out images beyond its frame. This is the opposite of an immersive filmic experience, what T.J.Demos describes as 'cinema's virtual experience', where the viewer enters the

[38] T.J. Demos, *The Art of Darkness: On Steve McQueen* October, Vol.114, Autumn 2005, p.68.

time and space of the film and gets drawn into a situation, forgetting their own temporality, spatial position and even political position.

Another work that drives out beyond the frame, is Smith/Stewart's *Ahead* (2000).[39] Projected onto the entire wall of a room, it is a black and white film. The viewpoint is from within a car looking out of the front windscreen. The artists are driving at night on a deserted country road, with no street lighting. The headlights of the car are on, and then suddenly the brave or mad driver switches them off, plunging themselves and the viewer in the gallery into complete darkness. I suddenly try to remember if there were other people in the room watching the film; am I on my own in this dark? The nervous breathing of the artists as they experience the blackness from within their car, does not help, or is it my own nervous breathing I am hearing? Their darkness has crawled out of their film and is here engulfing me. The artists drive ahead, for as long as they dare, into the pitch black. When they get too scared, they switch the lights back on. Both *Crash* (1997) and *Ahead* (2000) are large projections that rely on huge fields of projected light. This of course affects the entire room it is installed in, but I think the experience of both works would be the same if they were smaller. It is their negation of representation that gives them presence. Both blur and blackness depict nothing, or do not refer to something. You do not represent darkness; you produce it. You do not represent blur; you produce it. A live mode of address is produced.

Anri Sala's solo exhibition at the Serpentine Gallery in 2011 was performative. Sala is interested in sound; specifically its translation and its influence on space and through creating films and musical scores the effect of sound can be examined. The punched card that is fed through music boxes is a recurring theme. It is also the same paper technology used when factory workers clock in and out. A very large replica of one of these cards has blocked the long windows of the gallery. The space is pierced with light as it comes through the holes in the massive card. Each room at the gallery housed a large projected video work, but rather than being on continuously, the videos came on and off, moving the viewer around the space. The gallery space is orchestrated or played. The film works are in concert. They repeat,

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[39] *Ahead*, 2000, Smith/Stewart exhibited at Milton Keynes Gallery 31st January – 21st March, 2004.

alternate, and clash, with different formations and rhythms occurring. There is also a regular performance from a saxophonist, who clocks in and improvises along to a film of him playing the saxophone. He duets with his image. Joshua Simon writes in the exhibition catalogue: 'As the work unfolds in space, we find ourselves in need of a vocabulary to name the new potentials that they bring.'[40] I feel this overstates Sala's deceptively simple exhibition format, but another explanation of Sala's installation method would be that it is an exhibition in process; it is not fixed. It fluctuates depending on attendance at the gallery, or whether people are taking part in the proposed shifting. I understand this process as going beyond the frame, in that the works do not have an entirety or limit. Their edges are blurred with before and after. It is through the frame that we get a handle on the work and we can step back and contemplate it. If we can see the edges of the work we know its limits, we know its territory and how it maps out. The live mode of address exists when the work is out of our control and can't be entirely known.

Laure Provoust's work bombards us with images; we can't keep up, we can't take it all in, until it points at us. In many of her videos, and here specifically *It, Heat Hit* (2010) Laure Provoust directly addresses the viewer with subtitles 'you climb but you reach the ceiling of this room' flashes up on the screen. 'They are looking for you', we read. The video lifts its messy head and fixes me in its gaze. I don't really believe that the work can see me, yet I'm happy to go along with the superficial agency the direct address it creates. I know that it speaks to everyone like this, but I still feel touched. The work doesn't know I am here but the artist has made the work knowing someone will be. There is a real 'you' in the artist's mind, and I, at this moment of viewing, will put a face to that part. The direct address is more than a linguistic device; it is a spatial manoeuvre, extending the projected video off the wall and into the room. *It, Heat, Hit* (2010) is operating out of its projected frame and has come to meet someone much like me. Dorothea von Hantelmann provides a useful insight in her examination of James Coleman's *Box* (1977) (a work I've not seen) and one that also addresses the viewer directly. She writes: 'By using such dialogues that seems to address the spectator directly, Coleman opens up the representational level of his work to the situation that is presented.'[41]

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[40] Joshua Simon, *Anri Sala* exhibition catalogue, Serpentine Gallery, London, 1 October - 20 November 2011. p.31.
[41] Dorothea von Hantelmann, *How to Do Things with Art* (JRP Ringie, 2010), p.30.

The direct address can of course be made physical and in 1971 Vito Acconci's video *Centers* involves him holding out his arm, pointing at the centre of the camera for 20 minutes - an endurance feat, which takes its toll - and his finger wavers as his strength does. Initially his arm is straight out obscuring his face, and by the end it sags a little. Nevertheless, the point is made and it forces a line straight from him, through the camera, through the screen and out from the video to the viewer. 'Centers connects to his viewer in the present tense [...] Acconci's gesture says, inescapably, this is going on – I am pointing at you, now.'[42]

Rather than picking out the viewer as a viewer, my research has a different ambition for that role. My aim is to bring the artist and the viewer closer together and to synchronise the viewer with the artist on the side of production (behind the camera), not on the side of product or its reception (in front of the video). Not 'hey you viewer, be a viewer!' but 'hey you viewer, be a producer!' My strategy with *Chasing Animals* (2008 – 2010) and the following work *LOST* (2009-2011) is to relinquish a type of control in the production of the work, so that shot in real time, the images I see for the first time on the video screen when making the work, are the same images that the viewer sees for the first time when viewing the work. The video is new to both of us. But now I need to add in to my practice a consideration of the works 'perlocutionary force'. The form or frame of the video or photograph needs to be broken out of.

[42] William Kaizen, 'Live on Tape: Video, Liveness and the Immediate' in Tanya Leighton (ed) *Art and the Moving Image: A Critical Reader* (Tate Publishing, 2008), p.270.

Please now watch

LOST

on the DVD provided.

Discussion Two: *LOST*

16/10/2012

START AUDIO

Dean: Is this recording?

Emma: Go.

Dean: Well, I was thinking about John Smith's 'Hotel Diaries', I was thinking there's a little bit of a connection between that and the 'Lost' work. He's in a quite mundane situation, which is a not too luxurious, stopover hotel place. There's enough of a vulnerability of his own presence there, so although he's rehearsed it - and when he was in that symposium that you organised he talked about the fact that he did it three times before he got it right - it's supposed to look a little bit spontaneous, like he's just gone out and recorded this thing. That's what gives it that human quality which I always think about your work, your videos; it always has that human quality. So although there is an intelligence about the medium that you're both using, there's still a vulnerability or a humanity. Like his own presence or his own voice, in the sense of either not being totally in control, or not being out of control in the sense that there's a conceptual schema to not have to worry about being out of control. I'm not expressing myself very clearly, but (Laughter)...

Emma: You're doing all right.

Dean: Something about that, that's what gives it, I would say, a charm, actually. It's not cold, there's a warmness to it

because he's present. When he does that thing in the lift where he starts talking about going to the Jewish Museum and stuff, that is really, potentially, a really shit thing to do. It could easily be really naff or potentially overloaded with the political message or point he's trying to make. He's on that edge and I think that's why it's nice, even though he made it three times to get that, he hasn't killed that real element of it in the process.

Emma: Yes.

Dean: (Laughter).

Emma: There is a lot of zooming in. It's all about the camera. I wonder if there's a connection between these works because of the way we're both holding the camera?

Dean: It's weird, because when I was just talking about it now, without seeing the footage or anything, I'd forgotten that. We see his film through the camera, don't we? Everything is him viewing the camera. I wasn't imagining that, I was imagining him walking down the corridor. I was actually imagining seeing him walking down the corridor.

Emma: No, no. You see him once, in a mirror, but he is always behind the camera.

Dean: Yes, yes.

Emma: There are eight 'Hotel Diary' videos.

Dean: I've only seen one... I'll tell you what it's like, it's like when you have a strong memory of something when you were young. When you were a child or something. You see

yourself in the picture, so you see your sitting room, or something, at home...

Emma: With you in it? That doesn't happen to me.

Dean: Well, let's say you remembered, I don't know, Christmas dinner or something like that. How would you remember that? You would, without drawing a picture, without having a photograph of it, somehow you're imagining yourself in the space next to these other people.

Emma: Oh, I think...

Dean: You're not seeing it through your eyeballs.

Emma: I disagree. I think what you've done there is you have seen a photo of yourself at Christmas dinner. In your family album at home there is a photo...

Dean: (Laughter).

Emma: No, I'm serious. There's a photo of you eating Christmas dinner and, actually, you're remembering the photo.

Dean: I don't know if you always have a photo for that particular occasion.

Emma: I bet these particular ones that you're remembering, where you see yourself, are because you've seen photos that you are in. The camera fundamentally changed how we author memories. I am serious in that point, I bet you there's a photo of you eating Christmas dinner and you think it's a memory but actually it's not, you're remembering the photo.

Dean: Yes, but how would you remember something where you don't have a photo?

Emma: Well I remember it in the first person. I remember it from my eyes.

Dean: Well if you're looking at the peas and the carrots and the potatoes?

Emma: (Laughter) I don't remember the peas and the carrots.

Dean: Well that's where you were looking. What I'm saying is...

Emma: Okay, but I remember the look of the fence. I've got a fence that I ran a stick along, "Tick-a-tick-a-tick". Or I remember being...

Dean: But that's very filmic, isn't it?

Emma: I remember being in the playground, I remember when Wayne Martinez threw the mud and it got in my mouth. I remember the mud in my mouth. I don't remember how I looked. Things where I have me in the picture of are definitely memories from photographs. Like the wedding when I was a bridesmaid, dancing with my dad, at seven. I actually only remember the photos. There's a PhD in this, and I bet lots of people have already done PhDs in this.

Dean: When I was just imagining John Smith I didn't actually have a picture in my head of him, but what I'm saying is I also wasn't seeing it in my head as a picture of the screen. So when I'm thinking about your 'Lost' piece, somehow it's weird because the voices are present as people, even though I'm not seeing pictures of...

Emma: No. That's because he is talking about what he is seeing as if he is seeing it for the first time. It's authentic. It's not a voice-over that's been put over afterwards. It's authentic. And also he's talking to you, that is different to 'Lost', I am actually talking to my sister or to Dai. Both are authentic, or they have a sense of being authentic because you do know that the same person who's talking is the same person who's holding the camera. I know what it is, it's this thing again, which we might talk about in a minute, it's that what he's seeing as the artist is what you're seeing as the viewer.

Dean: Yes.

Emma: What he's seeing is what you're seeing, so you're joined at that moment of sharing.

Dean: Yes, yes.

Emma: You know it's what he's seeing because he's talking about it. In 'Lost' we're both seeing the same thing, it's not edited, it's in real-time.

Dean: It's not edited afterwards. It's not that place where you can't see the process.

Emma: Yes, exactly.

Dean: You don't see the point where Richard Billingham sits down with Jay Joplin and does the editing.

Emma: Yes. Although he has done it three times, John Smith, but we let that go.

Dean: But then that makes sense that he's done it three times, doesn't it?

Emma: Yes, he has to.

Dean: He has to, because he can't make it all right in the editing room afterwards.

Emma: Exactly.

Dean: You have to be seeing the exact same scene that he's seeing at that particular moment.

Emma: Yes. We're all joined. He collapses time.

Dean: Which is really just like loads of home videos, isn't it?

Emma: Yes.

Dean: So what's the difference?

Emma: Well they both have an amateurism. I would say both 'Hotel Diaries' and 'Lost' have a kind of amateurism to them which is also, again, something around authenticity which...

Dean: I would say there's something in both cases that is not trying to get rid of that home video thing... It is set up as an artwork rather than the usual subjects of...

Emma: That's to do with content.

Dean: Content, yes.

Emma: Yes. Especially 'Lost', 'Lost' is all about being in the home... It is a real home video, just a weird one.

Dean: Yes, it's a home video. You could probably look at that and be quite nostalgic about it.

Emma: Also, John Smith's is just a holiday video. Both settings, hotels and homes, are places where anyone might want to start making a video.

Dean: Yes.

Emma: Home and away. That's what he is, he's on holiday, essentially. He's just bored in his hotel room. Not bored, but we understand the situation the work comes out of.

Dean: That's part of his everyday life, isn't it, because he started making them because he was staying at loads of hotels.

Emma: Yes.

Dean: And your everyday life is Lost...

Emma: "Oh my God, where have I put my watch?"

Dean: Yes. You live in a messy flat and...

Emma: "When are you going to push the hoover around?" (Laughter).

Emma: Yes.

Dean: Okay. Can you turn it off for a second?

Emma: Yes okay, I'll get you a drink.

END AUDIO

START AUDIO

Dean: I mean I suppose there's that thing about – it wasn't totally clear to me whether you had organised Lost as an artwork, or whether it became an artwork afterwards. I mean there's this thing in your work from the Holes piece, and other stuff you've done, what you talk about in the Holes piece is that part of your life is that you carry a camera around, and then you do things like if you see an animal you'll follow it.

Emma: Yes.

Dean: If you see a hole you'll photograph it. If you're in a cafe you'll make a car crash scene or something.

Emma: In Lost, a bit like John Smith, we do try a few things over again. But within the course of the film Lucy actually realises that she's lost her iPod – because I'm looking for my watch and then there's a bit in the film when she says, "Actually I have lost my iPod". She's saying, "I know we're doing this art thing Emma, but could we look for my iPod as well?" She doesn't seriously mean it because she thinks we are making art but we do actually find her iPod!

Dean: Right, yes. Amazing.

Emma: It's amazing. So there's a lot of screaming at the end – something really does happen, so after we knew it really worked we did it lots of times for really lost things.

Dean: Well was that just an experiment that you did that it happened to involve a camera, then you decided that it would be art afterwards? Or did you say, "Okay I'm making an art piece now and this is what we're going to do?" and everyone knew what you were doing?

Emma: No, I was just trying to find a new use for the camera. I'd lost my watch and I wanted to look down the back of the radiator. So I realised I could do it with my camera. Then it took a lot of goes, it took three years. We just had this agreement, me and Lucy, that – well originally it was an agreement that everytime we lost something we would look for it with the camera, but then it really was actually useful. It actually really, really worked, so then we just started doing it.
So, I suppose it was always an artwork, but I never thought maybe a public one. I was genuinely just trying to work out what else can cameras do, although I wouldn't have hit record you see if it wasn't going to be an artwork. I just need the function of the camera to help us see, I don't have to press record.

Dean: But I think maybe that's what's successful about it, a separation between your professional art life and some other kind of life, whether it's a domestic life or working wherever you'd be working. So, in that way it does seem quite experimental and a little bit like, I don't know, there's a certain... it's not bounded by any rules. So, it is open and there's a way in for someone watching it, which is where these other things come into it, these other voices and who they are, what's going on and what's been found and stuff.

Emma: Yes. John Smith too does it. He manages to reflect on the medium. He makes films about films, yet he does it with a lightness of touch or humanity.

Dean: I reckon he doesn't do it in the third person, he does it in the first person.

Emma: Well I was doing it in the first person.

Dean: Yes. You do it in the first person as well. All I'm drawing attention to is the fact that a lot of - I would think a lot of certain types of video art operate in the third person.

Emma: Well again this is not that relevant for my PhD, but I personally don't like art that doesn't use the first person, or isn't from the first person. I don't understand it. If it's not from the first person, who does the artist think they are? God or someone beaming their voice in? I don't understand it.

Dean: Because sometimes it seems that the camera, whether it's a still camera or a video camera, is exactly the way to do that isn't it? It's exactly the way to make something objective in other words, but the way you always use the camera is, we're always aware that it's you using the camera. You've done that in various different ways. So with the Holes thing that is communicated through the narrative, which actually tells a story of where you were when you did this, the process that you were doing. Whereas in the Lost video, we have your live voice at the time of filming, so again we're aware that it's you doing the zoom. I mean that seems like a really important factor.

Emma: There's bits in Lost when Lucy says, "Zoom in Em" or "Focus a bit Em" so it's all there, you know it's definitely me behind the camera. So she says, "Zoom in" and I zoom in.

Dean: She's looking at the screen.

Emma: Yes, which is exactly the same, apart from in scale, as the screen that the viewer is looking at.

Dean: Yes

Emma: You know it's me behind the camera, and you can easily see that it's not been edited. You subconsciously understand that what you're seeing is exactly what I was seeing, or we were seeing. So we all join together: me, Lucy and then the viewer, we're all joined in watching this thing. I have no idea what's under the sofa. I mean sometimes nothing and sometimes just a box of matches. So it's not even like I know what's going to happen on the screen. I am a viewer; I'm just a viewer too – I've set up a process, what happens is unknown, me and the viewer are in exactly the same position. When artists forget to mention that it's them that made the artwork, and it's just a thing that one person or a few people made, I don't understand what's going through their minds. Why they would want to remove themselves from it? What do they think? It should be encountered as if it naturally occurred?

Dean: Well you're not trying to pretend that there isn't a subjective agency behind this and that happens to be a normal human being. There's a way in which the artist can be there, which isn't narcissistic, but it's more about demonstrating that art is an activity that a person does, and that can be any particular person.

Emma: Yes. I mean I do cringe when I watch Lost.

Dean: Exactly.

Emma: It's very embarrassing. The video was also meant to be a bit crude and disgusting and brutal and also this is where I live, this is how I lived. This is a shitty council flat.

Dean: I read recently somebody wrote about your work, "Emma Hart trips over the gap between how we experience the world and the way life is captured in photographs". I wondered what you thought about that, if you agreed with that?

Emma: (Laughter)
That's what I wrote.
(Laughter)
But that's really where I feel I'm at the moment; that is what's fuelling this PhD. I think that really goes to the essence or the heart of what this PhD is about. Visual culture just smoothes everything over. We did speak about it in the last conversation we had, where I was going on about how having a camera is really stressful. I find making photographs is very, very stressful and obviously none of that ever really makes it in. Photographs are just much smaller than life. Well in Holes they're much bigger, but they cut off at the edges and they just allow us to calmly consume things, even photographs of disasters or videos on the news give us bite-size chunks. We're able to manage the stuff that the photographs are made from. It's getting worse. I mean I don't want to talk too much about the digital age, but for me, the discrepancy is getting bigger between the manic chaos of real life and the difference between the way it's managed in symbols.

I'm just trying to put the dirt back into photography or video really, just trying to mess it up. It was one of the things I was thinking about with Lost: how can you make a messy video? How can you make an unfinished video? How can you make a video that's in process or is a bit chaotic? It's actually really difficult because the camera or the video smoothes everything over like one big sander, it just makes it all surface. Even photographs of messy places, or videos of messy places become not messy anymore. So how can you really speak of dirt, or how could a video stain you? This is some of the stuff I was thinking about. How can you have a video that's unfinished? How can the camera really be a tool and not an outcome? Or how can the video be a tool and not an outcome which is pinned down and done and dusted? Or not dusted in the case of Lost. But this was some of the questions. How can it be a raw presence directly in front of you?

Dean: So there seems to be two ways that you do that in Lost. One of them is by using zoom, and the other way is in the way that you actually set up the installation itself was to be very big and have you very, very close so you literally didn't have any distance?

Emma: Well, yes. I was thinking about that when we use the word close up, we don't actually mean close to the viewer, or even close to the camera, just zoomed in. So I suppose I was thinking about that, that close ups actually mean we're still quite far away, and that distancing is part of this smoothing over process that a camera does, it doesn't really put us in it. I also wanted to make a video that, if we accidentally touched the screen we might be worried that some of it leaked out on to us. So what I did for Lost was make a very large screen, that it's only ever a metre away from the viewer– look at the

pictures. We can't take a wide view on it, the viewer can't step back. We have quite a specific way of looking at art, which is to stand back and contemplate, and it comes back to owning and consuming. But what if you're really forced close to it? I wanted to just overwhelm the viewer so that they can't take it all in. So you can't really see what the video is of.

Dean: It's not scenic, there's no...

Emma: It's a double close up anyway and then it's...

Dean: Something interesting, I mean it's just something I thought of really which is this idea of consumption, because on the one hand, and I totally agree with what you're saying, you're talking about a fetishism that happens through photography. So the object becomes almost put in a separate sphere, a bit like the artwork ends up in a white cube gallery, how do you say? Flattened out did you say?

Emma: Yes, smoothed over.

Dean: Smoothed over yes. So all the dust is removed, all the dirt is removed, all the grime is removed. It's interesting now in a way that things like the materials - things like mobile phones are made from, or iPhones are made from, they can't really get dirty. They do look exactly the same six months later than they did six months earlier, unless you've actually dropped it and smashed the screen. They don't scratch, they don't pick up dirt, it's weird. Anyway I'm going off a bit, because the other idea of consumption is it is actually something really dirty because it's about possessing something. Actually it's about eating, it's about digestion, it's about stuffing something in your mouth, and that's interesting in terms of when you're sticking this camera down a crack.

It's really quite dirty and you find stuff and you're wanting this stuff. So it is a bit like when you compare the - in some of your other work - when you compare the camera to a hoover.

Emma: Exactly.

Dean: Which is very similar here, it's sucking stuff up and it is really pure consumption. So I'm just thinking about that, that's almost a contradiction of the society we live in now, which on the one hand is about presenting totally fetishised objects of consumption free of all dirt, free of all human contact, they're these pure sublime objects that you need to have. But the actual desire they're trying to motivate is something really dirty, and it's about grabbing and it's about wanting. You think of things like screen grabs or that language of sucking things up towards you.

Emma: I mean I did think a bit that the camera itself becomes a bit of a wild animal, snuffling about, trying to get into crevices. There's a point where sometimes the camera wouldn't fit into places that I'm trying to ram it into. I'm really robust with my handling of the camera, I don't care; I'm just slinging it around. That's the other thing, you're not supposed to put cameras in dusty places and it's getting very dirty. The camera is being treated quite violently and it all becomes a bit of a wild animal on a hunt for its next kill.

Dean: Yes, it's violent.

Emma: Yes. I liked it, that's why I liked it.

Dean: I liked it as well. That's what you want art to do isn't it?

Emma: Well what I was trying to do, was move the video out of the frame so that it leaves its space and comes into our space. So that it leaves the space of when it was made and comes into the viewer's here and now, it comes into their 'personal space.'

Dean: I quite like that because it's a bit like – maybe we have talked about this before, but that idea of the scenic is that you have a distance.

Emma: Yes, the vista.

Dean: So I mean you could oppose the scene with the obscene, for example where you don't have a distance. But there's another way of thinking about that, which might relate to what you're saying, which is with the scenic what happens is, it allows you to mentally step inside the scene so you can wander around the vista, whatever. You're describing the opposite. So instead of you stepping into the scene, the picture comes out of the frame and steps into your world.

Emma: Yes, that is my aim exactly. The image has left its world and is coming for you in your world.

Dean: That is quite horrific isn't it? That's like those horror films where what's on the TV screen comes out into the real world.

Emma: I wanted it to infect you or make you a bit dirty, rough you up a bit.

Dean: I really felt that by making the screen so big, it made us feel smaller. It actually put us on a similar scale to the objects. I felt a bit like a cockroach, that's what made me feel dirty, is

the fact that I felt like I wasn't in the room beyond, I was down there with all the horrible, nasty stuff under the radiator.

Emma: This is a key work in working out what a live mode of address is. Through synchronising the time of making and time of viewing, I do this thing of putting the artist and the viewer in the same place. So that's one thing. So what the viewer sees for the first time, the artist saw for the first time. Even though those times are separated, that gives the work a liveness of discovery. Two, the other thing that's important about this video is it's a process. It's not a narrative, it's not a story, it's not a document, it's just a byproduct of a process. The camera is really undertaking real work. So you're entering into a process which means that the work isn't received as an outcome, it's received as an action, which is important. What else? The fact that the work can't all be taken in, the fact that the way it's exhibited and the fact it is repulsive, and the way it can't be contemplated, you can't stand back. It's also similar to a live performance. Whilst it's going on you're missing other bits. You can't see it all at once.

Dean: You can't see the whole thing, yes.

Emma: You can't see the whole thing and that's...

Dean: So it's not at your disposal. It comes back to consumption doesn't it because in some way the idea of consumption is that - its about ownership really.

Emma: Yes, but you can't own a performance.

Dean: Yes, but people talk about that in terms of a camera for example. What the camera does is it – when people talk

about the camera turning anything in the world into an object of consumption, what they mean is it puts it at the disposal. So there's a symbolic violence, maybe, which can possibly be related to real violence - maybe we won't go into that.
But you're taking something like the world, which is actually a process of natural forces, social forces, human forces, all this stuff, and you're turning it into an object of consumption. So it's then for the delectation of the person to scan this thing at their leisure. Very much how advertising sells stuff to us and particularly sells things as sex and relations and love as objects detached from the messy reality of living. Sorry that's probably too much, I've gone a bit overboard then but...

Emma: No, you're right. The messy reality of living, that's it really. That's also why it has a live mode of address.

Dean: Yes, because you're not given that distance. We can't watch this at our leisure.

Emma: It's a very physical video. We have physical reactions to the dirt so that too is a physical reaction, that's a live reaction.

Dean: Can we take a break now, I need to go to the toilet?

Emma: Yes.

END AUDIO

Please now watch

A Brecht Play
with
Video Costumes

on the DVD provided.

Chapter Three: Ideas *TO DO*

Working against the traditional dramatic style of theatre, Bertolt Brecht devised a new working theory for his productions. He insisted that the audience would remain critically aware and not get swept up by the suspense or emotional content within a play. In order to enable a space in the production for the audience's self-reflection Brecht employed techniques to remind the audience that they were not watching something natural, but something constructed. He insisted that his productions always be encountered as artifice, and that they would therefore provoke analysis from the audience. Brecht's aim was that this shift from realistically representing the world to a theatre of strangeness would enable people to reconsider all things they found to be natural. This would bring about a readiness to probe the constructs that govern society, such as the class system. Political action was the driving force for his work. If his plays did not have political content, or were not fulfilling a political function, then he would not have pursued these techniques.

Getting the actors to directly address the audience, to stop acting and talk as themselves, was a technique Brecht developed in order that the medium of the theatre not be transparent to the audience. Along with using songs to interrupt the action, or speaking the stage directions out loud, or using text on placards to move the story along, Brecht interrupted the illusion of theatre so that the audience would not get completely absorbed in the narrative of the play, forgetting themselves as critical beings. Brecht thought that a certain type of dramatic theatre results in an audience paralysed with emotions, seduced by the unfolding story and drawn into the world the theatre depicts, rather than considering their own subjectivity and conditions. This resonates with my criticism of the camera being understood as akin to our 'natural' vision. I want to make lens-based artwork that does not draw us into the time and space of what is depicted, but creates a presence that the viewer encounters in their own time and space. Brecht emphasized that the audience's critical faculties become frozen through being only a depository for someone else's story. Dramatic theatre can be a form of escapism, rather than a place for action. There is no perlocutionary force. There is no going beyond the frame. The audience gets lost in the play's content and does not apply any of the narrative to their own struggles and lives. Articulated another way, this can be understood as a response to a lack of a live mode of address.

In considering this point, Brecht's 'Learning Plays' are particularly significant. Written over the period of a decade, starting in the late 1920s they are a radical way of disrupting the conventional separation between the actor and the audience. They were musical, and written in collaboration with composers. Singing was an essential component, not something to hear but instead *to do*, as the participants were the audience – everyone was in the play. The 'Learning Plays' go to the heart of disrupting dramatic theatre, by taking it *out of the theatre.* They go physically beyond the frame of the proscenium arch and out into the world, namely factory canteens, classrooms and workers' choirs. Brecht's target audience was the growing proletariat, maybe new to the theatre, but the people in most need of his revolutionary energy (and what the revolutionary energy of his plays were in most need of). Going further than a change of scene, Brecht's radical work was to write plays that groups of workers found at the factory and with no acting experience could perform. Everyone in the group took part in the play, there was no audience. The emphasis in the performance shifts from the end product of a play, to the process of working on one, and one that could be changed as they worked on it. This process would involve discussions and exchanges of ideas amongst the participants. At the end of the play, Brecht would hand out questionnaires asking for opinions on what aspects could be improved. Rather than entertainment consumption, this was production:

> And most importantly, the central contradiction – that between producers and means of production – is completely erased, 'the great pedagogy changes the role of acting completely; it annuls the system actor/audience; it recognises only actors who are at the same time students'. The audience is either completely dissolved as onlookers or is given an active role [...] In this instance, the audience is producer.[43]

The Exception and the Rule, written in 1929, tells the story of a rich merchant who goes on a business trip that takes him across a harsh desert. To carry his bags and supplies he employs a porter and to navigate he employs a guide. The desert is

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[43] Roswitha Mueller, 'Learning for a new society: The Lehrstück' in Peter Thomson and Glendyr Sacks (eds) *The Cambridge Companion to Brecht* (Cambridge University Press, 1994), p.86.

tough terrain and the merchant finds it increasingly hard going, as panic sets in his brutality and paranoia increases. He eventually dismisses his guide, but then gets lost and the water supplies are running low. When the porter offers him some water the rich merchant mistakenly thinks he is being attacked and shoots him. Later in a court scene the rich merchant is acquitted of murder, as the judge understands the logic of the shooting. It would never have crossed the merchants mind to consider that the porter was offering him water. From the merchant's perspective it would seem to be in the interest of the lower classes to attack their masters in these circumstances, and therefore the merchant was right to kill him as, even if there was not a real threat, he is programmed to think there was one. Brecht's aim was to facilitate learning through either discussion about the content of the play or by the participants adopting and taking on gestures of characters or types within the play. Brecht hoped the plays would work on a number of levels, simply by playing a rich merchant who doesn't care for his servants meant a working class man might question his status in society. Brecht thought it would be impossible for a member of the proletariat to take on the behaviour of being upper class without expressing their opinions on the upper classes. Through adopting another classes' behaviour, the choices the other class makes and their alternatives can be examined. 'Would you do the same if you were them?' and 'would you behave as they did if you occupied in the social structure?' seem to be questions that underly these works.

During a short artist residency[44] I worked on performing an extract from a 'Learning Play', thus providing me with a meaningful way to research Brecht's aims and method. Falling far short of Brecht's communal vision by only using myself, I worked with his model and included the camera as a participant or function of the play. I was playing all the parts and needed a way to distinguish each character; they needed a costume. I realised this is how the camera could take part in the play, and how it could affect the images it records. When character A is in shot, the camera (and character A) goes out of focus. When character B is in shot, the camera (and character B) zooms in and out. An action of the camera distinguishes each character and therefore the camera is used for something other than recording. In this work the actions of the camera do not describe, the video camera is being 'used' to 'do'

[44] The residency was with Outpost Gallery, Norwich in 2009.

something; further, it almost prohibits description as the blur and zoom don't allow us to see clearly.

That camera angles and types of shots have different characteristics and different levels of intimacy is at the heart of film making for cinema and television. Whether used to provide a character's point of view, or going wide to establish the scene, or close up to provide a private moment, the use of the camera is used to generate mood. The camera pours over a scene, covers its human subject, enveloping them in its frame. Here, instead, the camera actions delineate the characters. This is a strange use of the camera, resulting in this short, single screen video work in progress. My eventual plan for this work was that each character would be projected large on to the walls of a gallery creating an immersive space, where the camera creates and obstructs the viewer's path through the play. I then got the chance to do it; I was offered an exhibition at Matt's Gallery, London. Working on the proposal to develop the *Brecht Learning Play with Video Costumes* (2009) into a large installation revealed to me the idea's weaknesses. With only one actor as opposed to a community, and taking place in a gallery where the proletariat are hard to find, the political desire of Brecht would be thwarted. Then there was my growing anxiety around the address of the video projection. Televisions we shout at, camera screens we direct, phone screens we talk into; but projections, which mostly require a dark room, make us become invisible. Anyone who has been stumbled over as people hesitantly creep into the gallery black box, blinded by the change in lighting, knows that in the gallery projection room the viewer can't be seen. In Chapter Two, I considered the projected moving images of *Ahead* (2000) by Smith/Stewart and *Catch* (1997) but, as said, these examples would function equally well on a monitor. In Chapter One, we saw how Ryan Trecartin took great steps with his videos to ensure the viewer remains visible and active, in providing them with elaborate sets to engage with whilst at the same time projecting the video in that room. Laure Prouvost uses the direct address to reveal the viewer. My Brecht proposal seemed to rely on scale to make the images 'immersive', a word that would make Brecht cringe. On all levels my proposal worked in opposition to Brecht's ambitions for what a 'Learning Play' should do.

The cinema black box verses gallery white cube's impact on contemporary art has been much discussed in the field of art. It is similar to comparing a performance on a stage in a theatre to one in front of us in a gallery. The latter shares our time and space, whilst the projected film and theatre production try to get us to temporarily suspend actual time and space. This is a contributing factor to Ian White's aligning of them as not live in his recent essay *Performer, Audience, Mirror: Cinema, Theatre and the Idea of the Live.* For White – and he is close to Brecht's views on theatre here - cinema takes us away from our lives or our own liveness. Through considering the medium of film, he asks 'what is liveness?'

> Cinema is not live by definition. The same 'film' is played every time. A theatre play might require bodies but the actor is as controlled by the mechanisation of rehearsal and repetition as the 'moving' image. [45]

White's claim that a rehearsed theatre play is not live is not new. Anyone who has not been in a Brecht 'Learning Play' but done a Shakespeare tragedy at school has experienced the deadness of recitals. Although not revelatory, White's essay is helpful to this research in providing points to think about. White is arguing that theatre's 'not live' address stems from the way it is produced, each viewing will be the same as the last because of the discipline that rehearsal brings to the event. For White, this is equivalent to the indexical nature of film. In both cases the audience is confident that when viewing a film or a play nothing is going to happen that hasn't happened before. The audience can relax; they can be assured that everything was meant to be this way. They can become the passive depository for the honed repeated performance and unchanging filmstrip. *There will be nothing new to see here.*

> To be lifelike is not to be live. Or, liveness is not lifelikeness. Just because somebody is actually there, a body on stage is no more of a guarantee that what we are seeing is categorically live than an emotion portrayed by an actor on the screen is an indication that

[45] Ian White, 'Performer, Audience, Mirror: Cinema, Theatre and the Idea of the Live' in Bridget Crone (ed) *The Sensible Stage* (Picture This with Plenty Projects, 2012), p.31.

> something was actually felt, even though we might think they are these things. [46]

Ian White thinks that 'to be lifelike is not to be live', however, this needs to be rethought. The term lifelike is always, as here by White, taken to mean the look of something. An actor in a play of course looks lifelike; film, unless digitally enhanced, is lifelike. I want to argue that in thinking about whether something is live or not within art, the question of lifelikeness is not the point. What is important is *the way we address them.* Liveness is not engendered from whether something looks lifelike or not, but whether our encounter with it is lifelike. The encounter needs to be lifelike for an artwork to have a live mode of address. What is a lifelike encounter? One that is cut up, fractured, interrupted, non linear, different for each person viewing, without limits (whether a frame or framing device such as the beginning middle and end of a narrative) and continually in process. Our experience of being in the world is an editing process. There are lots of things happening at once which we can't all take in and we have to pick our way through, edit our own experience of the situation. Therefore the way to elicit a live mode of address with lens-based still or moving images, is to change the way we encounter these images. When Ian White does not experience the theatre production as live, or the film in the cinema, it is not because the actor has rehearsed her lines a thousand times - this happens a lot in life, 'can I help you?' and 'have a nice day'. But what is not live is the static, singular viewpoint that is his encounter with the play, the same encounter that everybody else is having. He is watching what everybody else is watching, in the same order that they are watching it. This is not lifelike and this does not have a live mode of address. Ian White's statement 'liveness is not lifelikeness' is attached to appearances, which is the wrong target. Liveness in art does have a link to lifelikeness, but the lifelikeness is a quality of the encounter.

White nominates expanded cinema as the answer to his question 'what is liveness?' He insists that expanded cinema provides a live experience of the *not live* cinema, even though they are both made with the same stuff – film:

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[46] *Ibid*, p.31.

> [...] expanded cinema could be considered as a practice that extends or multiplies the frame of the screen to incorporate what is happening in the screening room itself, to include space, movement, live speaking, to incorporate the corporeality of the spectator as also constituting the work itself through relative, physical positions in space. [47]

The main drive of this genre, is to explore the structure and materiality of film resulting in work that uses the equipment of cinema, namely projectors and screens, but challenges and undermines their conventional use. 'Celluloid was no longer simply used to impart narratives, transmit information or convey simple emotions.'[48] Historically expanded cinema takes the form of a performance. Guy Sherwin's *Man With A Mirror* (1978) begins when the artist steps into the beam of a projector holding a large rectangular mirror that is painted white on the back. This catches the projection - a film of Sherwin holding the same mirror outside in green surroundings. The performing Sherwin *mirrors* the movements of the film Sherwin. It is a compelling visual puzzle, gradually made easier over the years as performing Sherwin ages and begins to look different to the young Sherwin caught on film. This discrepancy might not have been foreseen when the performance was first made (Sherwin might not have imagined still performing it 35 years later) but it adds a very personal dimension to the work, one that increases the range of voices it speaks to the audience with, making it more than a very smart conundrum probing the dimensions of film. Many expanded cinema works are now being converted for a contemporary gallery appetite. 16mm film projectors need to be converted with a 'looper' in order to play constantly, but once 'loopered' the 16mm film projector does not require the intervention of the artist to change the reel. The artist, or the 'I', disappears and it becomes an autonomous machine that runs and runs.

Coincidentally whilst I have been writing this, an early work of mine, *Blind* (2006), classified as expanded cinema, has been presented as part of a group show entitled

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[47] *Ibid*, p.39.
[48] Mark Webber, 'The London Film-Makers' Co-operative' in *Shoot, Shoot, Shoot: British Avant-Garde Film of the 1960s & 1970s* DVD booklet, (Lux, 2006) p.9.

Film in Space at Camden Arts Centre, curated by Guy Sherwin.[49] Included in the show is a seminal work from Malcolm Le Grice. Made from found footage in 1966, *Castle 1,* is a projection of a film onto a wall where a light bulb hangs down. Cut up within the found footage is also a film of this light bulb coming on and off, which is then visually multiplied with the actual light bulb coming on and off. When it does, the bulbs luminance drowns out the projection and lights up the room. The viewer becomes visible. This is similar to the impact of Smith/Stewart's *Ahead* (2000). A dark room switches over into a light room, yet it has none of the psychological charge. Le Grice's work goes beyond the frame but it does not move me beyond my frame; its insistence on referring only to its own making does not provide an active encounter for my imagination. Along with other works in this exhibition it is a radical way to use the film projector, which is explicit about the workings of the projector in order to not be film. They are made in opposition to the narrative linearity of cinema. Yet their negation of narrative becomes their only narrative.

A review of the *Film in Space* exhibition helped clarify my thoughts. The writer Christopher Townsend, did not enjoy the show; in fact he found it 'utterly joyless.' He goes on:

> Expanded cinema's experiments with language and the space of film is ultimately sterile: its performance enacts a reduction of the subject through the annihilation of language, rather than finding new spaces and rhetoric through which subjectivity may be achieved.[50]

He then puts the knife in:

> For all these filmmakers' insistence upon the importance of audience, event and the rupture of the fourth wall, the embodied, living, breathing, laughing, spectator is absent from these arid proceedings.[51]

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[49] *Film in Space,* Camden Arts Centre, London. 15th December 2012 – 24th Febrary 2013. The press release says 'The exhibition focuses on expanded cinema, a film movement which came to prominence in Britain in the early 1970s, at the time Sherwin started making films.'
[50] Christopher Townsend, *Film in Space Review,* Art Monthly, 2013, issue 363, p.24.
[51] *Ibid*

Here Townsend articulates what I hope is an important difference between expanded cinema and the artwork I have been making in this PhD. Expanded cinema has already done the thing I had worked out needed to happen - it has broken out of the frame. In fact in all the examples in this chapter, film has expanded into sculpture, yet *it hasn't taken any content with it.* The approach across the works has been to remove the referent, to not use film 'of' something, but to only use the elements that make up film, such as light and projection equipment. Certainly here film is used to 'do' something, but that seems limited to transforming our understanding of film. I want to create a live mode of address with lens-based equipment but *not* stripped of referents. There were slides of photographs of holes in my slide projectors. Images of the past have remained present. Rather than erase these images, I want to change the way we address them. Townsend writes that he would have preferred it if Anthony McCall had been included in the exhibition. I don't think it would have helped.

Anthony McCall's *Line Describing a Cone,* when first made in 1973 was a timed screening, but it has now got a 'looper' and has been converted to a frequently exhibited installation. Made by projecting an animation of a white line gradually becoming the perimeter of a circle, McCall calls it a 'solid light film'. With a long distance projection away from the wall, it beams the growing circle through the space to land on an opposite wall. A thin dry ice mist - initially cigarette smoke at the first few screenings, in other words an environment produced by the audience themselves - is sprayed into the room catching the beam, making it solid. A cone of light is formed with its tip at the projector and its base at the circle. Viewers move around, walking through the magical beam, sliding fingers through it and pushing their heads into the cone. The object of attention is other viewers' spectatorship; everybody is doing the same thing. This spectacle is live but not lifelike. If I am an active viewer it is merely as a body interacting with the projected light. This fits with White's hopes for the genre. This active encounter is based on the fact that a projection, which conventionally makes us invisible, is turned to make us visible as we interrupt the beam. Is being a body in the way of a beam of light enough to bring a live mode of address? As a body in McCall's solid light, I know exactly what is going to happen next. I do not need to experience it more than once; another viewing will not reveal new things and I'm sure when I look around all the viewers

are experiencing the same thing. People are standing in different places, and varying the body parts they push into the light cone, but the perlucutionary force of the work remains the same. The work is unified, singular, and, like the white circle it eventually delineates, complete. It was the notion of fixed repetition that caused Ian White to reject the cinema and conventional theatre as live. Yet this work will repetitively always, at every viewing, for every person be exactly how McCall planned.

> The Lehrstück needs no audience, it teaches by being performed and not by being seen, that is it should be considered a 'Lern' (learn) rather than a Lehr (teach) piece. [52]

The distinction between learning and teaching lies with performativity. Learning is something we do, teaching is something we pass on. Learning is an action, and we teach descriptions. Learning is a process of questioning, of wavering attempts started from a position of uncertainty. Teaching starts from a position of certainty, teaching supplies fixed answers. That Brecht chimes with Paolo Freire is obvious, they were both Marxists working hard to halt the 'naturalisation' of capitalist systems. Freire wanted to make sure we do not understand the 'banking' system of education as the way it has to be (continually teaching people this is the way it has to be) and Brecht wanted to make sure we did not accept the class system as natural (continually keeping people in their assigned social position). This is is brilliantly summed up in the opening to the 'Learning Play', *The Exception and The Rule:*

THE ACTORS: We are here to report
The story of a journey.
It was undertaken by one who exploits and two of the exploited.
Closely observe the behaviour of these people.
Find it strange, even when ordinary.
Inexplicable, even when familiar.
Incomprehensible, even when it is the rule.

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[52] Bertolt Brecht qtd in John Wilett (ed) 'Introduction', *Brecht Collected Plays: Three* (Methuen Drama, 1998), p.xvii

Even the slightest detail, however simple,
You should look at with suspicion. Ask if it is needed
Especially when it is quite normal.
Please, we say to you now, do not accept
Events that happen every day as natural!
For in these times of bloody confusion
Ordered disorder, deliberate violence
Inhuman humanity –
Nothing must be called natural, so that nothing
May be thought unchangeable. [53]

Our day to day relationship with the camera is to use it to confirm - that we were there, what we saw, how things are. It is used to teach. Like Brecht's reworking of the conventional play, I am asking if the camera can be rerouted to be a device with which to learn or discover something new. Brecht's strategy with the 'Learning Plays' was to remove the external observer: there is no outside of the play, everyone is in it. But Anthony McCall's *Line Describing a Cone* (1973) demonstrates that putting everyone in it is sometimes not enough. For a live mode of address there needs to be a more complicated exchange between the artwork and viewer. This complicated, fractured, incomplete exchange should be considered 'lifelike'.

[53] Bertolt Brecht, 'The Exception and The Rule' in John Wilett (ed) *Brecht Collected Plays: Three,* Methuen Drama, 1998, p.155.

Please now watch

TO DO

on the DVD provided.

Discussion Three: *TO DO*

21/11/12

START AUDIO

Dean: Do we start?

Emma: Let's go.

Dean: Well, I suppose we could begin by talking about this exhibition, 'TO DO'.

Emma: So the deal at Matt's Gallery is a special situation for an artist, in that they're interested in providing you a big space to work in and then show in, it all happens in the same space – I think their strapline is something like "Letting artists take risks, so they might even surprise themselves." You get three months. Well, I had three months there. That is an experience, as an artist, I've never really encountered before. It's normally much more stressful than that. What I wanted to do, which is really important, was work in a way where it was always unfinished. I worked out that to keep it unfinished I needed to work in a modular way. So there could have been 12 sculptures or there could have been 50. There happens to be 27. It just stopped when there was no more time, "It's half an hour until the opening Emma. Please put down the scissors now!" (Laughter) Therefore, to my mind, it's unfinished. I probably will go on to make some more in the future and each time it gets shown, I'm able to experiment with it. It's never been fixed down.

Dean: There seemed to be a move, especially with this work, into three-dimensional object work. The aesthetic is very distinctive. It's a very contemporary, familiar kind of range, these dayglo colours, these health and safety high visibility materials, the colours, and so on. They're practical use materials. It's like you could probably find your art materials, everything you needed, I don't know, down the high street if you needed to.

Emma: I'd never made a sculpture before, so – what's that big sculpture shop in London?

Dean: Tiranti's?

Emma: Tiranti's. I couldn't go in there. What would I buy? I don't know how to work any of the stuff they sell. But I do understand Staples. I understand how that works. I understand how B&Q works, and all that kind of stuff. I can go in there and not feel quite so stressed out. So I really just work with stuff that's around me. But also the point is that these are my assistants. I had been noticing that everytime I did anything as an artist I had to take my two cameras with me to document it. They are always with me, supporting the work and at the same time I was helping out my boyfriend, who works for lots of artists, and they were building a really, really ambitious piece. It was getting very stressful, and panicky, and I got roped in, just to help out. We were at Frieze all working very hard, and this artist had 10 assistants, and we all had to wear high visibility jackets. I was thinking, "This is what's going wrong with my career, I haven't got enough assistants. In fact (Laughter) I haven't got any assistants. So I'm going to make some." and then I thought I do have two kind of assistants, these two cameras that document all the art I make. So yes, there's high visibility in

there, the uniform of the worker. The other thing about high visibility is it changes colour under flash. So it helps me talk about photography having its own vision. We don't see the high vis in the same was as the camera. The same for black velvet – it's the only material that looks different when you photograph it. It goes completely black. Anyway, It was a big leap to me. I don't want to keep going on, but it was a big leap for me to make these sculptures, and I really had to just start from scratch. It was beyond me to work with anything other than the things that I have around.

When I very first had the idea to make assistants with cameras, I made them human. There were two humans. The camera had wigs on and the tripods had arms. It was very difficult to make more than two, because they just carried on looking the same. So I needed to work with something that would open up an imagination store in my brain, and I really love birds. Obviously it could sound a bit naïve to say, "Oh, I made a show about birds, because I love them." But I really needed to tap into a lot of energy, and I really want art to be a blast of raw, unfiltered energy. Which is dangerous talk, because I could sound a bit like a hippie, but I just wanted it to be a bit raw, and just get a bit of a hit off it, of energy. So I felt that to do that I really needed to work with something that you love.

Dean: I know your whole thing is about getting us to look at the actual camera, rather than the thing that the camera produces, which is the image. I suppose we are used to going into an exhibition and seeing - looking at a screen that a camera's recorded previously, but this is obviously a special set up where we go in to see the work and we are placed behind the cameras, so we are looking from the back of the cameras.

Emma: That's definitely one of my reasons for claiming there's an original contribution to knowledge.

Dean: Okay.

Emma: Obviously I cannot prove something like that, that I was the first ever artist to use a camera as a sculpture. In fact, I am pretty certain I am not. But I think that the idea of not showing us the products that a camera makes, but showing us the workings with the equipment to produce the products and then putting the viewer behind that product is quite a reverse of the normal way of encountering lens based media. We are normally on the other side. So the world has gone through the camera, out of the camera into the computer, out of the computer as a video into a projector or TV screen, out back into the world again as a video and then the viewer is right on, you know, right at the end of that looking at that.

Dean: Yes.

Emma: And then now the viewer is right back to the first place, the square one which is behind the camera. Quite a powerful place to be, I hope.

Dean: We are back to the little screens that we look at to test what we have just recorded, so we are back to a very low quality recording that, you know, that's not normally the screens that we look at in galleries.

Emma: No, but it is the kind of screens that we look at every day.

Dean: Yeah. So we are put in the place of the -

Emma: Producer.

Dean: Camera person.

Emma: Or artist, yes... this place behind the camera, this is a mad place. There is no film footage ever taken of behind the camera. I mean, it's an unknown land. We have got no pictures. Everything is photographed in this world except behind the camera. It is an unknown mystical land where we do not know what is happening - it's the place that we can't photograph, behind the camera, no images exist. Every camera has a secret blind spot, you know, and I just wanted to go into that magical or weird, mystical place that we don't really talk about that much. I mean, people are still going on about that they haven't got any images of certain tribes in the Amazon or whatever, but we haven't got any images of behind the camera, yet we think we're pretty confident we know what it is. Anyway, that was really - that really interests me.

Dean: Yes - I suppose it goes back to that idea of, the camera being an objective gaze on something...

Emma: Yeah. I mean, one of my idea as a precursor was that I would make myself funny costumes.

Dean: Mhm-hmm.

Emma: I would make like really weird costumes - a bit like Edwina Ashton, actually, I was probably inspired by her - and then go out with a camera and take photographs. And only present the photographs.

Dean: Yes.

Emma: Which probably would look quite banal, and you wouldn't know that I was wearing ridiculous costumes when I took them. But there would be this secret world behind the camera, and actually that's another place where the ideas for TO DO came from; it didn't need to be me wearing the costume. It could be the camera that was wearing the costume.

Dean: So as a viewer you are physically behind the camera in that secret, mysterious world that the viewer never goes to and then sometimes you are actually looking at what the camera is looking at because it is on, but sometimes you are behind that, you are behind the cameras, but you are looking at what has been previously recorded.

Emma: Yes some of the cameras within to the To Do Exhibition are recording; seven of them. But, yes, you're right, most of them you are watching videos that have been pre-recorded, but maybe it's enough to confuse you a bit.

Dean: Right, yes.

Emma: You were there, did you notice that you were behind a camera or did you just think it could be just a series of TV screens, small television screens?

Dean: No, no, the physical cameras are really important, that's the most apparent thing that there are all these cameras...

Emma: And tripods, yes.

Dean: Cameras in the room but also they are sculptures, so they are physical, but then the fact that they are on and the fact that they are...

Emma: Working.

Dean: They are working and we're looking mostly at the kind of screens that you now get on video cameras, small screens, but the fact that some of those are pre-recordings is ... it's a bit like somebody might have got there before you and they were there where you are now recording the thing that you are now looking at. So in a way, you are still doing what a viewer does in a gallery which is you are looking at pre-recorded film, at least in some of them, but you are doing it from the same position, exactly the same position with this apparatus that the artist was in when they recorded it.

Emma: But also I was hoping that it's only you looking at one video at a time. Behind the camera allows only one person to stand there. It's the whole point of a big projection is to get as many people to see the thing as possible, which makes you a bit invisible, especially as projections are in the dark but showing the videos like this also sets up a one-to-one relationship. We have a one-to-one relationship with the camera and that is important. At the opening at Matt's there were lots of people and they were all in a ring, and then the viewers had to clock round, like cogs, waiting for the next person to move on. I thought that was quite good. So it's about denying entirety...

Dean: So there's a weird way in which the machines, the cameras, the technology, become like people, and the people become like machines?

Emma: Yes. I hadn't thought of that, but yes. The people viewing it were like a machine cog. Although I prefer the opposite idea that the one to one address means you're not just a crowd; not just a face in the crowd. And then obviously the sculptures are kind of human sized as well, because cameras are. You can get really close and have a good look at all the stuff

Dean: There is so much stuff. But also the way that you have to - the set up, the installation, the way the sculptures are physically present in the space demands the viewer is not just looking, they are having to move and the movement becomes quite important, like the movement from one camera to another.

Emma: I mean, I hope - I bet everyone saw a different show. There are too many permutations of the 27 videos, some of them are about five minutes long, so the chances of someone seeing exactly the same thing as the other person are impossible, which is really exciting to me. It was really my main thrust for the work, to set up a situation where the viewer and what the viewer sees is out of my control. And then there's already lots of threads within the show; there's a domestic object layer, a bureaucracy layer, a bird layer. There's all these different access points onto the work. There was this thing at Tate Britain once - I don't think they do it anymore - where they used provide leaflets which instructed you how to take mood tours around the Tate. There was a selection to choose from depending on what kind of day you ha had. There was a leaflet asking 'Are you hungover?' then saying well we've got the easy does it hungover tour. Are you sad? We have got the broken heart tour. Feeling flush? We have got the just made loads of money tour. And within the leaflets would be maps, picking out works that would be

appropriate to these different attitudes. I mean, with TO DO there were lots of different things to see physically and then just practically the chances that you would see the whole show are small. If you saw every video at every bird camera sculpture you'd have been there for two hours.

Dean: Yes.

Emma: Which of course is not going to happen.

Dean: That's not the point, is it?

Emma: That would be a bit horrifying.

Dean: Yes, yes.

Emma: I mean, maybe a mistake was to have it in a circle, but I put it in a circle for a reason, they are waiting for something to happen in the centre, maybe perhaps I should have allowed more of a random feel to choosing which bird you went to next. But they would always be in order however you put them out. You could have crossed the circle if you wanted to. Yes, anyway, that's something I think about sometimes, but I really wanted to relinquish my control as the artist and the viewer needs to pick their own way through. Do you think it's too noisy here?

Dean: Do you want to move to the other table?

Emma: Yes, do you think it's too loud? Alright, I'll just put it on pause...

Dean: I think it might be a bit quieter over there.

END AUDIO

START AUDIO

Emma: Yes, go, it's going now.

Dean: So what you're talking about is that you're not producing a unified finished work. You're a bit out of control of how it is perceived. That's what you've set up, and this is something where the audience interaction comes into the creation of what the experience of the show is, and this is something that's important to a lot of your work. I suppose all the images, they're all happening at once, and you have to go from one to the other. You can never get a view of the whole thing. I thought this was more like watching television rather than watching a film. The idea that there are always other channels, and you're flicking between channels. I don't know what you think about that. There is ... there is no coherent whole. You will always, in a way, create a unique experience, so the viewer is active in the production of the work itself. They are producing it in a similar way to flicking channels or something.

Emma: Well, I think that's it. (Laughter) I think about TV a lot, actually I watch TV a lot, doing all that negotiating channels, and the programmes are flipping out all the time, I'm changing channels all the time. I'm really interested in the fact that you can't have all the exhibition at once. It's only really in art, or maybe in fiction, that you get to see a whole thing, and actually, by making it cut-up, and fractured, I'm trying to

mimic more how it might be out in the wild (Laughter) and therefore alive. Photographs normally make documents, which are highly mediated, and we encounter as representations. I wanted to make work through cameras that was non-mediated. That are presentations. That have a live presence. Because that somehow speaks to me of the chaos of my life – well, of life full stop actually.

Dean: Yes.

Emma: I don't know. Something about a photograph, or a camera, is so rational. We use them to calmly consume the real. We can't experience the force of the real without cutting it up into bite size camera photographs. So yes, I wanted to return the camera back to the wild. (Laughter)

Dean: Right, yes. I think you've done that. (Laughter)

Emma: Yes. It's also around the idea of the frame. In real life the world does not have a frame around it. So we're constantly being bombarded – William Burroughs used the cut-up because he felt it was more like real life. Because life is always being cut-up, and narrative and seeing something as a unified whole, is actually really alien to us. So books, and photographs, and art often have a frame around them. So they're a complete, unified thing, which we can stand in front of, contemplate, and understand, and I realised I could use sculpture to interfere with video, to cut it up, make it spread, fracture it. So as well as something having a live mode of address, i.e. having a presence, I'm also beginning to understand that is actually to do with life as well. There is a relationship between liveness and lifelikeness, and lifelikeness means we don't encounter things that have limits, or frames, or, "Oh, okay, that's about that", or, "That's about

that." We have to weave our own experience... Just walking down the street, there are lots of different things coming at you. So I think I've been trying to make art, or particularly with 'To Do', trying to make a work that resonated with me in how we encounter life as much as we encounter art. So, even though it's fantastical, and it definitely looks like art. Cameras do not normally have feathers stuck to them. Maybe the way we address the show is a bit more like how we might address the street, or whatever. That's live for me. That's live.
I'm going on a bit, aren't I? (Laughter)

Dean: You've got so much to say. (Laughter)

Emma: Even though I'm using cameras, which make videos, which are from the past, I cannot get away from the fact they are from the past. We perhaps encounter them as presentations, and not representations, because we don't recognise them. I felt that with 'To Do' I made something completely new.

Dean: I was thinking of Donald Judd when he says, 'Life is one thing after another.' It's a bit like walking down the street, and you're never quite sure what's going to happen. Also I just had this funny image when you were speaking of – you know in the Generation Game, when they have the conveyor belt of stuff that keeps coming? It's a bit like a nightmare, isn't it, because you don't know what you're going to get. It's like a food blender, or a cuddly toy, or whatever. But I think the reason that popped into my head is because there is that slight aspect of a game show (Laughter) in your exhibition, in the busyness of it, the fact that there are all these things happening. Again, a bit like going from one camera to another, and seeing these different little games played out. You've got games going on with a series of different images or different words.

Emma: I don't find life is like one thing after another. It's more life is everything at once.

Dean: Maybe it's more like that quote by Tony Smith, he's talking about driving on the unfinished highway and says something like 'there's no way you can frame this, you just have to experience it.'

Emma: Yes, that's exactly what I think...

Anyway, there's lots of videos, and there are two main types. The cameras are constantly changing channel from the video, and it's going inside and outside all the time. So there's inside, inside the camera, as if the camera, rather than going into description mode for one moment, it's stopped describing the outside world and it's having a bit of a daydream and a bit of a think. The camera is having a bit of a daydream. But within the dreamlike videos there is often the material that is also used within the sculpture. It looks like part of the sculpture. Each camera has a dreamlike video to it, which also function as birdcalls. Each is made up around a word such as 'take', or 'welcome',

Dean: 'Welcome' is a performative word, isn't it?

Emma: Yes. They're all performative words, and these words are said out by me, in funny voices, like the call of the bird, of the camera calling out. The videos were mostly made by a process stemming from the fact that I often use the copy stand. The copy stand is a piece of equipment where the camera points down and takes photos of things. I like using a copy stand a lot. I like the fact that the camera points down rather than out.

Dean: Like a bird, maybe, looking down?

Emma: Yes. So I would just take a series of photographs. Let's take the tea stain video as an example. I was interested in the idea of stains, because photographs maybe could be stains from an event. I just took some photographs of a cup of tea leaving a tea ring stain on a photograph. Then I would feed these back into a computer, this series of images, and I would nominate a word. So when the photograph of a cup of tea on a photograph came up the word would be "yes". When just the photograph came up it would be "no". When the tea stain came up it would be "maybe". Then I'd hand over control to someone else, and they would randomise the order. Then they would play the slideshow at a certain speed by tapping a key on a keyboard. So it became a bit like a musical keyboard as I would respond with the word as I saw the images come up. Their pressing would elicit a sound. So it was like a game, and I had to try and keep up with them playing. We did this for a lot of the videos. It was a way to allow me to do silly voices, or work with my voice so that I didn't sound like an actor. I wasn't acting. I had a task to do, and I was focused on concentrating on the images. I was played like an instrument. It was good fun.

Dean: In terms of birdcalls, and birdcalls being, I suppose, an instinctive and a functional thing, rather than aesthetic, maybe the human inclination might be to frame the bird call as an aesthetic experience that humanises the animal. It's really happy singing in the tree, or something.

Emma: I think they're quite stressed. If they're singing sometimes it might be because they're quite stressed out.

Dean: They sing and stuff to warn others, don't they, if there are predators?

Emma: Yes. I think there's quite a bit of men singing to impress the women, all of that.

Dean: That's functional, as well, isn't it?

Emma: But yes, the words that I used were functional or instructions. Then the words spilled out, and some of the words of the videos went onto the back of the sculptures. I was looking at pictures of Elvis Presley, and he had to have all his song lyrics written and taped to the camera at all his performances. In fact, actually I think it's quite a common thing to do. But you don't see that many pictures of this very common thing, which is a camera with big bits of paper taped round the sides of it with all the words on.

Dean: This is the blind spot you were talking about, isn't it?

Emma: Exactly. So that's why some of the words are on the sculptures, which are impossible for the camera, that's in the centre of that sculpture, to film. The words are also instructions and are going to be affecting the scene in front of it. Even if you just stand in front of one of the sculptures that's recording, and you read the word that's attached on that camera, the camera has affected what it's recording in front of it. As all cameras do, all the time.

Dean: It's interesting how you're talking about making things active. On the one hand you're making the cameras active. So we're not just looking at what the cameras are used to produce, but the camera has become active in the piece. They're the centre of attention. On the other hand you're talking about the

audience not recognising something that pre-exists, and therefore just being there in a passive capacity. But, as you said, they're cognising it. They're creating it for the first time, and, in a way, the only time, because each way of producing this work will be different and unique in a certain way.

Emma: Yes. It's live, right?

Dean: It's live. And then, in the third way, you're activating yourself as well. You're active in it. So you're active as this character who is not there as a controlling presence, but is being played, as you say. So you're in a behavioural way, like B. F. Skinner's lab rat or something. So you get the stimulus, and you respond, like a moron, like we all do. So yes, maybe we could talk a little bit about this because you also appear in the work, there's your voice, but you also at certain points appear on the camera screen. In all your work, you are very present. I don't think that that's in any way because you're an egomaniac or something.

Emma: That's kind of you to say so. (Laughter)

Dean: Well, at least it's not the only reason. (Laughter)
I just wondered if you had any thoughts yourself about bringing yourself very, very much into – you're in a lot of the camera shots, either your voice, or yourself running around the space.

Emma: Well, yes. First of all, I always work from a position of uncertainty. I don't really know what I'm doing while I'm doing it. So it would be really hard to work with other people, because you have to tell them what to do, and I don't know what that is. So I have to use myself, which is a bit jarring. So every now and then the videos change from the daydreams,

they change channels, and there are these strange videos of me bustling around the space, or waiting for or rehearsing something. Because they're waiting for the action to happen, and they're getting bored waiting, so they keep flipping out into their own little world. But when they come back...and there's me walking around the cameras, and you're not quite sure whether it is a performance that has been, and this is their memory of it, or if this is a preparation for a performance. I'm quite ambivalent about the temporality of these little videos, and whether we're watching the remnants of a performance or a performance that's about to begin.
But basically the room has potential for something to happen within the middle. These are my assistants here to record or have recorded a performance.

Dean: There are these points where, because the screen that you're looking at serves a double function in the camera, it can be a screen to look at what you're recording live, or it can be a screen to play back what you've just recorded or you've recorded previously. There are moments where, because you're looking at the screen rather than at the gallery space, you pop up, you could possibly be there. There's a real confusion, sometimes, with whether you are really there or not.

Emma: The word screen means screened off, something is screened off. We think the screen will show us more, but actually they're preventing us from seeing things. So yes, definitely I intended that there might be a moment of confusion on some of the cameras, especially when you first come into the show, before you've seen 27 of them, maybe in the first few.
That you might actually think I've actually managed to slip into the room while you've been paying all your attention to my feather work, or my whatever, my sculpture making, or

the video, so I'm there. Yes, because the screen is the ultimate blind spot really.

Dean: Ah, yes, that's good. (Laughter)
I'm interested that you said a photo is a bit like a stain. I know it's a bit off the subject, but it's really interesting. What did you mean?

Emma: A stain is a mark, an indexical mark of something that happened. Then I meant it more interestingly, in the way a stain lingers, can actually be quite a nasty thing. We mostly understand the idea of the photograph as very positive, because it's helping us to remember all these things that we'll otherwise forget, like Christmas 1982. Well, actually Christmas 1982 was a nightmare. (Laughter) And I don't want positive help to remember. I just think that it might be more helpful, sometimes, to think about photographs as stains of events, rather than mementos. I think there is a lot of false positivity spoken about photographs. Maybe because we can hit delete so easily we don't really worry about how awkward they really are.

Dean: Yes. They're evidence of something that happened.

Emma: Some kind of spillage. I'm into the idea of spillages. A stain is evidence of a spillage. Not insignificant. There's some kind of spilling of reality – which has stained the back of the camera .

Dean: As you're speaking, again it's about the camera being an active agent in the world, and it produces something. Because you've spoken a lot about these material equivalents.

Emma: Oh, yes. Within the show are lots of things that I think might function as a camera, or more precisely have the same action as a camera.

Dean: Like Hoovers. The Hoover is sucking something up. Actually the spillage is not sucking anything up. It's doing the opposite. It's spilling something out, isn't it? Which is not an immediate way that we think about photography.

Emma: Well maybe we should. There's an iron in there that flattens the image out. Hoovers like cameras suck stuff up. They're all in there because I'm trying to look at the way cameras work.

Dean: Hanging out your dirty laundry?

Emma: Yes hanging out your dirty washing. There's a washing line too. Then there are camera equivalents pointing things out. The camera points out things. So within the show there's lots of rings, and crosses, and ticks. There are arrows. There's a clipboard, a list, ways to remember things. There are dictionaries, the ultimate index. Then there are birds, the way birds look. Someone once told me that a bird doesn't turn its eyes. It only turns its head.

Dean: That was me who told you that. (Laughter)

Emma: (Laughter)
A camera doesn't have eyes. It has to twist its head. In fact a camera on a tripod looks like a small bird, with really long legs, and looking, birds seeing us. But you're right, the spillage doesn't quite fit in with all that – but that's how I feel. The photograph is an excess of reality, of the world. It's burst through onto a bit of paper.

Dean: Well, sometimes people get upset, don't they, when you take a picture of them?

Emma: Yes.

Dean: Because actually what you've done, you haven't recorded something so much as you've produced something which shouldn't have been there, and maybe it's already on Facebook or something.

Emma: Yes, and it's embarrassing.

Dean: It's embarrassing, yes ... and if you say, 'I'm making a show because I love birds', that's potentially a little bit embarrassing, because you've revealed a little bit about your subjectivity. But I strongly believe that, if art is going to be interesting, it has to have that element of subjectivity. That's where energy comes from. If you get rid of that you're left with something that might look very professional, and slick, but it's crushing, somehow, to the spirit, if that doesn't sound too romantic. But there is a way that a lot of your life comes through in your work, for example your voice. Talking about the object again, your voice is very present. Your voice, for example, communicates the fact that you're not posh, along with this other stuff: you need to make your own assistants, and all this kind of stuff.

Emma: It's embarrassing when my voice spills out, or when you spill anything. I just did it just earlier, didn't I, with the milk. And it's embarrassing when you conceptually reveal things.

Dean: Well, sometimes a stain never comes out.

Emma: Especially vomit, I've found. (Laughter) I shouldn't say this, but we had to move house as a kid because of some bad vomit stains after my dad's 40th.

Dean: Oh, really? Jesus.

Emma: Yes. We'll cut that bit out. (Laughter)

Dean: Yes and cut it out of the carpet too. (Laughter) But when you said stain, actually, I was thinking of the Lacan thing about the ...

Emma: Oh, the Holbein?

Dean: The Holbein, yes, which is a different thing really. What he means by stain is something – it's that bit that you don't recognise, actually. You don't recognise it but it dominates, it frames the whole thing.

Emma: A stain is recognised, that is why it's embarrassing.

Dean: It doesn't just fuck up the little bit of the carpet in the corner.

Emma: No, it fucks up the whole thing.

Dean: And that's weird, isn't it? Or, if your sheet gets a little bit stained, it's like the whole thing is ruined.

Emma: Yes.

Dean: That's interesting.

Emma: Yes, that is interesting.

Dean: I don't know what it means.

Emma: I can feel a new artwork coming on. ...

Dean: Well, shall we stop? We could stop and then something might come into our heads.

Emma: Make a stain in my wallet, and I'll buy you lunch.

Dean: (Laughter)

END AUDIO

CONCLUSION

Chapter One described video and films I felt had engendered experiential qualities that I nominated as a live mode of address. Even though they had been made with a camera they struck me as having presence. Through looking at the work of Chetwynd, Smith, Provoust, and Trecartin, I located reasons for this. That the works are in process is important, they were made without a fixed outcome in mind. There is a sense that the videos bring something new into the world. By de-stabilising the information inherent within lens-based images, via voice-overs, editing techniques and splitting the display, a live mode of address is possible. Shifting the temporality of the work by addressing the viewer, makes the experiencing of watching feel as if it is happening now, and happening to me. These were criteria I was working towards, but combining these things led to much more than the sum of them.

It is only in culture that we experience 'complete things' – stories with a beginning, middle and end; visual images with edges and frames and isolated objects in white rooms. The moment I see something as entire, as finished, as complete, the more dead and 'art-like' I find it. This is partly a problem with the museum, where we mostly only see an element of an artist's practice; we can't see what attempts went before and after, we can't see it as a process or a stage in an enquiry. The museum eliminates uncertainty as the camera does. The museum's effect on art is similar to the camera's effect on the world. Both could be described as a window on the world, snatching elements and representing them as isolated wholes. A work has to fight to remain unfinished in the museum. When I see works that are cut up, sprawling, messy, I recognise life in them. They seem alive. When we see something in its entirety it somehow gives us the confidence to interpret it, as it is all there. It is sewn up. It is stable. It is independent of the world, not contingent upon it. Prouvost's frenetic collaging of video is perhaps much closer to our experience of the world, therefore much more live than a narrative description.

William Burroughs, who vigorously employed the cut up technique (cutting up existing forms of writing, and re–ordering them to produce something new), said:

> Life is a cut-up. As soon as you can walk down the street your consciousness is being cut by random factors. The cut-up is closer to the facts of human perception than linear narrative.[54]

Throughout this PhD I have emphasized that the camera does not work like the human eye, that what the camera captures is not what we would have seen had we been where the camera was. What the research has now clarified is not that photographs don't look like the world, *but we don't look at photographs like we look at the world.* Life looks good in images, or if not good, far enough away for us to manage and control. It is not enough for artists to merely produce lifelike images to be consumed, it is the viewer's encounter that has to be made lifelike. There is a growing gap between how we experience things, and how we address photographs of things. Lens-based images are removing themselves (and taking us with them) from what they capture. As the world becomes more frantic and complicated, the photographs and videos we use to capture it become easier (to take), smaller and more limited.

This practice led enquiry created an encounter with the lens based image so that it was not primarily received as a representation or window onto the world but operated as a presence sharing the viewers time and space. This shift in reception means the image is not initially understood as information to interpret but as an encounter to experience. I name this changed manner of encounter a 'live mode of address'. My research began with *Holes: A Lecture* (2008 - 2012) a work that introduced my research questions and embarked on methods which would be developed over the PhD. Forcing the slide projectors to be present in the images they were projecting coincided the production and presentation of images and chipped at their retrospective temporality. This is then taken to extreme in *Chasing Animals* (2008- 2010) as the camera sets out to crash into and destroy the images it records. It is the action of the camera that is being captured. *Holes :A Lecture* (2008 - 2012) began another unpicking of the photographs representational mode, when I considered how the viewer and artist might be synchronised through the 'hunting and finding of holes'. Through these moments of discovery the artist's action at the

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54 William Burroughs qtd in Synne Genzmer 'Cut-up or Out of Control On William S.Burroughs and His Art' in Colin Fallows and Synne Genzmer (eds) *Cut-Ups, Cut-Ins, Cut-Outs:The Art of William S.Burroughs (*Kunsthalle Wien, 2012), p32.

time of making and audience's action at the time of viewing are linked. It is being made, as it viewed. It has a live mode of address.

Using the camera as a tool of discovery is further conceptually and practically explored in the video installation LOST (2009 - 2011). Here the camera's primary function is an action, it looks for lost items. J.L.Austin's demands on the performative speech act, that it produces a reality rather than describe one, is tested through the mechanics of the camera. The spatial installation of the work is an important moment in the PhD. The placing of the screen so close to the viewer prevents the complete video from being watched, it can't be contemplated or seen as a whole, it goes beyond its frame and only parts of it can be noticed whilst other parts missed. The spatial or sculptural element of the work, changes how we understand its temporality, it moves further towards an experience that is being produced by the viewer in the here and now through where they choose to stand, rather than a record of events simply received by the viewer. This triggers the next stage of research that results in the exhibition TO DO (2011). The notion that the viewer edits and actively produces their own experience of the artwork is investigated through creating sculptures.

In the exhibition *TO DO* (2011) I made 27 sculptures out of cameras, that each noisily demanded attention, the viewer had to physically travel and build the exhibition in their minds as they moved around. Making sculptures with cameras placed the viewer behind the camera and put the images produced back into the time and space of the viewer's experience. Where the artist stood at the time of making was the same as where the viewer stood at the time of viewing. As with *LOST* (2009 - 2011) they are synchronised at a position of production.

Working with sculpture offered me a way to interfere with the viewing experience. I can interrupt and fracture the image by sticking things to it; it is encountered in a new, awkward, incomplete way. Sculpture is a tool with which I can intercept and interrupt the conventions of the image, making it cut up, fractured and physical. *TO DO* (2011) overwhelmed the viewer with much to look at and negotiate. It created a network of looking as lines of vision crossed from behind and in front of the cameras. This is closer to how it is when we leave the gallery and drift back into the

outside world, we are encompassed with phenomena that we must pick our way through. TO DO (2011) generates a live mode of address.

Spartacus Chetwynd's use of the split screen, discussed in Chapter One, as a way to generate the experience of her live performances from her video documentation has been a useful starting point. However Chetwynd's split screens can still all be accessed from the same position, the viewer does not have to physically move. Whilst the fractured video works of Trecartin and Provoust incisively push through my physical encounter with their large projections and create new places in my head. Yet despite the brilliant complexity of Provoust and Trecartin we will discover the new in their videos, but only in the order that they want us to. Through their precise linear editing the order in which the chaos hits us has been decided and fixed by the artist. This is the opposite of a live situation. The video artist always knows what the viewer is looking at. They know, for example, that at 3mins 33secs into their video the viewer will be looking at the image of the dog they put on the editing timeline at that point. The artist is in charge. Fractured, chaotic –yes; but in a live situation, or performance, or learning play, anything could happen; the artist is not in control and does not entirely know what is happening next.

With the exhibition TO DO, I relinquished control. The array of materials and references and imaginative paths in and out meant there was too much to see, meaning that I couldn't rely on everyone seeing the same thing. The number of sculptures and videos meant also just mathematically it was very unlikely the same person would see the same combination of snippets of videos as they walked around.

I ended up with a conclusion to this research at Matt's Gallery, that I never would have envisioned or understood at the beginning of this research. This investigation has truly stretched my questions and methodology and importantly transformed my art making. Putting this thesis together at the end of the practical, verbal and written research, something unexpected has emerged. The discussions with Dean kept circling my own subjective presence in the works. Dean observed that 'I make work in the first person.' I had not fully anticipated the significance of this. The artist's I write about Chetwynd, Smith, Prouvost and Trecartin are also all in their

own work. As a voice or participant, their physical presence is a personal address from the artist. Vito Acconci's work emanates from his body and its placement in the world. It is the changing, growing old 'I' in Sherwin's performance (something he can't control) that provides potential for a live mode of address. This 'I' is removed by artists, when their expanded cinema work is mechanised to run without them. It is the missing presence of the first person that causes Christopher Townsend to have such a miserable time at Camden Arts Centre.

Performative language theory played a large part in the research. It helped me to articulate and construct ideas around my demands on the camera, namely to produce a reality not describe one. What I had not understood, however, is that a *performative speech act is always in the first person.* I promise you they are. Performatives are from one person to another. More than being a form of self-expression, the first person positioning of the work is structurally essential to it being performative.

I reread Margaret Iverson's essay *Following Pieces;* I had missed some clues. In a section I initially thought of as not being that relevant, where she discusses writing by Denis Hollier on the Surrealists and shadows as a way of an introduction to performativity, Iverson writes:

> As Hollier notes, the shadow is the clearest example of an indexical sign that is 'less a representation of an object than the effect of an event.' [...] For Hollier, works such as Jean Arp's sculpture *Bell and Navels* (1931), which incorporate real shadows, 'open the internal space of the work to the context of reception, mixing it with that of the beholder.' The literary equivalent of the cast shadow, he says, is the first person. Just as the cast shadows indicate the object, the 'I' is an index of the subject of enunciation: 'The I opens up language to its performative circumstances.'[55]

55 Margaret Iverson 'Following Pieces' in James Elkins (ed) *Photography Theory* (Routledge, 2007), p.91.

I want to make art which includes my own presence, which risks being embarrassing and awkward, but puts me and the art I make in the same place as the viewer. I don't want the artist to be shrouded in mystery or specialist knowledge. This serves to remove the art from the viewer and it will not then 'mix with the context of the beholder'. My demands for the lens-based image, that it is encountered as a presence, are actually demands I make on the politics of making that includes the artist in the work. The first person brings forth the precarious nature of art and is essential to the live mode of address.

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