



FILM
CULTURE

IN TRANSITION

THEORIZING FILM THROUGH CONTEMPORARY ART EXPANDING CINEMA

EDITED BY

JILL MURPHY

LAURA RASCAROLI

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Theorizing Film Through Contemporary Art



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Theorizing Film Through Contemporary Art

Expanding Cinema

*Edited by
Jill Murphy and Laura Rascaroli*

Amsterdam University Press



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In memory of my mother, Mary Murphy, who was wise, warm, and true. (JM)

To Mara – cousin, twin, friend – to the sinuous fabric of love that connected our lives in proximity and distance, to the anguish of the tear, to the day when it might heal. (LR)



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Jill Murphy and Laura Rascaroli
Cork, March 2020



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Foreword: Courtesy of the Artists

Sandra Gibson + Luis Recoder

Expanding cinema by means of theorizing film through contemporary art. Expanding it, that is, by theorizing-film-through something other than film itself and yet in affinity with it. The cinematic affinities in contemporary art as the occasion through which theorizing film projects itself into an expanding cinema that promises to become the theoretical apparatus par excellence of a new dispositif for its expanding theory. In expanding cinema through contemporary art the expanding theory preserves the legacy of theorizing-film-through-film by other means. The ever-expanding dispositif of theorizing-film-through-art reinstalls itself in the new installation, namely, from the cinema to the gallery. The coming attraction, or rather distraction, is no doubt the post-cinematic condition of possibility for its own projection performance: theorizing contemporary art through film. Whether the dispositif of theorizing-film-through-art takes hold of the dispositif of theorizing-art-through-film as the uncanny shadow of its shadow is a possibility among possibilities in the throw of the thematic scope outlined in the handsomely edited volume before you. A retrospective foreword by way of a collection of aphorisms in the form of artist statements, proposals, and correspondences from our collaborative work as Gibson + Recoder registers the vertiginous twists and turns of a threading path entangled in the light spill of an expanding cinema: Theorizing Film Through Contemporary Art.

I.

In our installation work, we use projected light to articulate space and time. Film projectors and celluloid are the material base of our constructions in light and shadow, the elemental properties of cinema. These things are deeply imbued with a history of viewership in the dark of the theatre. To remove it from darkness is to flood this history and cast a certain illumination upon it. A certain exposure. Light spills in the shifting of film from its native

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Figure 1 Gibson + Recoder, *Light Spill* (2005). Modified 16mm film projector, film, screen, dimensions variable. Installation view, Eye Filmmuseum, Amsterdam, the Netherlands, 2016. Photo by Hans Wilschut.

darkness in enclosed chambers (camera obscura) to the uncanny openness and defamiliarized illumination of installation. We are exploring the shift, elaborating the displacement, recasting the light mechanics of a peculiar

estrangement of the medium. The art of cinema, yes. But more timely: the becoming cinema of art. That is the coming attraction for us.¹

II.

Our work employs the medium of film at the moment when film is no longer the industrial standard of motion picture technology. Film is obsolete. But if this is the case from an economic point of view, it has always been the case from an artistic one. Artistic obsolescence in the medium of film is a primordial fact that does not wait for the waning of its technological base; film is obsolete at the moment of its birth. Film is fundamentally obsolete in the same way that all art is obsolete at the moment of its birth. In the realm of aesthetics, the emergence of beauty is utterly precarious, unstable, decomposing before our very eyes. The economic view of obsolescence in the medium of film is merely the vantage point through which to glimpse the artistic view of obsolescence in its correct, even if belated, perspective.²

III.

To ask about cinema is not the same as asking about film. Cinema is the metaphysical idea (of cinema) and not the phenomenological 'thing itself'. It is bereft of materiality in its escape into a dream-like immateriality. Cinema is not film. It is the death of film (from the moment darkness settles in, the materials disappear in the dark fabric of an abysmal masking device). Film is not cinema. Film goes up against the grain (but it has no grain) of cinema. It is the rotting flesh made up of bones and other corporal beasts lurking in the dark, suspended in a murky substance. The organic nature of film is the long intestine (umbilical/spinal cord) unwinding and slithering silently behind our backs (our spines), wrapping its infinite coil (or noose?) ever so swiftly around our necks! The death of film is not the death of cinema. Disembodied/disembowelled from an apparent (though not transparent) darkness, film is cut loose from its immaterial bond (its false disappearance, its fake death) and made to roam the world for the first time. Film can do without cinema once and for all. While cinema pretends to be continued...³

1 Gibson + Recoder, 'Coming Attraction'.

2 Gibson + Recoder, 'Cinematograph'.

3 Gibson + Recoder, 'Cinema/Film'.

IV.

Film projection exceeds the limits of its concept as a mere functional apparatus for the mechanical performance of cinematic works. A concept of 'projection performance' is, therefore, inherent to the medium which *performs* not only the negation of its mediation and thus subordination to the celluloid material, but also its resistance as a passive carrier. (Projection projects its ambivalence to the material, intermittently hesitating between its slavish animation of a dead object and its absolute indifference as to whether the object is already dead or missing.) To perform the already performed is to raise this element of resistance to a second-degree awareness. In light of this awareness, the concept of projection performance becomes a tautological concept in which 'performance' merely doubles and thus foregrounds the specific functioning of the projective apparatus.

To work as an artist within a certain tautological understanding of projection-as-performance is precisely to perform and reperform ad infinitum the already performed. Film projection has always relied on a projectionist to perform and reperform ad infinitum (ad nauseam) the already performed and preformed functioning of the projective apparatus. An aesthetics of projection performance is an apprenticeship to this dedicated custodian of darkness (of nothingness, of disappearance, of invisibility, of transparency). To work or labour in utter darkness is one thing (i.e. to make a bare something out of a bare nothing), but to shape and reshape the intermittent im/palpability of this void through the tyranny of cinematic time is another thing, one which incessantly haunts in its stubborn resistance to the resistance. To break free from this temporal tyranny of narrativized time, or at least to slip beneath its gaze, a shift in the projective location presents itself as a possible exit, though by no means an escape.⁴

V.

We work with projection and this is a very material, object-based practice; but in our projection performances, more than in the installations, we are interested in framing a certain dialectical slippage between materiality and immateriality. We imagine the viewer being completely lost in the illusion of the screen events, almost forgetting the live aspect of the experience. The

4 Gibson + Recoder, 'Projecting Projection'. Based on a lecture presentation delivered at the Society for Cinema and Media Studies conference in New Orleans, 10–13 March 2011.

slippage between being a live, non-reproducible, event and a reproducible event occurs also because of the durational nature of the work and its illusive character. We are interested in foregrounding radical materiality, exaggerating it to the point where, paradoxically, it is no longer the material itself that is experienced but pure light, sheer illusion, absolute immateriality, or what have you.

There is a difference between working materially in a gallery, where the approach tends to be literal, the object is there, and in a theatrical space, where the tendency is to withdraw from materiality, simply because the cinema space is so overloaded with a kind of illusory forgetfulness of the material conditions. The architectural contributes to this effect. As much as you try to pry into it, call attention to it, unmask it, and expose it for what it is, the cinema is resiliently stubborn and rebels against transparency.

We like to think of the footage as just another element in the ensemble that constitutes the apparatus. Our apparent ambivalence with the footage is not unlike any other element in this multiplicity known as the cinematograph. The footage as a found object is no more special than the found object of the cinema machine itself. We are working with the totality.

Film projectors are not meant to be running all day, as they overheat and break down, and so we discovered that minimally chiselling away at some key components allows for an uninterrupted, continuous exhibition of something that wasn't designed to be presented in this manner. In general, any kind of intervention we do with the projector has to do with the sheer impossibility of the cinematograph to project non-stop 24-hours and seven days a week, unlike a static object such as a painting or a photograph. And that comes from the fact that the machine resists that kind of viewing situation, and also resists being viewed as a machine – it's got to be tucked away in a hidden chamber so as to keep from view the medium's utter fragility and precariousness.

Whenever we exhibit *Light Spill*, someone always asks: 'What do you do with the film pile afterwards? Do you rewind it?' – and so the idea of *Threadbare* came from the act of rewinding the film back onto the projector, but in such a way where the return of the material is so vast that it overwhelms the take-up mechanism to the point of rendering the entire machine inoperable. Perhaps it is a form of mummification. Some say it resembles the signature silhouette of Mickey Mouse's head.

We have two different practices which are in conversation with one another. In order for us to express something essential about the projection performances, it is imperative that it be achieved in displaced form, outside the dark chamber. The open space of a gallery allows us to express a kind of



Figure 2 Gibson + Recoder, *Threadbare* (2013). 16mm film projector, reels, film, 27 x 35 x 12 inches. Courtesy of Gibson + Recoder Studio, Brooklyn, NY, 2013. Photo by Rachel Hamburger.

materiality that is not allowable even in the most material gestures of our performances in the closed space of the cinema. Open and closed spaces work together, the one expressing what the other cannot articulate.

Much of our sculptural work attempts to frame a certain paradox of the still life of motion picture phenomena. What we have achieved with this work is extremely cinema- or even film-specific, even more so than in the cinema space proper, which again rebels against its transparency.⁵

VI.

What is the status of an artwork when nobody is in the gallery? What is the status of an artwork outside the gallery's exhibition hours? What is the status of an artwork that requires light once it is no longer illuminated? What is the status of an artwork that runs on electricity once the power is shut off? What is the status of an artwork that has been destroyed or gone missing? What is the status of an artwork when the viewer is blocked from experiencing the thing itself? What is the status of an artwork as a concept

5 Excerpts from an interview conducted by Tommaso Isabella.

without an object? What is the status of an artwork amidst the scrutiny of questions concerning the inaccessibility of the artwork?

Artworks that run on electricity and are intermittently turned on and off in compliance with a museum or gallery's exhibition schedule seem to beg the question whether their status as artworks undergoes a certain disequilibrium in the constitution of their spatiotemporal currency. Can you imagine that the artificial light works of major artists such as Dan Flavin, Keith Sonnier, and Jenny Holzer are switched on and off, day in and day out, to comply with museum exhibition hours worldwide? Can you imagine a permanent installation of fluorescent or neon-light works at a prestigious art foundation flickering in and out due to a power surge or blackout? Can you imagine a light blowing out and a technician attending to the 'problem' while viewers eagerly wait for the incandescent resuscitation of the artwork? Or the more common practice of posting signage indicating that the artwork is temporarily 'out of order'? Can you imagine a famous painting, say Da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* or Duchamp's *L.H.O.O.Q.* (aka *Mona Lisa with a Moustache*), with signage indicating that the artwork is temporarily 'out of order'? Perhaps the closest one may get to witnessing such an unlikely, not to mention absurd, scenario is when curatorial practice insists on displaying an empty frame indicating a missing painting that was allegedly the target of an art heist. The uncanny framing of invisible canvases by Rembrandt, Vermeer, and Manet at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum comes to mind.

Again, what is the status of an artwork when it is not altogether there or absent, when the power flickers out or the viewer is blocked from experiencing the thing itself?⁶

VII.

STILL: NOT OR HARDLY MOVING; AN ORDINARY STATIC PHOTOGRAPH (AS OPPOSED TO A MOTION PICTURE); WITHOUT MOVING (STAND STILL); EVEN NOW OR AT A PARTICULAR TIME (THEY STILL DID NOT UNDERSTAND); NEVERTHELESS; EVEN; YET; INCREASINGLY (STILL GREATER EFFORT); MAKE OR BECOME STILL; STILLNESS; STILL LIFE. STALL: THE STALLING OF AN ENGINE (THE CONDITION RESULTING FROM THIS); REACH A CONDITION WHERE THE SPEED IS TOO LOW TO ALLOW EFFECTIVE OPERATION OF THE CONTROLS; CAUSE (ENGINE) TO STALL; PLAY FOR TIME WHEN BEING QUESTIONED; DELAY; OBSTRUCT.

6 Gibson + Recoder, 'Electric Shadows'.

STILL STALL: REACHING A CONDITION WHERE THE SPEED IS TOO LOW TO ALLOW EFFECTIVE OPERATION OF THE CONTROLS, CAUSING THE ENGINE TO STALL SO AS TO NOT OR HARDLY MOVE. THE CAUSALITY AND CASUALTY OF A STAND STILL. AN ORDINARY STATIC STILLNESS AS OPPOSED TO A MOTION STALLING. NEVERTHELESS, AND WITH INCREASINGLY AND STILL GREATER EFFORT, A HARDLY MOVING AND YET EFFECTIVE OPERATION IN OPPOSITION TO A MOTION PICTURE. TO DELAY EVEN NOW OR AT A PARTICULAR TIME A WITHOUT MOVING PLAY FOR TIME OBSTRUCTING THE OPPOSITION.⁷

VIII.

FILM IS...NOT FILM. IT IS EVERYTHING THAT IS WHEN REDUCED TO THE SHEER NOTHINGNESS OF NOTHING BUT FILM. WHEN YOU ARE LEFT WITH NOTHING BUT FILM OR WHEN IT LEAVES YOU WITH NOTHING BUT (WHAT) REMAINS, IN THE UTTER NOTHINGNESS OF NOTHING YOU REACH INTO THE IMPALPABLE VOID. CALL IT THE IMMATERIALITY OF THE MATERIAL EXCESS OR WHAT HAVE YOU, FILM IS NOTHING AS IT NEVER (EVER) WAS ANYTHING TO BEGIN WITH BUT THE NEARNESS – BARELY THE PRESENCE – OF SHEER NOTHINGNESS. ALMOST NOTHING. CONSIDER THE INTERMITTENT FACTUM BRUTUM THAT FILM IS AND IS NOT. MORE SPECIFICALLY, IS ONLY VIS-À-VIS ITS NOT. THE IS IS NOT WHAT IS MOST INTRIGUING BUT WHAT IT OBSTRUCTS, NAMELY THE NOT. OUR STUBBORN CLINGING TO THINGNESS STIFLES THE POSSIBILITY OF ANY CRITICAL AND ENGAGING CONFRONTATION WITH THE IMPALPABLE NOTHING. THE MORE FILM REACHES INTO THE VOID OF ITS ESSENTIALIST NULLITY THE MORE IT TRANSCENDS AND SHATTERS ITS APPARENT THINGNESS. FILM IS...NOT FILM. IT IS THE ENTRY AND EXIT POINT OF A MOVEMENT IN AND THROUGH WHICH FILM IS IMMANENTLY NOTHING BUT ITSELF BUT ONLY IN APPEARANCE AS ITS REAL MOTIVE IS TO OVERREACH AND THUS OVERCOME ITS PURPORTED LIMITS IN A CONCENTRATED EFFORT TO SURPASS ITSELF IN ITS SELF-EFFACING AUTO-DESTRUCTION. IT IS IN THE WAKE OF THIS IMMANENT CRISIS THAT FILM IS...NOT FILM. A FILM WHICH ASPIRES TO REFLECT NOTHING BUT ITSELF IS A NARCISSISTIC MIRROR WHICH SHATTERS WHEN THE REFLECTION AND THE THING WHICH IT REFLECTS COME HEAD TO HEAD. FILM IS...NOT FILM. IF EVERYTHING

7 Gibson + Recoder, 'STILL FILM / STILL LIFE'.

IN FILM IS SO GEARED, IS SO EQUIPPED, SO AS TO RESTRICT THE VIEW OF ITS THINGNESS THEN WE SHALL FURTHER RESTRICT THE RESTRICTION SO AS TO MAKE IT OUR CONSTRICTING VIEW. BY RADICALIZING THE IMMATERIAL PREMISE OF THE MATERIAL APPARATUS PERHAPS WE CAN BETTER ARRIVE AT THE UNCANNY TRUTH NOT ONLY OF THIS ANTIQUARIAN APPURTENANCE THAT WE CANNOT SO EASILY SHAKE OFF (EVEN WHEN WE SO DESPERATELY TRY) BUT OF AN ENTIRE EPISTEMOLOGICAL DISPOSITIF. FILM IS NOT NOTHING. (FOR THAT WOULD BE AN UTTERLY NULL THING TO SAY.) FILM IS THE NOTHING PURE AND SIMPLE (WHICH, WE MIGHT ADD, IS THE MOST DIFFICULT THING TO ACHIEVE) – WHAT WE ARE CALLING HERE THE NOT FILM, I.E. THE NOT FILM IN THE RESTRICTED SENSE THAT IT IS SHOT THROUGH AND PERMEATED WITH THE EPOCHAL (ESSENTIALIST) FILM IS... FILM IS (NOT FILM) IS (NOT) WHAT REMAINS AS ITS THINGNESS FADES INTO DARKNESS. WHAT REMAINS GLIMMERS IN THE NIGHT. IS THERE AND NOT THERE. (FILM APPROACHES ITS NULLITY.) THE FILM SLOWLY FADING INTO THE OPAQUE NIGHT PUNCTURED BY A STARRY SKY IS THE SLOWEST FILM IN THE WORLD SHEDDING ITS LINGERING LIGHT ON NOTHING BUT THE APOCALYPTIC (THOUGH BY NO MEANS NIHILISTIC) COMING OF THE PROFOUNDTEST NOTHING. ONLY THROUGH THE VEILS OF FILM CAN WE PEER OUT OF FILM IN A COMPREHENSIVE PEERING ALL THE WAY THROUGH FILM TO FILM'S VERY END, NEVER FULLY ESCAPING FILM BUT ALSO (AND THIS IS WHAT IS MOST PROMISING) NEVER EVER FULLY TAKEN IN BY FILM EITHER.⁸

IX.

Motion picture projection and theatre presentation manuals describe an optical aberration that produces unwanted effects of stray light on the screen. What is striking, at least for us, is the industry's insistence in referring to such effects as non-image formations. In one sense they are non-images, if they interfere with the official motion picture of a feature presentation; and yet, in another sense, they are images precisely because they interfere, i.e. images of non-images. *Incident Light* insists on the indecent exposure of the non-image to stray forth and come to light.⁹

8 Gibson + Recoder, 'FILM IS...NOT FILM'.

9 Unrealized project proposal titled 'Incident Light' for Microscope Gallery, Brooklyn, NY, 2016.





Figure 3 Gibson + Recoder, *Illuminatoria* (2016). Hand-blown glass, rheostat motors, lighting kit, Lucite, hardware, 114 x 80 inches. Installation view, Exploratorium, San Francisco, CA, 2016. Photo by Gayle Laird.

X.

“The function of the motion-picture screen is to display a world of fantasy and entertainment without the screen being obvious.”¹⁰

The point of departure for this premiere performance is the obliteration, literally the blotting out, of the cinematic object of projection. Projection performance as the art par excellence of obstructing, concealing, masking absolutely nothing but itself. *Obliteration*: in which the spectacle of the apparatus is to be screened, or better screened out, in the negative relief of a self-cancellation vis-à-vis nothing but the disciplinary application of a cinematic standard.¹¹

XI.

An ‘empty frame’ in negative – elements for a collaboration.

What if we loosely structure our collaboration around the idea or concept of a screening space photographed with a large format camera, but limiting ourselves to taking the negative as the thing itself? It is irrelevant whether the film we are projecting is *Snow White* or the white light of the film projector. If the former, then an exposure long enough to overexpose the screen but not the screening space is necessary. If exposed properly, our negative depicts a black rectangular screen against a white screening space.

This negative image is the first stage in developing our latent image of the cinematograph. Our collaboration will devise different ways in which this latent image can be further developed.

A couple of years ago we developed a proposal for a performance titled *Incident Light*. No film and no film projector involved but a pair of high-end studio spotlights with manual aperture and dimming functions. Aside from this, we are currently contemplating an ambitious project that takes the same negative (of the cinema) and blows it up to a life-size walk-in movie theatre. It partially answers your curiosity in light of the flicker and on/off in which you observe the following: ‘As if Sugimoto’s camera could have made a composite temporal image JUST of all the BLACK spaces in between frames.’¹² We have the beginning of an answer to precisely this area of inquiry in the black-and-white photographic negative that frames a

¹⁰ Kloepfel, p. 88.

¹¹ Gibson + Recoder, ‘Obliteration’.

¹² Walley, Email.



homogenous black rectangle suspended in the blinding light of the theatre. Now imagine if we take this photographic negative and blow it up to an actual life-size walk-in movie theatre.

Sugimoto's yet-to-be photographed negative of Kubelka's Invisible Cinema?

The construction of such a light/dark space, ideally a re-gutted abandoned cinema, would be to fabricate a large-scale recessed black rectangle so that the black hovers indeterminately between flatness and depth, surface and void. The illumination of the theatre's interior would of course have to be as bright white as possible, somehow flooded like a studio 'cyc' (which apparently derives from 'cyclorama'). The hollowed-out interior of the recessed rectangle to be treated with a non-reflective black matte.

Our proposal for a negative cinema can perhaps hook up to your proposal for an 'infernal machine' – a model for the conceptual apparatus 'designed to unveil as many levels of intermittency as possible'.¹³ Actually, we conceived the technique of the camera obscura in *Obscurus Projectum* as the prototype for the possibility of an 'intermittentless' cinema in which the negated intermittencies (i.e. Baudry) can be critically contemplated and perhaps even reintroduced, beginning with the intermittent nature of the viewer navigating within the viewing space itself, literally breaking in and out of space so as to rupture the cinematic continuum. (Our more recent work in Chicago, *The Changeover System*, is perhaps as 'infernal' as it gets for us with two movie theatres, a sound artist, dancers, and an audience in constant flux). Your concise and yet poignant Exploratorium essay introduced the figure of breaking- or tearing-apart and wanting to know what is inside, and that this is precisely what the 'digital' prohibits while the 'analogue' facilitates.¹⁴ The camera obscura is already a 'broken' apparatus in the sense that there is a light leak in the architecture of darkness – and this is where the 'cameraless' work of *Available Light* gets its bearings.

So the parameters of the collaboration would be to contemplate in an infernal machine such as the one proposed in the negative of cinema not only a vast collection of subsumed intermittencies, but also a working model for the development of a new body of work existing nowhere but on paper.¹⁵

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Walley, 'Obscurus Projectum'.

¹⁵ Unrealized project proposal in collaboration with Jonathan Walley titled 'Infernal Machine: The Negative of Cinema'.



Figure 4 Gibson + Recoder, *The Changeover System* (2017). Two screening rooms, two multi-reel feature-length 35mm films, four 35mm film projectors, hand-blown glass, rheostat motors, hardware, variable duration. Dance choreography by Douglas Dunn. Sound composition by Brian Case. Performance view, Gene Siskel Film Center, Chicago, IL, 2017. Courtesy of Conversations At The Edge & School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Photo by Connor Fenwick.

XII.

Conceptual Specificities

The project (if we can call it that) is to question the ‘expanded’ cinematic forms that argue in favour of a certain crisis and perhaps overcoming in the concept of medium specificity. What we desire is nothing more, and nothing less, than to inhabit the concept of medium specificity as if it had never been inhabited before. With our closed-in systems, we imagine that the conceptual–structural integrity of the whole is a simple looping device or mechanism that is by no means *merely* repetitive and boring but *precisely* repetitive and boring. In brief, the concept of medium specificity, when specifying its concept, is a performative contradiction that keeps looping back upon the impossible impasse of its symptomatic aporia as it infinitely approaches the closure of an inexhaustible exhaustion.

Change-Over System

To perform the 'changeover' system in the 35mm theatrical projection of celluloid film is to disclose a performative contradiction that is embedded in the cinematic organization of the materials themselves. What is simultaneously projected and thus superimposed in a kind of double-projection is the intermittent play of cinematic illusion and disillusion. However, the maintenance of this material–immaterial dialectic (perhaps embodied in the figure of the projectionist) quickly transpires in the dissolving forgetfulness of an audio-visual seduction. As there is absolutely nothing to 'grasp' or 'grip' in the conceptual void of an ambiguous theatrical effect, the viewer is automatically rendered helpless to the coming attraction of an enigmatic abduction. An enigma, moreover, whose radical absence is the mere formulaic precondition of an imaginary presence barely hanging on the threads of light and sound waves unthinkable outside the narrow spectrum of a certain projective anthropomorphism. The cinematic effect that discloses the shock of an utterly indigenous heterogeneity entangled in the projective thread is no contradiction at all, but the phantasmagorical persistence of an infernal material–immaterial dialectical machine.

Dark Chamber Disclosure

Dark chamber disclosure performs the concealed contradiction of the cinematic apparatus within the apparatus itself. For it cannot be pried open, teased out, or unveiled in any other fashion. The contradiction resists its representability in a spectacle-within-a-spectacle, as in meta-cinema's catastrophic attempts at medium-specific self-reflexivity, but must be performed within a site-specific domain that is itself the very medium of a fundamental performativity always-already performed. The living agency of medium-specific performative contradictions is merely the obtrusive materiality of a subject slipping into the cinematic caesuras to perform a medium stripped bare to nothing but the specificity of itself which is, paradoxically, everything but specific.¹⁶

16 Gibson + Recoder, 'Performative Contradictions'. Based on a lecture presentation for the 'Expanding Cinema: Spatial Dimensions of Film Exhibition, Aesthetics, and Theory' Conference, Yale University, New Haven, CT, 15 – 16 February 2013.

XIII.

The main subject matter of our work addresses the materials and ideas of projection. Our current fascination with the camera obscura has to do with reimagining and recasting this 'bare' technological apparatus as the earliest, if not the first, projection of the world, or simply world projection.¹⁷

XIV.

The *Matter with Film* is a play on the condition of film-as-matter and its matter-of-factness in the face of emerging technologies. What's the matter with film anyway? Why does it matter? As a matter-of-fact film matters. How? It matters as soon as the maker takes the material at hand. In this meeting between film-as-matter and hand something is grasped. Grasped into matter. In the grasping of matter the latter grasps the hand in return, slaps back, so to speak. Back-and-forth. The objectification of film as matter and the matter of objectifying go hand in hand, catch one another. The *Matter with Film* is a catchy title for a curious game we play with a bit of matter. Once handed, we can matter-the-matter so that it matters. For all the films in this program matter in the face of what does not matter, that is, of that which immatters and relentlessly chatters.¹⁸

XV.

Ride the Light is a programme of live events for the multiplicity of film projection. The doubling, tripling, and sometimes quadrupling up of screens – in short, the *dispersal of cinema* – fragments the always-already fragmented, and in essence redistributes the temporal distribution of temporality. The doubling-up of the mechanical-spectacular releases our time machine from the bond of a manufactured 'ticking-away'. The sequential beat of the framework (of frame-upon-frame) is followed by its doppelganger to be reproduced not as reproduction of the same thing but as *re-production of the dissimilar in simulation*. When twos, threes, and fours converge there emerges a ricochet, a

17 Mad. Sq. Art, 'Artist Interview: Gibson & Recoder'. Interview conducted on the occasion of solo exhibition, *Topsy-Turvy: A Camera Obscura Installation*, Mad. Sq. Art, New York, NY, 1 March – 7 April 2013.

18 Artist statement titled 'The Matter with Film' for a touring film screening series in 2003.

shimmer, a ghost. It is this ghosting that cinema pursues with its 'persistence of vision' only to erase it from vision by thickening the still succession framework in what is called *eidetics*. *Ride the Light* broadens the network of streaks, raises the erasures, re-visions for cinema its indigenous *persist-stance*.¹⁹

XVI.

If our experience of film history is generally thought of in terms of fleeting images on a blank screen in a dark room then how are they to be displayed, exhibited, screened in the overexposed rooms of a museum gallery? How is this unprecedented temporal specificity to be remembered? Or do these immaterial effigies caught in the flow of time utterly rebel against their display? Given this conundrum our working title for Headlands [Center for the Arts], *Film Museum*, might appear somewhat counterintuitive, nay impossible. But is there not an exit strategy somewhere beyond the EXIT sign, in the lobby, in the little chamber above and behind the spectator's head where projection casts a flickering of light and shadow? Questioning along these lines slows down the filmic flow, freeze-frames a tableau imbued with time and movement, brings it closer to painterly and sculptural phenomena.²⁰

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19 Gibson + Recoder, 'Ride the Light'.

20 Gibson + Recoder, 'Film Museum'.

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About the Authors

Sandra Gibson + Luis Recoder have been exhibiting their expanded cinema installations and projection performances since 2000. Their works are in the permanent collections of major museums, including the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, Academy Museum of Motion Pictures in Los Angeles, and Museum Kunstpalaast in Düsseldorf. Awards and commissions include The Rockefeller Foundation's Bellagio Center Residency, National Endowment for the Art's U.S.-Japan Creative Artists Fellowship, and Mad. Sq. Art. They are currently featured artists and research associates of RESET THE APPARATUS! hosted by the University of Applied Arts Vienna, Austria. Gibson + Recoder live and work in New York. www.gibsonrecoder.com



Introduction: On Cinema Expanding

Jill Murphy and Laura Rascaroli

This book is born of a visit to an exhibition. We saw Philippe Parreno's *Hypothesis* at the Pirelli HangarBicocca of Milan in December 2015.¹ A complex, anthological 'choreography' including many works and collaborations by the artist, *Hypothesis* is a deeply cinematic work. The term cinematic, albeit frequently used, requires qualification. While recognizing that it is resistant to definition, Maeve Connolly has explored a range of ways in which it has been used by critics to discuss art that has to do with the activities, materialities, and processes of filmmaking, while being 'located outside or beyond cinema'.² In line with this definition, although including a number of films and videos, the cinematicity of Parreno's *Hypothesis* exists outside and beyond them (and even above them, given that much in his exhibition happens at hangar-ceiling height). But what is significant about our experience of Parreno's exhibition, and generated the reflection at the root of this volume, is that *Hypothesis* struck us as a cinematic artwork that is theoretical. That is, a work that is not only associated with, and draws on, the cinema as imagery, medium, and cultural referent, but one that functions as a theory of it. The whole set up, indeed, powerfully spoke to us not only through, but also of the cinema – seen as a specific, historicized experience, as a constructed space, a set of cultural meanings, and an apparatus. Ideas of film technology, projection, reproduction, spectatorship, narrativity, temporality, historicity, and myth all came to us as if in waves while we explored the vast expanse of the gallery, formerly an industrial hangar. Concrete objects of the cinema (spotlights, marquees, sets, rails, screens, projectors) as well as immaterial ones (the play of light and shadows, the identifications, the mythology) were at the basis of this effect, while not exhausting it.

1 *Hypothesis* was Parreno's first anthological Italian exhibition and was held at the Pirelli HangarBicocca between 22 October 2015 and 14 February 2016.

2 Connolly, p. 85

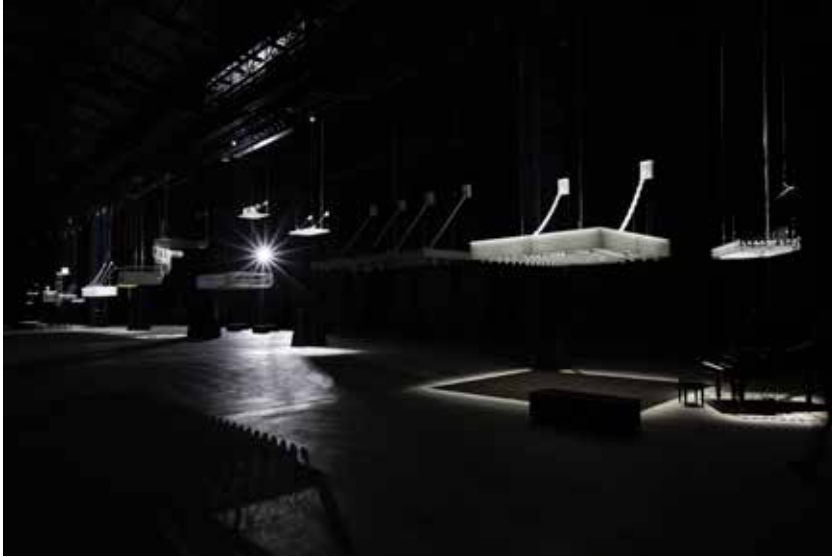


Figure 5 Philippe Parreno, *Hypothesis*, HangarBicocca, Milan (22 October 2015 – 14 February 2016). Photo Andrea Rossetti. Courtesy of the Artist.

It is of course possible to identify the cinema as an inspiration behind discrete works in *Hypothesis*. The rather overpowering installation *Danny the Street* (2006–2015), for instance, is composed of nineteen differently shaped and sized marquees – sculptures in Plexiglas and lightbulbs which, positioned at different heights, form an imaginary, almost sentient avenue under which the visitor walks. Inspired by the marquees common in 1950s America to publicize films, the lights intermittently switch on and off according to the tempo of a powerful score conceived by Parreno and Nicholas Becker together with a number of musicians, and played automatically by two pianos controlled by a master keyboard.³ The marquees not only design a street of the cinema, and beckon to the visitor gesturing to the promise of a marvellous (cinematographic) spectacle to be discovered, but are the spectacle in themselves, independently of the films they are supposed to, but do not, advertise. As such, they represent the activity of cinema-going as the true experience of the twentieth century. *Another Day with Another Sun* (2014), then, realized in collaboration with Liam Gillick, is composed of a cinema spotlight that, travelling along rails suspended from the ceiling, hits the structures and columns of the gallery, projecting an ever-changing game of shadows on the wall, as on to a huge

3 Artists and musicians included Agoria, Thomas Bartlett, Liam Gillick, Ranjana Leyendecker, Mirwais, and Robert AA Lowe.

white screen. Drawn by the marquees into the spectacle of the cinema, thus, the visitor steps inside Plato's Cave, and admires a pre-cinema spectacle of shadows reminiscent of an ephemeral, and filmic, urban skyline. Of the films by Parreno that the visitor can pause and watch on the screens, which are part of the exhibition, *Marilyn* (2012) is particularly emblematic for its reflection on the cinema as a construction founded on the stars, on mythologies, and on the illusions of representation, *mise en scène*, and technology. The images in this video are presented as subjective shots of Marilyn Monroe, whom we hear talking, and whose hand we see writing. The setting is the meticulously reconstructed suite of the Hotel Waldorf Astoria in New York where the diva stayed during the 1950s. The atmosphere becomes progressively haunting, as a sense of confinement and loneliness is evoked by the restricted view, the persistent ringing of an unanswered telephone, and the sound of rainfall striking the window. Eventually, the camera pans backward, revealing the machinery that created the illusion of Marilyn's presence (her voice was reproduced by an algorithm, her handwriting by a purpose-built robot, her gaze by the camera), and the room to be nothing more than a film set.

While many individual pieces in *Hypothesis* are profoundly cinematic in themselves, they are not experienced by viewers individually; rather, they are organized in sequences which form non-linear narratives – a loose and yet organized structure. Visitors walk around beckoned by events of light and shadow, bursts of sound and music, which, like powerful *son et lumière* performances, suddenly grab their attention, drawing them in, only to release them again. Waves of emotional and contemplative engagement push the visitors through the invisible routes of the exhibition, eliciting different degrees of intensity and participation. It is the exhibition as a whole, then, that by curating the works in space, by creating a montage and a sequence, comes across as a theory of the cinema. *Hypothesis* explores the themes investigated by Parreno's individual works – including presence and absence, reality and simulation, mediation and the uncertain confine between illusion and perception – as a product of the cinema, seen as a specific cultural, technological, and ideological construct that has profoundly, irrevocably shaped our consciousness. Inspired by Parreno's *Hypothesis*, the present volume, *Theorizing Film Through Contemporary Art: Expanding Cinema*, stems from the observation that contemporary art continues to incorporate, restage and re-present fundamental elements of the cinematic medium and that, in so doing, such artworks raise probing theoretical questions on the ontology of the cinema – which they can now contemplate from the vantage point of a post-medium location.

In commenting on the convergence of the cinema and the museum that has become increasingly evident and significant in contemporary art,



Giuliana Bruno has observed that this convergence was in truth established very early on, and indeed characterized the prehistory and birth of the cinematic medium. She writes:

It is important to remember that there was an actual history of ‘installations’ that took place at the very origin of film. The convergence of cinema and the museum that was established at the dawn of modernity is rooted in the birth of the medium. Today’s artists appear to be winking at this very historic moment out of which cinema was born.⁴

For Bruno, the forms of projection of post-cinematic art (with specific reference to installation art) reconnect with, and repeat, the ‘exhibitionary fantasies that emerged at the time of precinema, [...] the culture of exhibition and the art of projection of early modernity’.⁵ Thus, concludes Bruno, artists today, ‘[i]n some ways, are becoming historians’.⁶ This collection, by focusing on how through their work contemporary artists reproduce, test, and investigate the components of the cinema as an apparatus and a specific form of experience, is equally and even more interested in how artists are becoming film *theorists*. The conceptual movement this book produces, accordingly, takes its point of departure from the encounter with a specific art object, and tracks back to the cinema, in an effort to (re)theorize film through the lens of contemporary art.

The title of the volume alludes to the expanded cinema framework, but our project differentiates itself from that debate by proposing a distinct take. Since its introduction in the 1970s, the term expanded cinema has gained much currency, while remaining a rather vague concept. Gene Youngblood’s famous definition legitimized this ambiguity, by proposing that expanded cinema is not ‘a movie at all: like life it’s a process of becoming, man’s ongoing historical drive to manifest his consciousness outside of his mind, in front of his eyes’.⁷ Accordingly, the term has been applied to a rather diverse range of artistic experiences. Jackie Hatfield’s useful definition synthesizes for us the prevailing sense of this complex phenomenon to be found in the critical literature:

Not without ambiguities, expanded cinema as a term generally describes synaesthetic cinematic spectacle (spectacle meaning exhibition, rather

4 Bruno, p. 27.

5 Bruno, p. 29.

6 Bruno, p. 27.

7 Youngblood, p. 41.

than simply an issue of projection or scale), whereby the notions of conventional filmic language (for example dramaturgy, narrative, structure, technology) are either extended or interrogated outside the *single-screen* space.⁸

While this field is relevant to our project, the significance of artists' film to the relationship between cinema and contemporary art has been widely documented, and, as such, exceeds the scope of our inquiry. Key contributions like *Exhibiting Cinema in Contemporary Art* by Erika Balsom, for instance, among others, have used film theory to analyze contemporary moving-image-based art, and have eloquently examined the ramifications of the fact that film is no longer confined to the cinema theatre and the home, but has extended to the art gallery and the museum (and far beyond them, as demonstrated by Francesco Casetti). Although acknowledging and drawing on this important work, our collection seeks to go in a different direction and examine what the artworks say about film theory, rather than what film theory says about contemporary moving-image-based art. Our investigation is not so much motivated by understanding what happens to cinema in the art gallery as by engaging with artwork that explores the apparatus, the cinema space, the film set, the projected image, or cinematic performance – in short, the objects of cinema and their aesthetic, technical, experiential, material, and ideological coordinates.

At the core of the artworks considered in this project is an effort to understand both the experience of the cinema within the material and the experience of the material within the projected image. The relationship between cinematic and real space is defining in this respect. The contributions in this book focus on artworks that have a strong material presence and tend to coexist with the viewer in a shared space. This sense of materiality is also conferred upon the object or actor within the image and even on the frame of the image or the sound in an artwork. Unpacking the cinematic object in this deliberate way opens out from the moving image to a mediation of the world as told by the narrative structures of film, as presented through its technical structures, as shaped by its economic and ideological frameworks, and as delivered through its conventions of performance and *mise en scène*. Lifting the cinematic from immaterial cinematic space into the gallery space or emphasizing the physicality of the material object or actor on screen challenges film theory, probing and testing if its tenets hold under expanded, reworked criteria. It is worth repeating

8 Hatfield, p. 5 (emphasis in the original).



that our concern is not expanded cinema but expanding cinema. As the century of cinema recedes into the past, and the experience of the cinema has been fully subsumed into our ways of seeing, feeling and thinking, how do film theorists read these twenty-first-century reformulations of the medium and the critique they offer of what cinema is and what it has been? In this respect, the project intentionally confines itself to a limited historical focus, with almost all the works considered in the volume dating from after 1995. Accordingly, the book seeks neither to cover as many artists as possible nor to produce a history of contemporary art that engages with film. Rather, it seeks to think about film through art.

Through their chapters, the accomplished film theorists and experts in this edited collection variously examine artworks incorporating, restaging and re-presenting the cinematic medium's specific configuration of space, experience, presence/absence, production and consumption, technology, myth, perception, event, and temporality, and to address the creation of film theory through practice in contemporary art, the practical illustration of film theory by specific artworks or artists, the testing of specific film theories using examples of contemporary art, and the evolution of film theory to encompass contemporary art.

The different chapters confer on the volume its own internal logic, which organically divides into 'materialities', 'immaterialities', and 'temporalities'. This is not to suggest, however, that each chapter fits neatly into one of these classifications. Instead, the various chapters tend to shift between these headings, inevitably, giving rise to a significant amount of slippage between the material, the immaterial, and the temporal. Nonetheless, it is possible to establish a sliding scale that progresses from one concept to the other, and that leads to a closing section that contemplates what might possibly come next for the image, in all its multiple forms, whether analogue or digital, moving or static, material or projected.

Firstly, though, it seems entirely appropriate to commence the collection with artists' input as they have sown the seeds for this research. The work of Sandra Gibson and Luis Recoder almost embodies the idea of expanding cinema by theorizing it through artistic praxis. Indeed, it also demonstrates, as Volker Pantenburg points out in his chapter on Gibson + Recoder's work, how within cinema-inspired artwork the concepts of materiality, immateriality, and temporality can coexist. In their foreword, Gibson + Recoder have assembled together an anthology of their artists' statements on their work, which provides a fascinating insight into the creative impulse and thinking that typifies the different work considered in the collection.



The first chapter in the book proper is one that perhaps best exemplifies the impetus behind the collection while also foregrounding the notion of the materiality of cinema in the gallery. In ‘Cinema as (In)Visible Object: Looking, Making, and Remaking’, Matilde Nardelli considers ‘the material turn’ of cinema towards the gallery, which has led artists and scholars to shift their attention to the physical qualities of cinema, particularly cinema’s objectness, in both its digital and analogue forms. In contrast to the current tendency to extol cinema’s increasing dematerialization, Nardelli examines how art has become a privileged place for testing alternative, even opposing claims, and through the consideration of work by the artists Runa Islam and Tobias Putrih, she analyses how the evolving ‘objects’ of cinema in the days of its obsolescence, cross-media transformation, and digital metamorphosis are theorized. She also suggests that these artists are putting cinema into art practice in such a way that cinema is *re-made*, transformed, and metamorphosed into something which, if not entirely new, is nevertheless something else that what it was before.

Likewise, Alison Butler, in her chapter ‘Objects in Time: Artefacts in Artists’ Moving Image’, discusses the ambiguity of the object in film – again evidencing the slippage between the material and the immaterial – and how the relationship of film with the object has been transformed in the transition from analogue to digital, using as examples Tacita Dean’s *Day for Night* (2009), about the studio of the Italian painter Giorgio Morandi, and Elizabeth Price’s *A Restoration* (2016), based on the collections of the Ashmolean and Pitt Rivers Museums. Butler examines the de-contextualization of objects by museums and films, extracting them as they both do from their original location in space and time. However, she suggests that films unlike museums possess an inner temporality within which time is invented through the encounter between the artefact and the medium, which rather than dematerializing, rematerializes the object.

In ‘Materializing the Body of the Actor: Labour, Memory, and Storage’, Maeve Connolly considers a different type of cinematic materiality in which artists seek to materialize the acting or performing body within the physical space of the gallery, using overtly sculptural means, combining the moving image with material objects, props, or supports. Focusing on specific works by Cécile B. Evans, Nathaniel Mellors, and Clemens von Wedermeyer, Connolly considers the use of sculptural media (such as digital 3D modelling, scanning, or animatronics) to actualize acting bodies in the gallery, and explores how these media function, either explicitly or implicitly, to articulate aspects of the actor’s labour, memory, and storage mechanisms that remain relatively undertheorized in film studies.

As mentioned above, Volker Pantenburg in his chapter on Sandra Gibson and Luis Recoder identifies how immateriality and materiality exist side by side in the artists' work. In 'How to Spell "Film": Gibson + Recoder's Alphabet of Projection', he considers their object-based work and their projection performances, using Hollis Frampton and Peter Gidal as theoretical touchstones. Pantenburg discusses how Gibson + Recoder restages and updates practices and techniques originating in experimental cinema of the 1960s and 1970s. However, rather than characterizing Gibson + Recoder's work as simply revenants or museological adaptations of their historic models, Pantenburg instead presents the works he discusses as a playful and deeply ironic investigation of questions of medium specificity and obsolescence.

Jill Murphy in 'The Magic of Shadows: William Kentridge's Distancing and Exposure in *More Sweetly Play the Dance*' also examines the shifting nature of the material and immaterial in the cinematic as presented in the gallery, in relation to a recent work of William Kentridge. Murphy examines how Kentridge uses and then thwarts Plato's Cave allegory to tease out the power inherent in giving the audience both agency and work to understand, choosing to locate his images in the shadows that are most reminiscent of a moving-image tradition dating from Plato's time to the pre-cinematic practices of the nineteenth century. Using theoretical concepts put forward by Jean-Luc Nancy in relation to the distance of touch and the spacing of the world, Murphy traces how Kentridge uses this technique to address current world issues while connecting them to historical traumas.

The immateriality of vision and imagination is the subject of Sarah Cooper's analysis in 'Douglas Gordon and the Gallery of the Mind'. Looking at works such as *Phantom* (2011), *100 Blind Stars* (2002), and *Self-Portraits of You + Me* (2003), Cooper suggests that experiencing these works is akin to the perceptual reflexivity of seeing and being seen that Maurice Merleau-Ponty describes, and that Vivian Sobchack relates to the cinema, but with an essential imaginary layer added, one that is actually constitutive of the cinematic image – an imagination-image – and that the gallery space allows Gordon to explore in all its dimensions.

'A Throw of the Dice Will Never Abolish Chance' by Kirstie North also locates itself between the material and the immaterial. North investigates how Tacita Dean's *Section Cinema (Homage to Marcel Broodthaers)* (2002) telescopes back to film's origins from the point of its obsolescence as Dean returns, through Broodthaers, to the era of silent film. In his *Section Cinéma* (1971–1972), Broodthaers draws attention to the affinity between analogue film and chance. While searching for traces of Broodthaer's former cinema, Dean herself comes across a *trouvaille* in the form of model ships that are

visually similar to the one depicted in Broodthaer's film *A Voyage on the North Sea* (1974). Using this chance encounter as a departure point, North examines the status of film as a medium – its emergence and its history – presenting chance as its most enduring, most affective, and now most threatened capacity.

At this point in the collection, a subtle shift occurs in focus with the following three chapters focusing on the temporality of film through the stasis of photography. Ágnes Pethő looks at how the 'photographic', the 'pictorial' and 'the cinematic', or even the 'architectural', fold together in a convergent post-media art, focusing on the use of the diorama in contemporary cinema, photography, and video installations. With examples ranging from Jeff Wall's light boxes, to Gregory Crewdson's cinematic photographs, to a case study of Gustav Deutsch's film/installation *Shirley: Visions of Reality* (2013), the chapter traces the inflections of such a photo-filmic diorama, revealing the imbrication of different art practices as an expansion of the tableau vivant into a versatile 'cubicle aesthetic', which fuses narrativity and visual attraction and reconfigures the traditional dynamic of Michael Fried's concept of absorption and theatricality of the tableau form (and dispositive) in art.

Stefano Baschiera suggests a film-archaeological approach to the dispositive in the digital era in his chapter on the photographic work of Hiroshi Sugimoto. Using Giorgio Agamben's archaeological method as a point of departure, Baschiera specifically considers Sugimoto's photographic series *Theaters* as a reflection on time and the ontology of cinema itself. Taking a cinematic perspective, Baschiera examines the regenerative aspect of the photographic medium in its after-shot, which Sugimoto refers to as a 'resurrection', arguing that Sugimoto's approach leads to a new understanding of the area of film theory linked to the ontological realism of the medium and promotes a new reflection on the question of the apparatus in the moment of its disruption and 'relocation', as Casetti describes.

In 'Time/Frame: On Cinematic Duration', Laura Rascaroli uses Stan Douglas's photographic reconstruction *Ballantyne Pier, 18 June 1935* (2008) as a point of departure to consider the role of the frame and of the function of framing in determining questions of temporality in film versus photography and painting. Rascaroli examines how Douglas's intermedial artwork operates as 'stilled cinema', before moving on to discuss the neglected relationship between frame and filmic temporality in the moving image, particularly with respect to duration and ideas of the long take and slow cinema, using Eric Baudelaire's gallery video *Sugar Water* (2007) as a revelatory, Bergsonian case study.

In the final part of the volume, we turn our attention to what might lie ahead, given cinema's emergence into both black box and white cube of the gallery – and beyond – with three insightful and probing contributions.

Firstly, in 'Interactivity without Control: David O'Reilly's *Everything* (2017) and the Representation of Totality', Andrew Uroskie discusses the quasi-interactive model of spectatorship the game employs, exploring its ontology, and identifying ways in which it can help in thinking beyond models of spectatorship and genre whose validity has become debatable. As Uroskie observes, formally and thematically *Everything* refers to a significant cultural moment in post-war visual culture in which the representation of totality is central. Uroskie traces the dynamic, scalar perspective of the work back to Charles and Ray Eames's *Powers of Ten* (1968), which purported to describe the entirety of the known universe from the smallest particle to the largest galactic supercluster, and examines how it confounds concepts of anthropocentric mastery by taking its theoretical cue from the philosophical thinking of Alan Watts, thereby adopting a perspective that is partial and fluid. As such, Uroskie argues, *Everything's* focus is on radically non-anthropocentric forms of space, time, and subjectivity.

In 'Post-Cinematic Unframing', Lisa Åkervall poses the question what happens to cinematic framing in an era of post-cinematic media? In traditional cinema the frame has a specific relation to the space both on- and off-screen that allows for an expansion of supplementation of what's on-screen through processes of reframing. In post-cinematic media, however, the role of the frame has changed significantly; it no longer operates in relation to a pro-filmic space, neither absolute nor relative, real or fictive. Post-cinematic frames are instead imploded from within, and the image is unframed. Using two post-cinematic artworks, Camille Henrot's single-channel video installation *Grosse Fatigue* (2013) and Kevin B. Lee's video essay *Transformers: The Premake (a desktop documentary)* (2014), and reconsidering seminal theories of the cinematic frame from André Bazin to Gilles Deleuze, Åkervall examines the transformations of the frame in post-cinematic media.

Finally, in a profound meditation on the ontology of the image in the early twenty-first century, D. N. Rodowick discusses how to give form and expression to what he calls a critical Image within the vast proliferation of reproduced images and images of reproduction that are a norm in daily life. Rodowick deals with this in terms of style, organization of forms, and construction, using Theodor W. Adorno as a theoretical point of departure, and suggesting that central to the critical Image are the technologies of sighting in which everyone is 'envisioned and produced as images', and proposes that new techniques be created to critically interrogate images.



Exhibitions have stimulated much of the writing in this collection: as explained at the beginning of this introduction, the idea for the collection originated in a visit to an exhibition; the book is prefaced by Gibson + Recoder's artists' statements from their exhibitions; many of the chapters in the book refer to one or several exhibitions; D. N. Rodowick's closing meditation on the future of the image germinated in an exhibition appropriately entitled *Images*. It is thus fitting that we conclude our introduction with reference to an exhibition we visited three years after seeing Philippe Parreno's *Hypothesis* in Milan, when the *Expanding Cinema* collection had already taken its final shape. In December 2018, we visited the Ryoji Ikeda exhibition at the Eye Filmmuseum in Amsterdam.⁹ A key figure in electronic music, the Japanese artist makes sublime audiovisual art drawing on mathematics, quantum mechanics, and big data. Upon entering the first room and viewing *data.scan* (2009) and *4'33"* (2010), we felt we had encountered contemporary art that had absolutely nothing to do with the cinema. Pure post-cinematic, new-media art. A novel world of computer graphics, an entirely abstract view of encoded information, digital data, automated graphs, pixels, and coded time that owed nothing to the cinema as imagery, as a medium, and as a form of experience of space and time. As if the cinema had never existed. The fact that *4'33"*, a homage to John Cage's silent 1952 composition, consists of a blank 16mm film strip that is exactly four minutes and 33 seconds long did not seem so relevant within the context of an overwhelmingly digital art. Also the use that, in the next room, *data.gram [no 1]* (2018) and *data.tron [3 SXGA+ version]* (2009) made of projection seemed at first quite disconnected from the cinematic. But then we encountered *point of no return* (2018). A black circle in the middle of a white square is fixed at the centre of a projected vortex of light that creates a strong stroboscopic effect, accompanied by, or seeming to produce, a barrage of white noise. The fixity of the black circle and the rotation create the impression in the viewer of being inexorably attracted to, almost swallowed up by the black hole. The metaphysical intensity of the experience, the shape and features of the work, the loud noise, and the entranced reaction of the viewers all brought to mind the totemic apparition of the monolith in Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968), with its accompanying high-pitched sound, and the mesmerized apes staring at it. As we finally managed to detach ourselves from the black hole, and walked behind it, we discovered the back of the work: a perfectly still, blindingly bright circle, projected by an ARRI lamp in use on film sets. Positive and

9 Held from 15 September to 2 December 2018.



Figure 6 Ryoji Ikeda, *point of no return* (2018). Eye Filmmuseum, Amsterdam, December 2018. Photo Laura Rascaroli.

negative. With the cinema now fully back in the picture, we moved to the next room, where *radar* [*3 WUGXGA version A*] (2012–2018) struck us as being eminently filmic. Immersed in the darkness of the room, we sat and looked in subjective shot, as if through the screen of a flying spacecraft, at the visualizations of star systems and the cosmic images scanned by a radar projected onto a wide screen. As Jim Supanick has written in a review of Ikeda's *the transfinite* (2011), which included some of the same work in the Eye Filmmuseum exhibition: '[b]y deriving material from astronomy and genetic mapping, *the transfinite* acts as a kind of conceptual zoom lens, fulfilling cinema's dreamed-of union of inner and outer space, an aspiration shared by contemporaries Luis Recoder and Sandra Gibson, and Bruce McClure'.¹⁰ From the purely digital back to the cinematic.

Philippe Parreno, Gibson + Recoder, and Ryoji Ikeda show, in their diverse ways, how the cinema has finally separated into its material objects, but is still pervasively shaping our understanding of both inner and outer categories of space and time, the whole of our human and post-human experience. By examining film theory as a blueprint for the moving image,

¹⁰ Supanick, p. 16

and juxtaposing it with artworks that render cinema a material object, the aim of *Theorizing Film Through Contemporary Art: Expanding Cinema* is to unfold a complex relationship between a theory and a practice that in the past have been deemed to be virtually incompatible. In doing so, we hope that this book will enhance our understanding of each medium and, more pertinently perhaps, their interaction.

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