

***The Elusive Digital Frame and the  
Elasticity of Time in Painting***

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**London Metropolitan University**

**PhD in Fine Art**

**November, 2012**

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**Fig. 11     p.151**

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**Objectives:**

This practice-based PhD research seeks to contribute to our understanding of the perception of time and affect in painting; to explore the question of what can cause the passing of time to become 'elastic' in the perception of the spectator encountering a 'painterly' surface; to consider how this is connected with embodied studio practice and also how such unsettling encounters may be liberating or enhancing. The project engages with these questions by looking at what the languages, processes and apparatus of 'experimental' film reveal about subjective perceptions of temporality. In particular, the work engages with frames as conceptual markers of time. The works constructed for the research make use of altered frame rates, exposures and time bases in order to explore perceptions of temporality as a key factor in the emotional 'affect' of art.

The written thesis is intended as a reflective commentary on the practice, using critical theory as well as observations about temporality drawn from experimental studio practice in film and painting. Theoretical material, primarily drawn from the work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Gilles Deleuze, Peter Gidal and Antonio Damasio, will be used to reflect on insights about the perceived temporality and affect of painterly surface derived from the artworks produced.

**Abstract:**

How can we gain a deeper understanding about the emotional affects of painting with respect to temporality by working with the mechanisms and languages of the moving image?

This practice-based doctoral research aims to add to our understanding of the perception of temporality in painterly surface and to investigate the relationship between subjective perceptions and emotional 'affect' in encounters with painting which offer an expanded and enhanced sense of lived temporality. The project sets out to do this by devising art works using the processes, apparatus and structures of 'experimental' film/video and photography. This work seeks to question what can cause the passing of time to become 'elastic' in the perception of the spectator encountering the 'strangeness' of painterly surface as an intense experience and asks how this phenomena may be connected with perceptions of time and vision for the embodied painter engaged in practice. In addition to painting practice within the project, works by Frank Auerbach are taken as examples of 'painterly' surface with which to consider temporality and spectator experience.

The written thesis is used to document and reflect on the development of this practice-based work; in particular, insights derived from the two photo/video installation works *Que Sera* (2010) and *Is It You?* (2012) which juxtapose material made with high speed filming and long exposures and which engage with the 'frame' as a marker of time passing. The reflective thesis draws on theoretical

material, including Maurice Merleau-Ponty's essays which propose painting as a form of metaphysics and a way of understanding how we see; Gilles Deleuze's work on the phenomenology of painting; the experimental film theory of Peter Gidal and recent neuroscientific work by Antonio Damasio, investigating vision and consciousness. This material is used in conjunction with observations from experimental and expanded film works as they deconstruct aspects of subjective temporality and visual perception.

**I can confirm that all of the research contained in the written thesis and the practical work submitted is my own original work.**

**Thesis originally submitted April 2012, submitted with revisions Nov. 2012**

I can also confirm that the following have been published since my registration for the research degree in May 2006:

Robinson, Anne (2009), *Underwriting: an experiment in charting studio practice*, *Journal of Visual Art Practice*, Vol. 8 Issue 1/2, pp. 59-74, ISSN Number: 1470-2029

Robinson, Anne (2010), *Traveling Eye: the elusive digital frame and the elasticity of time in art*, *Journal of Media Practice*, Vol. 11 Issue 3, pp. 215-229, ISSN Number: 1468-2753

See also documentation appended for details of related art work which has been exhibited in the public domain.

**Anne Robinson, November, 2012**

## **Introduction**

The project in this practice-based PhD is to add to our understanding of the perception of time and affect in painting, through the languages of the moving image, taking as a starting point, the questions:

- How can we develop a greater understanding of the interrelationships of time, consciousness and affect for both painter and spectator?
- What light can be shed on these interrelationships by the languages and apparatus of the moving image?

Approaching these questions through studio experimentation and documentation, this research seeks to examine what the various languages, apparatuses and technologies of the moving image have to offer in terms of understanding the 'expanded moments' experienced by painters and spectators; what passes in those moments and why it is valuable. I will go on to suggest that this moving outside of our regular experience of temporality in the contemplation of painting is not only profoundly affecting for the spectator who gains an expanded sense of being in time; but that approaching painting as a 'time-based' medium and even as a form of practical philosophy may allow us insights into the nature of visual perception. Practice-based research methods have included: making paintings from images derived from moving image/photographic/digital processes; carrying out experimental studio work with paint and making images and sequences using moving image technologies in order to explore temporality and visual perception

and their relationship to 'affect' in the work of art. The key works presented for the PhD are the two video installations: *Que Sera* (Robinson 2010) and *Is It You?* (Robinson 2012a) along with documentation of the *Studio* painting series (Robinson 2012b) earlier works for reference. The dissertation is intended as a commentary on the practice as it has developed in response to the main questions.

The research was initiated by two key moments: firstly, an experience of emerging into the corridor of the studio building, after painting for several hours and being aware of a sense of altered consciousness; secondly, being moved in a way that it would be possible to describe as being 'outside of time' in front of a painting by Frank Auerbach: *To the Studios, 1979-80* (Auerbach 1980). Both of these experiences contributed to a desire to understand the extreme emotional 'affect' experienced by both painters and spectators of paintings. What is present for us through painting as a painter and what is present for us in painting as spectator?

The experimental studio work in this research has been documented to make visible the processes and experiential learning which inform the art works. The practical project works submitted for the PhD will be referred to by title and date in the written thesis and are as follows:

1. *Que Sera* (2010) two-screen photo/video installation work with sound; DVD and documentation of installation
2. *Is It You?* (2012) two-screen photo/video installation work with sound; DVD and documentation of installation

(Both works will be set up as installations at London Metropolitan University)

3. A portfolio of documentation and archive copies of additional and earlier works arising from the PhD research will be available for reference
  - a) *Studio* (2012) series of 12 paintings, submitted as slides on DVD
  - b) Documentation from *One More Time* exhibition and symposium, October, 2011
  - c) Studio documentation of painting processes, video frames and source material: video and slides on DVD, 2006-11
  - d) *Afterlife* (2009), *Alf* (2008), *Still Moving* (2007), painting series
  - e) *Lighter Darker* (2008) video installation DVD
  - f) *Lighter Darker* (2008) painting series
  - g) *An Occulting Light* (2007) video installation DVD
  - h) *Hold* (2007) video DVD

## **Methodology**

The overarching methodological approach in this research project could be described as a rhizomatic mapping process, in which the individual chapters in the thesis open up investigations into distinct but interlinked fields and intersect with the experimental studio practice and artworks presented for exhibition and as documentation. The questions examined in the thesis have emerged out of studio practice and encounters with painting and this is the key point of departure for the project. The practical experiments generate further material for focussed interrogation, both in themselves and as they are drawn into conjunction with theoretical material and observations. This is an energised process, continually moving back and forth between sections. Where fruitful for the main questions, the interconnections themselves will be discussed. There are several layers to the methodology in that, within the whole structure, each section/chapter makes use of appropriate strategies such as the setting up of practical experiments using film, observation documentation of studio practice, interviews with practitioners, analysing artists' writings, reflective and analytical writing making use of key arguments from scientific research and, perhaps most substantially, drawing on philosophical perspectives to inform observations on practice. I have sought to bring ideas from the particular thinkers examined into a unique configuration to form a discursive landscape and to inform the project as a whole.

This fluid and dynamic method of thought and the term 'rhizomatic' are drawn from the writings of Deleuze and Guattari, where they describe the rhizome, in A

*Thousand Plateaus* (Deleuze & Guattari 1987), as a map rather than a tracing; an enabling phenomenon:

*The map is open and connectible in all of its dimensions; it is adaptable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification. It can be torn, reversed, attached to any kind of mounting, reworked by an individual, group or social formation. It can be drawn on a wall, conceived of as a work of art, constructed as a political action or a meditation*

(Deleuze & Guattari 1987:13)

This working method has guided the engagements with discourse and the working practice throughout, providing the larger pattern into which individual strategies fit. The rhizome operates at all times in the space between things and this is where key findings and arguments in this work have developed. For example, keeping a log of studio activities has enabled this working environment to be opened up as a space for action-looking and for critical reflection. At times the log may involve the use of conventional linguistic strategies, at others, visual document and more open forms of record and thought. This is a navigation tool within the rhizomatic map of the whole project and allows different kind of material to be brought together and form new ideas. In adopting the rhizome as a pattern, the intention is to find a dynamic use of language, which interacts with the visual and with tacit knowledge as a set of lenses with which to view key questions and practical experiments.

This over-arching approach has many advantages in being able to draw together diverse categories of material from theory *and* practice. Working between ideas drawn from a range of disciplines and experiments in art practice, connections may be formed that go beyond any simple dialectics of practice/theory, in keeping open some of these interconnectivities and allowing them to suggest future directions in the spaces between fields and systems of interrogation. In adopting this overarching strategy, I would hope that, instead of fixed identities forming too early in thinking about painting, temporality or spectatorship, or the taking for granted of orthodoxies about 'painterly' practice or 'experimental film' for example, that nomadic and fluid subjectivities will come into play: dismantling fixed ideas in order to allow for new thinking about painting as a time-based medium and recognising the liberating potential afforded to the painters and spectators who experience time as momentarily 'elastic' in their encounters with painting. This 'elasticity' indicates that such painters and spectators may operate in a more fluid register of marking time. The research project itself seeks to 'deterritorialise' fields of art practice that may not conventionally be brought together as well as making use of scientific discourse alongside philosophy, artists' writings and art criticism.

The methodological approach here then, takes the destabilising of fixed ideas to be a positive factor in leaving potentialities open between the diverse forms of material that have contributed to the research outcomes. In order to maintain coherence and to allow points of entry for readers and spectators, each chapter will define specific research tasks and focal points at the beginning and draw together the strands that have been looked at to conclude and make connections with the next

section. Following this overarching pattern, the main concluding section seeks not to close off all of the strands for further investigation, but to draw together insights from the project as a whole in order to assess what has been learned about painting, temporality and visual perception and what work it may be possible to take forward as further practice-based research.

In order to frame the project as a whole, I will briefly outline the structure of the chapters here. Chapter One looks at how the initial questions arose out of studio practice using digital video 'frames' and painting, working with a concept of the 'digital frame, the imaginary space between digital frames and temporal slippage. Chapter Two reflects on the video piece submitted with this thesis: *Que Sera* (Robinson 2010) in the light of these initial attempts to understand how temporality relates to emotional 'affect' in art, drawing on theoretical perspectives from philosophy and neuroaesthetics. Chapter Three moves beyond initial ideas about 'resemblance' to consider the specific nature of 'painterly' surface in the light of phenomenology and the late essays of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Eye and Mind* (Merleau-Ponty: 2004a) and *The Visible and the Invisible* (Merleau-Ponty 1968). This chapter focuses on works by Frank Auerbach and on my own studio practice. Chapter Four looks at experimental film practice, at Peter Gidal's theory of 'structural materialist' film (Gidal 1976), at specific works in this field and at embodied spectatorship in order to inform an understanding of the perceived elasticity of time for painter and spectator. The next section, Chapter Five, *Interference*, documents the expanded video work *Is It You?* (Robinson 2012a), reflecting on this work's engagement with subjective temporality, rhythm, affect and

embodied spectatorship through experimental uses of moving image technologies. This chapter also addresses subjective temporality, altered states and neuroscientific perspectives. The final chapter, *Time and Again*, draws together conclusions arising from the construction of the video works and paintings made in the project, as informed by theoretical perspectives from the works of Merleau-Ponty, Deleuze, Gidal and Damasio along with observations from experimental cinema and painting practice; proposing that we encounter, in 'painterly' figural painting, a phenomenon that makes explicit the operations of temporality for the painter and for the spectator.

I will now outline the subsidiary strategies adopted at each stage as appropriate to the nature of the material covered. In Chapter One of the thesis, I will set up definitions of key terms; defining key terms such as 'painterly' and 'experimental' for this context. Underpinning the whole project and developed from the work in this chapter, is the proposal that it may be possible to gain a greater understanding of subjective temporality in encounters with painting through an in-depth interrogation of moving image practice: using the apparatus, languages and technologies of film, video and photography contextualized by observations of practice, discursive encounters, theoretical perspectives and artists' writings. There is also a core understanding throughout that the 'elasticity' experienced in such encounters is a potentially liberating phenomenon for artist and spectator; recognising that it may in fact throw conventional artist/spectator relations into question.

The main strategy I have adopted with regard to the studio practice has been: firstly, to define the key aspects of the initial encounters which initiated the research; secondly, to break these down into component elements, so far as possible in this context and, from these points, to devise experiments in order to observe, document and reflect on key factors such as the relationship between film 'frame' and painting 'plane', frame rates and perceptual responses, and how temporality intersects with emotional affect. My studio practice up to the point of starting this research had been concerned with looking at juxtapositions of still and moving images, making painting series based on film frames and with the 'affect' of various forms of re-filming. This multi-disciplinary practice informed and shaped the experimentation for this research. Studio experiments thus set up new encounters in which a kind of action-looking may take place: looking, and looking again with renewed awareness and information. I would also acknowledge here that intuitive responses remain part of the formation of practical studio work in painting and film. Having worked through a set of experiments in painting, digital imaging, photography, projection or video editing; documentation, analysis and reflection are used to in turn to devise the next experimental strategy: for example, working with high speed filming rather than time bases in editing.

Chapter One offers a summary of initial experiments with the digital frame and painting. At some key stages of the research, notably the construction of the video installation pieces: *Que Sera* and *Is It You?* and the later painting series: *Studio*, the experiments have been formulated as more coherently defined art works set up for spectators. This has enabled further reflection and interpretation related to

'affect' and spectatorship. The construction and configuration of these works are described in detail in Chapters Two and Five in order to enable readers of this thesis to grasp the nature of their experiments with time and affect. At each stage: during experiments, whilst works are in progress and on completion, photography, video and observational note taking have been used to record aspects of the practice. This material, which essentially draws on the direct operations of the practice, is then interrogated to form new insights and brought together with a range of theoretical, analytical and reflective perspectives in order to understand more fully the nature of temporality being marked and structured by the mechanics and languages of the moving image through these practical experiments.

The main focus of this research as a whole is the passage of time in encounters with painting. This is based in the complex operations of acts of painting and spectator encounters. Practical studio experimentation has included the documentation of studio practice for observation and also the use of more intuitive note-taking and reflective material in studio practice which can be seen as a series of encounters. The studio material is then brought together with observations and critical analyses of 'painterly' works encountered as a spectator. It has therefore been an important part of the strategic approach firstly, to set up parameters by defining as precisely as possible one type of surface, which I have called here, 'painterly', which I have observed to produce this kind of temporal distortion, and further, to focus on a single main example of this kind of 'painterly' open and 'figural' work and to interrogate the nature of this work and its affects by looking at specific paintings. To this end, a substantial section of Chapter Three looks at

works by Frank Auerbach. The range of work covered is limited to a small group of cityscapes and these are examined through a strategy of making close readings of just a few pictures, spending long periods of time observing these at close range and writing up detailed descriptions. These observations are then interpreted in the light of reflective and analytical material drawn from art criticism as well as critical theory in order to develop insights into these material manifestations of painterly practice with respect to temporality and affect; working in a space which acknowledges the importance of the material in painting whilst refusing orthodoxies of medium specificity and which allows painting to be seen as experimental practice. In terms of methodology, key terms for the project have been set up including a specific understandings of 'painterly' and 'figural' as defined more fully in the thesis. These terms have been expanded and interrogated using philosophical perspectives, including Merleau-Ponty's work in phenomenology which sees painting as a form of metaphysics and the writings of Gilles Deleuze on 'figural' painter Francis Bacon. For this section in particular, it has been useful to draw these philosophical strands of thought together with perspectives from neuroscience relating to visuo-perceptive processes and image processing in the brain in order to develop a constellation of insights about temporality and subjective perception and bring this to bear on the experiential learning drawn from practical experiment, observation and reflection.

The development of specific practical strategies for the experimental studio work here has been informed substantially by observations of practice by other filmmakers and artists using the moving image in experimental and expanded

modes as well as a more recent and therefore more time limited engagement with durational performance. The operations and strategies formulated in this kind of film work have provided dynamic models for setting up works from which to derive insights about visual perception, subjectivity, embodied spectatorship and affect. 'Experimental' film and 'expanded' cinema have suggested working models for this project by making explicit how a document itself may be the work, and in the interplay of structural proposition and 'intuition'; also in their focus on temporality. As A. L. Rees has said: '...the experimental film puts film time at the core of its project' (Rees 1999: 6). I have adopted a methodological approach to working with this material that has incorporated primary and secondary sources and this material underpins the reflections and proposals in Chapter Four of the thesis on film. Primary sources here include: interviews with three filmmakers on their various concerns with temporality; the setting up of opportunities to observe the constructions and configurations of practical works by artists who are concerned, in their film or performance practices with marking time, in the project *One More Time*; and direct observation of key works at screenings. Where it is useful to provide a coherent context for arguments, some elements of historical review have been retained, for example, with structural materialist film. Secondary sources have included using artists' own writings on their practice and also theoretical material about experimental and expanded cinema, together with performance criticism, e.g. Gidal (1976) and Heathfield (2009) and the nature of embodied spectatorship, e.g. Marks (2002). As throughout the project, the approach to the primary material is observational and interpretative whilst the critical and theoretical material is drawn in to inform this and draw interim conclusions.

In all of the chapters of the thesis, key thinkers examined are drawn from a range of disciplines which include art criticism, philosophy and neuroscience. These include: philosophers Henri Bergson, Gilles Deleuze and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, neuroscientists Antonio Damasio and Semir Zeki, film theorists Laura Mulvey and Laura Marks, art critic Robert Hughes and experimental film-maker and writer Peter Gidal. As a methodological approach to utilising theory, I am seeking to bring the work of these theorists into dialogue in order to inform each stage of the practical experimental work and the observations of practice and of artworks. It is the space for new insights opened up *between* these theorists which is most productive here in allowing ontological connections to emerge between, for example, Deleuze's work on painting and recent work on spectatorship; or insights into the work of Auerbach from art criticism and politicised readings of temporality and active spectatorship in structural materialist film. This 'space between' is also productive in making connections between the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty and much more recent work from neuroscientists such as Damasio, as both pertain to visual perception and emotional 'affect'. Again, the configuration of ideas from different discourses is valuable in considering the subjectivity of painter and spectator, bringing the philosophical concept of 'chiasm' together with a current scientific perspective on the importance of image formation. Critical engagements with the key thinkers in the project at each stage provide space for conjecture and points for departure to move into the next phase of practice and towards the drawing together of responses for the project as a whole.

This research engages in particular with the late essays of Maurice Merleau-Ponty: *Eye and Mind* (Merleau-Ponty 2004a) and *The Visible and the Invisible* (Merleau-Ponty 1968), reflecting on the nature of painting, seeing and the kind of tacit knowledge arising from the practice of painting. The idea of 'sensation' in art, derived from the texts by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, has informed the project, as has Bergson's philosophical work on time. Recent developments enhancing our understanding of visual perception and consciousness from the fields of neuroscience and, in particular, the work of Antonio Damasio have also facilitated reflection on the practical works with respect to 'affect.' The research also makes use of insights derived from the observation and documentation of art and film practice: specifically investigating what 'structural materialist' experimental film-making and expanded cinema practice, as influenced by the theoretical writings of film-maker Peter Gidal, can offer for an extended understanding of temporality as manifest in painting and of relations between the perception of temporality and emotional affect in painting.

To summarise my methodological approaches in this research, I would say that whilst the overarching strategy is intentionally fluid, nonlinear and 'rhizomatic', within the various stages of the project, I have made use of practical experimentation with studio materials, observation and documentation of the practice of other film artists, interpretative analyses of observations and primary interview material and critical analysis of paintings and film works, as appropriate to the material. The project as a whole has emerged out of experiential encounters and both practice and theory have remained important in addressing the key

questions. Alongside the practical, observational, critical and reflective phases of the project, the work of key thinkers such as Damasio and Merleau-Ponty has been brought together in unique configurations in order to provide underpinning knowledge and understanding and to develop insights arising from the research. The written dissertation is intended to offer commentary, reflection, elucidation on the practice as it has developed in response to the main questions and to draw ideas from this practice back into forming coherent responses and arguments. In order to make a contribution to understanding about temporality and affect in art. The key methodology embracing the whole work however has meant that, although at various stages summaries of information and propositions have been interposed, these strategies have been permitted to remain fluid and to form diverse inter-connections in order to maintain the maximum dynamic potential in developing insights into the nature of temporality in encounters with painting and in forming conclusions in the final section of the thesis.

## Review of Literature

In order to effectively situate this project within relevant contemporary research within fine art, visual cultures, philosophy and film, and to more clearly delineate the field to which I would identify my research as contributing, I will now briefly give a review of recent PhD research which has addressed related questions on temporality, affect, moving image practice and painting. I will focus here on seven in particular, but would also acknowledge the value for this thesis of methodological approaches to the practice-related PhD dissertation in work on

painting by Pat Paxson (2004). In John Chliver's thesis: 'Gestural Ethics; consequences of the mark in contemporary painting' (Chilvers 2005) considers the work of painter Barnett Newman in the light of Derrida's notion of the 'trace' in order to look at phenomenologies of agency in generating appearances. In this thesis, he also includes close readings of works by David Reed which shed light on temporality in painting. The interrogation of the 'mark' in painting is useful here because of my focus on 'painterly' surface, made up of varied marks and planes. Also, I found his arguments on contemporary painting and post-modern irony which the mark is dismissed or re-cast, convincing, as are his points about the mark destabilising pictorial codes (Chilvers 2005: 183). Gerald Cipriani's work 'On the Figural in Painting' (Cipriani 1998) looks at the 'figural' as a 'moment of meaningful form' (Cipriani 1998: 1). He is looking at the experiential dimension in artistic meaning and approaches his investigation by undertaking a critique of 'objectifying' approaches. Although not directly cited here, his work has been of value here in elucidating the 'figural' as a key term and in its criticisms of phenomenological approaches and as he notes the experience of 'sensation' as stimulated by the emerging form that is taking place here and now and as being unfixed or oscillating (Cipriani 1998: 213). Keith Faulkner, addressing questions of temporality in his thesis: *Deleuze and the Three Syntheses of Time*, proposes that: '...art explicates the world by implicating divergent elements. To put it simply, the work of art does the same thing that dreams do: it creates new combinations by combining disparate images and thereby expands perception.' His proposals concerning Deleuze's temporality are relevant here with respect to the modes of temporality experienced by spectators.

*Painting, Deleuze and Surface Effects* is a practice-based dissertation in Fine Art by Catherine Ferguson which 'sees painting as the 'object of a fundamental encounter' (Ferguson 2005: 111) , looking at the domains of interaction set up by painting in encounters as she draws on biosemiotic models to describe painting as '...a theatre of creative "cognition"...' (Ferguson 2005: 78), focusing on the embodied nature of painting. In taking an approach which so clearly draws on studio experience as a painter, I found Ferguson's recognition of '...fast noncognitive dynamics wherein a number of alternative microworlds are activated...' (Ferguson 2005: 49) convincing and illuminating in my own consideration of the temporality of painting. Another practice based research project that has assisted my research in addressing the relationship between the philosophical perspective of Deleuze and Guattari and the practice of painting is Alistair Payne's *Redefine and reterritorialise: painting as an interdisciplinary form* (Payne 2005) which suggests an interdisciplinary approach that realises: '...a painting practice that shares a commonality with Bergsonian and Deleuzian motifs of the 'virtual' rather than bounded rule-based and medium-specific limitations of previous formalisms' and posits painting as rhizomatic. I have also found Beth Harland's work on how painting, in conjunction with digital imaging, opens up the space of memory very interesting in looking at temporality in this context (Harland 2009b). Lucy Reynolds' thesis on experimental film, *British Avant-garde women filmmakers and expanded cinema of the 1970s* (Reynolds 2009) focuses specifically on women filmmakers such as Annabel Nicholson and Lis Rhodes and looks at their work in light of theories of embodied spectatorship and intersubjective

exchange. It also addresses issues relating to structural, experimental and expanded cinema in a way which seeks to go beyond reductive histories. I would propose therefore that my research project on temporality and affect in painting with a particular emphasis on 'painterly' surface and drawing on phenomenology and making use of strategies from experimental film relates clearly to existing research and will make a contribution to the field of knowledge and understanding in the field of fine art and visual culture.

In identifying methodologies for this project, I have taken account of a range of methods employed in recent practice-based PhD research, as listed in the brief literature review above. I have also found the concepts of 'visual intelligence' (Fortnum 2006), 'tacit knowledge' (Jarvis 2007) and also Schon's idea of the 'reflective practitioner' engaged in the 'experiential learning' cycle (Schon 1987). Knowledge in this work is produced through non-linguistic formations, which are valuable in and of themselves and which intersects with written language. As Ian Sutherland and Sophia Krzys Acord (2007: 9) point out: 'The role of art is unique in its ability to create conditions for knowing, experientially...'. Tacit knowledge often underpins the multiplicity of textual practices collectively termed 'artists' writings as well as more recent projects explicitly defined as 'research' and Kristine Stiles points to the importance of these documents: 'Artists' textual practices are as much a part of the construction of visual knowledge as are works of art' (Stiles 1996:8). Rebecca Fortnum describes 'visual intelligence as: '...really about understanding something of the thinking that goes into making artworks.' (Fortnum 2006: 10). In considering current thinking on practice-based research, I am especially indebted

to Michael Jarvis's work (Jarvis 2007) in recognizing the importance of 'artistry': the ways in which tacit knowledge, experiential learning and visual intelligences not only inform process and 'finished' art objects but also contribute to our deepened understanding of the 'creative' and 'intuitive' processes in making work and affect. In the making of art as research, these concepts resonate for contemporary artists engaged in linguistic or relational practices as well as more conventional studio-based practices.

## **1 *Throw Away Your Watches***

### **Questions of painting, temporality and 'affect'**

This is an investigation into why paintings 'move' us, why they are unsettling, how they throw us off balance and how all of this is connected with perceptions of temporality: the connection between the strangeness of painting, specifically of the 'painterly' surface, and our subjective experiences of time passing. How does temporality operate with respect to art? Gilles Deleuze proposes that: 'To render time sensible in itself is a task common to the painter, the musician and sometimes the writer' (Deleuze 2003: 64), whilst artist Jean Tinguely says: 'We are still very much annoyed with out of date notions of time. Please would you throw away your watches!' (Tinguely 1996: 205). Time is notoriously difficult to think, write, speak about. We all live in it, our lives are defined by our mortality and the ticking of the clock; and yet, in our encounters with art, our inner time, dreaming time, strange time, seems often to operate in a different register.

In this chapter, I will look at how the initial questions arose out of studio practice working with digital video 'frames' and painting and with a concept of the 'digital' frame which opened the imaginary space between frames allowing for temporal slippage. I will also set up definitions of key terms for this particular defining key terms such as 'painterly' and 'experimental' for this context. As noted above, my main strategy in studio practice for this project has been to define the key aspects of the initial encounters which initiated the research; secondly, to break these down into component elements and to set up experiments in order to observe, document

and reflect on key factors. Photography, video and observational notes were used to record this phase of the practice and documentation is included in the appendices - see: **Appendix A: 3 c) - i) and DVD 'Portfolio: documentation' b) - h).** From this early stage, there has been an underpinning understanding of the potentially liberating nature of the strange temporal experiences in question.

Emotional 'affect' is also arguably one of the most slippery aspect of how artworks function and I will argue that this is inextricably linked with embodiment and temporality. As Antonio Damasio points out:

*...the images you form in your mind always signal to the organism its own engagement with the business of making images and evoke some emotional reactions. You simply cannot escape the affectation of your organism, motor and emotional most of all; that is part and parcel of having a mind.*

(Damasio 1999: 148)

At the centre of this investigation into subjective perceptions of time and 'affect' are the engaged and embodied artist and, in turn, the engaged and embodied spectator, both caught in a circuit defined by Merleau-Ponty: 'For painters, the world will always be yet to be painted...' (Merleau-Ponty 2004a: 320). The physical nature of painting and factors such as rhythm and movement are important elements in the process and crucial to an understanding of 'affect'. In the studio, the painter is looking out into the world, at phenomena beyond the boundaries of

the physical self and is acting on matter; acting according to inner impulses, derived from the seeing encounter, brought into conjunction with memory, embodied emotional experience and intellect. This encounter is made of a series of moments in which acting and making take place beyond the level of articulated language, not unconsciously, but drawing on and working in a region under the radar of conventional signs and requiring a fluid semiotics such as that offered by Deleuze; where the work of 'signs' goes beyond mediated representations:

*...it is a question of making movement itself a work; without interposition; of substituting direct signs for mediating representations; of inventing vibrations, rotations, whirlings, gravitations, dances or leaps which directly touch the mind.*

(Deleuze 1994: 9)

According to Barbara Kennedy, Deleuze's semiotics are:

*...concerned less with signification or distinct elements, than with tonalities, rhythms, shifts of force, energy [...] the image is not a single unit but graded richness, resolute with modulations across a timescale from past, present and future.*

(Kennedy 2000: 115)

The surface of 'painterly' painting becomes a section through time, slicing through space as a plane on which are inscribed many 'frames'. There is then, a temporal architecture to be considered in thinking about how paintings are made. Working from studio documentation and observations of both painting and the construction

of film/video works, from engagement with the practices of other artists, the use of critical theory, philosophy and texts engaged with the interface between art and neuroscience, I will propose that painting moves us because it presents time 'strangely.' As we contemplate it, the painterly surface engages us in an impossible rhythm that displaces us, makes the world tilt and upsets our equilibrium. This displacement may push us to operate in time registers which differ from our habitual mode of being, as if we are able, just momentarily, to be outside of time and this is a powerful emotional experience. This key observation has arisen from experiments with altered time bases and perception made using film, video and photographic media. Reflecting on the understanding I have gained from the project as a whole, I will also propose that insights gained from painting may be valuable for a greater understanding of visual perception and subjectivity in the broader field.

In this first chapter, I will contextualise the two experimental video installations, *Que Sera* and *Is It You?* and the later development of the practice-based research by looking at how my question arose out of studio practice working with digital 'frames', re-filming techniques and painting: how I began to consider what may be learned about painting and perception from technologies of the moving image, initially working with a concept of the imaginary 'space between' digital video frames. I will begin with brief definitions of the key terms: 'painting,' 'painterly,' 'figural' and 'experimental.' I will then go on to look at the encounters that led to my interest in the relationship between temporality and painting: my own experience of feeling jolted out of time and being in an 'altered state' in my studio art practice, my

work with moving image sequences to explore the nature of digital frames and film frames, focusing on the visible evidence, within frames, of temporal slippage; the uses of moving image mechanisms in an experimental context informed by artists' film practices including structural-materialist film; and reflections on studio processes. Much of this will be extended in Chapter Three, considering spectator experiences of temporal distortion in encounters with 'painterly' paintings and in Chapter Four which deals with experimental film.

As some of the key terms used throughout the thesis may be ambiguous, I will attempt to offer some definitions here. In discussing 'painting' in this context, almost all of the practices and works that I am engaged with and much of the related critical/textual commentary is concerned with paintings constructed using oil paint on a fixed surface, usually canvas or board. With a few exceptions, where noted, I am engaged with works that I would term 'figural'. By this, I intend to indicate works which have a source in the phenomenological world which is in most cases recognisable and may therefore be considered 'figurative,' but which avoid being illustrative or narrative. The term 'figural' as used here builds on Lyotard's use of the term (Lyotard 2011) to indicate that which goes beyond the discursive, i.e. rational, representation as flat linguistic narrative form. In the works and processes discussed here, although there is a referent in the world, what 'figural' points to here is with the direct temporal operations and affects of painting. This is also related to Deleuze's term of the 'Figure' which he defines as: '...the sensible form related to a sensation; it acts immediately upon the nervous system, which is of the flesh, whereas abstract form is added to the head, and acts through

the intermediary of the brain...' (Deleuze 2003: 34). We encounter in such a work an intense sensation; a haptic unfolding of time that affects our consciousness in the world; not according to the depiction of an apple, a draped cloth or a kerbstone, but resulting from our heightened perception of the painting's force, through its dialogic surface rather than 'representation' or 'figuration.' working directly on the nervous system, yet also engaging us in the consciousness of inner time.

The term 'painterly' is a rather slippery and ambiguous term which has been used over time in a number of contexts including both art history and criticism. The definition offered here sets some parameters for the work that I may be referring to in this thesis. The main examples of paintings by another artist that I will go on to look at in Chapter Three are the cityscapes of Frank Auerbach and these works provide a good example of what I intend by the use of the word in this context. Several writers, reflecting on Auerbach's pictures, use the word 'energy' (Carlisle 2001: 62) and this visible dynamism in the surface is also characteristic of 'painterliness'. I will return to the importance of 'motion', but would point here to those 'motions' that are made through gesture. Merleau-Ponty emphasises the centrality of the artist's body in process: (Merleau-Ponty 2004a: 294) and I understand 'painterly' painting to be an embodied process: its surfaces made of gestures, rhythms, movements made by painters in studio spaces working in time. I would consider the term 'painterly' to be descriptive of works where there is visible evidence of manual mark making such as brush-strokes and surfaces where there are areas of *tons rompus* and visible residues of erasure as well as overlapping spatial arrangements of tone and colour; where the marks made in response to the

shapes and forms of the source have not been completely blended into an illusionistic smooth surface but left to form new visual phenomena. Deleuze also notes the term *malerisch* as drawn from the writings of Heinrich Wölfflin and Herbert Read<sup>1</sup> as used to describe certain slippery qualities in paint surface. He goes on to indicate how painterly works show the hand of the painter.

*These marks can be called nonrepresentative precisely because they depend on the act of chance and express nothing regarding the visual image: they only concern the hand of the painter. In themselves, they serve no other purpose than to be utilized and reutilized by the hand of the painter, who will use them to wrench the visual image away from the nascent cliché, to wrench himself away from the nascent illustration and narration. He will use the manual marks to make the visual image of the Figure emerge.*

(Deleuze 2003: 94)

It is worth noting here that within the field of contemporary painting, the painterly mark has been contentious or forced into exile. In an article for *Art Monthly* in 2004, Marcus Verhagen pointed out that: '...contemporary painters have moved away from painterly expression, either satirising it or potentially circumventing it' (Verhagen 2004: 14), as typified for him by the work of artists as diverse as Elizabeth Peyton or Dexter Dalwood. John Chilver, in his thesis on the 'mark' in

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<sup>1</sup> Deleuze explores the term *malerisch* in a footnote to Chapter 5 of *The Logic of Sensation* (Deleuze 2003: 177) where he notes its use being advocated by art historian Herbert Read in an introduction to *Classic Art* by Heinrich Wölfflin (Wölfflin 1952), as being more essentially accurate than any roughly equivalent English term to describe the merging, non-linear quality of painterly work.

painting, describes: 'An entire logic of post-modern style - in which artworks or architecture cloak themselves in pre-established codes while claiming a power of domination of those codes through irony' (Chilver 2005: 183). We could see Glenn Brown as being typical of a recent tendency to satirise 'painterly' painting in order to distance oneself from the painterly object as commodified in the marketplace or demonstrate a self-reflexive knowingness that avoids excessive sentimentality. However, Brown himself acknowledges that, in making his key work *Atom Age Vampire* (Brown 1991) as a copy of Frank Auerbach's *Head of J.Y.M.* (Auerbach 1973), he was on the one hand responding to what he perceived as the prevailing criticism of painting at Goldsmiths which went something like: 'Why are you painting? There's no point. Just rephotograph them' and on the other fulfilling a desire to paint because: '...I liked the process and its subtlety' (Trigg 2009: 2). The influence of Auerbach has persisted in the work of Brown and certainly not merely as a foil for ironic play. I would contend, with Adam Mendelsohn, writing about the state of contemporary painting in 2008, that: 'the radicalness of looking as demonstrated by artists such as Lucien Freud and Frank Auerbach' is still highly relevant' (Mendelsohn 2008: 10). This 'radical looking' is central to my concern in this research about how painting directly affects us and this research will take on new perspectives in seeing this painterly work as radically experimental. As Alistair Payne has noted: 'painting can now have many different identities' (Payne 2005: 12).

The term 'experimental' is also important for this project. Painting is always experimental: generating paint surfaces out of experience; out of inner vision or

reflected light, embedding an experience of time, the dynamic past/present/future, in the painting itself. In seeking to deconstruct the operations of painterly marks and their relation to temporality and affect by using mechanisms and languages of the moving image, I am specifically drawing on conceptual frameworks and practices from experimental film-making and video work. A.L. Rees has suggested that the key characteristic of experimental film is its foregrounding of temporality: 'Instead of the visual image, experimental film centres itself on the passage of time' (Rees 1999: 6). In film, the rate at which we see the world has been defined by frame rate: our brain processes a series of still pictures that pass rapidly in front of our eyes at a rate of something between 15 and 30 frames per second, perceiving them as movement. As this research questions subjective temporality and the perceived elasticity of time passing, I am making use of experimental film and video techniques in order to explore this. Seeking a rigorous practice which would deal with the temporal nature of the medium and the politics of the image and also concerned with the phenomenology of perception, film-maker and theorist Peter Gidal proposed, in his theory of 'structural-materialist' film, that: '...in film, duration as a material piece of time is the basic unit' (Gidal 1976: 3). I would therefore understand the term 'experimental' in this context to mean exploratory uses of film, video and photographic technologies as mechanisms for seeing the world, where artists construct works that materialise and project processes and marks of temporality by working with frames, camera and projection apparatus, making visual perception itself explicit in a way that 'affects' the spectator by making perceptual experiences that directly engage with their inner consciousness of lived time. This would include experimental film practices which engage with the

indexicality and reflexivity of film and video, the construction of individual works as documents of their making and works where the time base is altered with non-narrative intentions.

The nature of 'painterly' surface is that it has many different kinds of marks and paint formations and varying degrees to which these lines, planes, scumbling, scraping and so on have been left complete or subsequently altered. For example, in my practice, I may start by making an outline made with a smallish brush and then overlay this so as to make alterations to the structural line drawing using a second colour. Then, I may add larger flatter areas of colour and tone; subsequently working into these in detail making small differentiated brush marks in response to what I can see. That is to say, I respond to edges, changes in tones, the effects of light and the parallax effects created by the movements of my head and body in relation to object/field. Marks made over the top of these representational marks may be more gestural and dynamic and then the whole process may be changed by the whole picture area being partially erased using turps so that a ghost image remains, composed from all the previous elements but now less distinctly defined. Over this in turn, I would work as noted above, but perhaps not go through each stage, being more selective, but more accurate in some sections of the work and freer in gesture and mark elsewhere. This process occurs in time and the temporality of the moments passing is also fluid as experienced by the artist.

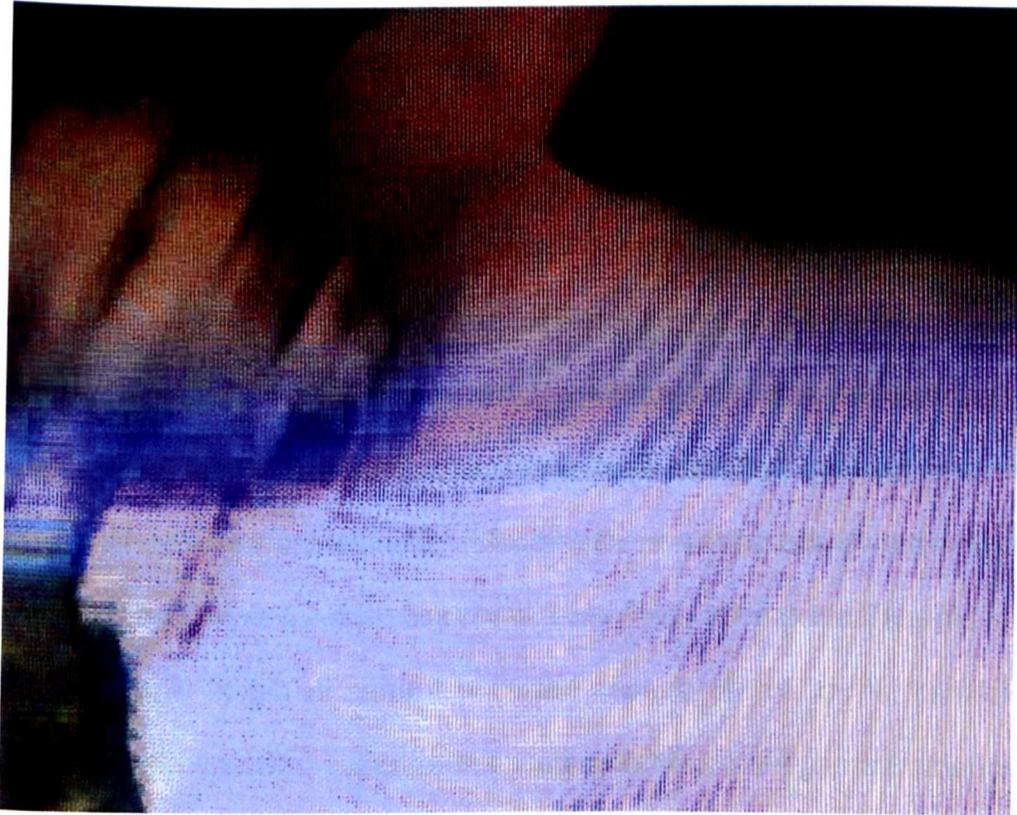
A mirror to the making of the painting is the painting re-positioned out in the world as it is encountered by the spectator and their experience of 'affect' in those moments. In looking at painterly surface, the experience of the spectator is made through the interconnectivity of looking and feeling, not engaging in physical acts of production as in the studio, but still embodied. The experience is shaped by looking at the elements of the painting across moments in time that may become elastic, so that the spectator experiences a kind of slippage or 'fall' as described by Deleuze: 'Most artists when confronted with this problem of intensity in the sensation, seem to have encountered the same response: the difference in intensity is experienced in a fall, hence the idea of a fight *for* the fall' (Deleuze 2003: 81). This project is a mapping of encounters. The shape of these encounters and, in particular, their temporal aspects are, for this body of research, sites of experiential learning.

The first encounters in this research then are in the studio, working on figural, painterly paintings. Deleuze and Guattari, in *What is Philosophy*, describe how art is made of: 'percepts, affects and blocs of sensation.' The artist develops a way of working that: '...makes the standard language stammer, tremble, cry, or even sing: this is the 'style', the tone, the language of sensations' (Deleuze & Guattari 1994: 176). Drawing on Deleuze and Guattari's ideas on art and Heidegger's notion of the 'handlability' of tools and materials, artist and writer Barbara Bolt challenges the idea of painting as 'representation'. She proposes a 'materialist ontology' for art and develops the concept of 'working hot' to describe a materially and theoretically productive studio practice. Bolt describes 'working hot' as a '..crucial moment of

understanding, that is the work of art [...] being thrown towards one's own possibilities and in the realisation of small sensations' (Bolt 2004: 185). I found this concept productive in thinking about how to approach studio practice within the research.

My practice as a painter which led into this current research involved making paintings from projected slides of TV screens: frames from TV dramas and, later, wrestling matches, drawing on an engagement with the indexicality of the freeze frame and with how the image is translated through the TV screen light. In the case of the *Alf* series (see documentation in appendix A), the engagement was with repetition and difference across a series, painting from single projected photograph. Working from slides has similarities to and differences from working 'from life', the striking qualities in the studio set up being their luminosity and ephemeral nature. Painting 'from life', the movements of head, eyes and body in relation to the object or person being painted affect the dynamism of the paint surface in the process of looking over time. With one glance, response and marking, the head is in one position, at the next, there are small changes, which are then recorded/reflected in the paint surface. For example, a line made in response to a perceived 'edge' in the field of vision is not like a line traced over another picture. It is formed through looking at something in motion because of the painter's body, head and eyes and also movement in the 'object.' There are also perceived gradual changes in light and dark, which allow us to understand objects in the field of vision that, in a slide, would be static tonal areas.

Working from slides, and particularly using film sources, threw the cycle of painting practice - looking, marking, moving, looking again - into sharp focus as a process. It displaced my expectations and motivated me to reflect closely on what I was doing and *how* this seeing and making process worked with 'affect'. It was also at this time that I noted the experiences of being in something like an altered state of consciousness following long periods of intense looking at the slide projection screens and at painting. Subsequently I noted this effect in drawing 'from life' as well. My perception of my surroundings became almost hallucinatory, in that I would notice small details and patterns in normally mundane wall or floor surfaces,



**Figure 1: *Seconds Away 1*, digital print, Anne Robinson, 2003**

experience an enhanced enjoyment of colour, an increase in visual brightness and clarity of edges and a sense of time being momentarily suspended, of 'losing track' of time. I also began to connect these experiences with spectator experiences of displaced temporality in front of 'painterly' paintings.

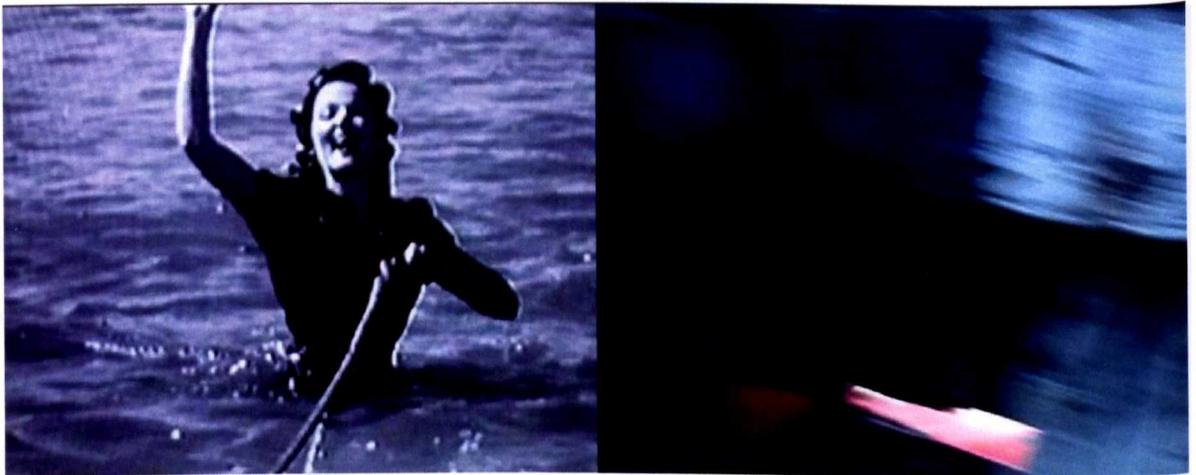
My working practices using film and video sources altered over time. Initially, I would record material that I was interested in from television using a VHS video recorder, and then review the tapes, take decisions about which sections I wanted to use, pause each frame and then take a slide using a 35mm SLR camera. Often, this process resulted in 'flaws' in the image, light slippage, and so on, and I gradually came to incorporate these into the paintings, becoming interested in the conceptual factors arising from the 'looks' and temporal lags intervening between pro-filmic event and painting. I then began to experiment more extensively with close ups, shutter speed, exposure times and so on and, eventually, to use digital film cameras to re-film the VHS material, extracting stills from the resulting video footage. Owing to the nature of the digital frame, these processes revealed images which appeared to *resemble* painterly phenomena, including brushmarks and forms of blurring that one would expect to encounter in the *malerisch* surface and which had, in many cases, a particular affective quality (Fig.1). Using re-filming techniques, alterations to frame rate and speed and experimental editing, I explored 'affect' in the spaces between frames in digital video where the image exceeds the original frame boundaries, oscillating between visible traces inscribed in the newly constructed sequences. In most cases these qualities of excess or

slippage have come about through interference between variations in frame rates, analogue video scan rates, pixellation, shutter speeds, and exposures.

In digital video, the *frame* as such is a simulation or construct and does not really exist. Whereas the *film* frame has a material form, the *video* frame is composed of two electronically captured fields made up of scan lines that have been digitally encoded. With re-filming, the process of 'looking' with another lens seems to capture the space *between* these imaginary frames and to capture movement.

There is a sense of moving in and out of the image, of it not being absolutely still; there may also be an uncanny doubling. What is revealed in this space for the viewer is a range of distortions: the seeing that is not stored in the time of the frame, that has slippage as well as motion and that seems to transcend the original frame boundary. These image distortions have an emotional affect which, in turn, alters our perception of the elasticity of time when we encounter them. Visually, the images suggest 'painterly' seeing: the kinds of translation made by the painter into mark-making and the interplay of operations that may produce an alteration of resemblance. We may perceive 'alterations' such as layering and brushwork as traces of movement in time consider whether painting affects or moves us because it embodies time in the layering of the surface as a kind of palimpsest.

Over time, I began to work with the re-filmed footage itself and with digital stills that came out of the process of making painting sources. In the work that developed as the two-screen video installation *Hold* (Fig. 2), I used footage from the film *The*



**Figure 2: *Hold*, Two screen video, Anne Robinson, 2007**

*Ghost and Mrs Muir* (Mankiewicz 1947) combined with stills drawn from footage that I had filmed of sites relating to family memory. It was whilst working on *Hold* that I set out to investigate these now apparently related phenomena: temporality, painterly surfaces, affect and moving image mechanisms in a more focused way. This was a conscious part of the work for the video installations: *An Occulting Light* (Robinson 2007) and *Lighter Darker* (Robinson 2008) as well as in the later paintings that became the *Afterlife* (Robinson 2009) series and the animated painted frames for *Lighter Darker*. The sequences which make up the two-screen projected installation work *An Occulting Light* are composed from a series of tiny fragments from the British war film *The Cruel Sea* (Frend 1953) where the battleship has been hit and the sailors are forced to bail out; re-filmed and extremely slowed down. I found that my experiments with re-filming and speed changes in editing seemed to reveal something about how we see. Walter Benjamin suggests that the camera introduces us to 'unconscious optics' as a kind of parallel to processes in psychoanalysis. He says for example that:

*...the camera intervenes with the resources of its lowerings and liftings, its interruptions and isolations... its enlargements and reductions. The camera introduces us to unconscious optics as does psychoanalysis to unconscious impulse .*

(Benjamin 1970: 230)

I will go on to look at the particular affects of slow motion in Chapter Two, on *Que Sera*.

In this earlier work, the transformation of perception arising from the de-familiarisation of the image creates subjective associations. For example, in the sequence from *An Occulting Light* (Fig. 3) where the sailor's head turns in the water, the visual transformation corresponds to Francis Bacon's heads painted in the 1950s; for example, two works from the early 1960s such as: *Three Studies for a Portrait of George Dyer* (Bacon 1963), and *Study for Three Heads* (Bacon 1962). In these paintings, Bacon's stated aim of making pictures: '...to look as if a human being had passed between them, like a snail, leaving a trace of the human presence and memory trace of past events as a snail leaves its slime' (Hunter cited in Gale 2008: 26), seems all too evident: paint as viscera, 'memento mori' in the brush trails, scraped across time, broken and decaying. Does this then reveal something about the relations between vision, emotional 'affect' and temporality, about how we grasp matter through the effects of light? In all of the work, I made at



**Figure 3: *An Occulting Light*, Video installation with sound, Anne Robinson, 2007**

this time, there is 'slippage' arising either from operations relating to digital frames or through the dialogic layered and scraped paint surface which foregrounds the subjectivity of our experience of time including the operations of memory.

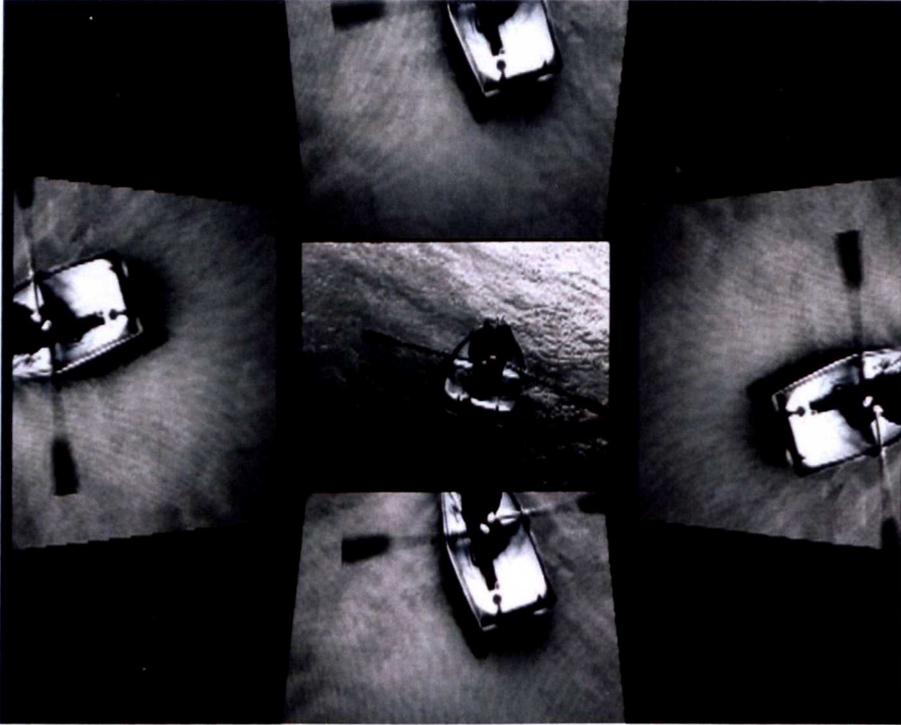
As the work developed, I encountered Victor Burgin's 'remembered film and 'sequence-image' concepts (Burgin 2004) and these ideas offered an insight into my decisions to work with certain film fragments. Drawing on psychoanalytic theory, Burgin writes about the fragments of cinematic image which emerge into our waking consciousness spontaneously, unbidden. He goes on to develop the idea of the sequence-image to describe this kind of subjectively formed fragment of cinematic memory, which forms a dream like 'rebus' rather than any kind of logical progression: 'What distinguishes the elements of such a configuration from their evanescent neighbours is that they seem somehow more "brilliant"' (Burgin 2004: 21). These 'sequence images' have an emotional resonance or 'punctum'<sup>2</sup>. Burgin,

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<sup>2</sup> For an explanation of Barthes' terms 'studium' and 'punctum' in photography, see: *Camera Lucida* (Barthes 1984), in particular, pages: 25-60.

again: '...a chance encounter with an image may give rise to an inexplicable feeling...' (Burgin 2004: 21). The ways in which the re-filming process may 'catch' spaces between frames is of course accidental, random, but these 'accidents' seem to create new and psychically compelling images out of what is essentially an indexical process of light creating a frame, and also allow us to look back at movements which have passed. I further explored temporality in painterly surface by making paintings from re-filmed frames from *The Cruel Sea* (see documentation attached, Appendix A: 3 and DVD 'Portfolio: documentation).

The work, *Lighter Darker* was constructed to use five screens in the space of the Planetarium dome at the World Museum in Liverpool (Fig. 4) and, in this work, I devised sequences that explored movement, temporality and affect in the visual field of expanded cinema. This is a work where the spectator has to move within the space to take in the five screens, arranged around and above them on the inner surface of the dome. There are also experimental aspects to the work in terms of alterations to the time base and after-image. In the orbital sequences that make up this work, time is explored spatially. In making up the sequence, I made the basic rowing across the screen work as two opposing orbits on the North/South and East/West screens in the Planetarium, whilst the centre rower circles, apparently lost and tries to navigate. The processes of constructing the work relate to experimental film practices and explorations of space in expanded cinema, although not working with the specific materiality of film. The viewer is placed inside the installation and may experience some disorientation during the flash



**Figure 4: *Lighter Darker*, Five screen video installation with sound, Anne Robinson, 2008**

sequences where single frames stay on the retina as after image. This resonates with experimental film works where the spectator is intentionally engaged in an active position through the work's spatial arrangements and reflexivity. I attempted to work with this idea of expanded time in the site-specific spatial arrangements of the screen in *Lighter Darker*.

Whilst installing the piece, I was conscious of the time and motion of the screens, the tensions between movement and stillness and the slippage between digital frames, where there may be a flicker effect, or exchange of two images, all operating with respect to affect for the spectator and in relation to their subjective perceptions of temporality. Sections of the work were made by painting over printed frames and looking at the frame that follows - so I was working on top of one frame image, and looking at the frame ahead - embedding a passage of time

in the painting - using material, colour and reflected light to make the frames (Fig. 5). Reassembled, these pictures of course become animated - the rower moves again across the screen - and in this installation across the dome of the night sky. Observing effects produced in the course of this work led me to reflect further on the nature of the 'digital' frame, its perilous virtual existence, its elusiveness, its possible inadequacies in the face of analogue measures of space like film frames and sundials. Paradoxically however, the space between these non-frames, captured through re-filming, seems to offer an intertwined space where time has slipped away to reveal a kind of 'time out'. These spaces resemble 'painterly' seeing, raising questions of resemblance and representation in painting. Accepting them as indexical of an event, if not a pro-filmic one, seems to indicate the

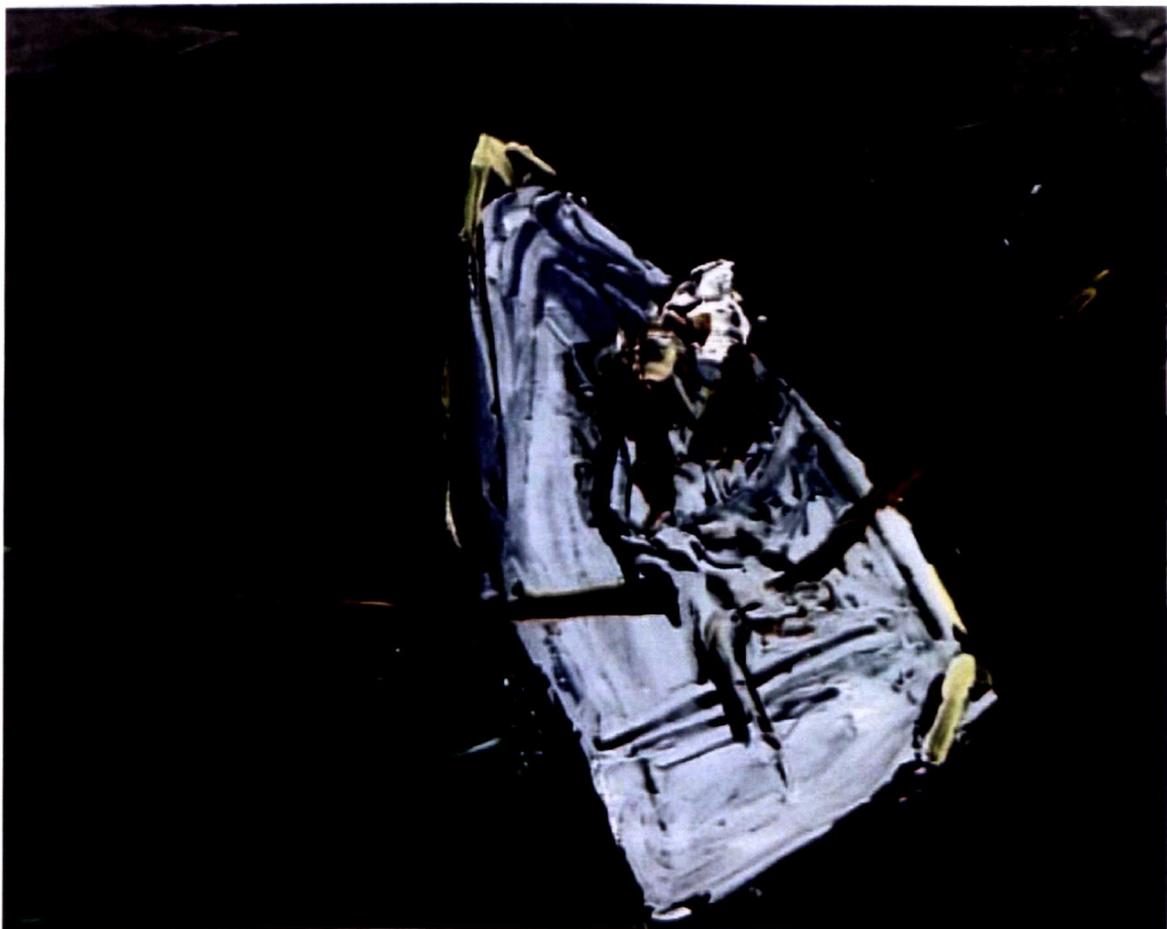


Figure 5: *Lighter Darker painting series*, oil on photographic print, 127 x 203 mm,

Anne Robinson, 2008

possibility of Benjaminian 'unconscious optics' at work in their construction and selection: a kind of analogue of visual perception that slips and slides: as mobile as our actual lived vision; like a Bacon or Auerbach picture where lines and colours germinate into forms under our temporal scrutiny.

I continued to paint in series in further paintings made from *The Cruel Sea* and in the *Studio* (Robinson 2012b and see Appendix A: 3) series making observations on studio painting practice; a process that has time embedded in it: the time taken to look, the rapid sequences of actions responding to the visual field, the variable pace of working into areas of the surface, the waiting times and tensions built up between individual acts of painting and the repetition of acts of mark making. The second looking and acting, and all subsequent repetitions of and variations on this, retain memories of that which has been seen: looked at intensely, seen incidentally or peripherally and the embodied memories of making actions with the head, eyes, hands, fingers and body; these latter being imperfectly repeated so as to move on and make the surface 'work' and translate the 'seen' into a painted surface. This 'making work' or completing of a painting is, again, not a totally conscious process or one that is easy to define in language; but it is at the centre of the process of emotional affect for the spectator who, when a painting is finished, responds to the painterly surface.

In the epilogue of Norman Bryson's book on painting and the 'gaze,' a chapter entitled *The Invisible Body*, he points to the limitations of both conventional art

history and post-structural theory and semiotics in denying the presence of the body in art. He points out that: 'The body of labour, in its studio space, is hidden by the brilliance of the posture, the facial or bodily feature, in which the viewer discovers his or her sexual interest...'. He asks: 'How are we to *think* that other space of duration, that other body of labour?' (Bryson 1983:163). He emphasises this by describing the film, partly shot in slow motion, of the painter Matisse, describing this as a scene of suspense:

*...as though in slowing the movements down the film were able to demonstrate for the first time a dimension of intentions and decision that would never otherwise become known... the brush, held a few inches from the canvas, begins an arc that moves in slow motion closer and closer to the surface; the point of the brush contacts the canvas, and as the hairs bend, a smooth, even trace of pigment appears.*

(Bryson 1983:163)

Painting in this sensual and detailed description becomes performative, emphasising movement and rhythm as in dance and focuses on both the preconscious nature of the activity and the variety of rhythms and perceptual temporalities in play, as brain activity, mobile gaze, and physical responses and actions. Using paintings from the *Afterlife* series, I made up a video sequence (see 'c)' on DVD 'Portfolio: documentation) by taking each picture as a frame and using dissolves to explore the affects of this intensified layering of agency from the original pro-filmic event through re-filming, painterly surface and back to time-

based work, and noted the haunted quality of the new sequences, like reanimated flesh; the imperfections in translation registering as disturbances.

Slow filming as an experiment to catch something of the variable temporalities in making a painting has also been a useful experiment for this project. The experience of making a painting is so fast, so much in the moment, so of itself, so fast and yet so slow at the same time. When you are immersed in painting, the process is so rapid that it is impossible to really know what you are doing: hand, eye and the place that you in are all tangled up. And yet, in between, there are really slow, contemplative times or just slow 'nothing' times or times when your consciousness seems to have slipped away. So, a painting is made with variable timings, perhaps like tension and release in music. The following are extracts are from reflective journal notes made immediately after painting sessions and also in response to filmed sequences of studio work (Robinson 2009) (see also video documentation on DVD 'Portfolio: documentation).

Notes on film of painting heads from *Cruel Sea* film: Jan 2009: re-filmed at 25fps and condensed as sequences of stills

*Painting 1*

*The image begins with blue lines slashed across to indicate head shape; this is a dense, dark colour.*

*Subsequently, there is fast marking in of the head outline and light background area.*

*Turps-thinned purplish paint used to mark out features, as a tonal drawing, then rag used to refine shapes within this.*

*Magenta paint added as mid tones, then white highlights and both wiped off in small areas*

*More light paint is added*

*Then yellowish white overlay is added and then painted in*

*Orange mid tones added with smallish brush*

*All of surface wiped with rag and then toned down and darkened*

*Looking rapidly*

*Marks made in detail, then over all surface and then back again*

*Painting 2*

*Starts with orange circle, then orange faced shape*

*Then purple lines and tones for features*

*Blue background area painted in*

*Darker brownish features painted in*

*Yellow white scrub across whole area, dense paint*

*This is worked into with rag erasure*

*The features are picked out and then toned down*

*Bluish paint added and then erased and more features painted in*

*Material edited from journal entries (Nov. 2008 - Feb. 2009)*

*I look at what I am about to paint. I move my head and look again, I move my eyes around. I make pencil marks to indicate positioning of areas on the canvas according to observation of the screen. I take a general base colour of brownish green and make outline marks over the pencil marks and then mix colour with turps to make areas of tone. I alter the colours from warmer to colder with umber and blue in turn. I make decisions quickly that pile in upon one another; decisions about the mixing of paint, about brush size or bits of fabric or hands/fingers to use in marks. All the time, I am looking - looking up at the screen/object, looking rapidly between the canvas and object, back and forwards, looking intensely at the canvas as my gaze slips back to the object or down to the palette while still making a mark, looking at the mix of colour and consistency on the palette, on the brush. When I have spent time doing this, I look again at the work on the canvas. I see what is there and I erase sections, or all, of the paint and go back again. I cover the canvas with colour and tone right across the surface in response to dark and light tone in the object/field and then start again to work on areas in detail. this means depositing the contents of a brush loaded with colour on to an area of the picture and then manipulating this, drawing across to mix with the paint already there, looking, erasing, pulling the paint back, scraping to leave areas of the colour and tone underneath exposed.*

*This is a process of rapid looking: looking close and then far away at object, at varied distance to the paint surface, in turn. A mark is erased and replaced and worked over or a series of planes and marks describing a recognisable*

*area are scraped through and perhaps the whole work left for a longer period of time between sessions in the studio, time passes and when I come back to it I am seeing the work itself. The process of decisions is not possible to verbalise, as it happens too quickly and my sense of what is happening is that any attempt to bring language to bear on the successive decisions, actions, responses and the whole cycle of making of the painting would utterly fail and render the process impossible, prevent any kind of live surface. This appears, from my own observations, to hold true for both intentionally 'accurate' renderings from slides and responses to images that are looser and more quickly executed.*

Notes made on studio film of painting: November, 2011

*The painting set up: the support is a canvas 14" x 10" using oil paint, part of series of 14 pictures based on painting frames from a film sequence of a figure lying down and gradually getting up. The paintings have been completed as series and then over-painted using slides of the frames in between. The canvas is on wall at eye-level; palette on flat table surface to the right with colours arranged: titanium white, raw umber, yellow ochre, burnt sienna, lamp black, prussian blue, cobalt blue, alizarin crimson, dioxazin violet, magenta, cadmium yellow (deep) hue, cadmium lemon, cadmium yellow, chrome yellow, viridian, vermilion; data projector 1,000 lumen used to project jpg image from Apple Mac, on to screen at approx. 40" x 30". The screen is positioned to left of painting area, approx. 3 feet away and at a 45 degree angle. Filmed at 120fps.*

(Numbers refer to separate films on DVDs)

1

*Looking at screen and bringing hand into position whilst looking across at screen, start to move hand in the shape of the figure's back, hovering above (in front of) canvas*

*Start to mark with brush touching canvas whilst still looking to source*

*Brush marking around the edge of painted figure, mostly in straight lines*

*Rag dragging all paint, left to right horizontally across canvas*

*Then, also using rag to wipe out highlights etc. whilst looking to source.*

*Note directionality of movement, so following illusions of shapes in space and dimensions*

*Consider temporality in erasures*

*Residue of paint, of gesture*

*White paint over soft surface*

*Mark, look, hesitate, trace*

*Looking and mark and memory - remembering source, look back and still moving hand and body*

*Pressure of brush/rag/hand and lightness, tension and matter*

2

*Look at source and at same time position arm in relation to vision and intention - and follow through existing shape on canvas with small alterations*

*Broad darks and lights still at this stage,*

*Orange tone again, distance from viewer*

*Blank expression, look back and forwards*

*Pulling back and drawing out, consider physical activity*

*Consider field of vision, size of painting*

3

*Rag and distortion, modeling: figure, flesh*

*Erase and paint again*

*Painting in detail*

*Then more rapid looking*

*Process intensifies*

*Head inclined as direction of brush*

*Brush-marks not so visible, painted in*

*Brush movements before looking, before apprehension, look at what has been done, gesture*

*Lean back, looking canvas and screen*

*Consider position of body with respect to 'expanded cinema' and spectatorship*

*What is being looked at?*

*What is happening in perceptual process?*

*Taking in what is there, processing*

*Rebuilding picture after rag erasures etc, using perception, vision, memory, colours, edges*

*Temporal build up and gradual apprehension of image*

*Looking depends on light*

*For this image - one frame over the other, changing shape of figure as painting.*

(end of extract: see also documentation on DVD)

Painterly surfaces are made up of responsive marks and these responses are made in the temporal architecture of individual moments. This mark making is not an orderly process and the experience of making a painting is such that I feel lost inside the process whilst I am engaged in it and then gradually come out of a phase of responses and marks to pause before moving back in again or taking a break and starting later. The process as a painting is close to finishing can be tense and there are more definite start and stops, smaller phases of paint and briefer moments of activity, shorter actions. The marks and residues that are left by performative action, having been made in time, have sequentiality in them. That is to say, they are not single and yet not unified. A whole painterly surface may be seen as all of one piece, but, within it, there are places where the gaze is more engaged, stays for longer, has more complex visual problems to solve. The responsive marks made in paint that may be there to describe an edge or shape or a differentiation between objects or to mark the way a plane recedes into the distance, in this kind of surface, will have been made at different rates and in different ways. There may be marks extant in the final completed picture that were made all of a piece in the initial drawing stages. However, these will have been overlaid in other areas and will be combined with irregular layering. The marks used to describe elements in the visual field are not literal. A brush-mark response to the perceived shape of a garment or leg or corner may not be imitative, but

physically made with the artist's body. Of course all marks are so, but there is a range of tensions at play here: where tight, controlled marks are made to respond closely to an initial perception of the shape of an object but then this is later crossed by marks responding to the broad sweep of a plane in the visual field that may not even have been picked out clearly at first.

As the painterly surface builds, although the source remains important for continuity, the tension of mark-making shifts so that the painting now becomes a thing in and of itself, a phenomenon where encounters with a source have created a dynamism that moves on to make a new place a new space for encounters. Depth and time are in the work of the surface where paint marks have been erased and crossed over in describing an edge or a differential in time to begin to create a new space that is no longer quite just a shirt or table or building, for example, where an encrustation of paint marks which has resulted in visible broken tones meets a scraped back area of flat tone, in turn crossed over by gestural lines. There may be a feeling whilst painting of moving in and out of the surface. This is also part of the process of looking rapidly and intensely in turn during individual acts of painting and within the process as a whole. There are variations in how quickly movements will have added to the making of the picture surface. There are rests and rhythms, tensions, releases, moments of forensic looking and tiny movements in rapid succession contributing to this surface as well as periods of looking with no marks made at all or lines, planes, scraping marks and smudged areas made very slowly. This process is performative, like a performance made for a future spectator who is both absent and present in this stage of the work: absent

from the closed cycle of: hand, eye, matter, look, surface, look again, matter, action; and yet, perhaps present as the painter steps away to look.

Painting is about seeing: about making something that presents us with the strangeness of seeing and the strangeness of being alive in the world. Seeing is inextricably linked for most people with orienting themselves in the world. According to contemporary neuroscience, it is an active process as the brain builds images more rapidly than we can easily imagine. Seeing then is a series of creative acts that makes sense to our conscious selves of the uncontrollability of our visual presence in the world and helps us navigate the things we encounter that are not language. What we see is all around us as a presence that we are also present with as embodied, physical, desiring subjects. There is jumble, there is chaos: the world is not arrayed before us as 'field and ground.' The operation 'field and ground' is our brain trying to make sense of this 'presence', an orienteering device. Paintings are planes sliced through space and then made dense. There is chaos in them and the painter works below the radar of language to engage us. As painters or spectators, we can only work according to the rhythms of our body. So, when we are confronted by the bisecting of space with plane and the disorderly desiring mark of the painter, we are unsettled, as this encounter makes us re-live time, makes us travel back into our memories and into other experiences of time. I will therefore propose that paintings reveal aspects of how we see and indicate the emotional importance of seeing. Proposing a new 'materialist ontology' for art, Barbara Bolt says:

*...the praxical engagement with tools, materials and ideas produces its own kind of sight. Such knowing occurs at the level of hands and eyes and operates in a different register from the representational paradigm of 'I' as subject in relation to mere objects.*

(Bolt 2004: 65)

Philosopher Merleau-Ponty proposes that the particular connections made through the act of painting contribute to, perhaps even transform our perceptual grasp of the world around us, affect our sense of the physical and metaphysical world and our connection to this through vision. In his essay, *Eye and Mind*, he proposes that '*...this philosophy yet to be done is that which animates the painter...*' (Merleau-Ponty 2004a: 309). Paintings are made through gestures that follow vision: a kind of physical thinking as the paintings mirror our sense of aliveness. For Deleuze:

*Painting directly attempts to release the presences beneath representation, beyond representation. The color system itself is a system of direct action on the nervous system... Painting gives us eyes all over: in the ear, in the stomach, in the lungs the painting breathes...*

(Deleuze 2003: 52)

Painting in other words, is visceral; of the body, a force in the world. Layers of paint have time embodied in them, so paint records/holds memory in dialogic surfaces that may give rise to multiple meanings in translation. Lyotard points out that:

*A distinction should be made between the time it takes the painter to paint the picture (time of 'production'), the time required to look at and understand the work (time of 'consumption'), the time to which the work refers (a moment, a scene, a situation, a sequence of events: the time of the diegetic referent, if the story told by the picture) and finally, perhaps, the time the painting is. This principle, childish as its ambitions may be, should allow us to isolate different 'sites' of time.*

(Lyotard 1991: 78)

Film is a time-based medium. If we work with film or video, we must impose the marks of measured 'clock-time': time-codes and distances on to our inner consciousness of continuous time and the time of the imagination. Yet, painting too is 'time-based'. It has to operate with time as an entire phenomenon: both in its making and in the space of spectatorship.

I have noted above, in writing about the effects of my work with inter-frame spaces, slowing down sequences and re-filming, that some of the resulting images 'resemble' Francis Bacon's portrait 'heads'. Initially, I connected this resemblance and its emotional affect with an idea that painterly surface can be 'moving' because of what it reveals about the unconscious rapid perceptual processes in seeing, much as Benjamin argues that cinematic mechanisms draw us into an 'unconscious optics' (Benjamin 1999). I also connected this work with ideas drawn from psychoanalytic discourse such as Victor Burgin's 'remembered film' and 'sequence-mages'. These insights were valuable in developing my practice and

reflective writing. However, following leads from this work back into the practice of making paintings in the studio, I encountered the limitations of the idea of *resemblance* here, as set against an understanding which was based in the materiality of studio practice and less dependent on assumptions drawn from appearances. This led me to explore the idea that time is marked in marked in painterly surfaces through indexical and analogue experiments at different rates by working experimentally with time bases in film.

I developed strategies for working with moving image forms in order to address these initial ideas and also formulated new questions, which came to be more fully explored using the work of Merleau-Ponty and Deleuze: 'How does painting as practical philosophy inform us about the nature of visuo-perceptual processes? 'What is revealed about our experience of seeing and of temporality by looking at 'painterly' paintings?' and: 'What is it about the *juxtapositions* of diverse temporalities and rhythms that is unsettling for the painter and spectator in painting?' The experimental moving image works here are an attempt to deconstruct painterly time by constructing something that is as a painting, trying, as a practical essay, to try and break apart the temporal/perceptual experiences of making or looking at a painting. Following these earlier experiments, I devised parameters for moving image works that would expand on the idea that elements of 'affect' were derived from the embodied nature of the process, with the body and the perceptual responses of the painter moving at different rates and from the juxtapositions of these varied rhythms manifest in 'painterly' surface. This led to the

work with altered time bases, using long exposure photography and high speed filming, in *Que Sera*.

## 2. *Que Sera*

### On temporality and 'affect' in experimental moving image practice

*Que Sera* (Robinson 2010) is an experimental two-screen video work exploring perceptions of time using long exposure photography and high speed filming. The sequences and images were constructed by filming for the length of time it takes to sing a song, using a range of photographic, film and video strategies which alter frame rate and shutter speed, thus altering the duration of captured frames. This material was then reconstructed as a double sequence creating a dialectical relationship between stillness, movement, clarity, blur and so on. *Que Sera* provides the spectator with an unsettling and disrupted experience of time deconstructed through cinematic devices and catching the spectator in a circuit of traces and afterimages. We are presented with a juxtaposition of diverse temporalities. The experience of sound in the work, the 'remembered song', is also immersive, pushing language to the threshold of recognisable auditory form.

*Que Sera* is one of the main experimental works constructed in order to investigate affect and the perceived elasticity of time passing as a spectator of art. This chapter reflects on the video piece *Que Sera* (Robinson 2010) in the light of the initial attempts, outlined in Chapter One, to understand how temporality relates to emotional 'affect' in art, drawing on theoretical perspectives from philosophy and neuroaesthetics. The construction and configuration of these works is described in detail in order to enable readers of this thesis to grasp the nature of their

experiments with time and affect. Relevant material for viewing can be found in : **Appendix A: 1 and on DVD 'Que Sera' disks 1 & 2.** The work itself picks up on factors noted in Chapter One, including:

a) the investigation of high speed filming to produce slow motion effects, derived from earlier experimental works: *Hold* (Robinson 2007a), *An Occulting Light* (2007b) and *Lighter Darker* (Robinson 2008a)

b) The investigation of the affects of long exposure photography and experiments with respect to the appearance of painterly surface in the painting series: *Afterlife* (2009) and *Alf* (2008d) and the re-filming work and painted animation elements for: *An Occulting Light* and *Lighter Darker*

c) the idea of 'remembered songs' derived from research experiments working with Victor Burgin's concept of the 'remembered film' and the 'sequence-image' (Burgin 2004) as developed through the above video works

d) the relations between marks in paintings and traces left by the recording processes of time based media; explored by various experiments making paintings from film frames: painting on to one frame whilst observing the next frame in the sequence, comparing paintings made direct from frames with photo/digital frames which show interlacing or other distortions made during re-filming processes.

*Que Sera* draws on observations of the practice of the 'structural materialist' experimental films and works of 'expanded cinema' made in the 1970s and 80s by film-makers and artists such as: Lis Rhodes, William Raban, Steve Farrer and Peter Gidal (see Chapter Four), using these observations to devise filming strategies, experiments made at the editing stage and the constructions of the work

for installation. The experiments with recording that developed into this work were also informed by theoretical material on time and perception from Bergson, Deleuze and Guattari and Merleau-Ponty, as well as work on the physiology of vision and neuroscientific theory by Margaret Livingstone, Antonio Damasio and Semir Zeki. These ideas have been used to reflect on the work during stages of the working process and following its exhibition for spectators.

The visual elements of *Que Sera* were made by recording myself in the studio singing the song of that title, using various recording devices and filming techniques. I would like to explain briefly how I came to use vocal recordings and songs in the context of this body of work looking at the elasticity of time in painting which started out with concerns about *visual* perception. As previously noted, i between 2006 and 2009, I worked with re-filming processes which had developed from painting practice and the techniques I had been using to find and capture source material, originally working with 'found' sequences and frames from existing films.

Considering Burgin's 'remembered songs' and also drawing a parallel with Benjamin's 'unconscious optics' as 'unconscious acoustics' i.e. fragments that remain in the memory and arise unbidden into consciousness, I began to work with altering the time base in sound elements and in recordings of my own singing voice, in particular, building on spectator/listener responses to my works and on my own perceptions of studio experiments. In earlier video works, such as *Slice Through the Night* (Robinson 2006) (which is not incorporated into the body of PhD

research here) and *An Occulting Light* and in studio work between 2006 and 2009, I made experiments with slowing down songs that were familiar to me from childhood and that remained in my memory. As with the visual elements, my interest was in how these fragments were experienced perceptually and their intense emotional affect<sup>3</sup>. In some of these soundtracks, the songs were pushed beyond recognisable language by temporal alterations, as with the edge of figurative recognition in legibility of paintings where 'affect' derives from alterations.

One source for the work *Que Sera* then, was a fascination with the fragments of songs that stay in the memory, their perception, legibility, temporality and affect and these concerns are directly related to the subjective perception of duration. Experimenting with 'remembered songs' such as *Danny Boy* and *The Mountains of Mourne* in previous works, altering the timing and using my own voice, I found this productive in reflecting on temporality. I therefore began to devise a coherent structure for a new piece derived from the temporality of a song, also drawing on my studio experiments in order to construct a work that would have visually apparent manifestations of the passage of time made strange for the spectator.

*Que Sera* emerged, in part, from a persistent memory of a particular song: a kind of haptic and visual sense memory, something in the periphery of my receptive field which was there along with my immersion in thinking about temporality in art. The song *Que Sera* (Evans/Livingston 1956), is best known in its interpretation by

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<sup>3</sup> This exploration of 'remembered songs' has continued in my work, apart from the PhD research, in recent works such as *Song of the Skiver* (2011) and *Mountain* (2011).

Doris Day in 1956, in the film *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, (Hitchcock 1956) It was thus a popular song still current in my childhood in the 1960s and one of my earliest memories is of my mother singing this to me at the age of perhaps three years old. Inevitably then it is charged with personal memory and part of my interest here is to investigate how it may be possible to understand and, to some extent, define this kind of 'charge' as it becomes an element in the work and as it 'affects' the spectator of a work. My use of the song: recording my own vocal interpretation which I used to structure the visual recordings and then manipulating the time base of the vocal element at the editing stage in correspondence with the pictures, is also an experiment in how perceptions of temporality, as experienced subjectively and in the body at the stages of making, for the artist and again at the installation of the completed work, for the spectator, relate to emotional 'affect', to our sense of being 'moved' by a work of art.

Having made certain proposals above concerning the appearance of re-filmed frames made using slow shutter speeds that interfered with the moving images and resulted in apparently 'painterly' images, I set up a recording space in the studio in order to experiment with long exposure photographs of an original subject, as distinct from re-filming from a video screen. Using a medium format camera, I took a series of photographs of myself singing *Que Sera* based on various timings from the song itself; setting the shutter speed for the duration of a line, a verse and so on. From these initial experiments, I observed certain factors such as distortions to facial features relating to resemblances within the photographs to painterly mark making. I also noted the way in which time, embedded in these pictures as the

shutter remained open, made a haunted effect when placed together with the recording of the song; a kind of disembodiment and re-embodiment of the voice, with slippage resulting in an uncanny manifestation where the apparition has a being you can hear but not see and a being you can see but not understand fully according to regular temporal perception. This effect was unsettling as the pictures now seemed to be unnatural and disturbing in themselves owing to the apparent distortions of my face so that an empathetic viewer is upset in some way by their perception of painful or distressing changes to the body and also by expressions that are impossible to interpret or that seem hostile and strange.

This is of course a common effect of long exposures of human subjects, but here, the juxtaposition with the voice seemed to be affecting because of a disjuncture between the song, playing at regular speed at this stage of experiments, and the images which had been made simultaneously. I had observed that some re-filmed frames in previous works took on a disturbing appearance owing to certain distortions that seemed to be related to temporality, in particular how instants in the duration of a movement had been captured and revealed through camera optics in a way that we may be able to 'see' but are not fully conscious of. This led me to consider how picture elements which were not in and of themselves disturbing could become so through temporal changes to the indexical recording of a setting or figure and led me also to question how our perception of what looks 'normal' in photographs, film sequences and paintings is constructed. For example, in Francis Bacon's painted distortions of the human form, described by David Mellor as: '...the paroxysmic as mediated photo-mechanically through film...' (Mellor 2008: 62),

Bacon himself spoke of a desire to: '...trap this living fact alive...' (Sylvester 1988: 58) and we can see the traces of passing temporality in all of his paintings, making the distortions appear violent and disturbing. Perhaps, in part, we perceive such painted representations as violent and jarring because of the way in which they record time passing and thus serve as reminders of our own mortality.

Following the initial experiments, I decided to make some changes to the background of the setting in order to make a more direct correlation to my memory perception of the song being sung to me. At this point, I experienced an involuntary memory of a figure emerging from darkness and a sound that had a temporal structure which I perceived as more fluid than the more contained or regular timings made through my vocal interpretation of the song. This is a very difficult kind of perception to define. In *The Visible and the Invisible*, Merleau-Ponty says: '...there is no vision without the screen...' as he explores the carnal revelation, in what he terms 'flesh', of: '...an idea that is not the contrary of the sensible, that is its lining and its depth...' (Merleau-Ponty 1968: 149) and also the expression of such 'ideas' of our inner life through art in the sensible world; suggesting that such ideas cannot be detached from the sensible. In the case of *Que Sera*, the 'sensible' would be: the working body, the vocal, the perceived sounds, the movement before the camera and the re-manifestation as film work. I also made notes at this stage about exposure times, aperture, shot distance and so on. I noted the similarity of some aspects of the experiment to effects which I had observed in the earlier *An Occulting Light*, in the 'sailors' heads' sequence. A key factor in the construction of that sequence was the use of slow motion and I decided to experiment further with

*Que Sera* using a range of *filming* speeds; as distinct from manipulations at the editing stage. For Walter Benjamin:

*...slow motion not only presents familiar qualities of movement but reveals in them entirely unknown ones 'which, far from looking like retarded rapid movements, give the effect of singularly gliding supernatural motions .*

(Benjamin 1999: 230)

In the next phase of the work then, I used a digital video camera, set to film at 120, 400 and 1,000 frames per second to record my performance of the song. I also made a further set of long exposure photographs, working with data from initial experiments and again, using elements of the singing to control shutter speed. At this stage, I intended to make a version of the work where a range of interpretations/recordings of the song would be visible simultaneously with one continuous soundtrack.

At the editing stage, I reconstructed the filmed song elements, both auditory and visual, to match up the various recordings of lyrical phrases, verses and so on and in order to ascertain what kind of effects may have been created by these manipulations of temporality. I also experimented with juxtapositions of elements of picture and sound in order to fix on a possible configuration for the work to present to spectators as an installation. The setting up of the piece corresponds to a space of 'expanded cinema' which is both reflexive and immersive for the spectator. As I am interested in temporality and how our perceptions of time passing and duration

'affect' us, I considered working, in the 'set up' with the relative visibility of elements within the field of vision at any given moment related to sequentiality. So, one possibility was to construct a setting where it would be impossible to see both screens simultaneously, thereby compelling the spectator to move within the space and to constrain their experience to experiencing elements of the work successively. I also looked at the possibility of a further deconstruction into multiple screens which might introduce a random element into the viewing. I settled on the most likely set up having two screens and opted to return to the exact configuration after editing two sequences constructed to run simultaneously with the same soundtrack.

I began by selecting pictures from the medium format photographs; retrospectively matching these with the elements of the song which they had been taken with and placing them in order on the editing timeline. Reviewing this material, I experimented with overlaying stills, made for particular song sections, and derived further still images from this process. I then constructed several experimental timelines, running video material filmed at different speeds alongside the sound and the stills and observed the effects created, taking note of factors relating to legibility and affect. From this process, I opted to capture some further still frames out of the footage which had been filmed at 120 frames per second and make use of these as additional material on the mainly 'still' screen (on the left in the DVD version). These can be seen in the first sequence, which starts with the work apparently running at regular speed and leads the spectator gradually into a

slowed down experience of the song. The slowing down throughout this work is a consequence of manipulating the frame rate.

In the UK, the standard frame rate for video is 25 frames per second. As noted elsewhere, the 'frame' in digital video is in fact a virtual concept derived from conventional mechanical modes of filmmaking and analogue video. If we accept the frame, even as a virtual measurement however, we can see that high speed filming with digital equipment continues to correspond with its analogue counterparts in that, if we film at a rate higher than the conventional 18-30fps but then play back or project at the normal rate, the effect will be to produce perceptible slow motion, the opposite effect pertains for filming at speeds lower than 18-30fps. In digital editing programmes such as Final Cut Pro, it is a relatively simple matter to produce slow motion effects by simply altering the duration of clips on the editing timeline using the speed control. However, in the case of slowing footage down, this only stretches the existing footage by repeating frames, as the programme is unable to 'tween' intermediates or insert frames where there were no frames before. In the case of the footage recorded for *Que Sera*, the material was actually originally filmed at higher frame rates so that there are more frames corresponding to more instants of time captured than there would have been with regular filming speeds. When played back on a timeline configured to 25 frames per second, this material is then stretched out but produces a much smoother transition from moment to moment than the one click 'speed change' editing special effect.

This work also raises questions conceptually then, about the temporal architecture of the moment as perceived in real time and about the perceived expansion or elasticity of temporality for people in so-called 'altered' states induced through drugs or meditation. We have come to accept the convention of cinematic time, but processes like this may expose possibilities for art works to operate perceptually outside of that kind of regularity. These of experiments also led me to further investigate the neuroscience of perception in order to try to answer questions about what 'frame rate' we live and perceive in as we experience the world in our everyday lives. Daniel Stern, writing from a psychoanalytic perspective on the nature of the 'present moment', has used moving image technologies to film therapeutic encounters and examine the temporal architecture of the moment (Stern 2004) as recounted by patients and based on his earlier work where he had developed the concept of the 'vitality affect' to help understand affects whose descriptors habitually suggest temporality:

*...qualities of feeling that occur do not fit into our existing lexicon or taxonomy of affects. These elusive qualities are better captured by dynamic, kinetic terms, such as "surging," "fading away," "fleeting," "explosive," "crescendo," "decrescendo," "bursting," "drawn out," and so on.*

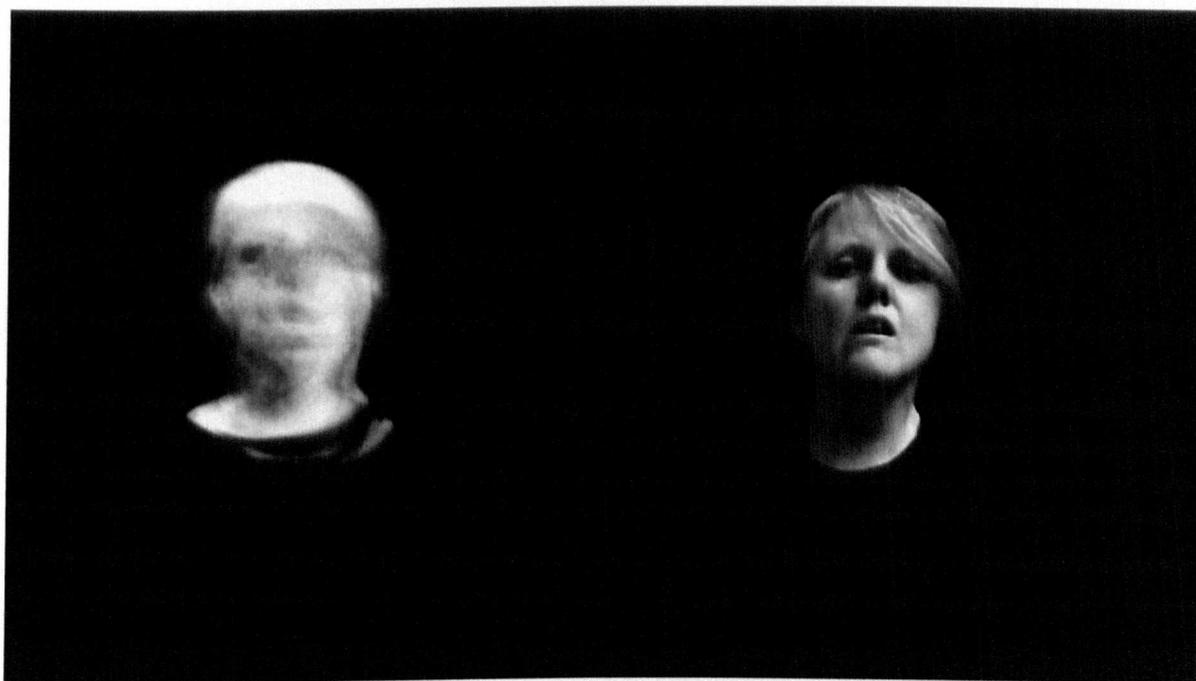
(Stern 1985: 84)

This kind of forensic unpicking of experience has a parallel in the work here, using moving image technologies to understand relations between emotional affects and temporality. The kind of expansion of the moment happening in *Que Sera* places

us, as spectators of the work, so that we experience juxtapositions of different temporalities, presented simultaneously. I would propose that this, in turn, allows us to see painting as a polyrhythmic activity because of the variability of action and temporal experience embedded in its making and the way in which this strange recording of time unfolds for the spectator as a space of expanded temporality. As Merleau-Ponty notes: ‘..a film is not a sum total of images but a temporal gestalt.’ (Merleau-Ponty 1964: 49); that is, although illusory, film can allow us to perceive time differently. I will further argue that this expansion allows the painter as human subject to be more fully conscious of passing moments and of the operations of time.

I went on to construct the edited sequences (as in the DVD version, fig. 6), beginning with the first sequence of singing running at perceptibly regular speed on the right hand screen and having still images captured from this sequence on the left, so that we follow the image apparently in real time and then an instant freezes on one screen whilst, on the other, the footage rolls on. As the song reaches the second verse, things change, as the footage is slowed down considerably and consequently takes on a different relationship to the stills. This is the first run through of the song and it is important to note that, as with most popular songs, this is an imperfect rendition, a recording of an embodied manifestation of a remembered tune and words. There are a further six sequences on each screen, seven sections in total, doubling to fourteen for the two screens, each corresponding to a gradual slowing of the soundtrack as noted above. The individual sequences are constructed at the editing stage according to perceptions

of affect in the material, including the interpretation of the song as recorded. There are sections of film which are intentionally out of synch as the sound slows down and moments where the visual sequence is disrupted by still images. I have used different recordings of the song, including one where the sounds made were in response to listening on headphones and one where the track is doubled by remixing in the editing programme. In each section, the recorded material becomes slower, and the images on each screen begin to correspond differently to one another as temporal and spatial distortions collide, until, in the final section, we have material filmed at 1,000 frames per second. At this point, the moving picture is accompanied on the other screen by a single still picture, one of the long exposure photographs where the features have been rubbed away and resemble a child's crayon drawing. The total running time is 17.5 minutes.



**Figure 6: *Que Sera*, Two screen video installation with sound, 17 min. loop, Anne Robinson, 2010**

In its first showing, in *Correspondence*, a group exhibition at Libeskind Graduate Centre in June 2010, the work was set up to play as a projection with stereo sound in an entirely darkened and fairly small space, approximately 2m x 3m which spectators were able to enter in small groups of up to seven people. Most spectators opted to sit on the floor of this space so that the main screen was slightly above their eye level and approximately 1.2m across. So, two sequences were placed in relation to one another in a space where an encounter with the work is unavoidable. In effect, the physical position of the spectator was defined by the space (it may be helpful to refer at this point to the attached DVD and photographs of the installation). I experimented with various configurations of the screens, including a placement which most closely resembles the DVD version, with the two screens side by side on a rear projection screen at one side of the darkened space and identical in projected dimensions.



**Figure 7: *Que Sera*, Two screen video installation with sound, 17 min. loop, Anne Robinson, 2010, (installation at Libeskind Graduate Centre, photograph by Steve Blunt)**

These configurations were tried out on sample spectators and the consensus was that the arrangement that 'worked' best in terms of the spectators feeling affected by the work and engaged to keep watching through all of the sequences was having the screen where the singing runs at 'regular speed' projected on to the centrally positioned rear projection screen in the space, whilst the other sequence, which first begins to break away from the expected norm of 25 frames per second running in synch, is positioned below this and slightly smaller, projected on to the black curtain surrounding the main screen. As reported by colleagues who saw a number of configurations during preparations for the showing of the work in, this set up created an unsettling experience of the work, having a distinct emotional 'affect' arising from the perception of the relations between the two screens, with one set of images now placed in the area of peripheral vision, in addition to the affects created by the altered time base within the sequences themselves (Fig. 7).

*Que Sera* is an experimental work constructed using the mechanics and languages of photography and the moving image to learn something about temporality and affect. It also uses elements which relate to subjective experiences of temporality as in memory and the physical experience of moving whilst singing. In the final set up of *Que Sera* as described above, the spectator is experiencing a performance of a song which may well be familiar to them, presented with the singer clearly visible in a close, even intimate, space. The perceived performance is a representation using devices and illusions and yet the images presented are indexical, they correspond to real settings, reflections of light, sound waves and temporal architectures of the past. This representation places images from the same and different recordings of the song next to one another in various dialectical

configurations so that these different methods of capturing pictures across time, through exposure, shutter and frame rate, are juxtaposed in such a way as to affect the spectator.

The spectator's gaze may fix on the main image as the frames creep forward, unfolding each moment of the slowed down song, but then their eye is drawn to the other picture with its shifts in time and space presented in the single frame of a long exposure where duration has unfolded before the camera. Whilst the shutter for the long exposure was open for one frame, the video camera may have captured as many as 4,000 frames. This work then offers the spectator two very different representations of time passing placed next to one another in a dialogic relationship and the 'affect' of this is very unsettling. Working in combination with the emotional resonance of the sound of the song itself and the enclosed space, spectators from the work's first exhibition reported that they felt moved by the work and that they associated its affect with a sense of melancholy, loss, or mourning, but also a sense of being displaced from the present moment, of being in a strange space, not related to the normal passage of time outside of the installation space. In *Que Sera*, it is possible that some of the emotional affect arises from the juxtaposition of two sets of images of the same time, the same action, the same presence, the same 'being in the world', recorded using different temporal mechanisms'. These images thus present us with an impossibility for a human organism's experience of temporality.

So, considering this work as a presentation of temporality, there are a number of factors in play: the original memory of the song as sung by my mother comes from myself as the artist constructing the work. The memory comes from my 'self' in the present, as the memory has emerged into the field of my consciousness. The song as sung is the result of an embodied process, incorporating the intake and exhalation of breath, vocal vibrations, physical movements of small muscles in the face, rhythmic movements of other parts of the body in relation to the tune, and so on. The song is of the body and it is recorded in this way as it emerges across time. The devices used to record work with the passage of time in different ways according to their functions and settings: including: frame-rate, aperture, shutter speed, sensors, digital data processing and so on. At the editing stage, the sequences are constructed to work as a complete piece that has a particular duration. In the editing, the 'still' images are cut on the timeline with duration built into them as part of the sequence. In its final formation, the work presents the spectator with several altered representations of time corresponding to a single soundtrack.

Reflecting on the construction and exhibition of *Que Sera*, I would identify a number of insights into the nature of 'affect' and perceptions of temporality in art. Firstly, slow motion, as used in this video work, reveals the speed/pace at which we live our lives, experience the world, make the world: the pace at which the world reveals itself to us. It may make us question our lived perceptual experience of temporality and duration: we may ask 'how fast does the world go?' Slow motion also reveals on screen aspects of motion and expression in the human body which

are not usually consciously perceptible and which may give rise to emotional responses and affects. The visible nature of slow motion effects in film then, may reveal how the world emerges visibly for our conscious selves. Secondly, the duration visible in long exposure photographs reveals aspects of how we see related to time. The movements of the subject within the frame may 'resemble' painterly mark-making such brush gestures made across time. I would propose that the relationship between the marks manifest by slow shutter speeds and some 'painterly' marks goes beyond 'resemblance' and exposes an aspect of why paintings move us by showing us how we see in time.

In considering the work as a whole, it is the *juxtaposition* of the two recording strategies that causes us to be unsettled in our encounter with the visible world as in lived experience: our being in the world as a thing among things. We cannot move at two speeds at the same time and yet this work places us as spectators in a position where that seems to be happening. This causes disequilibrium for our sense of navigation in the world which depends on our perceptual fields and in vision in particular. As pointed out by Margaret Livingstone:

*Given how much we move our eyes, our vision would look like a movie shot with a camera held by someone riding a pogo stick if our visual perception simply reflected the images our eyes send to our brains. But we see the world as stationary simply because the brain remaps retinal images to compensate for eye movement.*

(Livingstone 2002: 157)

We do not experience the world in the same way as a video camera does, with its panning and falling and its phases of visual incomprehensibility: the brain edits out 'frames' of vision and we have a sense of balance, perspective and ability to respond as our intelligent selves. At the same time, our bodies operate at many speeds simultaneously and we are not conscious of all that is happening to keep us alive, so it may also be that being confronted with variable temporalities connects with our sense of being alive, at a level below everyday consciousness.

This disquieting sense of temporality in art works may seem to expand or distort our experience of time passing. This is also emotional, as the passing of time has resonance for the mortal bodies that we live in and the selves we have become, with memories stored up and re-experienced in the present. In general, we expect to continue living at the same rate. And yet, as we connect with a work from moment to moment, this expectation may be displaced as in an altered state. So, encountering distortions of time embedded in a work of art may evoke powerful emotional responses. I would suggest that this is related to the always still mysterious functions and nature of our core selves and brain function as examined by neuroscientist Antonio Damasio.

Damasio gives us models for understanding what he calls 'core' consciousness, the formation of images (not only visual, but auditory, somatosensory and so on) and the processes by which the brain constructs neural maps of the objects it encounters. These concepts are extremely useful for this research, not only

because of the light they shed on how we see, how the brain processes images and how it constructs images of what we encounter in the world; but also because of his insights into how our emotions are felt and how feeling relates to consciousness. He suggests that the mind itself is formed by forming images, patterns and maps. From his research, we learn of the fundamental importance of constructing images, representations and maps in the brain for our sense of being fully human. These processes unfold temporally. There are many levels of processing and we are completely unaware of most of them.

*Images are constructed either when we engage with objects, from persons and places to toothaches, from the outside of the brain towards its inside; or when we reconstruct objects from memory, from the inside out as it were. The business of making images never stops while we are awake and it even continues during parts of our sleep, when we dream. One might argue that images are the currency of our minds...*

(Damasio 1999: 318)

Damasio also describes a loop operation by which the brain forms images and then improves upon them almost like the painter looking intently. Much of this operation is extremely fast; too fast to have any kind of perception of and mostly non-conscious. He describes here the imperceptibility of the mechanisms of brain processing: which are also temporal and unknown:

*Altogether the steps behind the stage take time, time being of the essence to establish the causal link between the image of an object and its possession by you. The time elapsed is miniscule if measured by a fine stopwatch, but is actually quite extensive if you think of it from the perspective of the neurones which make it all possible and whose units of time are so much smaller than that of your conscious mind...*

(Damasio 1999: 126)

I would argue that the rapid and non-verbal interaction described by Damasio, where images may prompt emotional responses, relates to how paintings are made and how they affect us. He describes here the extremely short intervals in which the neurological processes implicated in our awareness of feelings take place, indicating the distinct temporal orders at work both in lived consciousness and at these non-conscious levels of neurochemistry:

*When neurons "fire", the electric current known as the action potential is propagated away from the cell body and down the axon. The process is very fast - it only takes a handful of milliseconds, which should give an idea of the remarkably different scales of brain and mind processes. We need hundreds of milliseconds to become conscious of a pattern presented to our eyes. We experience feelings in a timescale of seconds, that is thousands of milliseconds and minutes*

(Damasio 2010:303)

There is then a temporal aspect to image processing in the brain and the construction of consciousness. In the experimental works here and *Que Sera* in particular, the work may make strange some aspects of this temporality for the embodied spectator. This making strange is an emotional experience, we 'feel' it. Damasio cites the taking of hallucinogenic drugs or having vertigo as special situations where the flow of images in neural processing is upset and I have begun to consider that art works may also sit in this special category. I will explore this further in In Chapter Three.

For any perceptual experience, there is an orchestration of images unfolding in our brains and not all at once, so there is temporality in the process even if not the kind we are familiar with at work in our conscious everyday experiences of the world. From my readings of the recording experiments in *Que Sera*, I would suggest that, in painting, the different strands of painterly surface, presenting time in different formations, may hold a mirror to brain function in its correspondence to our temporal being: where there are more or less conscious registers moving at different rates. These brain processes control the body; make the body live; are fundamental to its vitality. The perceived elasticity of time in art may perhaps be due to an opening up of neural temporalities as well as the heartbeat which has become our control modality for experiencing time. The images that you or I see in our minds are not facsimiles of the particular object, but rather images of the interactions between each of us and an object which engaged our organisms, constructed in neural pattern, according to the organism's design. The multiplicity and temporal polyrhythmia of marks in painting and their relation to second order

brain mapping are difficult to define in language, but may be recognised in the emotional responses we have to painting. Damasio's work on consciousness and the neuroscience of perception suggests then that the emotional affects experienced in art may have some basis in brain function. I would like to further contextualize and expand on the making and reception of *Que Sera* by looking at the work of philosophers Deleuze, Bergson and Merleau-Ponty.

My central research questions are concerned with temporality in painterly surface and, in *Que Sera*, I have set up an experiment which intentionally deconstructs perceptual processes involved in painting and spectatorship. Film-maker Babette Mangolte notes that: 'Everything in film seems to be about time, including the camera apparatus defined by its frame-per-second speed' (Mangolte 2003: 262) ,and yet, I am proposing here that painting is also time-based. The studio filming and photographic experiments with recording duration for this work have led me to reflect on the relationship between the 'frame' as a slice of time and space captured photographically and the 'plane' of a painting as it cuts across time and space; initially as the painter works on it and subsequently as the spectator experiences it. In *Que Sera*, physical presences are captured differently by different means, allowing us to experience planes that would usually be outside of our habitual visuo-perceptual register; thus placing us, as spectator in a position to witness a visual deconstruction of time passing. Paintings are not captured 'all at once' in an instant. The figural picture plane is not a 'slice', though it is a new plane and arguably a temporal phenomenon. What we see as a painting has been made through successive marks, erasures, and interventions. It reveals itself to us across

time and not all at the same time. As painters working with matter through time, our perception is heightened through intense looking. The act of painting may become a way of keeping ourselves 'present' as time slips away. These temporal processes of looking and inscribing connect through the painting, with the spectator. As spectators, we follow the phenomena of the painterly surface with our sensory perception through differentiated marks and planes, moving through this strange presentation of time and it may be that we experience this as operating in a freer temporal register.

I would like to reflect on *Que Sera* at this point by drawing on philosophical perspectives. For Henri Bergson, temporality was a central concern and the notion of 'cinematic' time as divided into frames was flawed, even absurd. He asserted that this ran counter to the: 'fluidity of our inner life' (Bergson 2002: 205) and to our subjective experience of temporality as continuous duration in the world, *durée* or lived time:

*...duration is essentially a continuation of what no longer exists into what does exist. This is real time, perceived and lived. This is also any conceived time, because we cannot conceive a time without imagining it perceived and lived.*

(Bergson 2002: 209)

Although writing in a period when cinema was in its infancy, Bergson's criticism of cinematic time was a criticism of its false spatialization as distinct from the more fluid subjective experience: *'Within myself a process of organization or inter-*

*penetration of conscious states is going on, which constitutes true duration'* (Bergson 2001: 107). He asks us to consider the nature of the continuous duration we experience as inner time, continuous with our lived experience, describing this time as: '*...a memory within change itself, a memory that prolongs the before into the after, keeping them from being mere snapshots...*' (Bergson 2002: 205).

Mary Ann Doane, writing about 'cinematic time' refers to Bergson's ideas and points to the flawed nature of attempts to fully record the passage of time mechanistically: '*...the human experience of perception pivots on a temporal lag, a superimposition of images, an inextricability of past and present*' (Doane 2002: 77). Referring to early chronophotographer Étienne-Jules Marey and to the timeless, oceanic Freudian unconscious, she also suggests the inadequacies of cinematic recording with regard to temporality:

*For Marey, time is the support of movement and hence of life - it enables them. For Freud, the unconscious is a site of perfect storage characterised by its timelessness.*

(Doane 2002: 67)

Doane and Bergson then are critical of mechanistic cinematic time as a reflection of humanly perceptible temporality. There are however, dimensions to painting that may be revealed by the indexical processes of inscription on film frames and these dimensions are to do with time rather than space and depth or even movement. In offering us a surface that has been built through time, painterly painting may

connect with how the world is inscribed for us in our experience of living in time and may in consequence move us. This may relate to the idea of 'sensation' in art proposed by Deleuze and Guattari in *What is Philosophy?*

*Even if the material lasts for only a few seconds it will give sensation the power to exist and be preserved in the eternity that coexists with this short duration. So long as the material lasts, the sensation enjoys an eternity in those very moments.*

(Deleuze and Guattari 1994: 167)

There is a sense here of how temporality is part of the affective experience of art, in which we may experience a heightened mode of being in time, as 'the pure sensation' unlocks moments of temporality. In his second work on cinema: *Cinema Two: The Time Image*, Deleuze develops the idea of the 'time crystal' as '... a small internal circuit between a present and its own past - an oscillation...' (Deleuze 2005: 78). For Deleuze, philosophy is practice like art and art forms, such as cinema and painting, have a parallel way of making meaning as practical philosophy. The sensations of art, percepts and affects, create new formations. In this context, we are considering the operations of 'time' in art and Deleuze draws on Bergson's ideas about temporality in proposing that the present is simultaneous with the past, so that the present is made 'actual' out of the 'virtual' past that still co-exists. In the cinema works (Deleuze 2001 and 2005), he develops the idea of the 'crystal-image' as:

*...the point of indiscernibility of the two distinct images, the actual and the virtual, while what we see in the crystal is time itself, a bit of time in the pure state, the very distinction between the two images which keeps reconstituting itself.*

(Deleuze 2005: 79)

This presents us with an idea of philosophical time that is not successive but 'stratigraphic' (a term borrowed from geology), superimposed and co-existent. Žižek, in his work on Deleuze: *Organs Without Bodies*, notes that Deleuze contrasts the times of science (linear) and philosophy (superimposed) and he describes Deleuze's "stratigraphic" modality as: 'the ultimate result of time catching up with itself in an inner fold, of a past crystal-image superimposing itself on a future image...' the true opposition being:

*...between movement in time correlative to a paradigmatic order, and the movement of time itself in a sort of circuit of past and present. The ultimate movement, the ultimate subversion of static order, is the very "stratigraphic" stasis in which past and future coincide in a superimposed crystallized image' (Žižek 2003: 56 )*

The development of the 'time crystal' in cinema thus relates to Deleuze's broader philosophical understanding of temporality: his formation, with Guattari of 'stratigraphic' philosophical time that is '...a grandiose time of coexistence that does not exclude before and after but superimposes them..' (Deleuze and Guattari

1994: 59). Also, his work on Proust's 'lost time' expands on this idea of simultaneity:

*...like sleep, art is beyond memory: it appeals to pure thought as a faculty of essences. What art regains for us is time as it is coiled within essence, as it is born in the world enveloped by essence, identical to eternity. Proust's extratemporality is this time in a nascent state, and the artist-subject who regains it. This is why, in all strictness, there is only the work of art which lets us regain time: the work of art is "the only means of regaining time lost." It bears the highest signs, whose meaning is situated in a primordial complication, a veritable eternity, an absolute original time.*

(Deleuze 1972: 46)

Zizek says of this conception of time: 'This Deleuzian eternity is, of course, not simply outside time; rather, in the "stratigraphic" superimposition, in this moment of stasis, it is time itself that we experience, time as opposed to the evolutionary flow of things within time'. Thinking this back to think about embodied, subjective experience, we could say that the way we live through time is exposed in this model of temporality.

In the context of this research, the affecting experience of having an altered, 'elastic' sense of temporality in an encounter with painting are elucidated through this philosophical thinking of time as non-linear. I would take from this Deleuzian perspective on time that the time of an art encounter may be a making explicit of

how time works 'stratigraphically'. We can see that the 'painterly' surface as examined here, may perhaps be seen as a model of subjective temporality in its multilayered nature. Thus, following Deleuze's ideas on time and also drawing on his earlier work in *Difference and Repetition* (Deleuze 1994), figural painting is radical, machinic repetition that reconstellates the past in the present: a different time and place, a different encounter.

In his essay on the artist Bracha Ettinger, Brian Massumi takes up Deleuze's 'time crystal' in order to discuss the paintings' affect: 'What is being painted is not the iconic content, decipherable in the image. It is not the meaning or the associations associated with it. [...] The idea construed most broadly is time' (Massumi 2006: 202). Thus, again, the operations of time made explicit in an encounter with painting. In my examination of Frank Auerbach's cityscape paintings in Chapter Three, I note that the encounter with the painterly configuration of the surfaces may cause experience of something like 'vertical' time that displaces the spectator and I would propose that there is a liberating dimension to this temporal 'elasticity', as we experience these expanded moments and are made more conscious of the time we live through.

Although Deleuze opposes scientific, artistic and philosophical modes of temporality (linear and 'stratigraphic'), I am proposing here that there value in bringing Deleuze's temporality together with recent insights in neuroscience relating to the 'actual' rapid connectivities of perception and affect, in particular Damasio's work. This adds to an understanding of temporal 'elasticity' as an

experience and of subjective perceptions of time without being reductive. I will go on to look at Damasio's work in more detail in Chapters Three and Five.

Merleau-Ponty is concerned with the phenomenology of perception and he writes about painting as a philosophy in and of itself. He sees painting as making new knowledge: adding to our deeper understanding of human experience and being in the world. He describes what painters are doing when they paint and what this process reveals about the process of seeing itself; our own human experience of visuality as a set of processes that allows us to understand the world and our place in it:

*It is by lending his body to the work that the artist changes the world into paintings. To understand these transubstantiations we must go back to the working actual body...*

(Merleau-Ponty 2004a: 294)

This revealing through the body in painting relates to the idea that our own 'seeing', our visual perception is how we orient ourselves in the world. Painting can be recognised as a way of seeing and of grasping the nature of things around us in a world that is made by the very nature of our organisms and our own state of being in the world. Part of this state of being is our physical animation and mobility; the fact that our 'seeing' is never completely static and that we are bodies within the world we perceive. For Merleau-Ponty, the painter makes objects emerge gradually before our eyes. This is inevitably successive and temporal and I would propose that these successive moments of looking for the spectator correspond to the

tactile and dynamic actions of the painter. This temporality is connected with the painter's actions, but here, the invisible and visible intertwine. The more fluid temporality of the invisible, thought and emotion, does not conform to the external marking of time. This of course has connections with how we are compelled to live in regulated and delineated time through capitalist-controlled and defined working lives that constrict much of our 'inner' experience. For Merleau-Ponty, the processes and marks of the painter bring these invisibilities into the consciousness of the spectator and make them strange:

*Forgetting the viscous, equivocal appearances, we go through them straight to the things they present. The painter recaptures and converts into visible objects what would, without him, remain walled up in the separate life of each consciousness: the vibration of appearances which is the cradle of things.*

(Merleau-Ponty 2004b: 281)

Although he did not write extensively about the cinema, in a short essay entitled *Film and the New Psychology*, Merleau-Ponty describes 'the movies' as: '...peculiarly suited to make manifest the union of mind and body, mind and world, and the expression of one in the other' (Merleau-Ponty 1964: 49). Taking this more broadly, I would say that we can apply it to other more experimental uses of film technologies and, in the work *Que Sera*, there is a 'feeling of strangeness' as time is presented in the sequences of the installation.

As with Deleuze, this philosophy of Merleau-Ponty's which sees painting as productive of knowledge, seems to be echoed in Damasio's work in neuroscience with the importance for human 'being' of the formation and inscription of images. Paintings and other forms of external visualisation, like photographs, drawings, sculptures and film are all different modes of registering the world's imprint. In our own human experience of visuality, seeing is living, active and dynamic; is part of our 'self' and is emotional. I am proposing that, as a response to the world, 'painterly' painting gives us something of this living, dynamic self-hood in being more aware of our own subjective experience of temporality and *durée*.

*Que Sera* experiments with the phenomenology of the song and presents two temporal recording strategies. In the work, we could say that time is inscribed in frames that are then presented as spatial planes within our experience. Following the insights gained from making this work, I began to film material for a new piece, experimenting with registering physical movement, marking time within the frame and with creating mobile planes and frames by moving cameras in space. Exploring the embodied experience of songs, this piece, *Is It You?* takes its structures from remembered dance tunes, working with the registration of time passing in the recording of physical and auditory responses. This new work relates to an idea arising from *Que Sera* of painting as an impossible rhythm and will be explored in chapter five.

I will summarise here some key insights for painting derived from experimental video work. The work takes a structure, in the song, that has parallels to figural

painting. Both forms have recognisable and poetic elements and are also affecting in their abstract dimensions of plane, line, sound, melody and so on. In this case, there is also the resonance of the song itself: familiar, evocative of certain memories, about time. It is then fragmented, becoming unrecognisable, with sound running continuously over and against the pictures passing in time. The work's temporal dimensions, the visually recorded duration and slowed frame rate, reveal aspects of how we see; how we experience the world. Most importantly for this research, the strangeness of *Que Sera*; its unsettling affect is made by the *combination* of the two modes of temporality inscribed in the sequences, the altered time bases used and manifestations of duration recorded in the long exposures; and by the attention drawn to the embodied experience of temporality, that we may also find manifest in the surfaces of a painting. Through alterations to the time-base of recording what is before the camera, in *Que Sera*, our subjective perceptions of temporality are altered. Time is presented strangely so that, although we could say it has been registered mechanistically, we are affected emotionally by its manifestations. In the next chapter, I will go on to look at the experience of the spectator encountering the painterly surface, with a particular focus on the visible marks of temporality as constructed in paintings.



### 3. *The Viscosity of Duration*

#### **Painterly surface and the phenomenology of time**

Two key questions running through this thesis are: 'what can cause the passage of time to become elastic in the perception of the spectator?' and: 'how can we begin to understand what is passing in these moments?' In looking at these questions, we may also consider the benefits of this experience; what it adds to our understanding of our own lived experience, our understanding of how 'affect' works for painting and our grasp of temporality as a complex phenomenon. We can also question how such experiences enrich our life experience as spectators and painters.

The work in this chapter moves beyond initial ideas about 'resemblance' to consider the specific nature of 'painterly' surface in the light of phenomenology and the late essays of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Eye and Mind* (Merleau-Ponty: 2004a) and *The Visible and the Invisible* (Merleau-Ponty 1968) and of Deleuze's writings on painting and cinema. This chapter includes observations based on close readings and detailed descriptions of works by Frank Auerbach and of my own studio practice brought together with reflective and analytical material from different disciplines including art criticism and neuroscience, taking Auerbach's paintings to be 'experimental'. Documentation of the studio work is in the appended material : **Appendix A: 3 a) and on DVD 'Portfolio: documentation' a).**

In this chapter then, in order to consider the spectator's relationship with temporality and affect in 'painterly' works which reveal or foreground the process of the work's own construction, I will begin by focusing on Frank Auerbach's London paintings. Residues of graphic activity are easily identifiable in Auerbach's cityscapes, constructed from *plein air* drawings made in the vicinity of Camden Town where he has had his studio, since the 1950s. In common with his near-contemporary Francis Bacon, I would describe his work as 'figural' rather than 'figurative' as indicated by Deleuze (see above Chapter One). Auerbach has continuously documented the surrounding streets and buildings, making drawings in the early morning and taking these back to the studio to form the basis of the many cityscapes he has made. As described by William Feaver, Auerbach is working in:

*...an area of streets and open spaces bounded by Chalk Farm and Kentish Town to the north, the Euston Road to the south, Regent's Park and Primrose Hill to the west, and to the east the rail termini of King's Cross and St Pancras.*

According to Feaver, his morning drawings:

*...maintain the pace, feeding spontaneity into the day-to-day business in the studio. A sense of animation prevails.*

(Feaver 2009: 4)

The other key strand in Auerbach's practice is the painting of portrait heads, again working repetitively, with the same sitters famously making the journey to his studio

on a weekly basis over a period of many years. For the purposes of this thesis, although I have also found relevant attributes in the 'head' paintings, I will mainly focus on the cityscapes, paying particular attention to the 'To the Studios' works, painted in the period 1977-95; and the early 'building site' works, made between 1952 and 1962 and recently exhibited at the Courtauld Gallery in London<sup>4</sup>, though I will refer to other works. I would argue that all of Auerbach's work is highly characteristic of 'painterly' painting as defined in Chapter One. Other bodies of work that exhibit the kind of painterly surface I am writing about would include the paintings of Francis Bacon and Peter Lanyon (Lanyon 1960) and some works by Peter Doig (Doig 1998). Looking at manifestations of temporality in the surfaces of works by established contemporary painters such as Gerhard Richter and Luc Tuymans, we find the translation of photographically mediated moments in much thinner paint surfaces. Such an examination would perhaps reveal an equally compelling painterly phenomenology. In the limited space of this research, however, I have opted to focus on a clearly defined group of works that have a particular affect with prolonged viewing. I have also noted above that Auerbach's work holds continued relevance for contemporary painters because of its focus on the intensity of looking.

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<sup>4</sup> Auerbach's earliest 'city' paintings were shown in the exhibition: *Frank Auerbach, London Building Sites 1952-62*, at the Courtauld Gallery in London, 16th October 2009 - 17th January 2010. The catalogue (Wright 2009) contains several examples of works with exceptionally dense surfaces that 'unfold' over time with prolonged viewing.

**Figure 8: *To The Studios*, 1979-80, oil on canvas, 1350 x 1139 mm, Frank Auerbach, 1979-80, (c) Tate Collection**

The spectator encounter referred to at the start of this thesis related to a specific painting by Frank Auerbach: *To the Studios*, 1979-80 at Tate Britain (Auerbach 1979-80) (Fig. 8). I experienced a sense of vertiginous falling whilst looking closely and was conscious of the figurative architecture of the picture reassembling itself differently under my gaze as I stepped away, almost feeling as if the dynamic lines, broken tones and colour contrasts, the edges and distinctions within the picture plane, would allow for a kind of parallax effect: if I moved my head to the side, I might be able to see behind the built structures in the picture. This sense of being tilted off balance also included a change in my subjective perceptions of time

passing. As the perceiving spectator, the time that it took for the detail of the Camden street to emerge seemed stretched and distorted, also affected by the distance I was at from the picture's layered surface, so that, although there was initially a fast jolt to the experience, I felt as though time was passing more slowly than usual, as I looked and, leaving the picture, there was a sense of returning to the world with a sense of heightened vision, as in an altered state.

Auerbach's London paintings are not sketches - they have long periods of time and labour embedded in them. Auerbach has said: 'I find myself a slow painter' (Auerbach in Feaver 2009: 233). According to the display caption for the Tate for this version of *To the Studios*: 'Over nine months, Auerbach repeatedly scraped down and repainted the surface until the final image was achieved' (Tate 2004). If we look long enough, these paintings achieve '...the sense of an emerging order, of ... an object in the act of appearing, organising itself before our eyes...' which Merleau Ponty describes in the work of Cézanne (Merleau-Ponty 2004b:278).

*To the Studios 1979-80* is a picture which fills the immediate field of vision as encountered on the gallery wall. Its dimensions are:123.2cm x 102.5cm and it is painted in oil on canvas. I would note however, that something of the 'emergence' effect overcomes reproduction and is present even looking at a smaller version on screen or on the page. The work is one in a series of about thirty documented pictures based on sketches made from a similar point of view. The space depicted is of the alleyway between a large Victorian house on the left and a modernist block of flats on the right. As in several of these pictures, we see the staircase and

banister leading to the house on the right of the path. The remainder of the picture is taken up with less clearly defined marks indicating additional structures such as a fence a gate a shed a rooftop. The whole has the sense of a shanty town dwelling, a tumbledown place between buildings, outside of proper architecture and overlooked in the cityscape. These are ramshackle lean-to structures. It seems they may fall at any moment. Buildings should stay put, should not move, but these ones do. The buildings in the real street in Camden are made of brick, the spaces here seem like wood or some flimsy corrugated material, put-up jobs, bleak shed-like places from an earlier time. The way the paint has been put down has made a world: it is unsteady and enormously complex. Thinking about affect in the paint, in the fact of the present painting, we could argue that there is an architecture to it, a sense of being surrounded by the skin of the paint, of colour drawing us in and then pushing back.

The uprights of the banister and the horizontal openwork stairs are placed with long and definite straight lines that look like single brush-marks. Some of these apparently 'structural' lines do not support anything or indicate real solid architectural elements. They are mostly painted in greyish browns with areas of mixed tone, indicating the presence of more than one colour on the brush or tool used in application. Behind the structure of the staircase on the right of the picture, there is an area of pink/blue broken spread paint that seems to stretch away to the distance. There are less straight lines in the central area leading in to the picture and painted in a rich blue. Other areas of colour receding behind the uprights are darker, indistinct in places. There are other architectural/structural lines such as

those forming the sides and roof of the lean-to structure against the house on the left of the path, the gate and the visible areas of the buildings behind. At the left, the barred gate is painted as if the wood struts are single directional strokes of paint. Behind this is the lean-to structure and the roof is painted to indicate the small chimney there, but this is indistinct, mobile. The sky visible along the top of the picture at the back recedes behind the buildings. It is painted in a bleak, cool yellow. The horizontal edge of rooftops against the sky is broken and looks as if it has been made and then moved, over-painted in both directions, There are duller blueish greys and purple at the back of the painting, close to the skyline. The section of building which looks like a small shed/tower structure on the top of another building stands out painted with strong horizontal strokes, the lower ones in red, pushed forwards toward the viewer.

Moving forward again, there are painted marks in warm tones of orange and yellow, then a zig zag of broken tone blue then pinkish grey, then path areas and areas of wall in disrupted pinkish grey closer to the front. The path, the ground closest to the front is the area of brightest colour in the picture, a bright yellow. The warmest tone is to the left of and slightly below centre and is a triangular orange shape with a patch of fairly cool green in it. These areas of broken tone draw the eye in such a way as to make the architecture of the picture as a whole cohere, as it makes more sense as a space to be in. The play of light is there and gone, not making single viewpoints from which to describe a scene but a place that emerges. The paint is applied in many different ways, as documented, for example, in

catalogue essays by writers like Lampert and Spender<sup>5</sup>: streaked, scraped, worked into, laid down in definite straight lines; overlaid on to other areas of paint, cutting across and leaving the area behind to recede. As I look again I can feel this place, I can move in it, I can be present with it as it emerges over time and this emergence seems to connect with a sense of 'inner' time.

This was not by any means an isolated experience, but it was one which made me investigate further. I have since had time to reflect on this encounter and to find out more about the minute processes of seeing and looking. Movements of my head and colours are processed differently and, if I move quickly, my brain will insert imperceptible spaces to counter the rush effect. 'Seeing' is distinct from 'looking' and, according to research in psychology, intense looking can induce a heightened vision akin to a drug induced altered state (Tart 1972: 12). The kind of marks here in this painting that have been worked across time by the artist looking and marking in succession, are residues of physical presence that have been left open, as potentials, showing evidence of movement for our brains to add up to compose the figures in the painting. They have been erased and put back and so will not depict one single 'cartesian' perspective viewpoint, but a mobile gaze and a set of different times, rebuilding a picture, rebuilding a fact, an encounter, a place.

The painter has had to deconstruct his visual experience in order to draw or paint and, in making the work, the mobile gaze, the mobile body, the neurological

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<sup>5</sup> Auerbach exhibits with the Marlborough Gallery and the gallery catalogues for exhibitions in: 1968, 1976, 1982, 1990 and 1994 have provide a useful source of reproductions and commentary.

processes of seeing, the visual experience as a whole, will have operated at many different rates. In essence, I am seeing someone else's seeing and the desire of the painter to make the painted space work. Encountering this sets me off balance because these different times are not my times, they have other vision in them that take me back into places I have not been. For all of us, in our lived experience, unity of vision is used to navigate the three dimensional world. The seeing process that my brain uses to navigate, using images to construct reality, is one that I have to take for granted and I am disoriented if confronted with its deconstruction in painting. I experience this as a feeling and emotion. It is this deconstruction of seeing and its 'affects' that are explored in the experimental moving image works in this research, such as *Que Sera*.

*Reading an Auerbach painting is an energetic experience, while colours prompt the unfolding of memories in the mind's eye.*

(Carlisle 2001: 100)

Auerbach's pictures are made through a process of constant revision. The 'painterly' surfaces of his works manifest figural elements that slowly emerge across time as the spectator engages; they have a sense of 'fall', of strangeness and displacement and complex operations of temporality. His working process has been documented by several commentators such as Isabel Carlisle:

*Sketches made on the spot are taken to the studio and worked up on boards*

*or canvases, sometimes over a metre in either direction [...] Laying the ultimate version of the composition over the scraped-off remains of so many predecessors demands six or seven hours of intense activity, much more than the figure studies.*

(Carlisle 2001: 100)

and Catherine Lampert who is one of his long term sitters for the figure studies:

*Very rapidly laying down fresh marks into just-made marks, angrily or eagerly scraping off areas, leaves an end layer of wet paint perhaps a few millimetres in depth. Sometimes the surface is flattish and packed; sometimes there are blobs, rutted strokes and marbled blends of colours.*

(Lampert 2001: 20)

The building site paintings made by Auerbach during the period 1952-62 are amongst his earliest city paintings. Arguably, these works, demonstrate aspects of the emergence of pictorial elements across time more forcefully than the later Camden pictures. They document the reconstruction of the bomb shattered London street-scape; central London recovering in the aftermath of war. There are pictures of many central London sites, including the Shell building on the Southbank. There are several versions of a site in Oxford street, including four small painted sketches and two large picture which have a very similar composition: *Oxford Street Building Site I* (Auerbach 1959-60) and *Oxford Street Building Site II* (Auerbach 1960). The first of these (see web reference in

bibliography) provides a good example of this temporal emergence. Made at a time when Auerbach was working with ochres and earth colours and extremely thick, densely applied paint, the surface in first phase of looking appears impossibly complex, dense, impenetrable and very difficult to 'read'. As with *To the Studios*, however, on spending several minutes with the picture, we can see forms emerging and begin to experience a sense of being in communication with a place and time, with a fact. The red coiled rope at bottom left recedes and, beyond this, it is possible to make out figures and horizontal planes on which building materials and equipment begin to appear under our gaze. The limited palette emphasises the actual mark making and paint application as temporal phenomena. Film theorist, Andre Bazin suggests that: '...time in a painting, so far as the notion applies, develops geologically in depth...' (Bazin 1967: 165) In the 'deep' surface of this work, Auerbach is painting across time. The picture is described here by critic Robert Hughes:

*...whereas in earlier Auerbachs one was aware mainly of the thickness of the surface, one now sees the directions and vectors of the drawings working fully in the thickness of paint. Wide continuous tracks of the brush leave clearly defined raise edges in the paint around them, so that details seem inlaid, as in the beautifully rendered arabesque of cable in the lower left foreground of Oxford Street Building Site II. The linear scaffolding of such pictures, heaving itself out of their dense paste, predicts a line of development in Auerbach's art towards drawn forms that are both free and not free - the hooking brushstrokes that convey such muscular energy just because they are clotted, substantial and embedded in surface...*

(Hughes 1990: 85)

I have quoted this description at length because Hughes' identification of drawn elements in Auerbach's work is important in relation to temporality:

*...both drawing and painting are records of an activity that unfolds in time. An essential part of the effect of early Auerbachs... their time-bound quality: deposit after deposit of paint, silted there on the surface, gravelly and static, left by three hundred sittings. But though the paint implies time - and reinforces it by suggesting an antique head, an archaic fragment - nobody can disentangle from this substance the order and sequence of its arrival there. Finished painting tends to cover its traces. Whereas drawing, in its apparent impulsiveness, seems more open: scanning it, you can guess at the sequence of the network of marks (however partially) and enter the story of its construction.*

(Hughes 1990: 195)

For Hughes, Auerbach absorbs the 'graphic energy' (Hughes 1990: 165) of drawn elements into his painterly practice and, as spectators, we experience the kinetic effects of repainting and reworking that goes into the paintings: 'The eye, in reading them, is never still; the brush-marks hectically urge it along, along the contours and round the back of forms' (Hughes 1990: 204).

For the city works then, location sketches that will have been made with fast, repetitive glances, are built into the oil paintings, often erased completely and reconstructed. Arguably, Auerbach is a kind of flaneur, characterised by Baudelaire as a: 'kaleidoscope endowed with consciousness' (Baudelaire 1992: 400). He has described a sense of 'time slipping away' being at the centre of his work and a striving after 'fact' that, for the poet Stephen Spender, writing in a catalogue essay is: 'a point of overlapping of internal with external likeness within a surrounding unlikeness.' (Spender 1982: 5) In another 'Studios' picture: *To the Studios - 1990-91* (Auerbach 1990-91), there is again the feeling of the 'fact' being arranged following chaos and also of potential motion; a parallax effect of being able to see beyond the depicted structures. This picture has a brighter palette, red and green horizontal strokes for the front steps of the house on the left, light blue sky and an over all atmosphere of transparency, of lightness. We struggle to connect the painted surfaces with recognisable form and yet then we move into another plane another place another landscape, moved around in our imagination, our connections across time. This phenomenon is at work in many of the Camden pictures, including notably, those made of the Mornington Crescent area between 1987 and 2006, including: *Chimney in Mornington Crescent - Winter Morning* (Auerbach 1991).<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> William Feaver's recent book (Feaver 2009) contains a complete illustrated catalogue of Auerbach's works, apart from works on paper smaller than than 559 x 762 mm. Other notable examples of Camden Town paintings are: Auerbach, F. (1976), *The Camden Theatre 1976*, oil on board, 349 x 381 mm (British Council, London), Auerbach, F. (1992-93), *Mornington Crescent Early Morning 1992-93* (private collection), Auerbach, F. (1977), *To the Studio 1977*, oil on board, 457 x 508 mm (private collection) and Auerbach, F. (1982-83), *To the Studios, 1982-83*, oil on canvas, 1029 x 1219 mm (private collection)

When we look at a painting and we encounter something like a ridge of paint or an area of broken tone against a field of colour, perhaps some lines drawn through a colour field or some colour patches, we inevitably struggle to compose into something coherently recognisable, linked to a phenomenon in the real world; an object. There may be moments, when we wake in the early morning, when we are not quite out of a dream state, when we are not quite sure what we are seeing; where we are. At such moments, we are perhaps a little more aware of this process of forming objects to be grasped by our conscious selves. If, as Damasio proposes, this is how our brains navigate the world around us, through the formation of 'images', all of us, whether we are directly engaged with painting or not, just as human beings moving through the world, encounter our lives as 'painters'. So, perhaps the activity of the painter is important because it makes us realise just how rich our temporal experience in the world is, perpetually making pictures in neural processing. When we slow time down, with film, we can see how much is happening in these instants which we are unaware of in our consciously lived time. This 'lived time' may actually operate in a way that corresponds to cinematic time as recorded in film strips where images are superimposed rapidly over time and not simultaneously. This is what Semir Zeki calls the parallel 'processing-perceptual systems' (Zeki 1999: 67) in our brains<sup>7</sup>.

If, as Daniel Stern does in his psychotherapeutic work (Stern 2004), we focus on small moments in time, beginning to unravel those moments in forensic detail, the

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<sup>7</sup> Zeki has expanded this term on pages 67-68 of *Inner Vision* (Zeki 1999) and there is a further account of the term, with respect to perceptions of motion occurring separately from other visual information, on pages 78-79.

process of looking again through memory reveals aspects of what has happened and what was surrounding us in the moment. If we think of all the sensations and movements that are there in our bodies at any given time, we find we cannot recall the entirety of our experiences through memory. If we were filming in slow motion from many different angles, we could replay the films, but we cannot replay what it feels like to be inside our embodied and subjective human experience of being in the world. I would suggest however that encounters with figural painterly painting allows us to glimpse a kind of 'replay' or temporal unfolding, as the act of looking pushes us into a different temporal register of image processing; something that we may experience as a kind of altered state. Perhaps that is why it has such a powerful emotional affect when we encounter the ridge of broken tone or the painted colour field and try and make it into something new, something else, even something as apparently mundane as a building in Camden Town.

It is well documented in scientific research that the elasticity of time is a key factor in drug-induced or meditative altered states of consciousness. The American psychologist Charles Tart offers the following definition of an 'altered state of consciousness':

*An altered state of consciousness for a given individual is one in which he clearly feels a qualitative shift in his pattern of mental functioning, that is, he feels not just a quantitative (more or less alert, more or less visual imagery, sharper or duller, etc.), but also that some quality or qualities of his mental processes are different. Mental functions operate that do not operate at all*

*ordinarily, perceptual qualities appear that have no normal counterparts and so forth.*

(Tart 1972: 2)

He also documents what he describes as 'disturbed time sense' where:

*Sense of time and chronology become greatly altered. Subjective feelings of timelessness, time coming to a standstill, the acceleration or slowing of time, and so on, are common. Time may also seem of infinite or infinitesimal duration.*

(Tart 1972: 12)

This is echoed in more recent work in experimental psychology which finds that:

*Time awareness may be significantly affected: Wackermann, Putz, and Miener (2001) found verbal overestimates of elapsed time intervals (1– 40 min).*

(Vaitl et al 2004: 100)

So, in an ASC, we may think many hours have gone past and but find that it has only a matter of seconds. We may also look very intently at everyday objects and experience pattern differently. In an ASC, the brain chemistry and the activity of neuro-processing are altered, inducing hallucinations. One of the significantly altered factors in hallucinogenic states is that our sense of temporality is significantly altered. I would suggest that one of the radical effects of intense looking whilst

painting may be that it alters both visual and temporal perception. If this is so, then perhaps, in turn, spectator encounters with painterly surfaces that have been made through intense looking and responses made whilst in an even slightly altered state, may alter our human subjective perception of temporality, so that we become aware of time passing in a way that is distinct from clock time. This could for the spectator be a result of the ways in which we respond subjectively, being pushed into an altered kind of temporal unfolding experience by the painterly surface before us where marks are left open and unresolved into fixed forms.

Damasio, describes the 'frequency' of mental activity or brain processing relating to images:

*...more often than not the flow of images moves forward in time, speedily or slowly, orderly or jumpily and on occasion it moves along not just one sequence but several. Sometimes the sequences are concurrent, running in parallel; sometimes they intersect and become superposed.*

(Damasio 2010: 71)

As noted above, instances which diverge from this frequency or forward motion would be daydreaming, vertigo or the ingestion of hallucogenic drugs which: '...produce illogical continuities of images' (Damasio 2010: 71) and I would argue that the intense looking of the painter may be just such an altered state albeit less dramatic than a drug trip or less specifically bounded than a meditative state of contemplation. It has already been noted that 'altered states of consciousness' as

defined for example by Charles Tart<sup>8</sup> may result from intense periods of contemplation and looking at the same field. This may include a disturbed time sense, as documented by psychologist Arnold M. Ludwig and backed up by other experimental psychologists<sup>9</sup> working in the field of ASCs:

*Sense of time and chronology become greatly altered. Subjective feelings of timelessness, time coming to a standstill, the acceleration or slowing of time, and so on, are common. Time may also seem of infinite or infinitesimal duration. (Ludwig 1972: 11)*

Identifying the different times of painting, Lyotard includes a 'time of production' (Lyotard 1991: 78) distinct from other temporalities and, given that studio practice entails such intense looking, it would be possible to argue that painters might experience effects of brain chemistry and function that change their perceptions of visuality and temporality and that these factors may in turn contribute to the painter's perception as they continue painting. Consequently, I would propose a possible connection between the temporality of the painter and the temporality of the spectator deriving from the, even slightly, altered state of consciousness of the painter, as the temporal and rhythmic distortions of intense looking are embodied through physical action on matter in the painterly surface.

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<sup>8</sup> Tart's definition of 'altered states of consciousness' (Tart 1972), draws, in part, on analyses in scientific journals in the USA, of the effects of LSD, Psilocybin and Mescaline use in the 1960s. Anecdotal accounts of drug induced altered states such as Huxley's *The Doors of Perception* (Huxley 1972) or Walter Benjamin's *On Hashish*, (Benjamin 2006), remain interesting in considering experiences of elastic temporality in art.

<sup>9</sup> See also Vaitl et al 2004

These points, drawn from painting practice, from observations of pictures and from recent developments in neuroscience, appear to correspond with earlier philosophical propositions concerning temporality and the phenomenology of perception; in particular, the work of Merleau-Ponty and Deleuze cited in earlier chapters. I would like therefore to note at this point, however, the relevance for the spectator of Merleau-Ponty's reflections on the intertwining of seer and seen, the embodied subject in the spectacle and his optimism about the potentiality of painting as a process which elucidates our human experience, in the perceiving body, of 'being-in-the-world' and of 'becoming' and the importance of art where we have aspects of human experience that '...could not be given to us as *ideas* except in a carnal experience' (Merleau-Ponty 1968:150). In *Eye and Mind*, Merleau-Ponty says of painting that: 'The eye lives in this texture as a man lives in his house', resonating with a sense of the phenomenological understanding of 'being in the world', with Heidegger's 'dasein' (Heidegger 1993).

For Merleau-Ponty, '...any theory of painting is a metaphysics...' (Merleau-Ponty 2004b: 303), suggesting that the particular connections made through the act of painting contribute to, perhaps even transform our perceptual grasp of the world around us, affect our sense of the physical and metaphysical world and our connection to this through vision. The operations of painting then connect a metaphysics of painting with the embodied subject, the, 'drawing from this world' in an unbounded process that takes any amount of time. If we acknowledge the primacy of images in shaping consciousness and in the formation of emotional

experiences, then our emotional responses are arguably closely bound up with the *nature* of our perceptual apparatus and are and are also largely pre-linguistic. The semiotics of reading then, of encountering words as signs, will often place these embodied emotional responses at a distance. This suggests the very great difficulties in making language describe such emotionally charged experiences as an encounter with a painting that moves us.

The point here is that painting affects us directly and operates in a different temporal and perceptual register than spoken or written language. French feminist writer, Hélène Cixous makes reference to Auerbach in her book *Coming to Writing*. She *also* speaks of her desire to 'write like a painter'. What does she mean? She acknowledges the temporality of painting: 'One does not paint yesterday, one does not even paint today, one paints tomorrow, one paints what will be, one paints "the imminence of" ' (Cixous 1991: 113). For her, writing is in the dark, the inside of Cézanne's apple that germinates into visible presence in the world. Auerbach echoes this desire: 'I wanted to make a painting that, when you saw it, would be like touching something in the dark...' (Hughes 1990: 86) Cixous speaks of the 'love' required to make painting: 'How much greater a love for painting than for oneself!' (Cixous 1991: 125) and Auerbach of the 'kind of love' required to paint repeatedly, to move beyond ego into the not yet painted and to erase in order to reconstruct a painting out of that yearning. From neuroscience, we learn that the formation of images is central for consciousness, enabling emotional experience and operating before language and this seems to concur with the phenomenology

of Merleau-Ponty; so, painting touches on tensions between the visible and the invisible.

Cixous' desire to write 'like a painter' may mean bringing into presence a 'painterly' surface as a plane of correspondence that acts as Freud's 'mystic writing pad' (Freud 1955), with *traits* of temporality over erasures, like a palimpsest of sensation, directly connecting with the desiring subject. Considering the fluidity of painting and recognising the difficulties of using words to convey anything of its affects, I will try to imagine here, from the perspective of a painter, a 'painterly' space for writing. The writing plane would be *malerisch*, haptic and diverse. It would be experienced at different angles and in new dimensions: in time as film fragments, in space as a permeable architecture. As you engage with its surfaces, with the broken tones now here, now there, your self-conscious presence would shift and be made again in the world. In the paint/writing space, precision and imperfections would be held in ambiguity, unpredictable gestures made in space, the marks manifesting the body's interventions like the mobile physicality of painting that connects with the minute time of nerves, neurochemistry, body rhythms and sounds. Inscribed by hand on the page, the written word corresponds with the painted mark. The painted mark in its affect however is more like a sound, outside time, taking no time at all, an affect that has no verbal parallel, no likeness. The painted mark is a shot across time that does not stand still. So, to write like a painter and believe, one must have words that allow the eye to pass over lightly, to pass with light, to hover and focus and stop; to stop and go back again, to reiterate but not repeat, allowing time to shift. One must have words that can resound and

flow in a surface that permits entry at different levels; a diverse temporal surface. So, for Cixous, to write like a painter may be: to write in layers, using gestures, to leave marks and visible evidence of erasure, to write at differing rates, to make time elastic, to make space expand, to work lightly, reaching across with the mobile gaze from the dark inside to the horizon. We may as what 'speeds' painting moves at. Cixous says: '...perhaps what I like about painting is its mad speed. '(Cixous 1991: 111).

To paint then, is to operate outside of language and, with 'painterly' works, away from conventional pictorial narrative. The temporality of painting is what prevents it from being conventionally linguistic; that makes the painting encounter 'speak', directly affecting us, as it makes explicit our way of being in the world. To look further at 'affect', I will draw here on philosophical perspectives from Barthes and Deleuze. The need for a fluid semiotics to grasp painting and the sense of 'fall' experienced in 'painterly' surface may be elucidated by Roland Barthes' distinction between 'studium' and 'punctum' in his work on photography *Camera Lucida*. Barthes describes the difference between his responses to what is directly represented in a photograph and the more direct 'affect' of certain photographic images. He describes both terms here, where 'studium' to refers to descriptive factors such as:

*...the figures, the faces, the gestures, the settings, the actions; whilst the second element will break, or punctuate, the studium. This time it is not I who seek it out... it is this element which rises from the scene, shoots out of it like*

*an arrow, and pierces me. A Latin word exists to designate this wound, this prick, this mark made by a pointed instrument... punctum.*

(Barthes 1984: 49)

He asserts here that, whereas: '...the studium is ultimately always coded, the punctum is not...' (Barthes 1984: 51). One factor in a photograph having a sense of 'punctum' for the spectator, is its relationship to specific memory retrieval; a process which is also arguably both an emotionally charged and temporal. Although photography and painting are very different phenomena, it may be that something like 'punctum' operates for spectator responses to 'figural' painting.

Auerbach's painterly cityscapes emerge over time and I would suggest that we may gain some understanding of the temporal density of these works by considering them in the light of Deleuze's words on affective elements in Bacon's paintings which he says are:

*...like the emergence of another world. For these marks, these traits, are irrational, involuntary, accidental, free, random. They are nonrepresentative, nonillustrative, nonnarrative. They are no longer either significant or signifiers: they are signifying traits. They are traits of sensation, but of confused sensations... And above all, they are manual traits.*

(Deleuze 2003: 71)

The spectator is physically present; embodied. I would suggest that the sensation of displacement under consideration here and associated with 'painterly' surface is like being off balance and, when we are off balance, we 'fall'. This is the term that Deleuze adopts to denote something that results from the expression of tensions experienced by the artist and: '...what is most alive in the sensation, that through which the sensation is experienced as living' (Deleuze 2003: 81). He also describes the concept of 'sensation' for the spectator as being:

*...at the limit it is the same body which, being both subject and object, gives and receives the sensation. As a spectator, I experience the sensation only by entering the painting, by reaching the unity of the sensing and the sensed*  
(Deleuze 2003: 35)

The temporal stages of construction in painterly surface can be hard to deconstruct just by looking. All of the paintings made in this research have been made in series, experimenting with temporality and perception by setting parameters for their construction. In the recent series *Studio*, the individual paintings have been built up in stages by responding to adjacent frames from the selected sequence in turn. Reflecting on the extent to which this working process mirrors aspects of a mobile and temporal experience of seeing and responding to a figure in the world, we find that there are a limited set of possible choices available to the painter in the 'thin' fixed frames which were originally part of motion sequences only when viewed in rapid succession. The paintings in this series have been made in stages and, after each stage, erasures, adjustments and new marks are made corresponding to the position of the figure within the new frame. This contrasts

with the situation of a painter making responses in the three dimensional environment where they would have stereopsis and parallax contributing to depth perception and in which there would be constantly changing views. The point here is that the construction of the work is limited to the mobile gaze of the painter responding only to the projected slide of each frame in turn. These are illuminated and have some illusion of depth but are also flat and still. The reanimation of the figure and the pictorial space of the picture plane happens only through looking at restricted stages of an absent and previous temporality. The paintings have thus been made according to elements of film time.

The surface of each painting in this series holds the previous image. Residues of the previous stage remain visible as a new layer is imposed and the resulting pictures have many 'painterly' aspects, such as a perceptible dynamism in the linear marking on the surface, clear evidence of manual activity and areas of broken tone that have been left visible. These pictures attempt to deconstruct the temporal architecture of a 'painterly' surface and to reflect on Merleau-Ponty's idea of the 'mobile gaze'. Here, the mobility is slowed down by isolating frames and then limiting free play in the work to the painter's gesture and motion. These painting experiments are set up as deconstructions of the 'strange' temporality in the painting encounter, using the 'frame' as a more specifically 'temporal element. The temporality of this painting series then, is such that different rhythmic levels are created by each frame-layer and the juxtaposition of these layers brings together dissonant rhythms and presents time strangely in each picture. This sets up an unsettling perceptual encounter for the spectator and, when the pictures are seen

as a series, I would suggest that the spectator may be unsettled by a further perceptual shift because of the added temporal slippage from picture to picture. Again, this creates an expanded and enhances awareness for us of how we live in time.

In seeking to understand 'affect' in the spectator encounter with painterly surface, I am proposing that, because of painting's irregular temporalities, we can learn from practices in experimental film and video, where artists are working with a range of possible mechanical, electronic and digital means of recording aspects of the world through time but without necessarily respecting conventional time bases, such as the recording of frames at around 15-35 frames per second, that have been proven to correspond to regular human perceptions of motion. Such artists are not employing individual shots and sequences as recorded in the context of a linear narrative form. In some cases, they also expose the limitations of the single screen and the cinematic viewing context. Experimental and expanded uses of the moving image then may elucidate the practice of and encounter with painterly surface, by placing the spectator in the position of the painter in the studio where the spectator is in an experiential situation of actively composing from the work before them. This process may mirror the temporal operations of neuro-processing and emotional response in our embodied selves. Such works can create a sense of displacement for the viewer. I would suggest that Merleau-Ponty's 'feeling of strangeness' (Merleau Ponty 2004b: 281) for the painter is extended and explored through this work in experimental film. We can learn both from looking at existing works and their theoretical interpretations and from engaging in experimental moving image

practice. Specifically, in the two works presented here *Que Sera* and *Is It You?* mechanical techniques to do with slow motion and long exposures are employed to juxtapose different temporalities for the spectator.



#### 4. *With Bloodshot Eyes*

##### **On embodied looking in experimental cinema**

Acknowledging that painting is a time-based art and that the particular temporality of 'painterly painting is dissonant and irregular, I have proposed that there are questions that can be usefully asked about painting using the apparatus of *experimental* moving image processes. This chapter draws on experimental film practice, Peter Gidal's theory of 'structural materialist' film (Gidal 1976), on specific works in this field and on the nature of embodied spectatorship. In order to continue this investigation of perceived temporal elasticity in art. Using direct observation and documentation of key works, setting up opportunities to observe the constructions and configurations of works in the project *One More Time*, and engaging in dialogue with artist filmmakers, critical and theoretical perspectives are drawn in to inform this and draw interim conclusions and to inform the second main video work in this research project. Documentation is appended at: **Appendix A 3 b) and Appendix C and Appendix D.**

Film allows us to present time 'strangely', at a distance and beyond our everyday perceptions and the apparatus of film allows us to juxtapose temporal elements as in painting. In this chapter, I will look at experimental approaches to working with technologies of the moving image, including film, analogue video and digital processes and how they can inform our understanding of subjective perceptions of temporality and affect. These insights may be gained because these experimental film works are made as manifestations of the process of their own making and

expose elements of construction, as in 'painterly' surfaces where marks are not painted in. The use of recording mechanisms and the construction of these works raises question about human vision and subjective perceptions of temporality. We could say that there is a form of philosophy in these experimental uses of film in that they explore the human experience of 'being-in-the-world' and 'becoming'. I would also argue that the embodiment of temporality in such configurations reveals aspects of human subjectivity with particular respect to the passing of time. Manipulations of the time base to record recognisable phenomena are possible; enabling us to perceive aspects of temporality that would otherwise be invisible or subconscious. So, my point is that *experimental* alterations to the time base in film/video allow us to reflect on the different rates of activity in bodily movements and brain connectivity that inform the actions of the painter and the marks of painterly surface. This work is part experiment with mechanisms, part exploration of the material, part questioning of perceptions and responses, part political engagement and part philosophical engagement with temporality.

Throughout chapter four, when writing about the structural-materialist filmmakers working in the 1970s, film refers specifically to photo-chemically shot and processed film as distinct from video; whereas, 'film/video' indicates uses of all moving image technologies. Elsewhere in the thesis, 'film' may be used as shorthand to indicate the 'moving image' as experienced by spectators. In Chapter Five, I will go on to examine more specifically the most recent moving image work I have made as explorations of the operations of temporality, perception, painterly surface and affect.

Elizabeth Grosz proposes that:

*Time is one of the assumed yet irreducible terms of all discourse, knowledge and social practice. Yet it is rarely analysed or self-consciously discussed in its own terms. It tends to function as a silent accompaniment, a shadowy implication underlying, contextualizing and eventually undoing all knowledges and practices without being their explicit object of analysis or speculation.*

(Grosz 1999: 1)

and yet, all art forms have to take account of the being in time who receive the work. In *experimental* film this temporal engagement is often made explicit. Experimental uses of the film medium break the illusory nature of its conventional uses in mainstream cinema. Very briefly, I understand the entire cinematic apparatus as a system in which film conforms to aspects of the standardised product: feature film, documentary or 'short'. Such films are produced to a greater or lesser extent within a commercial marketplace, making use of vertically integrated hierarchical working structures and which are distributed via established networks for screening, including cinemas and home viewing. In the case of fiction films, made according to conventional narrative structure, employing strategies such as the over-arching structure of the three-act drama, character-driven plot, the use of shot-reverse shot patterning, parallel storylines and continuity editing and where unconventional manipulations of: frame rate, lens, aperture, colour quality, focus and editing time-base are only permitted as indicators of an 'altered

state' for a character point of view or as an aesthetic strategy in titles and so on. By and large, these restrictions also hold true for art-house and independent cinemas in spite of a post-modern blurring of categories. Within conventional cinema, 'time' is presented for the spectator in a way that is made invisible, that disappears into plot, story, dialogue and action. Essentially, in conventional film languages, time is made to pass for the spectator in a naturalistic way, which is then segmented into story blocs. Experimental filmmakers are concerned with film or video's handlability as a medium; how they can use it as a tool for seeing. This includes some artists who choose to engage with or subvert conventional cinematic illusions and formations in their practice, in particular, by manipulating time.

In *Que Sera* and *Is It You*, my setting of parameters for the construction of the works drew upon my engagements with a range of experimental film and video practices, in the use of slow motion, audio recording/editing, freeze frames, long exposure, re-filming, experimental editing, performative elements and expanded configurations. This use of tools, of *techne*, in the studio may correspond to Bolt's 'handlability' in painting practice (Bolt 2004). taking film to reflect on painting, I will engage with factors such as: reflexivity, active spectatorship, material presence and the politics of the image from a broad history of experimental moving image work. The most fruitful engagement with artists' film for this research, and which I will focus on in this chapter, has been with Peter Gidal's proposals for a 'structural materialist' film practice which were often perceived as trying to obliterate 'image' altogether. He proposed that: 'In film, duration as material piece of time is the basic

unit.' (Gidal 1976: 3). Gidal's later writings have also been valuable here with their piercing grasp of film/spectator relations.

P. Adams Sitney, theorist of American avant-garde and structural film, identified the attributes of 'structural' film in the 1960s as being: 'fixed camera position, the flicker effect, loop printing, and rephotography off the screen...' (Sitney 2002: 348).

A.L. Rees describes these attributes as:

*...the means, among others, by which cinema signifies, and their presence is a mark not only that the films were made by a named person but that they were constructed. Splices, bars, flares, scratches exist as marks in-the film-text of the process of construction.*

(Rees 1977: 52)

In other words, films whose presence and affect arise from their construction as records of their own making, much as 'painterly' works leave exposed the marks of construction. Many experimental film artists have worked with the mechanics of film to expose cinematic illusion, such as pioneering Canadian filmmaker Michael Snow's uses of slow motion and double screens in *Two Sides To Every Story* (Snow 1974) and *See You Later/Au Revoir* (Snow 1990)

Robert Beavers' *From the Notebooks Of* (Beavers: 1971/1998) is not strictly speaking, 'structural' but uses the possibilities of the film camera mechanism to construct a work with precise poetics. The work is an interpretation of Valéry's work

on Leonardo's notebooks, that both reflects on and realises Beavers' ideas for making a film. It presents the spectator with a record of the rooms, window and surrounding external area of the apartment where Beavers was living and documents a series of experiments with the 16mm film camera's shutter, matte box, filters, lens, aperture and so on. These experiments are documented via a set of hand-written technical instructions and poetic reflections, such as:

*Editing the length of a shot in relation to the distance of using a matte film camera colour, shutter, matte movement...*

and:

*The shutter in the camera is like the wings of an insect...*

(Beavers 1971/1998)

Whilst recognising the distinction between lyrical experimental films by Beavers or Brakhage and 'structural materialist' films, we may find that there are suggestions here of an experimental model with which to reflect on painting, in this work where we encounter the inscriptions of the camera vision made explicit. Out of the documentary or even potentially mechanistic nature of the process, the moving image phenomenon exceeds the frame in this work in a way that corresponds to the affect of painting as described by John Berger: '...the moment of revelation when appearance and meaning become identical' (Berger 1985: 217).

The materiality of the film medium, i.e. the support, the photo-chemistry of processing, the formation of the frame in the camera, the shutter and motor speeds

and the mechanics of the frames on the film strip passing before the light beam on the projector, is important in many experimental film. In the course of this research project, my attention shifted away from the elusive nature of the 'digital' frame as data towards an understanding of the mechanics of temporality in the broader apparatus of moving image phenomena such as frame rate and shutter speed. In the project, I have used both digital and analogue filming technologies to form frames and exclusively digital technology to project in installation spaces. Filmmaker Babette Mangolte, points to distinctions between film and video, suggesting that in digital film:

*The unrepeatability of time passing and time past, the slippage between one and the other, and the pathos of their essentially enelucable difference are lost.*

(Mangolte 2003: 263)

This indicates a sense that somehow the time marked in film corresponds to our embodied experience. She extends the arguments about the distinctiveness of material film to criticise digitally projected images, describing them as having: '...no repetitive pattern as regular as your own heartbeat,' and being: '...unable to establish and construct an experiential sense of time passing' (Mangolte 2003: 263) She suggests that this effect is due to the black space created by the projector shutter that separates material film frames and this does seem to correspond to the physiology of sight. Laura Mulvey however, considering the digital frame, suggests that bringing stillness into the present through the creation

of a freeze frame can create a dialectic between old and new, and lead to reflection on the representation of time with the possibility of the 'technological uncanny' (Mulvey 2006: 27). I would suggest that the key factor here is in fact experimentation and that there are different insights to be gained from working in a range of technologies.

A. L. Rees, writing in 1977, cited Deke Dusinberre's summary of the main characteristics of the 'English avant-garde' as: '(1) the subordination of image-content to image-production, and (2) the emphasis on the devices of image-production and the perception of the spectator.' He also suggests that in landscape films of the time, such as those by Raban and Welsby:

*...critique of anti-illusionism is marked in the sensual and connotative imagery and in the rejection of simple duration and one-to-one correspondence of real/projection time by the use of time-lapse and a polysensory deployment of multi-screen projection.*

(Rees 1977: 49)

Key experimental (single screen and expanded) film works of the period include: *Yes No Maybe Maybe Not*, (Le Grice 1967) and *Horror Film* (Le Grice 1971/2008) by Malcolm Le Grice; *Paper Film* (Sherwin 1975) by Guy Sherwin; *Dresden Dynamo* (Rhodes 1971) and *Light Music* (Rhodes 1955/2009) by Lis Rhodes; *Slides* (Nicolson 1970) and *Reel Time* (Nicolson 1973) by Annabel Nicolson; *The Machine* (Farrer 1981/2009) by Steve Farrer; *Broadwalk* (Raban 1972a), *Diagonal*

(Raban 1973b) and *Surface Tension* (Raban 1976) by William Raban and *Room Film 1973* (Gidal 1973) Peter Gidal. This work (much of which is documented on The Lux website) was produced in a time of perpetual experiment and evolving conceptual framework for experimental film. Peter Gidal produced a series of proposals in the 1970s which were highly influential especially with the artists engaged with the Arts Lab and then the London Filmmakers' Co-op, and in 1976 edited the *Structural Materialist Film Anthology* (Gidal 1976) with contributors including Annette Michelson, Annabel Nicolson and Malcolm Le Grice.

In this research context, my concern with structural materialist film is with its radical engagements with both temporality and art spectatorship. I have found it productive to work not only with my own experimental practice, but to look at this in the wider context of artists using the moving image. Later in this chapter, I will focus on material drawn from interviews with filmmakers William Raban, Lis Rhodes and Steve Farrer. Looking at the construction and configurations of specific works by these artists and discussing their working processes and intentions in more detail enabled me to understand how film practice could open up possibilities for thinking differently about our everyday experience of time passing. I am proposing that this kind of engagement could also allow us to reflect on visual perception, subjective perceptions of temporality and altered states of consciousness in relation to painting. In expanded cinema, which Gene Youngblood, in his key work on expanded cinema (Youngblood 1970), proposed as a way of expanding consciousness, the spectator is 'inside' a work which, in its construction and display, makes the operations of temporality more explicit and

material. This spectator experience may affect the viewer emotionally according to the disruptive rhythms and presentations of time recorded in the work.

Reflecting on expanded cinema works such as *Light Music* (Rhodes 1975/2009), *Diagonal* (Raban 1973b) and *The Machine* (Farrer 1981/2011), I made connections between the perceptual experience of the embodied spectator in the space of an experimental moving image work and the position of the painter constructing work in a studio space: looking, marking and looking again. In the painting space, human, embodied temporalities and rhythms are built into the work in irregular patterns across time as a painting is constructed through marks and erasures in turn so that the painterly surface is a record of diverse temporalities. It is in this dynamic cycle of focused attention, intense looking and image formation that the painter may begin to experience the elasticity of time as a profoundly beneficial experience and one which can enable enhanced modes of visual perception and creative practice. Reflecting on experimental film also helped me to construct my own experiments with moving image technologies that would manipulate frames and planes in order to deconstruct the experience of painting. I will go on to look at the insights gained from the work of these artists in more detail and the interview transcripts are appended to this thesis. These reflections led me to consider painting as embodied and performative and to connect both painting practice and technologies used to capture frames of time with some aspects of temporality in performance art; specifically, my experiences of being present with durational performances. This connection was also informed by reading about the temporality of such performance works, for example in the work of Adrian Heathfield. I

therefore began to consider the temporality in embodied 'live' encounters as a relevant factor in looking at painterly practice. I will go on to provide an example later of one such durational encounter later in this chapter.

In order both to look in more detail at some of the experimental film work concerned and to facilitate a dialogue between film and performance practitioners engaged in constructing these works that make the operations of time explicit, I devised a space for showing work and for discussion of some of these proposals about temporality and affect. The exhibition and symposium *One More Time* took place at London Metropolitan University in October 2011. This project brought together several artists from diverse contemporary art practices, including performance, photography and film, working with ideas about marking and spatializing time. *One More Time*, ran for three days as an exhibition and a one day event enabled artists, including Farrer and Raban to make presentations about their practice and research activities and to share ideas. The resulting discussions informed the writing of this thesis informally through the extension of discussions of my own proposals about how art affects us in its various modes of marking time in the sessions following artist talks and in the plenary. It primarily informed the work through my interactions with works shown: being able to observe first hand and participate in the re-construction of Farrer's *Machine* in the 'boilerhouse' space at the university; to continue my dialogue with William Raban about structural film and temporality and to carry this through into his current practice; to consider the relations between film recordings of time and direct experiences of performances, including those by Leibniz and Rachel Gomme. An extract from the text of the

booklet for the symposium is appended to the thesis and I will reflect on my spectator experience of Gomme's work later in this chapter.

To return to the theoretical framework for 'experimental' film, Peter Gidal proposes film practices and works where there is a reorientation away from the expectations of cinematic convention so that the spectator is directly engaged with their own perceptual processes rather than 'what is happening' on screen. This engagement is provoked by the artists' actions as manifest in the work as shown such as focus-pulling, aperture manipulation, camera movements and so on, in other words, the mechanical materiality of the whole film apparatus. For Gidal: 'Structural/materialist film attempts to be non-illusionist. The process of the film's making deals with devices that result in demystification or attempted demystification of the film process' (Gidal 1976: 1) and: 'A film practice in which one watches oneself watching is reflexive; the act of self-perception, of consciousness per se, becomes one of the basic contexts of one's confrontation with the work' (Gidal 1976: 9). This proposed process-led and spectator-active cinema intersects with, but challenges some views within the early phases of psychoanalytically inflected Film Studies where there is a concept of a universalized or ideal spectator by writers such as Metz (Metz 1985)<sup>10</sup> and where even Laura Mulvey's feminist challenge to screen/audience dynamics in the key text, *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* (Mulvey 1975) draws conclusions based on spectator identification with protagonists. Gidal's absolute break with the conditions of cinematic illusionism

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<sup>10</sup> For a relevant account of psychoanalytically influenced theories of film spectatorship, see Barbara Creed's chapter 'Film and Psychoanalysis' (Creed 2000) in *Film Studies: Critical Approaches*, John Hill and Pamela Church-Gibson (eds.), Oxford: OUP.

proposes a radical Foucauldian subversion of the Panopticon of power/knowledge relations.

In his text about Andy Warhol's film *Blow Job*, Gidal says:

*Materialist practice in avant-garde film is often understood as a dry academic thesis about material, whereas, in fact, it engineers a dialectical, contradictory and endlessly fractuous relation with the subject-as-viewer and with his or her philosophical, secular and poetic metaphysics. And it is precisely in this fraught relation that a Materialist process inveigles itself.*

(Gidal 2008:12)

It is precisely in this quote that we see the value of Gidal's insights into subjective temporality, reflexivity and spectator-screen relations as they become relevant for a broader art practice including painting. Whilst in structural-material works, Gidal suggests that the use of 'real time' distinct from illusionistic devices is a key element, he proposes that there is a possibility for a 'post-Newtonian' time in engagements with art:

*There is here no absolute value other than that of the interaction of film moment and viewer. This relativistic time may but does not necessarily connect with 'real time. The notion of 'real time' on its own fails to take account precisely of this relativistic nature of time, the absence of some universal clock...*

(Gidal 1976: 9)

Considering the duration needed to 'read' a work, Gidal suggests that the 1:1 artist/spectator relation is possible only with film and he sets this against the problematic of Klee's idea of a painting built up over time and then viewed all at once. I would actually contest this as the affect of 'painterly' works such as the Auerbach cityscapes is in the tensions for the spectator between 'all at once' and temporal emergence. In an interview with critic John Du Cane on his work *Upside Down Feature* (Du Cane 1972) Gidal describes his intentions with respect to the spectator operating in a dialectical relation to the work:

*I'm interested in the viewer not working out my meaning, but in doing a process, the way I'm doing a process which may mean that the film I have and the film the viewer has are almost equal, but opposite.*

(Du Cane 1972)

Malcolm Le Grice recognises in Gidal's own films, such as *Room Film 1973*, how the reflexive operations of the artist's responsive camera actions within a set procedure or 'structure' mean that the viewer cannot but be aware of their own responses and be actively engaged. This work is in fact places the interconnectedness of artist and spectator in sharp focus:

*...he is not aiming to reconstruct his own motives for the viewer but to alert them to their reflexive attention in relationship to the 'events' which occur*

*before them on the screen. [...] the perceptual stages are deliberately prolonged - an indistinct region of light on the screen will become more distinctly a surface, though not clearly the surface of an object. Then it may take on an edge, but the scale has to be guessed at, being gradually confirmed, denied or neither by the film's subsequent progress. Then it may or may not become recognisable as a book or a shelf, only for the camera to move on to another region - every stage being drawn out by the sometimes nearly indecipherable double view of each segment. Experiences which in our everyday perception are over in an unconscious flash, in Gidal's films become extended processes for conscious attention and structuring.*

(Le Grice 1976: 23)

This description highlights the correspondence between structural materialist film and figural painting - the 'look' of the filmmaker is explicit and the work reflexive, making a new temporal architecture in which to look; a new experience for the spectator as in open 'painterly' surface.

As both theorist and artist, Gidal continues to engage with film in a contemporary art context and there are a number of filmmakers, such as Emma Hart, Mirza/Butler<sup>11</sup> and Sarah Turner whose work exhibits aspects of structural

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<sup>11</sup> Emma Hart's work emphasises materiality in the moving image and the active embodied spectator presence for her film works, for example in her collaborative works with Benedict Drew such as: *Kill Your Timid Notion*, (Hart/Drew 2006). See: <http://www.emmahart.info/hartdrew.html>. Mirza and Butler's film works, such as *The Space Between* (Mirza/Butler 2005) also demands active spectatorship for works that draw on structuralist film and work with expanded visual observations

materialist practice, notably Turner's *Perestroika* (Turner 2009) a docu-fiction account of a Trans-Siberian railway journey which uses the rhythmic and complex editing of still photographs to layer time<sup>12</sup>.

My interviews with film artists Lis Rhodes, William Raban and Steve Farrer for this project have focussed on experimental film practice which sought to engage directly with perceptions of temporality and active spectatorship. Many experimental film works from the period 1970-83 have a particular 'indexical' quality. That is, their engagement with the pro-filmic event is such that the device used controls the registration of phenomena on to film, through the given mechanical potentialities of that particular device with their associated qualities and according to the phenomenological presence of the objects and visual fields as matter reflecting light. There is a precision in their construction that derives from the processes of their making: the frame, frame rate, lens, shutter, aperture, mount, camera movement, optical sound track and so on. Of course, one could argue that all photographic process is, semiologically speaking, 'indexical'; but what I wish to indicate here is an engagement with the physical, material, temporal world that is direct and that largely avoids illustration, narrative, and shallowness in its stylistic representations. This does not mean that such works are lacking in desire. Rather, they are made intuitively and curiously in the spirit of Dziga Vertov's: 'I am kino-eye, I am mechanical eye, I, a machine, show you the world as only I can see it [...] My path leads to the creation of a fresh perception of the world

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and gestures. See: <http://www.mirza-butler.net/>. See also:  
<http://www.luxonline.org.uk>

<sup>12</sup> For further information on the techniques used in *Perestroika*, see:  
<http://www.bfi.org.uk/sightandsound/exclusive/sarah-turner-perestroika.php>

I decipher in a new way a world unknown to you' (Michelson 1984: 17). This is an engagement with temporality and spectatorship that to a broad understanding of painting as practice. The desiring-devices of experimental filmmaking correspond to the action-looking of the painter engaged with navigating in the world and with processes of physical and material translation.

This correspondence between experimental film and painting relates to mechanical operations such as camera movements and shutter speeds in relation to hand/eye/mark/surface dynamics. A further area for exploration is the relationship between 'frame' and 'plane'; taking each of these terms to indicate a range of spatio-temporal configurations in film practice and painting. This consideration of 'frame and plane' opens up a space for thinking about the fluid connections between film frame as temporal slice and the painting plane as palimpsest of time passed. Deleuze, in his cinema works (Deleuze 2001; Deleuze 2005), distinguishes between the 'movement-image' of action-based classic Hollywood and the 'time-image' largely corresponding to what he considers to be modernist or art-house cinema. Writing about the movement-image in cinema and how it produces affect, He picks up on Ferdinand Leger's descriptions of the films of Jean Epstein to consider how the plane/frame correlation may work in time and space:

*The cinema, even more directly than painting, conveys a relief in time, a perspective in time: it expresses time itself as perspective or relief. This is why time essentially takes on the power to contract or dilate as movement takes on the power to contract or accelerate. Epstein comes closest to the*

*concept of the shot: it is a mobile section, that is, a temporal perspective or a modulation.*

(Deleuze 2001: 25)

Deleuze describes cinema's operations for human consciousness and perception in his concept of 'time crystal': '...what we see in the crystal is time itself, a bit of time in the pure state.' Like Bergson, Deleuze is engaged with other than clock time. Although his cinema work refers largely to illusionistic forms of cinema, this work on the mobile section of the shot and the 'crystal-image' may be productive as a co-relation to Gidal's idea of film duration as a 'material piece of time' and to the work of experimental cinema in questioning subject-spectator positions and perception.

In much experimental film, 'process' is foregrounded, leaving the marks of construction exposed. Filmmaker Annabel Nicolson describes making the piece *Slides* (1970):

*Slides' came about through some fascination with the phenomena of matter, its frailty and transience, the oddness of tiny filmed images from my earlier work lying around. Working with these parts, 35mm slides cut into strips, thread, sewn film, light leaked footage, 8mm and 16mm fragments I hand held this material in the contact printer. Images were created by movement and handling, literally keeping in touch with the elements.*

(Nicolson 1977)

This description of handleable tactile material emphasises the use of film as an art medium like paint. Perhaps the paradox of film being both material and projected sheds light on the condition of painting and its operations for the painting spectator who experiences in *durée* an unfolding of pictures that has been built materially over time. In an interview conducted with him for this research, William Raban describes his transition to film from painting:

*...the paintings I was making all involved the passage of time or time as duration in one way or another - the tree prints and wave prints and even other pieces I was doing before that and film seemed to be the obvious way to go because [...] film is so much more overtly about the passage of time*  
Raban (Robinson 2009a)

As 'Co-op' filmmakers, Nicolson and Raban made works that broke with cinematic illusion and focused on process. Raban's work from this period is particularly rigorous and in many ways deceptively simple in its drawing up of precise structures within which to explore temporality and make interventions into the phenomenology of perception, engaging with an embodied spectator temporarily disengaged from linear time. He has described the early works like *Time Stepping* (Raban 1974) and *Angles of Incidence* (Raban 1973c) as 'painterly' based on their intentions and, interestingly, with the second section of *Time Stepping*, which derives material from the interplay of two cameras alternating action-movements

from the same viewpoint in a London street, Raban describes the juxtapositions of temporality for the spectator in the second half of the film, which:

*...maintains the parallel of projection duration to shooting duration whilst exploring single frame samples on both cameras. On one camera, single frames are taken and projected in the normal 1/24 sec & on other, time exposures lasting several moments are stretched to occupy the screen for their exposure duration.*

(Raban 1976: 130)

*Colours of This Time* is described as:

*...near-perfect camera time recording. Film is exposed for the whole of the 'real time' period. The scale of screen speed is controlled by the intermittency of frames. Within this framework, which reduces the whole daylight period to minutes, the film studies a more specific minute scale of speed changes occurring inside the twenty-second frame interval. Each frame reduces movement to multiple images. Movement is equated to transparency.*

(Raban 1976: 129)

This engagement with the potential of time-lapse is extended in *Broadwalk* (Fig. 9) which was filmed in Regents Park:



Figure 9: *Broadwalk*, 16mm, 12 min., William Raban, 1972, (screen shots by A. Robinson, 2012)

*A telephoto view looking northwards up the Broadwalk in Regents Park, distancing the camera from film subject. The film opens and closes with a 30sec rec at 'real time' (24fps). The in-between 24 hour period 9am-9pm is condensed by single framing. Again, the shutter is held open all the time between exposures. People are recorded in speeded up time but their images are held on the film by the condensed perspective field of telephoto vision. This impression of expanded distance, which opposes the experience of compressed time, only becomes apparent when the film switches to 'real time'*

*(Raban 1976: 129)*

In both of these works, we can see explorations derived from modernist painting practice working as interrogation of human perception, where the intense strangeness of our experience of images passing in time emerges from the precision of their syntax registered on film. This rigorous engagement with film temporality continues in Raban's current work, in the piece, *About Now MMX*

(Raban 2010) shown in the recent *One More Time* symposium (see appendix). *Diagonal* (Raban 1973b) and *Take Measure* (Raban 1973a) are expanded works which derive from equally rigorous poetics. With Malcolm Le Grice and Gill Eatherly Raban was part of the 'Filmaktion' group in the early 1970s who toured with performative multi-projector pieces such as these. In *Diagonal*, a deeply affecting spectator experience is produced by a three-projector work, which takes as its 'subject' the projector gate and where the film snakes its way through all of the projectors in turn. The spectator is also placed in the action for *Take Measure*, described here:

*The image is of clear film running through a film synchroniser with a footage counter that starts at zero and counts forward. After lacing the film on the projector, it is stretched out over the heads of the audience and taken up to the screen where as soon as the projector starts, the film is cut and snakes back through the audience with the screen image counting in feet, the length of the projector beam.*

(Raban 1973)

Film works by Lis Rhodes made during this period may also be considered 'structural-materialist' and, in some cases, 'expanded'. *Dresden Dynamo* is a film with no camera: a sound drawing made by physically marking directly on to the area of the the film strip which forms the 'optical' sound track, thus creating sensory

ambiguity. In my interview with her, she had this reflection on temporality and the moving image:

*...with film or video, the thing is, a representation is at stake; one can go backwards through it, one can go forwards through it. In my experience unfortunately one can't 'go' backwards in time! [...] whereas with a representation, you can bring it out on the screen or you can go backwards in time - to the previous painting...*

Rhodes (Robinson 2009b)

This idea of an expanded representation is also brought out in Rhodes' reflections on the 'frame' as:

*...an arrangements of things if you like - just that - it's curious the way we stick with the idea of frames... it's obvious in European culture - we tend to put frames round things - culturally otherwise that might not be the case*

Rhodes (Robinson 2009b)

In *Light Reading*, the temporal span of the film is used to implicate the spectator in a deconstructive critique of looking and gender that incorporates text and fragmentary images. It also exposes the richness of our experience in the usually fleeting moment by enabling us to focus on the distinct perceptual phenomena of hearing and seeing. We experience the affects of these deconstructed fragments as they unfold in this new time of the film. As Lisa le Feuvre suggests:

*Language is powerful: we become inscribed within language and Lis Rhodes challenges these assumptions by problematising language'*

(Le Feuvre 2005)

Questioning the notion of purely 'emotional' responses to art and inadequacy of language to describe spectatorship, Rhodes herself has said:

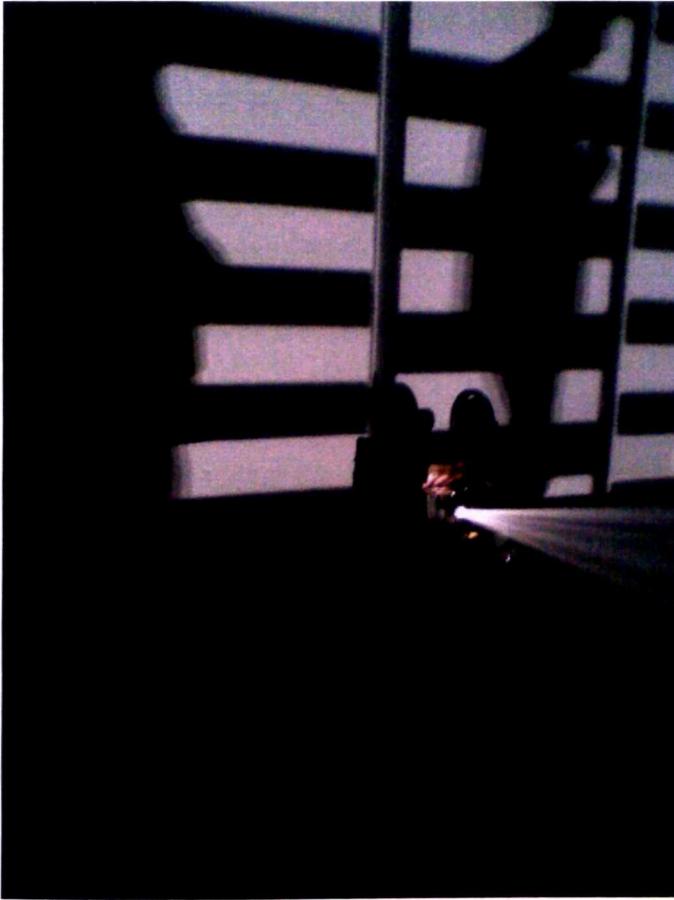
*...we get these amazing divisions that do cause almost a sort of silence - so that you're almost hesitant when you're trying to explain this sort of relationship to an image - its not that you cant find the words - I almost think you can't find the grammar to work it*

Rhodes (Robinson 2009b)

Rhodes' work *Light Music* was shown along with Steve Farrer's *Machine* in the large 'industrial' space of the Tate Modern oil drums for the 'Expanded Cinema' symposium in 2009<sup>13</sup>. In this work, the image consists of straight lines that are 'made' by the optical soundtrack of the film, constructed as music and the projections on screen are therefore manifestations of construction that directly connect temporal/perceptual experiences for the spectator who is mobile within the

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<sup>13</sup> The symposium *Expanded Cinema: Activating the Space of Reception*, Took place at Tate Modern from 17-19 April 2009. See also video of Rhodes' and Farrer's work at: <http://www.tate.org.uk/context-comment/video/tate-live-expanded-cinema>



**Figure 10: *Light Music*, 16mm expanded work, (installation in Tate oil drums, 2009), Lis Rhodes, 1975/2009 (photo of installation, A. Robinson, 2009)**

space, able to wander between the screens, and never able to fully see both screens at once (Fig. 10). The audience is thus engaged in actively processing and reconstructing the work reflexively. Malcolm Le Grice's *Horror Film*<sup>14</sup> is a performative work which has three 16mm projectors running with coloured filters whilst Le Grice approaches the screen making controlled gestures, with the viewer/participants positioned between projector, performer and screen, as if part of the process itself.

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<sup>14</sup> This work was originally performed in 1971 and was re-constructed performed again by Le Grice at Tate Modern in 2008

Steve Farrer's work *The Machine* (1981/2011) also expands our consciousness of time passing through cinematic processes and it is perhaps the work which has most informed my use of experimental film modes to interrogate how temporality works in painting. In being actively involved in the re-construction of this work in the boilerhouse space for the *One More Time* event, I was able to observe first-hand the nature of these unconventional frames unfolding. This offered me a unique deconstruction of visual perception by mechanical means. This enabled me to grasp more effectively Damasio's explanations of visual perception and consciousness and also to reflect on our embodied perception of film images as spectators, as one of the key elements of this work is how it makes us more conscious of the temporality of our own viewing mode. It is also 'affecting' through direct mechanisms which have an affinity with the fragility of early cinema. Jennifer Barker, emphasising the embodied nature of spectatorship, suggests:

*The moviegoer too experiences a "fellow feeling" with the film's body which moves in ways that our own bodies can recall. [...] intimate look not only inside the film but also inside ourselves, for cinema's inner mechanisms are a mirror image of our own.*

(Barker 2009: 76)

In this work, 35 film has been shot with a deconstructed film camera with the shutter removed so that duration is recorded without frames, and then projected using the device specially adapted for projection, which rotates and throws 'moving' image sequences on to the inside of a screen constructed as a large zoetrope or

'biscuit tin' shape, where the spectators watch the images passing from the inside (Fig. 11). This machine registers the image 'horizontally' along the length of the film so that, if you look at a strip of film, there are no dividing lines and, for example, a reclining figure is stretched out between the sprocket holes, in different positions along the length of the film. Rod Stoneman describes this effect:

*When the film is run at the original speed at which it was shot, it is paradoxically both in constant motion and at the same time static in relation to the projection surface...*

(Stoneman 1989)

**Figure 11: *The Machine*, Installation in Tate Modern Oil Tanks, 2009, (c) Tate, Steve Farrer, 1978**

We thus have a film record of something close to *durée* presented in an artwork, in an expanded and immersive form and, in its reconstructed form for *One More Time*, this quality was apparent for the audience. The term 'spectator' seems inappropriate for the experience of being with *The Machine* as it turns. The film unfolds around the drum-like screen, so that we are always close to the position of the machine-as-camera we see figures interacting, for example playing on a beach, as if we could be part of the action/experience. It is an entirely immersive phenomenon where time stretches and one's perceptual awareness of movement and temporality is brought into focus. The absence of frames means that the image as printed on the film is horizontal rather than being serial and vertical and thus our sense of cinematic time is expanded, perhaps paradoxically corresponding to Maya Deren's conception of 'vertical time' in artists' films<sup>15</sup> (Deren 1943).

*The Machine* is described here by filmmaker Anna Thew who was witness to various stages of the work in progress:

*...'The Machine' registers stasis, freezing movement, the flight of a bird, a passing cyclist or the motion of a wave breaking. Its function can be better understood in terms of still rather than movie photography. A static object registers in sharp focus. An object in motion will register as a streak of light. Whereas conventional movie film consists of a vertical succession of images and records separate moments in time, 'The Machine' records the real time*

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<sup>15</sup> There is a useful discussion of Deren's 'vertical' concept in Catherine Fowler's article in *Screen* (Fowler 2004), where she related it to contemporary gallery works.

*span of the camera in rotation. The film becomes a 360 continuous horizontal scan of landscape/space and it has no framelines.*

(Thew 1989)

In his interview for this project Steve Farrer describes the development of the idea and its mechanics based on a Bolex film camera:

*...I took the lens off, so that was just light and dark, and then I took the claw out and put the lens back and there were lines, and that was very beautiful. Because the claw was taken out, the film just streamed past: analogous to a tape recorder in that it's recording time through light*

Farrer (Robinson 2009c)

And, in further experiments:

*... if I moved the camera, then... the image stuck. As soon as you move the camera, the lines stick to the film - the film is moving at the same speed as the landscape or whatever and the image sticks. When I made *The Machine*, I thought you'd have bits of lines and bits of regular image and I thought you'd get this going between the two, but you didn't. [...] If you film out of a train window, because the train is fairly regular speed, then you just get the landscape, you get a long photograph. [...] The world's going by and the film's going by and if you can get the two things to coincide, they'll stick...*

Farrer (Robinson 2009c)

This way of setting up a mechanical device to register actions in time and the vision of a mobile camera-protagonist without the usual frame division, exposes our temporal perceptions differently from regular filming. Whereas, in a cinema, we perceive the successive superimposition of images as movement within a framed space so that the encounter is paradoxically static for the spectator; *The Machine* corresponds to our embodied mobile gaze as we see in the world. As the sequences unfold in time, we are able to move with them in a more direct re-experiencing of the original events and also to experience their variable rhythms within the expanded space. The operation of *The Machine* then gives us something like a spatialization of time in images passing at unconventional rhythms and with a strange experience of temporality for the spectator. I would propose that this strange presentation of temporality is affecting in itself beyond any 'content' and that corresponds to the 'affect' of painting. Farrer reflects here on the experience of the work as set up:

*It's more physical than retinal... going straight into the thought process, because you're not static, you're absolutely physical with it. It is truly expanded, because you're not allowed that relationship, where the image is transferred straight into the consciousness. Even with a multi screen film, it's more like being in magnum or at the symphony hall... whereas this was as if I was there, presenting these images as if it was live, like a live performance...*

Farrer (Robinson 2009c)

In the interview, he also considers the possibility of spatialised temporality:

*...a spatialisation of time - I'm thinking like that now, completely. I'm trying to get a repertoire of marks and mark-making in relationship to the temporal surface through time...*

Farrer (Robinson 2009c)

Several of the works explored here are 'expanded' in the sense of operating unconventionally across several screen spaces. Deke Dusinberre describes how:

*The spectator becomes inscribed within the process [...] and the audience becomes engaged in formulating the limits of cinematic perception*

(Dusinberre 1975: 224)

According to Duncan White, a work of 'expanded cinema' is: '...situated in these in between conditions of image production and reception. It acts on what is in and beyond the frames of filmic representation and manufacture'. (White 2011: 228). These conditions for the spectator offer mobility, a variable distance from the image and the breaking of the cinematic illusion. As Gene Youngblood, in the preface to his book on 'expanded cinema' says:

*Expanded cinema isn't 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.*

(Youngblood 1970: 41)

The space of expanded cinema is both reflexive and immersive, following Peter Gidal's arguments for structural-materialist film which relate both to the nature of a film work as an experiment and the setting up of the work in space: 'Each film is a record (not a representation, not a reproduction) of its own making. ' (Gidal 1976: 7) and: '...the real pleasure actually comes out of the work you do yourself, the dialectics you do, the decisions you do' (Du Cane 1972).

Gidal's theoretical work sheds light on the nature of subjective temporality as distinct from any form of universalised 'clock time'. Writing in Tate magazine in 2004 on 'a century of artists' film', he proposes that, in opposition to 'time obliterated' in the conventional film apparatus:

*Temporality is the basis of viewing film works in which process is so important a part of their making and their projection (the concept of film-as-projected is essential), and that means time regained - for you, for me, for the work.*

(Gidal 2003: 32)

I would propose that we can understand painting and its 'affects' further by looking at the spaces of expanded cinema as studio spaces where the spectator is placed in the midst of the process: between projectors and screens, sounds and motions so that the time of the making becomes the time of perception, as the spectator is thrown into reflexive mode in order to construct their own work out of what is

present. This corresponds to in the making of painterly surface where the painter intervenes across time and in a variable rhythm, making articulate matter. The mechanisms of seeing may thus be exposed in a spatial configuration where the spectator is affected as they build the work. Here too, the pleasure comes from the work you do. We may see the engagements in expanded cinema as characteristic of Merleau-Ponty's 'chiasm' or intertwining (Merleau-Ponty 1968) where there is a refusal of a Cartesian subject/object dichotomy. In chapter five, I will also propose that 'painterly' painting is embodied and performative linking it even more closely to this kind of expanded cinema practice and drawing on ideas about 'haptic' spectatorship where the site of sensation is the engaged and embodied spectator.

Drawing on close examination of experimental film practice, I have gained insights from William Raban's process-related works such as *'Broadwalk and Diagonal'*; Steve Farrer's *Machine* as a unique perceptual device describing a kind of Bergsonian 'inner' time and revealing aspects of subjective temporal distortion and Lis Rhodes' *Light Music* as a space from which to consider spectator position and response connected with the hand-eye-object-surface configuration of painting.

The phenomena that result from experimental and structural film process are mechanically and indexically produced. Many of these works themselves engage through reflexivity and deconstruct our sense of 'seeing' and thus enable us to inhabit more of our perceptual experience by making us more aware of visual and temporal perception. Yet, experimental film works are not easy to deconstruct using conventional semiotics. As with painting, these are operations beyond

language and perhaps faster than language. Walter Benjamin famously wrote about the camera operator being like the surgeon entering the body whilst the painter is like a magician or magical healer (Benjamin 1999: 227), so that the camera may move like a scalpel whereas the painter has a more speculative engagement with the space figured, casting spells to make their mark. Reflecting on the complex relations between frame and plane in film and painting, I am proposing here that understanding more about one practice informs perceptions of the other.

The next chapter will examine the work: *Is It You?* which draws on experimental and expanded film practice. Time, in these experimental and expanded works, is presented in a way that may set us off balance as we are thrown back on our own embodied state of being in the world as spectators. As we respond to different elements in a work, we may perceive time as being elastic. We may also experience the strangeness of encountering the very perceptual processes through which we grasp time passing revealed. Arguably, painterly surface also exposes aspects of the strangeness of human visual perception in a physiological and philosophical sense and also reveal to us the possibility of an enhanced lived temporality. In painting, we are unsettled by the handling of paint across time, as paint has been applied at different rates. The irregular temporal juxtapositions and the sense of movement and rhythm in the static surface affects us. Time, as Elizabeth Grosz proposes: '...disappears into events, processes, movements and things, as the mode of their becoming' (Grosz 1999: 1).





## 5. *Interference*

### Reflections on perceptions of temporality and 'affect' in the construction of the work *Is It You?*

This chapter documents the expanded video work *Is It You?* (Robinson 2012a), reflecting on how the work engages with subjective temporality, rhythm, affect and embodied spectatorship through experimental uses of moving image technologies. The work is described in some detail in order to explain how it makes a new encounter with altered temporality and deconstructs aspects of perception. This chapter also addresses subjective temporality, altered states and neuroscientific perspectives and, as throughout the thesis, key thinkers are brought into dialogue in order to inform the observations of practice. Documentation of the work is appended - see: **Appendix A: 2 and DVD 'Is It You?' disks 1 & 2.**

In *Que Sera*, the placing together of pictures made using different time bases has a 'moving' effect for spectators. Where one set of sequences used the recording process to catch 'frames' that we would not usually be conscious of because they would go past too quickly by using a high frame rate in filming, the other allowed an experience of the passage of time that we also could not experience as we are only ever perceptually 'in' one instant of the flow. The strangeness of *Que Sera* and its unsettling affect then are made by the *combination* of the two modes of temporality inscribed in the sequences: by the altered time bases in video and manifestations of duration recorded photographically. Attention is thus drawn to the

spectator's embodied experience of temporality as they experience the sequences simultaneously.

This work raises questions about the continuous flow of the spectator's experience and the 'affects' of rhythm as we experience variable temporal modes. *Is It You?* picks up on ideas, arising from *Que Sera*, about affect, temporality, rhythm and the embodied spectator; and uses cinematic process experimentally to help us to grasp painting's impossible rhythms. It effectively expands moments for the spectator. Gilles Deleuze proposes rhythm as central to a phenomenological hypothesis for levels of sensation in painting where the painter engaged with rhythm would: '*...make visible* a kind of original unity of the senses...' with rhythm as the 'vital power that exceeds every domain and traverses them all...' He goes on to propose that: 'Rhythm appears as music when it invests the auditory level and as painting when it invests the visual level' (Deleuze 2003: 42). He goes on to propose that: 'Rhythm appears as music when it invests the auditory level and as painting when it invests the visual level' (Deleuze 2003: 42). I would also like to consider how the mapping of rhythm in the temporal architecture of brain processing as described by Damasio relates to affect in painting.

*Is it You?* has been constructed using footage of myself dancing, filmed in two dance studios: one with white walls and in daylight and one with black walls and using low level artificial light. The music tracks played in the space for the dance rhythms were selected from records that have specific personal memories of

dancing to between about 1978 and 1988<sup>16</sup>. Most of the footage selected for editing was taken from dancing to the Toots and the Maytals song *Pressure Drop* (Hibbert 1969) apart from the repeated segment in the first and last sections, in the 'light' studio, which originally used the Smiths' *What Difference Does It Make?* (Marr/Morrissey 1983) the fourth section, which used elements from both *Pressure Drop* and *A Message to You Rudy* (Livingstone 1979), and the fifth section which uses footage recorded to elements of all of the tracks. The piece is made up of seven sequences, each of which is constructed as an experiment in rhythm, movement and affect, to include variable frame rates and long exposures placed together in different formations as listed below. Each segment is 3 minutes and 25 seconds long with a five second blank interlude between each. The footage was recorded using HD video on 25 fps and digital video on 120 and 1000 fps. The long exposure still photographs were taken using a Hassleblad medium format camera at exposures ranging from 5 seconds to 1 minute set according to movements approximately replicated from earlier dance sequences on video.

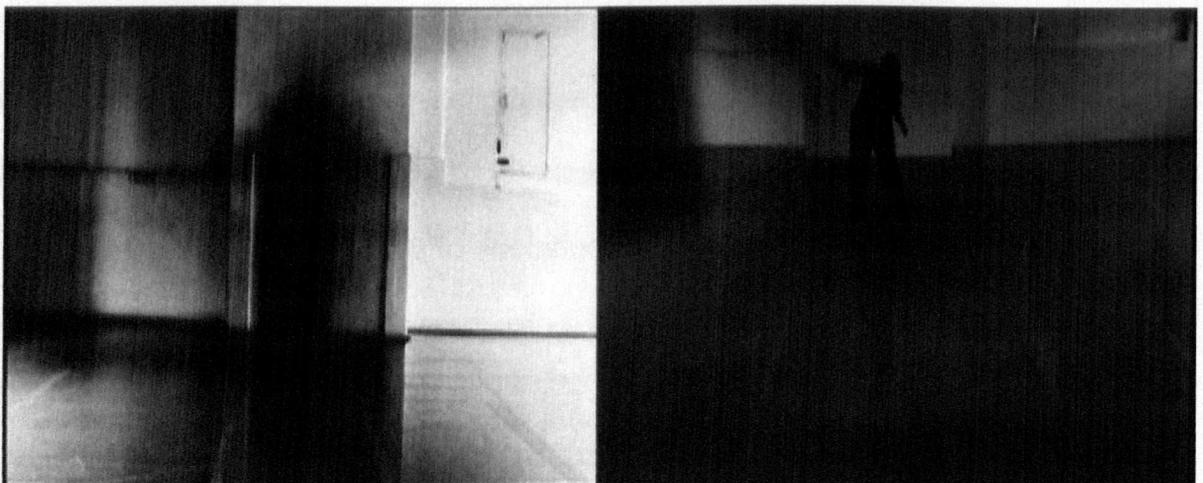
The sequences have been edited digitally using Final Cut Pro, in 4:3 standard aspect ratio. The original medium format pictures have been cropped to match video frame size. Further manipulations of the video time base have been made in

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<sup>16</sup> A complete listing of songs used during the filming of this piece is as follows, but most of these are extant in the final work as very short sections and are not used on the audio track: *Pressure Drop* by Toots and the Maytals, *A Message To You Rudy* by The Specials, *Get Up Offa That Thing* by James Brown, *Blame It On The Boogie* by The Jacksons, *Shoorah!Shoorah!* by Betty Wright, *You Make Me Feel (Mighty Real)* by Sylvester, *C30, C60 C90 Go!* by Bow-wow-wow, *Rock Lobster* by the B52s, *Echo Beach* by Martha and the Muffins, *What Difference Does It Make?* The Smiths, *Go, Go, Go! (This Is It)* by Rip, Rig and Panic, *Typical Girls* by the Slits and *Papa's Got a Brand New Pigbag* by Pigbag.

the edit in order to juxtapose specific elements. There is no compositing as such in the work, though simple dissolves are used at the start and end of sequences and, in some segments, between still images. As a video installation work, the intention is to construct two screens that will place the central figure in the videos at approximately eye level. with an optimum screen size of 6 feet by 8 feet and with the two screens placed at a 120 degree angle to one another, thus creating an immersive space for the spectator. The sound track should be ambient in the space. The piece may also be viewed on monitors with headphone sound. As with *Que Sera*, there is a composite 2 screen video version, where both images are side by side on screen, made as a comparison to the phenomenology of the installation space.

In the first section, in the light studio (Fig. 12), the right hand moving sequence was made from a segment originally recorded at 120 frames per second. As edited, this begins at regular speed and slows gradually (over 25 sections) to a standstill and



**Figure 12: *Is It You?* Two screen video installation with sound, 24 min. loop, Anne Robinson, 2012**

the still picture held for a few seconds. The footage then gradually restarts in reverse moving back to 'regular' speed. Because the frame rate for the FCP sequence timeline is 25 frames per second, as in PAL video, frames are effectively being removed from each section at the higher speeds and removed in the sections running in slower motion, so that some elements of time passing have been rendered invisible or visible as the sequence progresses. At regular intervals, a frame is 'frozen; in the moving sequence and made visible on the left hand screen. As the sequence progresses, these appear closer to the moving sequence as it slows down, At the point where both are completely still, the left hand 'still' screen changes to show a long exposure photograph taken of dance movements in the same studio space. This image remains steady on the left hand screen until the end of the sequence. The soundtrack for this section is a steadily rhythmic version of *Pressure Drop*, using vocals recorded simultaneously with listening to the track on headphones, slowed to slightly less than regular speed at the edit stage.

The soundtrack is edited so that the main vocal element 'Is It You' coincides with the shift from stillness back to movement on the right hand screen.\*\*PARA The second section is recorded in the dark studio and the right hand moving image sequence is a continuous recording of dance movements originally recorded at 120 fps and slowed to 500 stretched over 25 fps on the timeline, with no intercutting. The left screen is made up of long exposures captured in this space (Fig. 13). The length of the stills in the sequence has been edited in relation to the soundtrack rhythm; in some sections as a steady rhythm and at others crossing over or

diverging. The sound is that of a handclap rhythm recorded whilst listening to the main *Is It You?* music track. The rhythm of the clapping sound is disrupted by an echo of the voice coming in at two points on the track. The third sequence comes back to the light studio space. This sequence is made up of short segments from all of the dance visual tracks edited in an irregular pattern of rhythms where slower footage cuts across faster footage and rapid changes of position and direction of movement are created. The camera point of view remains the same throughout. The material here is derived from the original 25 fps footage and some of the footage is left at regular speed whilst other segments are slowed very slightly up until the last few seconds where the whole sequence is slowed down very slightly. This intermittent and disruptive rhythm is set against a more regular pattern of long exposure photographs on the left hand screen. In this sequence, the soundtrack has also been inter-cut to echo the picture edit. It is a loop constructed of vocal and rhythmic elements recorded whilst listening to the dance tracks.

Section four is in the dark studio with an irregularly constructed edit of footage originally been recorded at 400 fps and reconfigured at the edit stage. Again, the sound has been constructed using vocal and rhythmic noise elements and this disruption is placed beside slower dissolves between stills on the left. In section five, material recorded in the light studio at 120 fps, which shows increased



**Figure 13: *Is It You?*, Two screen video installation, 24 min. loop, Anne Robinson, 2012**

movement across the space of the frame, has been slowed down to an rate corresponding to 200 (over an 25fps timeline). The long exposure stills on the left hand screen are edited in an intermittent pattern to varying lengths. The soundtrack here is a straightforward recording of the voice recording of *Is It You?/Pressure Drop*, as in sequence one, but at regular speed. Section six, in the dark studio, shows a single extremely slow continuous sequence set against a sequence of long exposure stills with fewer pictures and therefore changing at a slower rate. This is placed against the original sound recording as used in five, but edited rhythmically with silent interludes. The seventh and final section is derived from material recorded in the light studio and has only one long exposure still picture visible continuously throughout on the left hand screen. The moving footage on the right hand screen is a slowed dance sequence with movements at a consistent and extremely slow frame rate of 400fps stretched over an 25fps

timeline. The sound is the *Is It You?/Pressure Drop* voice track in full with clapping extremely slowed down at the editing stage.

This work then pushes the observations from making *Que Sera* about the *juxtaposition* of differing time bases further by recording embodied rhythm and motion in order to explore temporality. It also explores further the phenomenon of 'remembered song' in the structuring of the work; this time using tracks that have a strong rhythmic resonance as they re-emerge to consciousness, evoking embodied memories of dance movements. This personal and subjective relation to the material allows the elements of memory and intuitive selection to continue to play a part in the process, as they would in the making of painterly surface as a physical, embodied and temporal activity. Memory and intuitive selection also play a part in looking at paintings in anything other than an artificially contrived setting. It would, arguably, be difficult to isolate the operation of these subjective factors from the experiences in question whilst still being able to explore 'figural' as distinct from 'abstract' works; and so they remain as an acknowledged part of the affective experience of the work.

The embodied visual and auditory rhythms, emerging in the piece through movements and sounds as the work progresses and experienced empathetically, have allowed me to pay closer attention to the affect of individual and differentiated rhythms taking place simultaneously. Laura Mulvey, in her book *Death 24 Times a Second* says:

*Human consciousness creates ordered time to organize the rhythms of everyday life according to the demands of society and economy, but also in recognition of the intractable nature of time itself. For human and all organic life, time marks the movement along a path to death, that is, to the stillness that represents the transformation of the animate into the inanimate. In cinema, the blending of movement and stillness touches on this point of uncertainty...*

(Mulvey 2006: 31)

Mulvey thus reminds us that visual/sensory media which, in their construction, draw our attention to the passage of time, affect us by exposing life's brevity. In *Is It You*, the slowing down of the movement is like holding the moment: holding on a little longer to a moment in time that is slipping away. This offers us a sense of melancholy; a reminder of mortality: that time *is* slipping away. Perhaps we also perceive this in the slowness of the movement in the body, associated empathetically with sorrow or aging. It is also paradoxically comforting, as we are offered the possibility of the moments of our lives lasting longer; the frame rate questioning rate our body lives at. There may be an empathetic sense of comfort in another human presence being still there; still there as a frame is stopped for longer than usual. The high-speed frame rate recording motion slowly offers us comfort and fall in its strangeness. The long exposures on the other hand, are unavoidably ghostly, spectral, strange in themselves as well as in juxtaposition. This even though they are only recordings of dance moves responding to pop tunes; the slightly sinister aspect deriving from the technical recording. The images

offer a different sense of being 'still there' as traces left hanging in the air of the movements left behind in a space of what has passed through, passed on. Silent though, without enough of a person to make sound. Embodiment in the pictures is visibly fragmented by time as it passes. The body has moved away. The disembodiment of sound also has an uncanny affect in our fantasies about humanity passed on. As with the silence of the spectral still frame, we have the paradox of comfort in something being 'still there' combined with the uncanny. In juxtaposition, the differing visual frame rates are unsettling, as the time recorded in a single frame, in which the light reflected from many planes in motion within a space and left visible on the film, is set against the time recorded as light reflected from material planes as they have passed through the space are made visible as many frames of the in film sequence. Both seem strange as they correspond to the temporality of our regular vision. This 'affect' may arguably correspond for us as spectators with what is 'gone' in a painting - the movement of the painter's body. This may be one aspect of the affect as we move into the temporal register of a picture as described in Chapter Three.

How can we begin to understand the temporality of these images and the moments that passed as they were recorded? The footage in the first sequence was originally shot at 120 fps. When speeded up using the digital editing programme, this is transposed to 25 fps and loses frames. Thinking conceptually about how much time passed in the original filming and how much time is observed by the viewer in its 'speeded up' form in the finished work, it seems to be a matter of how often time is marked or the reflection of light on planes is registered by

photographic devices and subsequently in human perception. A set of still frames is what 'the moving image' will always make of the planes that have been traversed by a performer or by the person filming. There will be more or less of these frames depending on a combination of shutter speed and frame rate and any 'irregularity' in these factors. Reading the re-animation of these frames as film sequences, we may find comfort in movement as signifying life or the movement of inanimate matter signifying decay. Both of these constructions are temporal markings and both could evoke empathetic responses. The 'fall' affect here derives perhaps from the visuo-perceptual shift demanded of the spectator confronted with different rates of movement and therefore different manifestations of time having been marked.

Both *Que Sera* and *Is It You* have been made in black and white. This has been done in order to more effectively isolate the frame rate, time-base and shutter speed effects used and their affects for the spectator from other factors, notably colour. Although the use of colour as well as tone is of course an important factor in the affect of painterly painting and choices about using colour as a painter are fundamental to how the medium communicates; in this work, I was attempting to look closely and specifically at temporality as a key element in how paintings are made and received. In working only with monochrome black/white/greys, it is easier to observe the affect of movements made, traces left and time marked in the video/photo frames. In the earlier video works at the beginning of the research, I found that the 'painterly' appearance of colour frames in works such as *Hold* (Robinson 2007) tended to distract from the specific affects of time marked in the pictures and sequences. The addition of colour is an element in many of the

Auerbach pictures taken as examples of painterly surface in chapter three. As this body of research developed, I found that I was initially working more consistently with original black and white film or video frames and with a limited palette in painting. This use of colour was about differentiating planes and rebuilding a multidimensional experience that was not only concerned with the illusion of space but also time. In the paintings made for *Lighter Darker* (Robinson 2008), I found that using a systematic and relatively limited application of colour in responding to the frames tended to emphasise the position of shapes within the frame and the motion across time in the animation of the frames.

If we accept that at least some aspects of the temporal phenomena in question here are related to our visuo-perceptual systems and neural processing, then Zeki and Damasio's work on brain mapping can assist us in our grasp of how this may work. Although light waves reflected by colours do not move at different rates in reaching the eye and light is not automatically processed at different rates, there is a temporal aspect to colour vision/perception in the sense that colour and movement are processed by different areas of the brain. Antonio Damasio has described this process of visual 'mapping':

*When the light particles known as photons strike the retina in a particular pattern related to an object, the nerve cells activated in that pattern - say, a circle or a cross- constitute a transient neural "map". At subsequent levels of the nervous system, for instance, the visual cortices, subsequent related maps are also formed.*

(Damasio 2010: 321)

The 'images' that hit our retinas are always broken down into separate components which are subsequently processed in different areas of the brain which organise their composition, rather than being simply captured as successive snapshots. The brain cells for vision are grouped for each attribute such as colour, form, size and movement. The area of the brain usually known as the 'visual brain' or 'V1' works in conjunction with other sectors which process different aspects of the information received. According to Semir Zeki:

*...recent experiments that have measured the relative times that it takes to perceive colour, form and motion show that these three attributes are not perceived at the same time, that colour is perceived before form which is perceived before motion, the lead time of colour over motion being about 60-80 milliseconds. This suggests that the perceptual systems themselves are functionally specialised and that there is a temporal hierarchy in vision...*

(Zeki 1999: 66)

So, colour is part of our visuo-perceptual experience that happens by light hitting the retina, being deconstructed and then processed at different times. This is relevant here in two respects. Firstly, because it suggests that our perception of colour *does* have a temporal aspect and, secondly, if our seeing process itself is temporal, this arguably reinforces the idea that 'painterly' painting with its open surfaces may be understood as a deconstruction of seeing.

With colour removed from a given visual field in a work of art which uses photography of film, the key visual elements which remain visible in the planes/frames and the mechanisms which construct them into sequences, may be defined as form and movement. Arguably, it is these two factors with the relative position of and distortions to perceived forms within successive frames that reveal to us the passage of time. In the works presented here then, colour has been intentionally left out or limited in order to focus more effectively on our understanding of temporality which may be expanded if we are affected by images *without* colour.

The work *Is It You?* as presented here only uses shots filmed from static camera positions. Again, this limitation is intentionally imposed in order to focus more specifically on one aspect of time and motion. I would however, like to note here that during filming for *Is It You?* a number of sequences were made showing movements in space created by twists and turns of cameras attached to both arms and legs to record these embodied rhythmic responses. The frames/planes in these sequences offered another aspect of motion in time as the cameras moved across the recording space and, I noted that the motion trails in these frames resembles brushwork. These images are different from any kind of *conscious* perceptual experience we can possibly have of motion. If, for example, we move our heads rapidly, our brains impose intervals of black space to cut out visual chaos for the retina and in order to avoid disorientation or vertigo. Perhaps this raises a question, beyond the scope of this research, as to whether the painter's

intuitive responses somehow incorporate these 'unseen' frames as head and eyes move from source to surface. It may be possible to explore this through further works. Seeing in space and time is extremely complex and the work here is an attempt to break this experience down into components to understand 'seeing' in painterly surfaces. Making this particular work with fixed camera points is an attempt to isolate temporality as one aspect of affect; to look forensically at one set of conditions.

Philosopher Merleau-Ponty has described the painter's gaze as mobile (Merleau-Ponty 2004a: 294), acknowledging painting as an operation and manifestation of 'seeing' and therefore a fundamental aspect of our 'being' in the world:

*Painting awakens and carries to its highest pitch a delirium which is vision itself, for to see is to have at a distance; painting spreads this strange possession to all aspects of Being, which must in some fashion become visible in order to enter into the work of art.*

(Merleau-Ponty 204a: 297)

He thus proposes painting as philosophy in practice. It may be useful to consider the connectivity between our perceptions of time passing and the emotional affect of painting in the light of Heidegger's proposition in *Being and Time* (Heidegger 1993: 303) that our subjective experience of time is of moving inevitably towards death. For all of us, mortality is unavoidable. Art that reminds of this can provoke an emotional response, a sense of being unsettled in our sense of everyday

and minute to minute continuity. We find this in the depictions or accounts of death, dying, longing, loss, yearning, and so on that come to us through narrative and representational forms, such as feature films or paintings. That is not what is specifically at stake here. In considering the phenomenology of time as manifest in works of art, there is also the direct wordless embodied experience of the work itself, the unnameable in our encounter with a work where we experience affect directly not from its content but from its phenomenology, its construction and being, which we experience as temporal in its materially present aspects such as the painterly surface. The sense of momentarily and impossibly being outside of time in the encounter with a work of art may be related to existential anxiety, the sense of the *unheimlich* in which we become aware of our own mortality. Heidegger, throughout his work *Being and Time* (Heidegger 1996), proposes the idea of 'being towards death': that our common human experience of being in the world, of living, is an experience of being in time and of anxiety about the end of our time.'

We connect with paintings in our own existential encounter with time. In the painterly surface, we find configurations of matter made in response to the artists' seeing in the world. As we go on looking, time may be slowed, the next moment held back, and the moment broken. This is undoubtedly an anxious state; one in which we cannot truly identify what has just happened. Inside this experience, we are conscious and embodied and, as our embodied human experience is inextricably linked with temporality, the emotional affect of the encounter, is tied to an underlying sense of mortality which is anxious. Yet this vertiginous sensation may be a liberation of our sense of possibility in the next moment and all of the

moments ahead. So the encounter is emotional because it is both anxious and potentially liberating. It is also physiological and empathetic and I will return to Damasio on emotion and to the idea of 'mirror neurones' and empathy.

In *Is It You?* the mechanics and languages of film are used to 'expand' moments of time for the spectator in order to expose the operations of temporality and perception in encounters with art. This takes place at two stages: at the stage of the world recorded by the camera and at the stage of the recorded material being edited, i.e. the placing together of temporal dimensions. These processes allow us insights into what happens when we shift perceptually from one time register to the next. In the work, we encounter simultaneously and then in succession, presentations of time past manifest in frames in which time has been registered differently on planes in space. As a parallel to experiences of making and looking at paintings, this allows us to consider what happens when we move perceptually in our looking from a place where time is marked in pulses to one where it is marked in milliseconds of synaptic activity. The work is mirrored in ourselves as embodied spectators, as our bodies move with many rhythms at the same time, such as breathing, blinking, and so on. By recording time with variable shutter and frame rates, the work allows us some access to what happens when our subjective sense of time is distorted by enabling us to see the instants not available for everyday perception. So, how does this sense of time distorted in our reading of filmic images relate to empathy? How does it reflect our physical embodied experiences?

The piece is centred on responses to music. These are rhythmic and embodied and involve movements at different rates taking place simultaneously: legs, feet, arms, hands, joints, spine, hips, head, and so on, all setting up patterns of motion: *dance*. In the completed piece, there are disjunctures in the rhythm; places where it is uneven, unsettling. Our rhythmic responses to music are reflexive and it is hard for most of us to break patterns of rhythm that are produced in our bodies, to be consistently arrhythmic in clapping or tapping responses. In fact, this kind of arrhythmic response as an inability to reproduce regular rhythms, or to make clapping rhythms that others cannot reproduce, can be identified as a symptom of neurological disorder where there is a disturbance or irregularity in the rhythm of brain wave activity, such as cerebral arrhythmia or epilepsy. It has also been observed in children with identified learning disabilities such as CAPD<sup>17</sup> and in patients who have suffered damage to specific areas. For example, the musician cited by Pressing et al who had suffered damage to the right temporal lobe and was no longer able to '... generate a steady pulse.' They also identify other deficits such as '...the inability to reproduce rhythmic patterns or to discriminate between them. and the inability to perform music rhythmically or to keep time in music, including dancing in time' (Pressing 2002). All of which demonstrates the existence of a 'cognitive clock' which keeps us in time as we move through physical activities and which may conceivably operate as a grounding mechanism for emotional and mental activity. Arrhythmic heart beats are of course a symptom of physical disorder in heart disease, although this can be of other than cardiac origin. Our

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<sup>17</sup> CAPD stands for: 'Central Auditory Processing Deficit,' a learning disorder that may include difficulties with rhythm and clapping in time. Further information may be found at: <http://www.concordspedpac.org/CAPD.html>.

heartbeats quicken in response to emotion such as fear or desire. So, rhythmic responses are also emotionally charged. Responding to musical rhythms through dance will often make us feel happier, more conscious of our physical being in the world. It is hard to dance in a state of lethargy or sadness, and yet the experience may also be anxious or unsettling. Tensions are set up as we move with different elements of the body and this sets us on edge in some way as we attempt to step to the rhythm, to respond in time.

Rhythm is of course closely allied to movement and Merleau-Ponty asserts that: '...vision is attached to movement.' (Merleau-Ponty 2004a: 294). Movement in film however is illusory; made of single, still frames. In the video image there may be other, interfering movements from scan lines or flicker; but, by and large, the illusion created by frames is consistent in terms of the brain's interpretation of the frames passing. We follow the image in time because of our perceptions of different figural positions, shapes, tones and patterns arrayed on the screen in succession. Considering the nature of movement related to time in film, Deleuze looks at what he calls the 'intervals' of movement: taking the idea of *photogenie* in French avant-garde cinema as the image pushed beyond itself by movement. He suggests that 'intervals' are units producing 'a maximum quantity of movement...' (Deleuze 2001: 45) For example, Rene Clair's film, *Paris Qui Dort* (Clair 1925) is divided into intervals at: 'points where movement stops, re-starts, reverses itself,

accelerates or slows down: a sort of differential of movement.<sup>18</sup> But Deleuze goes on to point out that these units are also determined by variable factors such as:

*...the nature and dimensions of the framed space, the distribution of moving and fixed objects, the angle of framing, the lens, the chromometric duration of the shot, the light and its degrees, its tonalities, and also figural and affective tonalities.*

(Deleuze 2001:45)

So, the movement-time relation in film is complex and sometimes paradoxical, as motion can be a marker of time in spatialised mode, as with the hands of a clock, and yet movement across the range of the camera's framing can only take place in stages which then build to a perceptual possibility of movement when re-animated. So, movement across time is always recorded in intervals as frames; it being a question of how much is in each 'frame', whether that is a sliver of a second captured in a rapidly turning film or video camera with the next capture following on right away, or a humanly perceptible interval of a number of seconds captured in one frame of the shutter being open. Considered in this way, the indexical recording of stillness and movement seems to converge. To return to Mulvey's points about the uncanny nature of film, she suggests that the 'blending of stillness

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<sup>18</sup> This film is also relevant to the project here because of the narrative of the 'crazy ray' that arrests motion in the city, enabling the lead character to examine the holding back of the moment - including a near suicide frozen still on the banks of the Seine, driven mad by rushing modernity.

and movement' in film recording blurs a perceptual distinction for us and that in the film frame we have:

*...a trace of the past that persists into the present, and one in which, in the case of the cinema, appears to animate the inanimate human body, the photographic index reaches out towards the uncanny as an effect of confusion between living and dead.*

(Mulvey 2006: 83)

Again, I would emphasise that perceptually we grasp 'film' in such a way that we are unconsciously affected by its processes as well as grasping intellectually for content and, if these processes are exposed, we may be thrown into contemplation of the nature of time.

For Peter Gidal, the temporality of *experimental* film can be: '...a violence done to the imagined continuum that the viewer lives within as unspoken comfort or habitude' (Gidal 2008: 28). What may emerge in this work then, from the recording of dance movements at higher perceptual frame rates, is a sense of disorientation or the uncanny. Further insights may be offered by looking at what kind of affect we experience at high frame rates actually projected at higher rates, as would be possible with certain very specialist high speed film cameras and projectors, as it is now generally understood that our brains can process something faster than 100

fps<sup>19</sup>. Where movements have been recorded using long exposures, we may still consider this as a manipulation of the frame rate with a change to the density of what is recorded, as reflected light creates image registration within the frame and movement crosses shutter speed in time. If the camera's shutter is open for, say, 2 seconds, at a regular frame rate this photo/frame would be recording the same movements and the same amount of time passing in the world as 50 frames at regular speed and 240 or 800 frames at the higher speeds used here. If these recordings are juxtaposed, we are in effect seeing different manifestations of time past recorded in ways that differ from how we usually 'see'. If, in turn, these indexical recordings are manipulated to form irregular rhythms, our perceptual responses as embodied spectators are further jarred, as the rhythms of our bodies are a fundamental part of our experience of being in the world which we take for granted and do not usually monitor consciously.

These possibilities are explored in *Is It You?* by setting different rhythms and time bases against each other across a temporal interval and in the adjacent spaces of the screen installation, as a parallel to paint surfaces in which marks made at different rates are set together by the painter and where the spectator in turn has to make perceptual shifts between small areas of paint and the picture as a whole; thus between different registrations of time in the painting. There are also adjustments to the sound track for the work to create matches and mismatches with the pictures across some sequences; again, allowing insights into what

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<sup>19</sup> There is ongoing research into human perception of frame rates in excess of 30fps related to improving performance in video games. For further information, see Claypool et al, 2006.

happens if this kind of disjuncture is set up for the spectator/listener. The soundtrack then also bears witness to time passing. It operates as an anchor to the visual experimentation and a counterpoint as the sequences progress.

As noted in Chapter Four, some experimental film work makes passing temporality explicit and engages directly with spectator experience. Malcolm Le Grice indicates the way in which:

*The nervous system seems able to superimpose a current perceptual configuration onto a recently previous configuration to be experienced directly as a pattern, (a gestalt). Our ability to recognise a difference between one rhythm and another is evidence that we have a form of pattern recognition for temporal as well as pictorial phenomena.*

(Le Grice 2011: 168)

Le Grice echoes not only philosopher Merleau-Ponty's idea of film: '...as a temporal gestalt' (Merleau-Ponty 1964: 49) but also the more recent work of the neuroscientist Damasio, who points to the importance of image construction and neural mapping for our sense of consciousness. Of the imperceptibility of the mechanisms of brain processing: which are also temporal and unknown, he says:

*Altogether the steps behind the stage take time, time being of the essence to establish the causal link between the image of an object and and its*

*possession by you. The time elapsed is miniscule if measured by a fine stopwatch...*

(Damasio 1999: 126)

As he describes them, these crucial processes of image formation, by which we navigate through the world and all of our interactions with it, are sensory perceptual rather than necessarily visual. We form and re-form many images into fluid compositions in this 'mapping'. Damasio points to the temporality embedded in these extraordinarily complex processes:

*The entire construction of knowledge, from simple to complex, from non-verbal imagetic to verbal literary, depends on the ability to map what happens over time, inside our organism, around our organism, to and with our organism, one thing followed by another thing, causing another thing, endlessly.*

(Damasio 1999: 189)

So, the formation of new images is a crucial part of our human physiology and of our consciousness awareness of the world. In short, how we live. Watching film, even as it is constructed in its illusory mode, is satisfying as movements cross new planes and as frames form to mark time passing; i.e. as we form new images neurologically from what we encounter in projection. The processes described by Damasio are exceedingly rapid and non-conscious, taking only milliseconds. In experimental modes of using film, this 'below the radar' temporality may be called

into question, and may unsettle our sense of the time we live by, perhaps even our experience of inner time or *durée*. However, in using moving image technologies to deconstruct our perceptual experiences, we can see 'cinematic time' as a paradox. The illusory mode of cinema constructs believable realities before the camera as pro-filmic events which are captured as moments to be used in a storytelling form that condenses time; but this mode is accepted as a form of realism.

Experimental/structural modes of film/video on the other hand, intervene in spaces and across times, using technologies to record without necessarily imposing a theatrically derived *mise en scene* or performance and may consequently reveal aspects of seeing itself as perceptual operations as distinct from assumed reproductions of pro-filmic content. There may be a 'set up' for the camera, but the visual material or performance constructed is related not to storytelling, but to an investigative or less predictable outcome. If we are confronted with a moving image sequence where, instead of the naturalistic modes of seeing as exploited in narrative cinema, we have a form of temporal marking that does not allow us to take the process of seeing for granted, we may experience vertiginous, unsettled or unexpectedly emotional sensations.

We could argue that making paintings has this kind of temporal marking; responses made through embodied and consequently multisensory processes across time. Looking at paintings may also make us re-run movements and memories; their surfaces can be contemplative spaces. With painting then, we may operate in a perceptual mode where, at least momentarily, we cannot take for

granted our habitual means of using sight as a navigation tool. This may set us off balance as we look at painterly surface or after we have been engaged in painting. It is perhaps this relation to our most fundamental means of negotiating life through images that makes painting, as Merleau-Ponty suggested, '...a form of metaphysics' (Merleau-Ponty 2004b: 303). In *Eye and Mind*, Merleau-Ponty gives painting a particular status as a kind of 'secret science' because of what Veronique Foti, writing in *Philosophy Today*, calls: '...the painter's interrogation of visible appearance.' She goes on to say that:

*...the genesis of the painterly image brings into play the ontological structure of the body, notably the interconnection of sensory and motile powers, and the fact that the sentient body always retains its place amongst sensible things. [...] Vision is not a power of reproduction but of differentiation and anarchic engendering; and the painterly image participates explicitly and interrogatively in this non-constructivist genesis.*

(Foti 1986: 312)

The video works in this research operate as interrogations of visual perception related to 'affect' and I would like to look here at how the embodied spectator may connect with these through 'empathy'. In *Que Sera*, there is a singer on screen and in *Is It You?* a figure dancing. Whilst in this research, I have been engaged with 'process' rather than the illusions of cinema, these moving figures projected on screen do raise questions about 'empathy' for the spectator. I would argue however that this 'empathy' may not operate in the way that has been described in

psychoanalytically inflected film analysis since the 1970s when theorists, including Metz (Metz 1985), posited an ideal cinematic spectator and Mulvey developed the highly influential 'visual pleasures' (Mulvey 1975) theoretical perspective on cinematic identification where, following Lacanian theory, the screen is taken to be a kind of mirror. Although Mulvey's theories remain valuable in understanding aspects of primary and secondary identification, in this early period, the physical spectator was all but absent and 'affect' was largely taken to be narrative-driven.

Empathy may be defined as the close identification with and vicarious experience of another's feelings or as projection into the space of a work of art, feelings more correctly ascribed to oneself. Art historian David Freedberg and neuroscientist Vittorio Gallese have examined empathetic responses with respect to art:

*Most spectators of works of art are familiar with feelings of empathetic engagement with what they see in the work itself. These feelings might consist of the empathetic understanding of the emotions of represented others or, most strikingly, of a sense of inward imitation of the observed actions of others in pictures and sculptures.*

(Gallese/Freedberg 2007)

They go on to discuss the idea of 'embodied simulation' where:

*...a functional mechanism through which the actions, emotions or sensations we see activate our own internal representations of the body states that are*

*associated with these social stimuli, as if [...] we were engaged in a similar action or experiencing a similar emotion or sensation.*

(Gallese/Freedberg 2007)

According to Gallese working with neuroscientist Pier Francesco Ferrari in their study of the 'moving' qualities of works of art :

*...every time we observe an action made by another individual, we are able to understand its goal because the observed action is matched on our internal representation of it...*

(Ferrari/Gallese 2007: 74)

Ferrari, Gallese and Freedberg's descriptions draw on Damasio's concept of the 'as if' loop, where we react neurologically to images or representations or other visual phenomena 'as if' they really were frightening, sad, etc. even although our bodies may remain present, e.g. in watching a film. Thus 'empathy' can be considered to be something that our brains are 'hard-wired' for and this will inevitably affect our responses to art. The inscription of an image through a long exposure has duration built in to the resulting frame as in painterly seeing where time has been recorded and recoded: left in the surface as marks, strokes, erasures and alterations. Looking at neurological responses to art, Gallese and Freedberg note that 'mirror neurone' empathetic responses may be activated not only by representations of disturbing or emotional actions or scenes, but also by: '...visible traces of the artist's creative gestures, such as vigourous modeling in clay

or paint, fast brushwork and signs of the movement of the hand more generally.' (Gallese/Freedberg 2007) This is very important for the arguments presented in this thesis and appears to support the idea of temporal 'process' creating or unfolding emotional affect.

Having looked at experimental film *practice*, I would also like to look at some recent work on film spectatorship which moves beyond earlier psychoanalytic theories, Vivian Sobchack (Sobchack 1991), Laura Marks (Marks 2002) and Jennifer A. Barker (Barker 2009) have written about the embodied spectator and haptic viewing. Sobchack draws on the existential phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty in emphasising: '...how seeing *incarnates* being and connects it with the visible world in a living engagement' (Sobchack 1991: 51) and suggesting that the impact or affect of art comes in part from artists actually engaging in something close to philosophy as practice:

*The painter's medium, the filmmaker's medium is less paint or film than it is sight. Indeed, at their most rigorous, both painter and filmmaker practice a phenomenology of vision.*

(Sobchack 1991: 91)

For Sobchack then, the spectator will re-experience something of the artist's *seeing*; i.e. will experience a particular deconstruction and reconstruction of what has passed in time and space. She goes on to suggest that:

*The painter's or filmmaker's activity of seeing turns back on itself and looks not to what appears as visible, but to the visible's mode of appearing. Akin to the reflection of consciousness upon itself and its intentional activity, this active seeing interrogates itself and thereby the nature of the way things become visible in vision.*

(Sobchack 1991: 92)

This re-experiencing of what has gone is part of an embodied experience for the spectator. Focusing on artists' film/video, Laura Marks has proposed that we may experience 'haptic visuality' in these works. This term relates to the concept of haptic *perception*: '...defined as the combination of tactile, kinesthetic, and proprioceptive functions, the way we experience touch both on the surface of and inside our bodies' (Marks 2002: 2), which Marks brings together with an idea of seeing film/video which emphasises the embodied nature of the spectator-subject. This is echoed by Jennifer Barker, who also describes an embodied and haptic affinity between the perceiving self and the actual mechanisms of the moving image as we experience them, suggesting that:

*Swaggering, skulking, cowering, reaching, flinching, swaying, swerving, leaning, or simply standing upright, for example, all send messages about our place in and attitude toward the world and toward one another. [...] the film does so with dollies, camera tracks, zoom lenses, aspect ratios, and editing patterns...*

(Barker 2009: 77)

Sobchack, Marks and Barker, focusing on the embodied film spectator, seem to be broadly in agreement both with the work on 'mirror neurones' which provides neuroscientific support for 'empathetic' responses to the *processes* of art and also with Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological perspectives. The spectator re-experiences not only *what* has been seen but *how* it has been seen.

This is also an *active* spectatorship, as proposed by Gidal for experimental film. The temporal rhythms of the embodied presence are part of the experience of the work encountered: experimental film or painterly paint surface. Feminist writer Rosemary Betterton has developed the idea of a 'carnal spectator' for paintings, suggesting that the modern free spectator for art is: '...more like the painter as he made the painting, as he tried to figure out the world by moving in and out from the surface of the canvas...' (Betterton 2000: 286). These concepts of the embodied viewer responding to film motion and the carnal painting spectator as close to the painter working suggest performativity in the construction of the film works and paintings which is re-manifest in empathetic and embodied spectatorship. This raises two points. Firstly, that the work of expanded cinema may place the spectator in a space that has perceptual or temporal parallels with the painter working in the studio constructing a work through interactions in the space; and secondly that, if painting may be considered as performative, then insights may be taken from a consideration of durational performance and temporality. Again, looking at the temporality of painting through the lens of a parallel and more obviously time-based practice may provide insights; in this case by focusing on the

performativity of artist *and* spectator. Models of practice and spectatorship from performance may expose some aspects of what happens in spectator encounters with painterly surface. In particular, subjective time as experienced as a spectator of some *durational* performance, seems also to be dense, complex and multilayered.

Writing about the durational performances of Taiwanese-American performance artist Tehching Hsieh which can be said to 'mark time,' including *One year Performance 1980-1981 (Time Clock Piece)* (Hsieh 1980-81) in which the artist clocked in to a factory type time-clock every hour and *One Year Performance 1981-1982 (Outdoor Piece)* (Hsieh 1981-82) in which he lived on the streets of New York city for a year without entering any buildings, writer and curator Adrian Heathfield suggests that these works try to address:

*...the elemental questions of how a subject produces and perceives itself in and through time; how this subject moves in and through the world. Hsieh's slow labor of unworking redisposes the observer's senses, draws them out and moves them into other temporalities and kinetics of subjectivity, into other ways of being, resisting and retarding the encultured times and moves of the Modern subject.*

(Heathfield 2009: 54)

Temporality is clearly central in Hsieh's work and this description suggests that this is a temporality that challenges conventional everyday taken-for-granted time; that

makes time 'strange'. It questions the nature of what it means to be a spectator for art. Heathfield also points to the presencing and marking of time within painting: '...the labor of the artist becomes an evident subject as the time of the work's realization is strongly marked within the time of its reception' (Heathfield 2009: 17) . Painting here is performative; the body of the painter and the lived time of the painter are re-presented in the work. The rhythms of painting are both disorderly and filled with tensions in almost any mode of painting practice. Responses are made according to spatiality, posture, neurological activity, visual perception and physical gestures. It is the disorderly and multi-rhythmic temporality of this performance that we encounter in the material presence of marks and surfaces of the finished work. The 'performativity' of the painter, according to the complex rhythms of their physical activity as the work is made, is therefore a factor in the perception of temporality for the spectator of the painting. For Heathfield, there is a temporal elasticity in the spectatorship of durational performances that: '...strongly evoke lived duration and generate a slowdown within their time of reception' (Heathfield 2009: 17) and I would propose that this reflection on performance may elucidate affect in our perceptual relationship to painting.

I will expand on this idea by giving an example from my own experience. For the exhibition and symposium *One More Time* (Robinson 2011), Rachel Gomme presented the piece: *Hour (For Penelope)* (Gomme 2011) in which she spent twenty-four hours sitting very still and silent in the window space of the Libeskind Graduate Centre at London Metropolitan University knitting yarn suspended from one side of a structure back across to the other in a continuous and materially

present temporal loop. As witness to the entire duration of the performance work, my responses included a sense of elasticity in time passing. The following is an extract from the notes I made during the twenty-four hours:

*I have slowed down. I am affected and moved by the stillness into a place of calm that does not seem quite of the here and now... My time is slowed down. I am aware of the different rhythms of time passing, like a journey taken through my consciousness... How still the air is. You are on my horizon, the outer edge of my perceptive self all the time that the work goes on... A figure on the horizon within the constellation, the space we are bounded by, a comfort and a change. Architectural space, a dwelling and a structure of a personal space in the temporal architecture of the moment passing...An active participant, still there as the stillness comes through in lines of light.*

(Robinson 2008-12) <sup>20</sup>

In this space, as witness/spectator, I became particularly conscious of my perceptual horizons and of the spatial expanses of the work. I was much more aware than usual of perception and physical distances: of my own presence 'within earshot' and also visual and phenomenological equivalents or 'horizons'. In durational performance, the spectator can be constituted as a kind of present witness to a lived, temporal experience. Bringing these thoughts back to the temporality of studio practice: what was within earshot for the painter, within eye-

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<sup>20</sup> Gomme's work is concerned with temporality in the relationship between artist and spectator and in the traces left by performance and the 24 hour piece for *One More Time* provided an opportunity to reflect on this with respect to this current research into painting.

shot, in camera, in the planes sliced through the making space? This experience of staying with the presence of a mainly still and silent performer working materially across time may have parallels with the temporality of painting as it is performed in the making space and the performance re-encountered as manifest in the painterly surface. I am proposing that *Is It You* and *Que Sera* have a performativity that emerges from the ways in which the temporal presence of the lived body has been witnessed and captured photographically and that this performativity subsequently engages the spectator through empathy.

As this research developed, it became clear that the main focus was the use of film/video mechanisms languages and techniques to deconstruct aspects of temporality in painting. I have however continued with painting practice throughout, working in the light of insights derived from the video work and in a deconstructive way that allows for reflection on the perception of time in the finished surfaces. The series of twelve pictures appended here as documentation, *Studio* (Robinson 2012b) experiments further with painting from film frames, using a sequence from the feature film *Pollock* (Harris 2000) which shows Ed Harris as Jackson Pollock waking up on the street and gradually trying to stand. The shot from the original film is a medium long shot showing the whole figure and lasts only for a few seconds. The paintings make a frame-by-frame breakdown of the laboured and limited movements of the figure recorded in this sequence as small, measured shifts in time, isolated from narrative.

Each picture has constructed layers of painting that correspond to several consecutive frames overlaid (Fig. 14). These layers were produced through responsive, observational studio painting process rather than photo-media or digital copying. The sequence was extracted digitally, the frames isolated as stills and then every fifth frame used in painting. A further twelve sets of frames were then selected with a view to using two or three frames in each picture. I then worked on each painting in turn, initially using the first set of frames several times over to establish an image on the canvas and then returning to the beginning of the series to begin working on a new set. I then began to erase elements of the surface in each painting in turn before returning again to the start of the series. My intention here was to work as openly as possible, painting in response to the

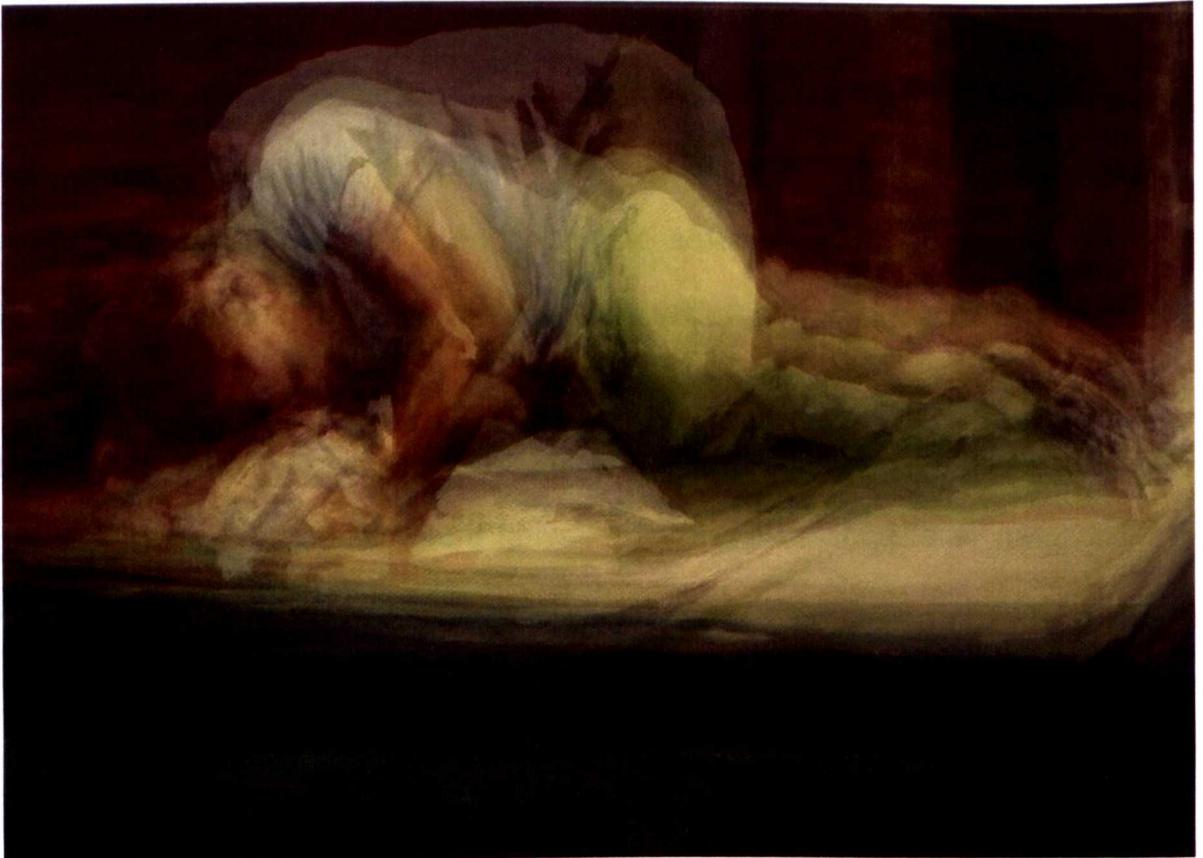


Figure 14: *Studio*, painting series, oil on canvas, 304 x 355 mm, composite image, Anne Robinson, 2012

projected frame at each stage so that shifts in contour, recognisable position and so on would be overlaid on the previous frame painting. At intermediate stages of the work, I experimented by making composite images with frames that showed *successive* planes in space and from paintings in progress in order to make more explicit the temporal nature of 'painterly' surface (see documentation 'a' on DVD). This working method differs in many respects from working from 'life'. This very distinction however, enables a closer look at temporality in these 'captured' successive moments made visible as each moment caught in a film frame contributes to a layer of paint surface. Fairly quickly, the resulting pictures took on aspects that I would associate with my definition of 'painterly' surface for this research: slippage, broken tones, erasure, ambiguity of plane, crossing lines, and so on. This perhaps makes explicit the process of temporality in painting, as the paint here has been laid down, erased, drawn with and overlaid specifically in response to sources recorded in successive moments as compared with the temporal operations in painting from 'life' where paint is applied in response to one source across a period of time. In *this* time, the painter's gaze is mobile, they change physical position, mental images are rapidly formed and fade away and alterations to the work are made according to all of these factors in the successive application of paint.

In terms of process, there was a revealing contrast between close examination of the indexical recordings of movement/time in the photographs and video sequences recorded for *It It You?* and the *Studio* paintings. Both processes

involved intuitive decision making, discovery, chance and juxtaposition in shaping the works, and yet, the paintings, even when working with film/digital source material, remain physical, embodied, unpredictable and nonverbal in a way the video sequences arguably do not. The video work responds to the painting process, intentionally setting up a work that is as a painting deconstructed. In their indexicality, their detailed recording and their deconstructive nature, the video works are both allied to the temporality of painting and distinct from it, as the embodied and material nature of painting and the connectivity between eye, brain, hand, source and matter remains more open ended.

*Is It You?* presents the spectator with visual recordings using different time bases of the same time and space. The intervals of time are covered differently and the result is perceptually unsettling. The expanded set up of the installation places the spectator as an active participant in the work and this sheds light on the nature of painterly surface, built through time with movement, gesture and displacement. Each frame/plane of *Is It You?* exposes a cross-section and each one has been recorded in a different way. In the reconstruction in the video work of something that is as a painting, there is opportunity to look at the affects of temporality in an encounter with a work which has a spatially defined presence, but does not use the matter of paint. In many ways, painting is *about* matter, *about* the alchemy of accidental fusions and fissures in the stuff applied. However, in constructing a practical essay to break apart the temporal experience of making and, in turn, looking at painting, it is important to recognise that everything in these processes happens at variable rates and often simultaneously. These micro events of painting

may be fast and tangled or slow and with contemplative and an approach that uses some kind of piece by piece forensic reconstruction seems essential. The 'iridescent chaos' described by Cézanne (Cézanne 1976: 198) may sound romantic but the experience is an element, I would conjecture, in almost any kind of painting: the sense of being *in* what you are doing and not in the regular flow of time.

The intervention of the moving image in the work here is a 'slicing through', a cross-section to find out what is there, not using the thinness of photography alone but making an experiment to deconstruct the density of painting. The processing of time in *Is It You?* unsettles us because we are confronted by different configurations of time simultaneously and side by side so that we don't know where to place ourselves. This corresponds to the layers and erasures, tones, planes and lines of painterly surface, applied through body rhythms, emotional states, mental activities and perceptual responses at different times. In the surface, these layers are all present together in a mesh or matrix of visible matter that we may respond to immediately. in our desire to look, but that we cannot perceive 'all at once.' Thus, the paint surface moves us into a time outside time.

*Is It You?* works through the *juxtaposition* of diverse unfolding temporalities in the variable rhythms of the sequences and in the nature of time passed in the frames of the piece. Processes of time are made strange because one screen has fast time and one screen slow time, placed side by side. We don't know where to place ourselves, that is, are perhaps unable to process this information in a

straightforward way. This difficulty results, for the film work, from the alterations to the time base. In painting, I would suggest that a parallel phenomenon is at work in our processing of the singular and compiled brushstrokes, marks, layers and erasures of a complex painterly surface which have been applied through different body rhythms, tensions and timings. Where they are present together in the surface, these residues of temporality affect us because we cannot process them in our stride. We may be 'moved' by the simultaneous presentations of differentiated and nonlinear temporalities in these paint surfaces. Trying to identify fields, grounds and comprehensible patterns in a painting rather than a complete mesh or matrix of visible matter, we momentarily stop taking our lived navigation processes for granted. We look down and feel vertiginous. Encounters with painting, connect with how our brains process colour, shape, line and the presence of places and things within our sensory perceptual field. Painting also connects with our embodied experience of temporality and with our desire in the world. The painting itself constitutes a body in the world, a material presence to be encountered.

Paintings are made through physical activity, with matter, with tools, through and with the body, including the activity of the brain as it processes seeing and its nervous connectivity putting signals into action. The physiological and mental activity takes place at many different speeds and is non-verbal. We see with our eyes *and* our brains. According to Damasio (Damasio 2010: 303), in the processing of sight, the connectivity between the retina and the neurones in the brain centres that process different aspects of vision takes milliseconds. These

imperceptibly rapid processes are happening simultaneously with each other and with the physical actions of arms, hands, fingers, head, posture... and, of course, all the while, with the myriad recessive activities of bodily maintenance such as breathing, heartbeat, digestive functions and so on. These visuo-perceptual connections are happening at a speed that is so much faster than words. The rhythms of the body are variable and differentiated. These rhythms are crossed by conscious intentional actions: gestures, twistings and turnings, as the painter paints. So, whilst acknowledging Mulvey's proposition that our consciousness organises '...ordered time to organize the rhythms of everyday life...' (Mulvey 2006: 83), we can see that our bodies move at many speeds simultaneously and we are not conscious of all that is happening to keep us alive.

Perhaps the painting process then mirrors our habitual modes of negotiating all aspects of our contact with the world beyond our embodied selves by making images in our brains. These images are not always visual they may be auditory or haptic, but, our relationship to painting relates to the brain's need to make images as a way of *navigating* the world. So, in a very direct sense, we can see painting as a means of understanding the world. These insights have been drawn from the field of neuroscience, but they very closely follow philosophical work concerned with painting by Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Gilles Deleuze, They also intersect with theories of embodied spectatorship and ideas from experimental practice in film. Considering painting's relationship to ontologies of being in the world, what painterly painting can reveal about how we see, we can begin to see why painting is an emotional experience and how it connects with perceptions of temporality,

revealing a potentially liberating mode of being. I would argue that the perceived elasticity of temporality for painters and spectators may be a consequence of several intersecting factors which we can understand by drawing on both theoretical material and experimental practice. So, this phenomena may arise from: temporal aspects of neurological activity in processing vision and emotions; the embodied nature of both painting practice and spectatorship; our consciousness of our own subjectivity as being-in-the world and the uncanny nature of bringing our lived and subjective temporalities into consciousness.

## **6. *Time and Again***

### **Conclusions**

Temporality and affect are perhaps the most fluid and slippery elements in how we encounter art. In this project however, I have tried to make some aspects of temporal operations in painting explicit by bringing experimental studio practice together with theoretical perspectives drawn from philosophy, film theory, visual culture and neuroscience as well as observations from experimental cinema and painterly practice; proposing that temporality is a key factor in the emotional 'affect' of painting for both painter and spectator.

This final chapter will draw together summaries of findings and insights arising from the construction of the video works and paintings made in the project, as informed by theoretical perspectives and observations from experimental cinema and painting practice. These are brought together here to form diverse inter-connections and to shed light on nature of temporality in encounters with painting and in forming conclusions in this final section of the thesis. Documentation for the various stages of the project is appended and specific works are as referenced in previous chapters. These conclusions will focus in particular on the works examined in chapters two and five; on the construction and configuration of the works as deconstructions of painting practice and visuo-perceptual processes from which we may learn about the operations of temporality in encounters with painting. Reflecting on experimental studio practice with planes and frames and

encountering the explicit marks of temporality in their completed formations, I would propose that we also find revealed in the 'painterly' surface aspects of how time works for us subjectively.

I would like to conclude then by making a reformulation of the original question:

*How can we gain a deeper understanding of the emotional affects of painting with respect to temporality by looking through the mechanisms and languages of film?*

In response to this question, I have constructed experiments in studio practice which have enabled me as an artist to look forensically at the capture of moments, frames and planes in order to gain insights into *how* we experience time passing, though our visuo-perceptual relations with the world beyond our embodied selves, primarily by reflecting on the nature of the film frame and its relations to the painting plane. Making the experimental photo/video works here has enabled me to look at differently captured frames with respect to neural image formation and how this enables us to navigate the world and to reflect on theoretical perspectives on time and subjectivity. The ways in which film technologies have been used in specifically experimental modes by other artists and the have added to this understanding of temporality derived from practical experimentation. I have brought the work of key theorists in philosophy, neuroscience, visual cultures and experimental film to bear on the problems of understanding time and affect in painterly surfaces, making unique combinations of these theoretical perspectives to

shed light on the experience of the elasticity of time in painting. Ideas from both neuroscience and philosophy in turn have shed light on the disorderly and disorienting rhythms of acts of painting practice, on the construction of painterly surface and on the emotionally charged nature of this strange temporality for the spectator and I have considered what the languages, structures and theories of 'experimental' film may reveal about subjective perceptions of temporality. I have gained insights into the nature of *painting* by using the operations of experimental film to make explicit temporality and visual perception and I would suggest that these photo/video works may also be useful in elucidating our perceptual encounters with other practices and forms in contemporary art.

This combination of practical experimentation with materials and apparatus and conceptual reflection has led me to consider in turn, what the practice of 'painterly' painting may tell us about temporality, vision and affect in a broader context; what we may learn from our visuo-perceptual encounters with painting and rhythm. Consequently, in my conclusions, I will also propose that this study of temporality in painting, made through practical experiment and reflection, concurs with the idea, which we find in the phenomenological approaches of Maurice Merleau-Ponty and in the work of Gilles Deleuze, of painting as a practical philosophy which may add to our understanding of 'being' in the world. Painting is a polyrhythmic activity where we encounter materially manifestations of the multilayered nature of time. It is a form of philosophy in practice which affects us by touching on the edges of visibility and invisibility. It sets us off balance by making us momentarily conscious

of the time we live by and by making explicit aspects of our subjective experience of time passing.

I will go on to propose that a key factor in the experience of the *elasticity* of time and its emotional 'affect' is the strangeness of the *juxtaposition* of temporal elements in the paint surface which presents perceptual difficulties for the spectator as it may create a sensation of shifting into a different psychic architecture, a different *time*, as they encounter the irregular rhythms and temporalities derived from the physical activities and temporal phenomenology of the painter re-activated in the painterly surface. The works *Que Sera* and *Is It You?* recording time through photographic processes, indicate emotional affects arising from the presentation of perceptually unsettling rhythms. I am proposing here that this may reflect on 'painterly' surface constructed through the strange and disorderly temporal processes of painting practice and I would like to include here some reflections on painting that have arisen directly from this investigation.

*If a painting 'stops' time, it is not, like a photograph, preserving a moment of the past from the supersession of succeeding moments.*

(Berger 1985: 205)

It is in the nature of our visual presence in the world that it is intertwined, 'chiasmic': the things we see, how we move amongst them are not in language; not grammatical. They are a presence in the world that we are part of, embodied and embedded in its phenomenology, in its jumble and chaos. Our perceptual

responses do not operate according to 'field and ground'. When a camera moves through a space capturing frames, what we get are planes dissecting space, planes slicing through space, with the chaos in them flattened out to a thinness. I would want to argue that painterly surface can be the most concentrated manifestation possible of embodied movement through the world as a desiring being and perhaps also the most 'affecting' traces left of this presence. Matter is applied, organised and erased according to this desiring presence and certain painterly marks appear to register motion in time. Perhaps then paintings engage with the dark spaces of vision that are in the mobile gaze, the frames between which are cut out by neural processing to avoid disorientation, thus presenting us with a registration of the unseen.

Painterly painting has a mobile density, made out of varied and crossing rhythms. We can only stay balanced in our navigation of the world according to the rhythms of our body: both the conscious intentional expressive gestures and the movements below cover, steady and rapid that we have to take for granted. We live in a state of perpetual motion, but may experience a falling away or a sense that the machine may crash if we look down. So, as we encounter, in painterly surface, a presentation of temporality that corresponds to these altered rhythms, we are unsettled.

*The painter's vision is not a view upon the outside, a merely "physical-optical" relation with the world. The world no longer stands before him though*

*representation; rather, it is the painter to whom things of the world give birth by a sort of concentration or coming-to-itself of the visible.*

(Merleau-Ponty 2004a: 312)

Merleau-Ponty gives painting a central place in phenomenology. Rejecting Cartesian dualism, he sees painting as important in the philosophical project of understanding 'being-in-the-world' and 'becoming'. He proposes painting as being productive of knowing about the world and his concept of 'chiasm' intertwines seer and seen, as in the painter's looking and marking which are temporal processes; as we look at objects emerging visibly in the light which has been reflected instants before, respond to them and then move on. This intertwining or 'chiasm' can help us to grasp how paintings work on our inner selves, on our emotions. In acts of painting, our place as temporal operatives in the world is made explicit in the cycle of our actions. gives painting a central place in phenomenology. the object and the painting under construction. We move in time and time may become 'elastic' in our embodied, subjective perception. As spectators we encounter this *strange* time, again as we are thrown into a different temporal register from the one we habitually live by. Thus we have a consciousness raising and liberating experience which enables us to gain, through encounters with painting, philosophical insights into how we navigate the world.

Painters for Merleau-Ponty shed light on the nature of seeing. He acknowledges the 'germination' of the landscape for Cézanne (Merleau-Ponty 2004b: 281) and the emergence of objects in the painter's gaze as rendering aspects of our

embodied presence and perceptions comprehensible. These 'emergences' into perception are temporal phenomena. In its grasp of how painters can affect our seeing and how painterly seeing responds to and manifests the incarnate world, Merleau-Ponty's work places embodied perception at the centre of an ontology that engages with the world and 'being' in the world as painting does and in ways that experimental and expanded uses of the moving image may elucidate in their engagements with temporality. The intertwined and dynamic nature of our embodied presence and visual perception is emphasised as he says:

*My mobile body makes a difference in the visible world, being a part of it. That is why I can steer it through the visible. Conversely, it is just as true that vision is attached to movement.*

(Merleau-Ponty 2004a: 294)

The paintings made in this research have almost all been made in series and constructed according to experiments with 'time-based' media in order to explore temporality and perception. As noted in Chapter Three, the paintings in the recent series *Studio* were made by responding to adjacent frames from a selected film sequence and each picture worked on in successive stages, perhaps even deconstructing the 'emergence' or 'germination' in Merleau-Ponty's work on painting.

Merleau-Ponty emphasises that perception always has to be embodied when he writes that: 'We are the world that thinks itself - or that the word is at the heart of

out flesh...' (Merleau-Ponty 1968: 136). The video works made in the research also take the embodied nature of perception and the entwining of seer and seen as a central element for exploration. These works limit the perceptually chaotic nature of lived presence by isolating elements of temporal perception and recombining them. *Que Sera* engages the viewer in diverse patterns of temporality by setting up a steady rhythmic pattern using the song which may itself correspond to memories for many spectators, and then introducing changes to the time-base and to the visible traces of time passed in the frames throughout the rest of the work, bringing together different manifestations of embodied temporality. *Is It You?* explores the strangeness of our embodied perceptual experiences, again, by working with juxtapositions of different time-bases, but it also introduces the further element of movement within the frame, in variable rhythmic patterns. Here, the 'affective' factors in the image have been made by manipulations of temporal elements that correspond to how traces of time have been made in paint surfaces through the activity of the painter.

Both video installation pieces have been examined in some detail above and the works themselves available here as documentation. In *Que Sera*, the spectator is confronted with a configuration of screens where one image fills the visual field and one is more peripheral but still present and demanding of attention. Over time, the expectation set up by the initial speed of the film running on the main screen at the conventional speed of 25 frames per second is disrupted by the consciousness of frames on the other screen matching for a very brief split second and then passing on. Then, the disruption becomes more pronounced as the main film slows down

and continues to do so throughout the remainder of the piece to 1000 frames per second in the last sequence. Meanwhile, the stills on the other screen are more distorted and the sound is slowed to match the main picture. The main affect here derives from the dialectic of the two screens: the juxtaposition of the slow motion footage and the long exposures. As spectators, we are unsettled by the different capacities required to process the information presented to us that is effectively two recordings of the same passage of time and the same visual elements structured by the song. This creates a strangeness for the viewer, a sense of being off balance, and consequently an emotional response that is in keeping with the speculative lyrics and the readings that may be made of the altered rate of the singing voice. This emotional response may be due in part to how we perceive different speeds of motion, or how much movement takes place in a given passage of time, as emotional where, for example, fast means happy or tense and slow means sad or contemplative. These affects are also present in *Is It You?* in which there are also passages of intermittent jump cut editing. This is a non-illusionistic, illogical and jarring condensation of time, time apparently running discontinuously and wrongly according to our habitual modes of experience and our expectations of diegetic engagement. Also, in this piece, the screens are evenly balanced and the spectator may be caught between these presences derived from the dance rhythms. Time is presented 'strangely' so that, although we could say it has been registered mechanistically, we are affected emotionally by its manifestation in the work.

The unsettling affects of these works then derives from their construction using diverse temporal elements. My understanding of how these phenomena may create affect has been influenced by Deleuze's work on film and Deleuze and Guattari's work on sensation and affect in art, but, in particular by Deleuze's work on painting: *The Logic of Sensation*. He identifies 'time itself' being painted in Francis Bacon's work: '...sometimes with the eternal force of an unchanging time, sometimes with the variable forces of a flowing time' (Deleuze 2003: 161) and he introduces the idea of 'forces' at work in painting. The 'fluid semiotics' of Deleuze's work probes the operations of temporality in painting from all sides and in all its manifestations and leaves no room for doubt as to its importance for our understanding, not only of Bacon's works, but of how painting communicates. I would suggest that Auerbach's 'painterly' cityscape paintings too may be taken as exemplary responses to Deleuze's contention that:

*...painting must render nonvisible forces visible. Sometimes these are the same thing: time, which is nonsonorous and invisible - how can time be painted, how can time be heard? And elementary forces, like pressure, inertia, weight, attraction, gravitation, germination, how can they be rendered?*

(Deleuze 2003: 57)

These questions for the painter identified by Deleuze are all connected with dynamic forces in painting which are temporally operational in construction and reception. He emphasises the centrality of rhythm in figural painting. The

experience of 'fall' in an encounter is: 'precisely the act of rhythm' (Deleuze 2003: 82). He also seems to suggest the juxtaposition of diverse temporalities in painting when he writes:

*In the coupling of sensation, rhythm is already liberated, because it confronts and unites the diverse levels of different sensations: it is now resonance...*

(Deleuze 2003:72-73)

and I would argue that this liberated rhythm and these diverse levels of sensation are partly responsible for 'affect'. Painterly surfaces presenting juxtapositions of time and irregular rhythms have aspects of the painter's memory process embedded in them and may also evoke memories in the spectator. For Proust, our involuntary memories exist in a kind of extra-temporal dimension and yet may be evoked momentarily by sensations in the world. In *Time Regained*, the final volume of *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu*, he describes his revelation that: 'the work of art was the sole means of rediscovering Lost Time.' (Proust 2000: 258), thus implying that it is only through the encounters and sensations of art that we may correspond with this extra temporal phenomenon without relying on chance memory shifts. Beth Harland, in her work on haptic time and painting, moves on from considering memory in a Freudian space of 'mourning' and is optimistic about painting, in its encounter with the digital, opening up the possibility of Proust's 'time regained' and '... reflecting more fully a lived experience of time' (Harland 2009b: 5).

In looking in particular here at painting and film, I would propose that the 'elasticity' of time experienced by painters and spectators is also a means of regaining 'lost time' and that these encounters and sensations are enriching and life enhancing experiences where we are perhaps made more fully aware of our presence in the world through acts of looking and making. These are *dynamic* experiences. The engaged and embodied painter at the centre of this investigation operates dynamically in overlapping circuits of perceiving and constructing. The spectator in turn is not frozen to the spot but moving through time and space in response to the work of art, as distinct from the steady gaze of Cartesian fixed point perspective. 'Painterly' painting becomes a plane on which are inscribed many 'frames' of time. 'To return to Merleau Ponty:

*This philosophy, yet to be done, is that which animates the painter - not when he expresses his opinions about the world but in that instant when his vision becomes gesture, when, in Cézanne's words, he 'thinks in painting'*

(Merleau-Ponty 2004a: 309)

and, according to Baldwin introducing Maurice Merleau-Ponty's essay *Eye and Mind*: '...great painters can express *durée* in which movement takes place...' (Merleau-Ponty 2004a: 291) The movements of the artist intersect in patterns, rhythms, actions and sudden diversions of gesture with decisions made in advance. The painter's arm moves as it makes a mark on the support and there is movement away from and towards the support and source. The eye itself moves, is never at rest whether awake or asleep; blink, gaze, sweep and 'glance'. As the

work progresses, 'affect' emerges from these patterns made in the time of painting. As *durée*, for Bergson, defines our humanity, so movement defines us as sentient, alive, engaged beings in the world. Painter Barbara Bolt gives us a sense of drawing as a fundamental act in motion:

*Charcoal, body, rubber and paper enter an intense state, a state of varying movements of speed, hesitation, slowness and rest. My hand becomes charcoal marking the paper. Charcoal and speed and landscape become within the paper...*

(Bolt 2004: 46)

As part of the flux of time/life, the eye and vision, here especially the painter's vision, are in motion. The sensual matter of paint has also been applied in motion, spread thick, stretched thin, in broken tones or smooth delineations of space. These residues of motion in the surface make time unfold as we find ourselves on the threshold of fresh perceptions. Traces of human temporality are evident in 'painterly' paintings: paint as viscera, 'memento mori' in the brush trails, scraped across time, broken and decaying. I would argue that the haptic response of the spectator to painting is not solely due to intentionally expressionistic marks and patterns, but to the qualities that emerges from the engagement with time that the painter as subject, body, consciousness and non-conscious mind has experienced during the time of making the work.

In his reflections in *The Invisible Body* on the slow motion filming of Matisse, Norman Bryson asks: *'How are we to think that other space of duration, that other body of labour?'* (Bryson 1983: 163) The painter operates in a kind of 'vertical time' connecting with nervous optimism and a visceral sense of seeing from inside our blood-and-guts selves, connecting with the matter of being alive. The space of the painter is also then a performative space: movements are performed in the studio for a future spectator. The subjective and, arguably, 'elastic' temporality that connects with the spectator is inextricably linked with this performance of painting in time. Describing the durational performance 'lifeworks' of Tehching Hsieh<sup>21</sup>, Adrian Heathfield, says:

*...the temporal and the kinetic become the source and modality of Hsieh's questioning of subjectivity. Hsieh asks how a subject constitutes its sense of self, its freedom to act and speak; how it relates to its environmental outsides, its senses of estrangement and belonging...*

(Heathfield 2009: 57)

Something of this kind of questioning may take place in painting considered as the document of a human presence in motion. The performative temporal qualities that are embedded in the surface of painterly paintings are irregular and placed according to the painter's vision: the embodied and mobile eye and the rapid synaptic connectivity described by the neuroscientists. A painting may be the space where the components of vision as a sensory mechanism connect with

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<sup>21</sup> Heathfield's book also includes texts by Peggy Phelan and Carol Becker, responding to these moving and ground-breaking durational performances.

memory, consciousness and desire. Before a mark is placed or erased, there are moments of tension; moments in which the future shape of the work is uncertain. In these times, alternative futures emerge and recede and leave their trace. As with Hsieh's work, this performativity may raise questions for the spectator relating to their own subjectivity. Returning to Merleau-Ponty, we can see how the artist, in the midst of seeing and making, fits his notion of the 'chiasm' as the disorderly nature of temporality in paint emerges from the relations between source, body and surface in illuminated space. The seer is seen:

*Since the same body sees and touches, visible and tangible belong to the same world. It is a marvel too little noticed that every movement of my eyes - even more, every displacement of my body - has its place in the same visible universe that I itemize and explore with them, as, conversely, every vision takes place somewhere in the tactile space.*

(Merleau-Ponty 1968: 134)

Spectatorship takes place at some geographical and temporal distance from the making of the work and in the absence of the painter. In lived experience, a being you can see but not touch or conversely touch but not see would be haunting and mysterious. I would propose that the residues left by the the body and the memories that have moved in time to construct a painting have an uncanny aspect for the spectator.

How does painting relate to the perception of time? Painting is an activity where many things are happening simultaneously; not all of them conscious. Making a material response to something in front of one's eyes also engages entirely non-conscious brain activity and, arguably, residues from the unconscious mind. Taking arguments from both neuroscience and psychoanalysis, we would be faced with the possibility that on the one hand, the neurochemical synaptic connections made in the brain are microcosmically rapid and, on the other, according to Freud and as distinct from the preconscious system, processes in the unconscious : '...are *timeless*, i.e. are not chronologically ordered, are not altered by the passage of time...' (Freud 2005: 69). The active time of painting practice then may show up, if filmed, as a only few visible seconds, but would have a much deeper resonance if measured in the temporalities of the mind and within layers of consciousness. Beth Harland suggests that painting time may be closer to film, as it:

*...affords us a similar attention to complex temporal structure, time folded within process, as does film when operating in the realm of Deleuze's time-image.*

(Harland 2009)

Perhaps, even if it is not consciously perceived through the senses in its complexity, this painting time is close to an externalisation of Bergson's 'inner' time, described as *durée*. This 'elastic' time of painting which may be lost time regained, is experienced as an expansion of our everyday consciousness. Time is stretched in the encounter with painting. When we try to examine this expanded temporality,

we may find that our consciousness of our selves in the world is enhanced as painting and 'painterly' surfaces intensify our awareness of our own visuo-perceptual systems as we navigate the world through fluid and rapid image construction. As noted above, according to neuroscientists such as Damasio, there are instances of human temporal experience which differ from the regular 'frequency' include 'daydreaming or vertigo where we find ourselves in what is usually called an 'altered state'. I would propose now, following this investigation, that this kind of immersive and unsettling experience of painting, with its expanded and intense temporality for the subject, is not only an altered state, but valuable in allowing us to understand more about *how* we see and to more fully inhabit moments of being.

This project has been an attempt to deconstruct the temporal phenomenology of painting using experimental photographic, moving image and editing processes; thus experimenting with media that always and inevitably work with time and in which time often has a more quantifiable presence. There is perhaps a 'making strange' through process in using devices, to register external phenomena, which have their own mechanical/digital operations that are distinct from human perception. This is not only a matter of technical apparatus. Experimental film practice that moves away from illusionistic representation and narrative may allow a distance from which to contemplate the strangeness of correspondence between artist and source in the world; of being witness to facts in the world; being witness to many moments passing; navigating the horizons of a space and working within the painter's reach; the strangeness of making a painting.

Peter Gidal has suggested that: 'Each work must be brought forth to clarity from the multilayered inscriptions that it is.' (Gidal 1976: 6). His films, such as *Room Film 1973* are disorienting, refuse any part of the of illusionistic project and push us to understand the nature of looking itself. They may also be taken as perceptual philosophy, expanding our grasp of being-in the-world and our engagement with *durée*. Gidal's work refuses utterly the subject/object dichotomy inherent in most other forms of filmmaking and proposes an entirely reflexive operational system. Working partly from the 'material piece of time' idea in Gidal's theories of structural materialist film (Gidal 1976: 3) and from the precise poetics of experimental film, it has been possible, in this project, to set up parameters for experiments that have used the elements of 'film' that are time-related: shutter speed, depth of field, focus and aperture, duration of shots, frame rate in recording, audio recording, manipulation of the time-base in editing, editing rhythms, transitions, frame animations and duration of works. In its conventional, illusory mode, the frame rate of film operates to all intents and purposes as a correspondent to the perceived rate of our embodied experience. Accepting the indexical nature of operations that catch residues of the pro-filmic event, in its experimental modes, film can make us question the rhythms of lived consciousness and can unsettle or disturb the spectator not by the construction of narratives or the placing of disturbing content, but through process and in our response to the phenomenology of altered temporalities.

The space of expanded cinema is always reflexive and immersive and, for the spectator, corresponds perceptually to the painter's studio space: mobility and a variable distance from the image, the requirement of the spectator to be active and the breaking of the screen in the sense of conventional cinematic illusion. The spectator is placed in the midst of the process, placed between projectors screens, sounds and motions and where the time of the making is the time of the making and the time of perception. In William Raban's *Diagonal*, for example, the 'affect' is derived from spectator actively placing together elements of experience temporally and spatially. In Steve Farrer's *Machine*, the spectator is placed at the centre of the viewing space and in a position from which they are reconstructing an affective experience. It also draws on existing knowledge about perceptions of temporality and frame rates in film and uses this to deconstruct an experience of seeing that questions vision itself, using the mechanics of camera, projector and space of reception.

One of the key works of experimental film, often seen as the first really 'structural' film, is Michael Snow's *Wavelength*, (1967), consisting of one long slow zoom across a city loft apartment. It is explicit in its aims to place the spectator in a position of heightened tension within the cinematic apparatus, as the camera moves steadily forward shifting the horizon of 'now'. Snow says:

*I thought that really the issues hadn't really been stated clearly about*

*film [...] in the way that Cézanne, say, made a balance between the colored goo that he used, which is what you see if you look at it that way, and the forms that you see in illusionary space.*

(Snow in Sitney 2002: 355)

In other words, Snow was aiming to use film to reveal aspects of the phenomenology of perception. In the temporality of the processes of moving image work, to an extent, the artist 'lets go'. In the process of an image made photographically, although elements like composition, framing, consideration of lighting conditions and so on may be planned in time as part of the working process, the picture itself has a slice of time on a single immobile plane where the light reflected from people or objects has brushed the sensors of whatever mechanism is used to make a flattening out of the instant; the tension here is in the moment of shutter capture. Perhaps it is in 'experimental' film that we can see most clearly Benjamin's unconscious optics (Benjamin 1999).

Drawing on the material examined in Chapter Four, I would propose that filmmakers such as Farrer, Rhodes and Raban, whose experimental works use the mechanics of film to manifest temporality, make visual perception itself explicit in a direct engagement with the spectator. In exposing the temporal operations of seeing and the embodied nature of perception, such film works also help us to reflect on what happens in encounters with painting: the connections between subjective experiences of distorted temporality and emotional affect. These works

are also characteristic of Vivian Sobchack's suggestion that *both* painting and film interrogate visual perception:

*The painter or filmmaker, however, as a condition of painting or filmmaking, regularly interrogates the coming into being of figures from the indeterminate and latent ground of the visible...*

(Sobchack 1991: 91)

Although the model of painting considered here may present recognisable images, I have suggested above that it is important to problematise notions of figuration and resemblance and that an encounter with an effectively resolved 'painterly' painting holds something akin to Barthes' 'punctum' in the photograph (Barthes 1984: 25) because of the connection back to the actual handling of the paint. The studio triangulation: hand-eye-painting, makes an analogue image of motif, object, thought or vision in a mode that materialises its own processes. Barbara Kennedy suggests that, in paintings: '...form and matter are in fact not so easily separable: they are more interestingly connected.' (Kennedy 2000: 111). So, although a painting may present the spectator with recognisable forms, these are not mere resemblances but forces or intensities.

Throughout this research, I have drawn on Deleuze and Merleau-Ponty's understanding of encounters with painting as productive of philosophical insights into perception and the nature of the embodied subject in the world. I have brought their ideas together with reflections on experiments in art practice, with

reflections from filmmakers and also with some scientific insights. Although in no sense seeking to justify philosophical insights through science, recent work from neuroscience and in the emerging field of neuroaesthetics about the importance of neural mapping, the formation of images and the brain conceived as a creative system appear to correspond directly with aspects of their work. As Merleau-Ponty says, we have to return to:

*...that body that is an intertwining of vision and movement.*

(Merleau-Ponty 1993: 123)

Norman Bryson, introducing Warren Neidich's book *Blow Up*<sup>22</sup> echoes Merleau-Ponty in describing the emergence of images in consciousness as: '... both self and world co-inhabit and mutually constitute each other through a perpetual' crossing over' or chiasmus...' (Bryson 2003: 11) Neuroscience has also chimed with early twentieth century theorists of aesthetics such as Robert Vischer and Teodor Lipps<sup>23</sup> in proposing the existence of 'empathetic' responses to works of art; for example, in the work on mirror neurones and the 'as if' pattern of responses, described here by Gallese and Freedberg::

*Our capacity to pre-rationally make sense of the actions, emotions and sensations of others depends on embodied simulation, a functional*

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<sup>22</sup> Neidich's book takes the 1966 film *Blow Up*, directed by Michelangelo Antonioni as a model for exploring photography, cinema and the brain in the light of the emerging field of 'neuroaesthetics.'

<sup>23</sup> For an account of Lipps' ideas about empathy and optical illusions, see: <http://ajp.psychiatryonline.org/article.aspx?articleid=100211> (accessed 04/04/2012).

*mechanism through which the actions, emotions or sensations we see activate our own internal representations of the body states that are associated with these social stimuli, as if [...] we were engaged in a similar action or experiencing a similar emotion or sensation.*

(Gallese/Freedberg 2007: 198)

We are responding to what 'happens' in a work of art then through pre-conscious understandings of our embodied selves. I have noted above the importance for this research of the temporal aspects of neuroscientific discoveries about image making and of the proposals drawn from these by Damasio about emotions and by Zeki about how art works. In the encounter with painting, the brain may be responding to an orchestration of movements and functions embedded in the paint surface so that there is an echo, reflection, correspondence between brain activity and what is happening in the paint surface itself, or second order brain mapping; the 'as if' loop.

A number of subsidiary enquiries about the operations of temporality and affect in art have emerged at different stages of this project and pursued as experiments and reflection. Some however, would entail considerable research beyond the scope of this thesis. For example, extending the video experiments to with temporality to include more on colour and camera movements or using analogue film processes to further examine the relationship between material and digital frames. I would suggest that there is also work to be done using film with projection facilities that allow projection at a higher frame rate, either matching or otherwise

manipulating the frame rate of recordings in order to explore the possibilities of making a denser marking of time available for the spectator. It may also be productive to explore temporality in painting by working from life and in relation to performance art. Further work on theorising affect in 'painterly' surfaces as specifically defined here could also prove useful and I would fully acknowledge that further areas of exploration could include 'chronochromie', Deleuze's idea of colour and time. Following up any of these aspects of the work would require further practice-led research.

Finally one's response to things in painting is wordless...

(Auerbach 2010)

As Auerbach suggests, we respond to paintings without words, emotionally as well as intellectually. Painting is beyond language. Barbara Bolt suggests that: '...the dynamic object prevents the painting from being reduced to just a sign' (Bolt 2004: 50). I would propose that our perception of human movement on screen is also something that goes well beyond intellectual interpretations of narrative-defined action or anything that could be framed linguistically. It is more closely connected with physiological responses where sensation and affect impact directly on our nervous system. In this research, I have thus found that examining the issue of temporality in painting by making experiments in film practice, has afforded opportunities for reflection that would not have been possible through writing alone.

By using different exposures, frame rates and time bases to record the same pro-filmic event and by *juxtaposing* these, the film work placed before the spectator here manifests *presences* from previous times, from previous moments that were, in some instances, stretched or expanded by the technology and in others condensed. So, a fast move across screen may evoke an empathetic motor response and, if slower movements are also taking place simultaneously in a different area of our perceptual field, this may be unsettling, hard to handle, as varying rhythms are juxtaposed; as in a painting where we perceive the whole, but as we look, more elements become available to us. We may experience emotional uncertainty as we seek to follow marks that variously in our perception: cut across, follow, move smoothly and calmly, speed across planes or move around in the frame. In painterly painting, we may have a rhythm that is hard to follow; an impossible rhythm that stops and starts; that stutters and does not allow seamless continuity. This may be like the language of experimental film: rhythms that are broken and move at different speeds as they engage us; perhaps even does violence to our habitual mode of experiencing time. So, as we look, we 'fall' into another temporality, as we do in intense engagements with painting. As we encounter a painting, we respond in our own inner time which is also like a kind of dreamscape where the expanse of a painting and the different experiences it provokes, including perceptions of temporality, are spread out for us and circulate wordlessly until we can begin to make them coalesce. Merleau-Ponty suggests that 'The painter, whatever he is, while he is painting, practices a magical theory of vision.' (Merleau-Ponty 2004a: 298).

What can the *construction* of experimental moving image works, operating outside of language and which have their own affective properties, tell us about painting and temporality and about the affects of painterly surface? Throughout this research, I have moved between practical experiment and theoretical reflection in order to address my initial questions. I have found that bringing strategies and perspectives from different disciplines together, into into unique configurations, has been highly productive. I would like to conclude here by focusing on proposals mainly derived from practice. Reflecting on the configurations of *Que Sera* and *Is It You?* there are several insights to be drawn about temporality, affect and painting, which I will now summarise. The alterations of frame rate pushes us as spectators to question our lived experience of pace and embodied subjective temporality. The duration made visible in long exposures also exposes aspects of how we see in time: 'seeing' as a cumulative phenomena with traces of the past continuing into the present.

This increased consciousness of time passing touches on a sense of finitude and provokes an awareness of the brevity of life. This is an uncanny experience. It also touches on our memories and on the sense of memory as 'time outside of time' brought back to us in the works of art as Proust suggests. In the works as installations, the *juxtaposition* of recordings of the same phenomena with different time bases sets up impossible rhythms for our perceptual selves. The rhythms of what we encounter perceptually correspond to the multitude of conscious and non-conscious rhythmic patterns that keep us going along with more intentional gestures and movements and compel us, for an instant, to question the co-

ordinates of these motions, thus creating a sense of disequilibrium. This is unsettling, as it sets up a dizzying sense for our neural processing of the images and is also metaphysically disquieting as we are aware of our balance in the world being tilted. There are also mechanisms of empathy at work in seeing the figure on screen singing or dancing, as we respond to the alterations of the movement and voice. These alterations may be affecting because of the way in which we empathetically mirror these frames, apparently operating according to a different time frame. I would propose that, because the alterations in these recordings have been made by mechanical/digital means, they remain essentially indexical in their rendering of what was before the camera and in their re-presentation of this.

So, the key factor that has been altered in isolation here is *time*, which has apparently been made elastic through shutter speed and frame rate. This allows us to see that the emotional affects of these experimental works in themselves arises substantially, though not exclusively, from *temporal* factors. Brian Massumi refers to: '... affect as a suspension of action-reaction circuits and linear temporality in a sink of what might be called "passion"...' (Massumi 1995: 6). We can draw inferences then about how temporal alterations in the visual/perceptual field may produce emotional affects, as we are presented with single and successive images operating in temporal modes that do not correspond to our expectations; that unsettle the time we live by. We experience these visual/temporal distortions in the encounter with an artwork as emotional and yet paradoxically liberating for us as an expanded perceptual experience. If we consider this with respect to painting, we can see how temporality is perceived by the spectator in the material surface of a

painting: in its tones, lines, planes, textures, broken tone and so on. We 'read' forms which correspond to our own experience of the world around us and this includes temporality. If we accept the centrality of image making and mapping for brain function and consequently our navigation of the world, then we could argue that paintings mirror this experience of navigating the world in what Damasio refers to as the 'as if' loop. As spectators of painting then we are also active and engaged with the 'chiasm' of painter and painting. Merleau-Ponty reminds us that:

*The painter can do no more than construct an image, He must wait for this image to come to life for other people. When it does, the work of art will have united these separate lives; it will no longer exist in only one of them like a stubborn dream or a persistent delirium,...*

(Merleau-Ponty 2004b: 284)

I am also proposing here that insights gained from considering the affect of encounters with painting may be of value more widely in informing our understanding of visual perception and subjectivity. It has been a key feature of this research to recognise that paintings are not instant captured 'all at once' and that what we encounter as a painting has been made across time, through successive marks, erasures, and interventions, revealing itself to us across time and not all at the same time. I have also derived the insight from the consideration of film works and paintings here, that, although we cannot recall or replay what it is to be inside our lived experience from moment to moment, that encounters with painting in which marks and planes have been worked over, erased and

reconstructed to make the 'painterly' surface, do present us with a kind of witnessing of moments past, a strange presentation of temporality as translated in painting. As in the video pieces here, which present us with time passing that has been recorded in different ways, in open, 'painterly' paint surfaces, our habitual rhythms of seeing are so unsettled as to create disturbances in our sense of time passing in the present. I am proposing then that the visual architecture of painting may make explicit our perceptual processes, considered both philosophically and in relation to neuroscience. Painterly' works unsettle the time we live by, but in doing so, they may enable us to momentarily inhabit an expanded and potentially liberating mode of being in time.

Painting, as in Gidal's formation of structural materialist film is also a 'material piece of time' (Gidal 1976: 3). The painter operates according to a dynamic time-machine operation of looking and action as the surface emerges out of marks made according to application, gesture and erasure across time in the disorderly rhythms of painting practice. These rhythms may also emerge from a distorted time sense for the painter, as prolonged looking results in a state of heightened awareness. The embodied presence of the artist and the varied time bases of this embodiment are central to the construction of the paint surface. The temporal potentiality of the painter's neurochemistry, image processing, and the non-conscious activities keeping the body and mind in balance are working simultaneously with their physical activity; the application of paint. This activity has points of tension and release, periods of intense activity and then contemplation, all of which unfold irregularly over lived time and are embedded in the paint surface.

Correspondingly, in painterly surface, time is present as material phenomena made available for the spectator out of the painter's temporality in making the work. So, we may argue for painting as performative, with the material residue of the performance to be subsequently witnessed by the spectator.

*And we are so slow. Life is so rapid.*

(Cixous 1991: 111)

What kind of temporality do we live by, paint in or encounter paintings in? Temporal operations are elusive, perhaps even impossible to grasp. Most of us navigate the world through seeing: a process in which temporality is embedded. What we are able to see is determined by distance and by reflected light which is already in the past, so that we are always looking back. The moments, images, fragments we can see have always already slipped away. We can't catch them, we can't hang on, we can't go back. So our subjective temporality and its relation to vision is deeply emotional. We live in time without fully understanding it and yet all we have are the precious days of our lives. So, how does time relate to painting? Derrida's proposal that: 'Time... gives nothing to see. It is at the very least the element of invisibility itself.' (Derrida 1994: 31) points to the impossibility of seeing or grasping time. Yet, I am proposing here that the slicing of space in multiples, through the marks of the painter and embedded in layered 'painterly' surface, makes us re-live time: travel back into our memories through other experiences of time. Time for the painter and the spectator is altered. In trying to understand this multi-faceted and slippery phenomenon, different facets of how our subjective

temporality works may be elucidated by Merleau-Ponty's 'chiasm' of seer and seen and his propositions about painting as a metaphysics and by Deleuze's work on the 'forces' and 'sensations' of painting. We also have confirmation of temporality as an aspect of visual perception, brain processing and empathetic responses in the neuroscientific discoveries of Damasio, Zeki et al, making it clearer than ever that our human embodied subjectivity is closely intertwined with our experience of living through time.

Drawing conclusions from this research, I would propose that we can learn from film, video and photography by making deconstructive experiments that allow us to see what we are not usually conscious of as time passes; to look at visual perception itself and to gain insights into the affects of painting. Experimental film/video can reveal the film frames which are like planes slicing through space and time and manifesting non-illusory phenomena, capturing mobile sections. These experimental works and their indexical operations are directly engaged with temporality and we find that the manifestations of this engagement can make direct emotional connections which by-pass conventional semiotics and verbal language to have a more visceral affect. Aspects of film language therefore may usefully intersect with painting practice in order to better understand the nature of 'painterly' surface and its affects. The moving image experiments in this research present us with simultaneous and yet contradictory perceptual experiences by juxtaposing different temporal modes. They 'expand' the moment, allowing us to examine the perceptual encounter as it throws us into an unexpected time register where perhaps we are able to contemplate our 'inner' time. If we take these experiments

as deconstructions of painting process and reception, we may have some elucidation of how temporality operates as affect. We may recognise that 'painterly' surfaces set up impossible rhythms for the spectator and that time is presented 'strangely' in painting. I would propose that this 'strangeness' liberates us from the set patterns we live by and offers us momentary insights into the nature of our being in the world. As Merleau-Ponty has said:

*Only one emotion is possible for this painter: the feeling of strangeness...*

(Merleau-Ponty 2004b: 281)

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Robinson, A. (2008a) *Lighter Darker*, site specific five screen video work with sound, dimensions variable, World Museum Liverpool, Plenarium, *Maybe in the Sky*

Robinson, A. (2008c) *Lighter Darker* painting series, 300 works, oil on to photographic prints, 127 x 203 mm

Robinson, A. (2008d) *Alf*, painting series, 28 x works, 304 x 406 mm

Robinson, A. (2009) *Afterlife* painting series, 30 x works, 304 x 406 mm

Robinson, A. (2010) *Que Sera* two-screen photo/video installation work with sound, 17 min. dimensions variable

Robinson, A. (2012a) *Is It You?* multi screen photo/video installation work with sound, 24 min., dimensions variable

Robinson, A. (2012b) *Studio* series of 12 paintings, oil on canvas, 304mm x 355mm

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Anne Robinson, 2012

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Anne Robinson, 2012

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Anne Robinson, 2012

### **Acknowledgements:**

To the Tate Archive for access to viewing the Auerbach paintings and drawings.

Permissions have been sought from the Tate for permission to reproduce the Auerbach painting *To the Studios 1979-80* in this thesis and from the Lux for reproductions of artists' works.

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*The Elusive Digital Frame and the Elasticity of Time in Painting*

Anne Elizabeth Robinson

London Metropolitan University

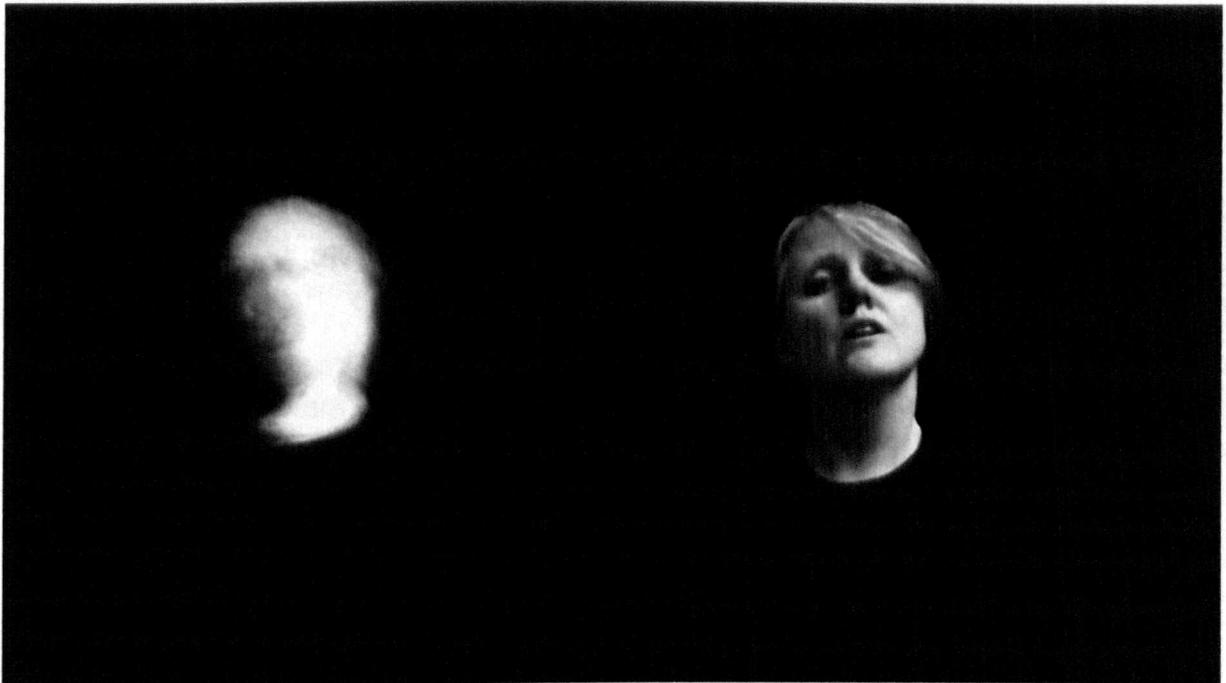
PhD in Fine Art

April 2012

**APPENDIX A**

**Practical work completed:**

1. ***Que Sera* (2010) two-screen photo/video installation work with sound, 17 min. dimensions variable**



**Description:**

*Que Sera* provides the spectator with an unsettling and disrupted experience of time deconstructed through cinematic devices and catching the spectator in a circuit of traces and afterimages. The experience of sound in the work, the

'remembered song', is also immersive, pushing language to the threshold of recognisable auditory form.

Place of first exhibition:

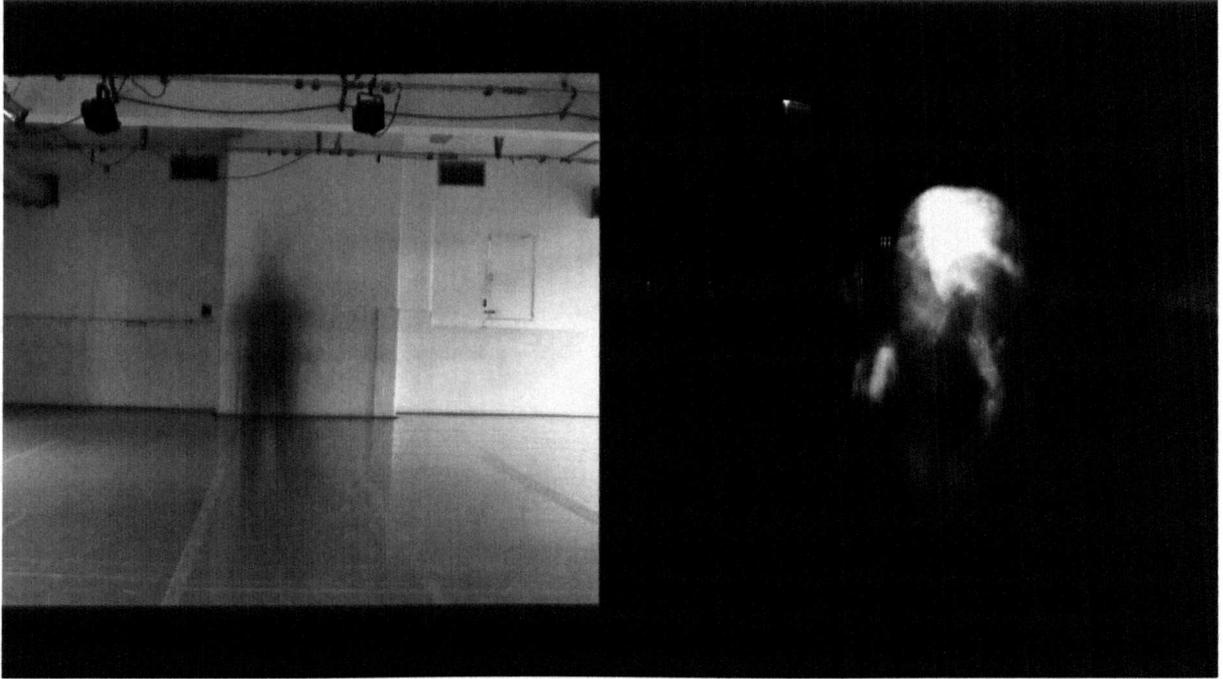
*Correspondence:* Facility supported group exhibition at Libeskind Graduate Centre, June 2010

Research context:

*Que Sera* is an experimental two-screen video work exploring perceptions of time using long exposure photography and high speed filming. The sequences and images have been constructed by filming for the length of time it takes to sing a song, using a range of photographic, film and video strategies which alter frame rate and shutter speed, thus altering the duration of captured frames. The material was then reconstructed as a double sequence creating a dialectical relationship between stillness movement, clarity, blur and so on.

*Que Sera* draws on the practice of the 'structural materialist' experimental films and works of 'expanded cinema' made in the 1970s and 80s by film-makers and artists such as: Lis Rhodes, William Raban, Steve Farrer and Peter Gidal. This work also engages with Gidal's theoretical work on structural materialist film, in particular his idea that: '... In film, duration as material piece of time is the basic unit' (Gidal 1976: 3). The research also draws on theoretical material on time and perception from Bergson, Deleuze and Guattari and Merleau-Ponty's later essays on painting and visual perception.

**2. *Is It You?* (2012) *Is It You?* multi screen photo/video installation work with sound, 24 min., dimensions variable**



**Description:**

*Is it You?* has been constructed using footage of the artist dancing, filmed in two dance studios: one with white walls and in daylight and one with black walls and using low level artificial light. One screen shows mainly long exposure photographs and the other moving image sequences at variable rates and rhythms. The work raises questions about perceptions of time, the continuous flow of the spectator's experience and about affect, temporality, rhythm and the embodied spectator; using cinematic process experimentally to grasp painting's impossible rhythms.

**Place of first exhibition:**

JCAMD: *At First Sight*, April 2011: selected elements exhibited as work in progress

Research context:

*Is It You?* is an experimental work constructed using long exposure photography and high speed filming and experimenting with altered frame rates and time bases in order to consider frames and visuo-perceptual experiences. The sequences and images have been constructed using audio responses to dance music tracks, as listed in notes for the written thesis and are presented on the installation screens as a dialectical experience of stillness and movement. As with the earlier work, *Que Sera, Is It You?* draws on 'structural materialist' experimental film practice and works of 'expanded cinema.'

### **3. Portfolio of documentation of earlier/additional works**

**NB:** not all works listed are intended for inclusion final research degree submission, but included here for reference

a) **Studio**, (2012) *Studio* series of 12 paintings, oil on canvas, 304mm x 355mm



See slides and additional material on DVD

Description:

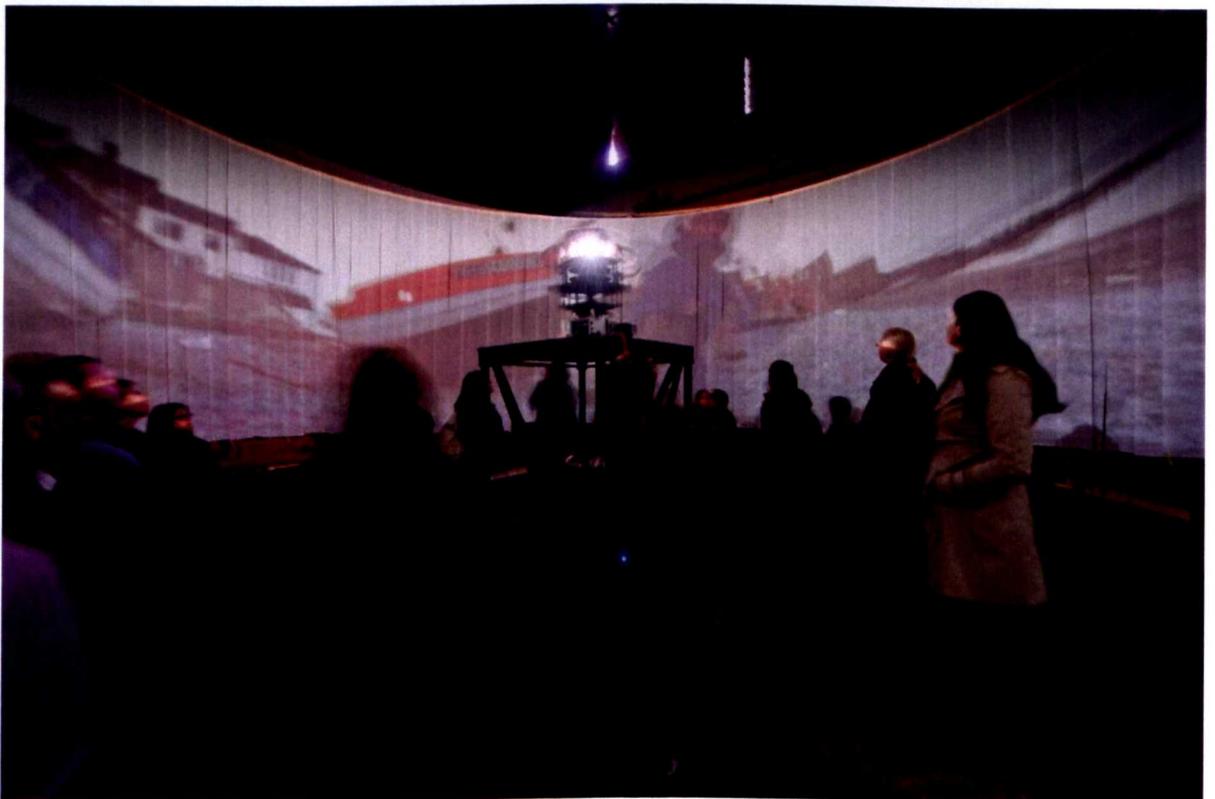
The *Studio* series of twelve paintings experiments with painting from film frames, using a sequence from the feature film *Pollock* which shows Ed Harris as Jackson Pollock waking up on the street and gradually trying to stand. The shot from the original film lasts only for a few seconds. The paintings make a frame-by-frame breakdown of the laboured and limited movements of the figure recorded in this sequence as small, measured shifts in time, isolated from narrative. Each picture has constructed layers of painting that corresponded to several consecutive frames overlaid. Shifts in contour, recognisable position and so on are thus overlaid on the previous frame painting.

Place of first exhibition: N/A

Research context:

The paintings have been made by building layers through responsive, observational studio painting process, but according to a systematic use of the original film frames in order to explore visual perception and temporality and allow for deconstruction of the finished paint surface.

b) Documentation from ***One More Time*** exhibition and symposium at London Metropolitan University, 20th-22nd October, 2011



Steve Farrer: *The Machine*, installed in the old boilerhouse at London Metropolitan University, 2011

See booklet in appendix C

Research context:

This project brought together several artists from diverse contemporary art practices, including performance, photography and film, working with ideas about marking and spatializing time. *One More Time*, ran for three days as an exhibition in the Libeskind Graduate Centre and the Old Boilerhouse at London Metropolitan University. There was an artists' symposium on Friday 20th October. The invited artists were: Steve Farrer, Rachel Gomme, David Howells, Rona Lee, Leibniz, Laura Malacart, Paul St George, William Raban and Claire Zakiewicz all of whom have been engaged with practice-led research in contemporary art or with experimental film practices. The project was curated by Anne Robinson.

See also details online at:

<http://www.londonmet.ac.uk/thefacility/projects/the-facility-re-launch/one-more-time.cfm>

&

<http://onemoretimeart.wordpress.com>

c) **Studio documentation** of painting processes, video frames and source material: video and slides on DVD, 2006-11

As slides and Quicktime movies on DVD



d) **Afterlife** (2009) painting series, 30 x works, 304 x 406 mm; **Alf** (2006-08) painting series, 28 x works, 304 x 406 mm; **Still Moving** (2007- 9) painting series, oil on canvas, 18 x works, 203mm x 253mm



Description:

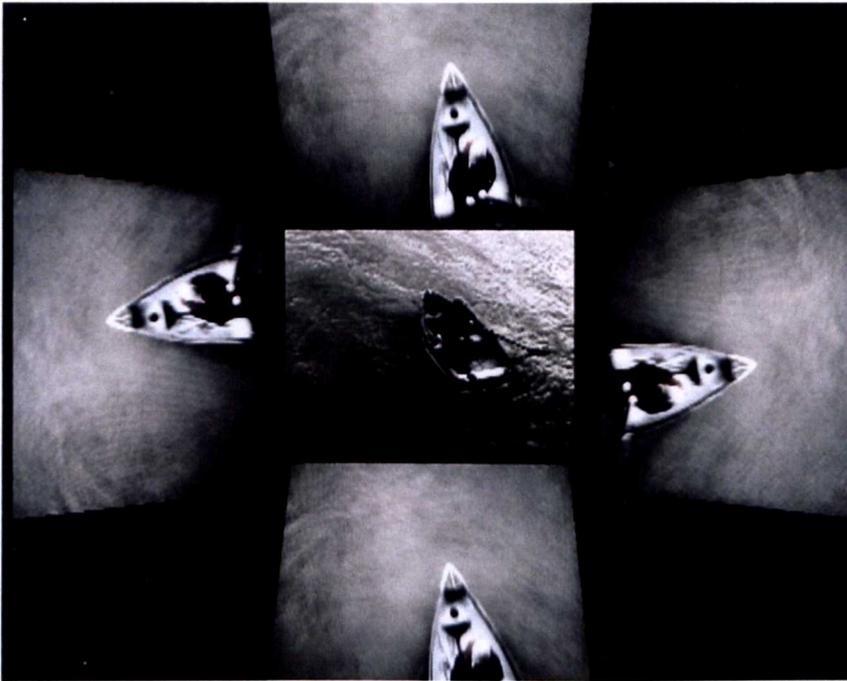
As with the video work, *An Occulting Light*, the paintings in these three series are worked from single frames and fragments from films: *The Cruel Sea*, *Ghost Ship*, and *In Which We Serve* and also from a single family photograph. The paintings are intended to be seen in series.

Place of first exhibition: *SlipFrame*, APT Gallery, London, June 2007; *Slow*, JCAMD, September 2009

Research context:

Considering time in painting, these paintings aim to explore the slipperiness of substance and time in this working process: what happens when we paint, in terms of the layers in the dialogic surface, making a density of time for the spectator. In each series, there are experiments with painting repeatedly from the same frame, with exploring the 'space between' frames and with using consecutive capture freeze frames. enabled me to reflect on the idea of slippage; from picture to picture and on the paint surface itself.

e) *Lighter Darker* (2008), site specific five screen video work with sound, dimensions variable, see DVD



Description:

This five screen video work was exhibited under an exhibition title of: *Maybe in the Sky* to coincide with the 400-year anniversary of Galileo's 'invention' of the telescope and was supported by funds from Arts Council England and the London Met University. Sections of the moving image sequence have been made using paintings.

Place of first exhibition: The Planetarium, World Museum Liverpool: *Maybe in the Sky*, 2008

Research context:

This piece uses movement outside of the frame across the space of five screens. Thus time is explored spatially. The piece consists of seven moving image sequences made using different manipulations of the frame. In this work, I have begun to explore working processes related to structural-materialist film, work with

ideas from expanded cinema and also with indexical relationships of light and time. The piece relates both the function and conceptual resonance of the telescope, or spyglass developed at the beginning of the 17th century by Galileo.

f) ***Lighter Darker painting series*** (2008), 300 works, oil on to photographic prints, 127 x 203 mm, see slides on DVD



Description:

These paintings were made by painting on to printed out film frames, extracted from one of the video sequences for *Lighter Darker*, by working from the frame ahead, projected in the studio.

Place of first exhibition: Liverpool, as above, in context of Planetarium work. As paintings: *Slow*, JCAMD, September 2009

Research context:

The construction of these small paintings enabled me to work directly with consecutive recorded moments in time, using the frames from the video, so that, in the studio practice, I was always suspended between frames. This enabled me to reflect on the visible temporality in the surface

g) ***An Occulting Light*** (2007), video installation with sound, dimensions variable,  
See DVD



Description:

This video work has been made using single frames and fragments from the British war movie *The Cruel Sea*. The work is projected on two screens with sound on headphones.

Place of first exhibition: *SlipFrame*, APT Gallery, June 2007

Research context:

In *An Occulting Light*, experiments with refilming, slow motion and so on are used to explore how film frames and fragments may reveal something about how we see. For example, in the sequence where the sailor's head turns in the water, there is visible slippage in each frame as the image becomes transformed, taking on a 'painterly' appearance.

h) **Hold** (2007), video installation, double screen with sound, dimensions variable,  
See DVD



*Hold* is a digital video installation which places still and moving images side by side, and uses refilmed tv stills, sampled sequences from film, and original footage filmed as a kind of notebook, exploring personal journeys: through remembered films, and sites of family memory.

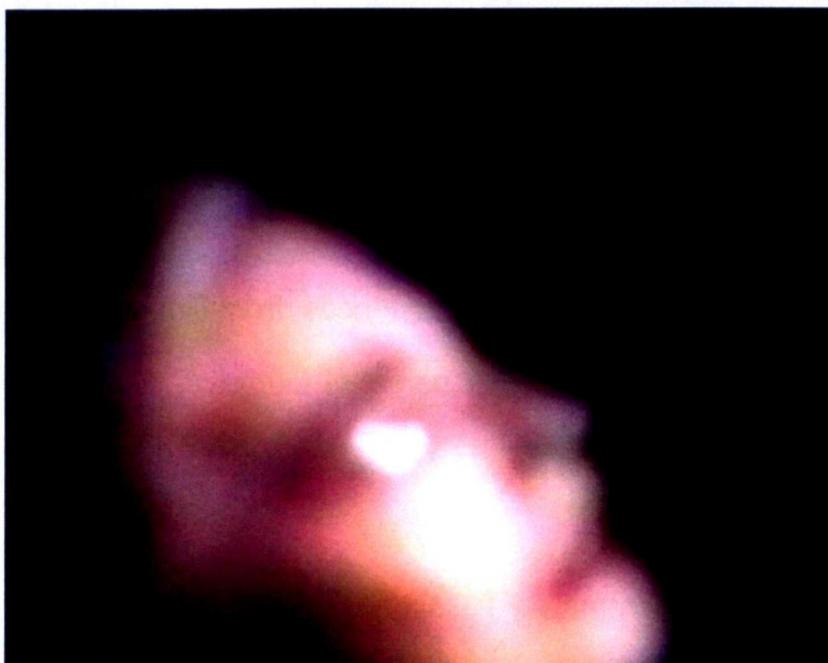
Place of first exhibition: *SlipFrame*, APT Gallery, London, June 2007

Research context:

This work is engaged with the freeze frame - the liminal moments in film language, which may have a heightened unsettling quality when isolated from causal or temporal flow, or when visually abstracted. In this piece, I started to look at spaces between frames, with the blurring of frame spaces in digital imaging and editing; and to develop languages of re-filming to 'catch' these frames; exploring this as a space of the imaginary.

This is a key work for the PhD questions, as it was during the production process that I began to gain a greater understanding of process of extracting re-filmed still frames as a parallel to painting practice. Re-filming processes can also have an uncanny effect. This work is 'about' memory which is evanescent, liquid, fleeting, and projected. I subsequently worked with re-filming found footage in *An Occulting Light*.

i) **Returning** (2006), 5 screen video installation with sound, loop, dimensions variable



Earlier piece using stills and re-filming techniques during first phase of PhD research

Exhibited at: Leeds Metropolitan University and Watermans Arts Centre, London, as part of the show: *Repossessed*.

j) ***Slice Through the Night*** (2006), multi screen digital video work



Earlier piece using stills and re-filming techniques during first phase of PhD research

Exhibited as work in progress at *Time, Flesh and Nerve* event, supported by JCAMD.

## **APPENDIX B**

### **Summary of Earlier written material:**

Robinson, Anne (2009), *Underwriting: an experiment in charting studio practice*,  
*Journal of Visual Art Practice*, Vol. 8 Issue 1/2, pp. 59-74, ISSN Number: 1470-  
2029

Robinson, Anne (2010), *Travelling Eye: the elusive digital frame and the elasticity  
of time in art*,  
*Journal of Media Practice*, Vol. 11 Issue 3, pp. 215-229, ISSN Number: 1468-2753

*One More Time*: essay for symposium booklet, October, 2011

*Que sera*; paper for PhD symposium at JCAMD, October 2011

Experimental film-maker interview transcripts as appendix

*Travelling Eye*: paper for *Journal of Media Practice 10th Anniversary Symposium*  
at Sussex University, 2009

*Still Moving*: paper delivered at HALE Practice as Reserarch Symposium at  
London Met, 2009

*Slipframe*, Programme notes, 2007

*Returning*: catalogue essay for Repossessed project - publ on cd and ionline at:  
[http://www.re-possessed.com/watermanscatalogue/open\\_to\\_view\\_catalogue.html](http://www.re-possessed.com/watermanscatalogue/open_to_view_catalogue.html),  
2007

*Time, Flesh and Nerve*, programme notes, 2006

*Slivers of Crystal*: paper for *Historia, Memoria, Amnesia* Conference, Centre  
CATH, Leeds, 2006

Catalogue essays on relevant work:

'Heretical Grace' by Gareth Evans, editor of 'Vertigo' magazine for *Maybe in the  
Sky* show (*Lighter Darker*).

'Surfacing; by Dr Judith Tucker, Leeds University for *Slipframe* show

<http://www.land2.uwe.ac.uk/essay15.htm>

## APPENDIX C

## **APPENDIX D**

### **Transcripts of three interviews with experimental filmmakers:**

Transcripts (unedited) of interviews with experimental filmmakers: William Raban, Lis Rhodes and Steve Farrer.

Original interview questions on Painting, Time & the Moving Image:

1. As a film-maker who came from a background in painting, what made you shift from using paint to the moving image?
2. How did this happen? does it relate to Gidal's idea of 'a material piece of time'?
3. Was there a concern with time in your painting work? If so, can you describe this?
4. Through work with film, expanded moving image or video, do you think you resolved any of the issues you had been working with as a painter?
5. Do you think that the handling of the apparatus gave you any insights into time and how we experience it? either philosophically, related to visual perception or to art?
6. Have you found that there is a connection between the way a work 'represents' or indexes the passage of time and its 'affect'? If so, can you comment on how you think this may work?
7. In working with film, have you found that the way in which it registers movement, light and colour has revealed anything about the 'affect' or visual perception of these phenomena? or perceptions of time?
8. How would you describe the experience of time in your work - watching or making?
9. To what extent have you worked with 'frame rates' in your work, and how?
10. In working with film, how important is its material quality with respect to issues of time?
11. If you have worked with any digital technologies for the moving image, have you found

that any of this indexing of points in time is affected by digital technologies?

12. If there is no real frame in the digital, might this offer something different from film in relation to the flow of time as lived consciousness?

13. The human presence - at times the artist's presence is important for your work - how does this relate to ideas from structural materialist film?

14. Does your 'handling' of the moving image relate to painting?

15. In any one single work of your, can you describe the 'experiment' you were undertaking?

16. Again, in any one work, can you describe the experience for the person encountering it?

17. Is there a political dimension to your work?

18. Have you returned during any period, to painting or using other media?

19. Is there anything you would like to add about your work in relation to either painting or perceptions of time?

1 William Raban

Tues. 2nd June 2009, Bow, London

AR - Thanks for you comments about seeing painting and culture as time based - can you say something about what made you shift from painting to using film?

WR - well it's very easy to reinvent ones history with the benefit of hindsight so - I think what attracted me was the fact that the paintings I was making all involved the passage of time or time as duration in one way or another - the tree prints and wave prints and even other pieces I was doing before that and film seemed to be the obvious way to go because of the - because film is so much more overtly about the passage of time

AR - what were your very first film experiments?

WR - time lapse films - mostly of nature - mostly of nature, but not exclusively - there was another piece I did which I think i've lost now - it was the first film i made really - a standard 8 film, and i made it in a basement flat i was living in while i was student in Islington & it's called 'Basement Window' and its just this idea that i took it at 24 f, 18 fps on standard 8 every time someone walks past the window so it was a dawn to dusk study - and so you get this all the gaps where people aren't passing the window w are cut out and so its a record of everyone who passed that frame throughout the day until sunset and then there were more obvious time lapse pieces that I made in more natural locations landscapes from dawn to dusk -

AR - River Yar?

WR - that I made with Chris Welsby, yes.

AR - what about 'Colours of this Time'? was that a bit later?

WR - It was a bit later - yes it was a year after River Yar - we'd notice that filming at twilight as it starts to get dark and go into night - and similarly when it comes out of night and go into dawn, using very long time exposures seemed to emphasize the colors of daylight colour temp so i wondered what would happen if i made a film in i think it was kensington gardens, where the shutter was held open for the interval between each exposure so they're 20 se time exposures in each frame, and it was really seeing what would happen to the colour and how it would record col temp differently in daylight by doing that

AR - so dependent on the technical and on chemistry

WR - yes it was to do with this concept of reciprocity failure and the way in which emulsions respond to that

AR - does that relate back to resolving things you were looking at as a painter and working through experiments?

WR - I think the other reason i found film more attractive - it occurred to me when i

graduated from St. Martins that hat although I loved painting, unless it could be shown there was no point in doing it and I couldn't see any chance of being picked up by a gallery and I've always been very suspicious of the gallery scene anyway because its based on this notion of rarity..

interruption

WR - ... galleries - as a student it always seemed problematic - and politically very elitist and a lot of the art that i was interested in people like John Cage, seemed to break out of the gallery in an interesting way. and becoming aware in my last year at art school of the I f m c and a completely different economic structure opening up. There was no money around but at least there was possibility of getting your work shown through the co-op

AR - it seems contradictory - painting is an amazing process - so seems wrong, a contradiction to have to sell in that way

WR - yes agree could have carried on painting

AR - the work comes out of amazing process with charge and meaning and emotional affect, but then are hidden away somewhere by commercial system  
- about particular works - I'd like to ask about Fergus walking, Autumn Scenes?

WR - yes, it's chopped up

AR - were those work filmed near here?

WR - yes near the entrance to the Rotherhithe Tunnel

AR - those works seems to be quite painterly to me - not hard edged paintings - something like a painterly surface where you go in and out of layers of time

WR - yes they were developing ideas that *came* from painting

AR- a cubist viewpoint?

WR - more specifically, - i don't know if you've seen 'Angles of Incidence' which is a 2 screen piece that's more deliberately trying to see if its possible to make a film equivalent

of a cubist painting by multiplicity of viewpoints by animating them

AR - trying to get - like your NFT piece 4' 22" - that sense of placing people in relation to the image made

WR - I'm trying not to see them as different processes

- do you know about Ken Wilder's research on projected space? - thats very much his area ?

how the viewer is located in relation to painting, especially classical painting

AR - well i was into that he was looking at altarpieces made in relation to a definite belief system

WR - and that they were made to be seen from one particular viewpoint

AR - yes and the spaces within the paintings were constructed for that to be seen in that way

AR - recently it seemed that from what i've read - i came to co-op around 83 84 to screenings - and there was a lot of different work being shown - retrospectives of some of the older more structural film feminist films and also other work . it seemed at that time that some of the rules about what could be seen as structural film structural materialist WR - film were a bit rigid

WR - absolutely

AR - anti-representational and anti-image and yet - paradoxically seems to engage more with an embodied spectator and embodied presence - i think what I'm getting with paintings - they're about being made by the painter, by someone's gesture, body time etc, so that's why it seems more directly to relate to that kind of material presence in film

WR - yes absolutely

AR - the question - on Peter Gidal's 'material piece of time' - seems to have a more real presence of humanity if you like - could you say how you think how that would work?

through your work from that time?

interruption

WR - I like this paradox I hadn't really looked it - but it's a nice one. It's important to say, I think one of the problems - I think we all felt this - all the people who were involved at the co-op in the early 70s - felt that, ok, we were embarked on this 'structural film' train lets call it or the 'materialist approach to the medium' and the logical conclusion was a blank screen, so you know by about 1976 I think we were almost wanting to disown that term - we couldn't run with it, it became too limiting - and you know coming a long a bit later we were characterised as very odd people!

AR - there's always a generational reaction isn't there? Yet ironically ilm more interested in what was going on before then

WR - I think Malcolm[Le Grice] really led that movement away from it - I mean, he made Finnegan's Chin about 1982, were you at St Martins then?

AR - no, just after

WR - I was making 'Black and Silver' then - but its very interesting what you're saying about the embodied presence with a lot of the expanded film pieces

WR - which works are you looking at? 'Line Describing a Cone' or not?

AR - yes, that's interesting, but more at your work, I'd I started off looking at 'River Yar' and also Lis Rhodes it was great to see 'Light Music' set up properly - it was really great to see Steve Farrer's machine as well

WR -I'd never seen it

AR - I'd seen a bit of it, but not really working properly at the co-op - I think conceptually it relates a lot to what I'm looking at in relation to time

WR - Wasn't it great seeing them in the industrial context at the Tate, not in a gallery?

I'd see Light Music as part of a really interesting expanded film programme Mark Webber did at Dortmund in 2004 that was the most amazing space it was a deserted steel mill, a big industrial space with hard concrete walls and the work just looked fabulous in there

AR - I'm interested in pieces like 'Horror Film' Malcolm Le Grice

WR - absolutely

AR - I've come round to an interest in movement - movement in film and movements making marks in painting - that being something that affects people - because of being made by movement, by substance, by material gestures

WR - in the way that you might read Jackson Pollock's paintings?

AR - yes, possibly it seems like a continuum to me and you talk about Cage and that's around the same time, but I'm also interested in a connection, almost like a triangular connection - looking and making marks and looking and making marks like a continuous movement - because film 's about movement

WR - what difference does it make that film is such an ephemeral medium?

AR - I don't know!

WR - that would seem to be one of the major differences I think

AR - what do you think about this quote from Gidal - I'm trying to unpick it - the idea of a 'material piece of time'?

WR - it's great - I think Peter Gidal is - one day people will realise what an important practitioner an theorist he was - he is very important and rather misunderstood

AR - yes the films are sometimes seen as too hard

WR - 'material piece of time', it's great. I think that's how I thought about my paintings - like

the tree paintings - they were the time in duration that it took to make them.. three months,, six months.. they were all about time. But what got chris and I interested in the time lapse filming was really an extension from the french impressionists from Monet and his serial studies of rouen cathedral and other places and the haystacks

AR - serial painting - i read this morning - that turner in his bequest to the tate - he said about his paintings- what good are they unless you see them all together?

WR yes that's in the Ackroyd book, isn't it?

AR - yes that what I was reading - i just found it

WR - it's a wonderful book isn't it?

AR - there's an amazing painting in the Tate where there's three studies of the sea all on one canvas

WR - but he was a terrible painter - after he died some of the pigments fallen off because he didn't use enough binding medium - does that make him a terrible painter? maybe they were only meant to have a short duration?

AR - but in ephemerality maybe paintings aren't meant to last so long

WR - and have you heard Malcolm talk recently about wanting people to take on performance of 'Horror Film'?

AR - yes, but sorry I interrupted you talking about serial painting outside and use of light and so on

WR - what the French Impressionists seemed to be about it was a whole new approach to making paintings presentation - you painted from life rather than from an idealised notion or wanting to make a perfect representation it was that kind of movement away from representation

AR - thats partly what I'm trying to get at - this experience of encountering light and

encountering time in the world - its not about making a picture of something or pictorial

WR - and a lot of the work - there were people like - John du Cane - he made a film called lensless where he just photographs a picture taking the lens off the camera just seeing hoe the light scattered on the emulsion when he was filming

AR - and i suppose those kind of experiments mean that you might sometimes see things that are apparently representational and sometimes you don't.

WR yes your getting a different kind of impression than the kind of impression that's formed on the retina when we might look at something

AR - I liked what you said at the Tate about it being fun - and can you say a bit about the handling the film and cameras projectors the whole apparatus can give us any insights into into an experience of time either to do with perception or any other aspect.

WR - one of the reasons i like using film - i love that moment of shooting and looking at the image through the viewfinder and seeing the interruptions caused by the shutter it creates the effect of a metronome almost - if i pick up a video camera the tendency s to do what everyone does - switch on and leave it running as long as possible and make sure that somewhere in there you've caught it - whereas because film is precious, you have to be quite sparing and you have to be kind of quick thinking - Vertov talks about this editing at the time of shooting

and so you have to be aware of when to pick up the shot and when to get out of it

AR - and the unpredictability of the light I suppose

WR all sorts of things like that - yes

AR - did that make you think about lived time - or about framing?

WR the frame's the most important thing there i

AR - it might move

WR - yes have you seen my piece 'Surface Tension' ?

AR - no i haven't i've only read about it - 'Diagonal' I have of course

WR - but the projectors don't move - in 'Surface Tension' they move and in 'Wave Formations' they move as well

AR - in the more recent work - i wondered where some of the concerns from the structural materialist work come into the more recent work? I haven't has a chance to see the sea work

WR - 'Continental Drift'?

AR - yes

WR have you seen my 'Under the Tower' trilogy? Sundial?

AR - I love Sundial!

WR - 'Sundial' was a great film to make - Begonia and I had just made this documentary - working with accounts of survivors from the Spanish Armada, its got a real subject, so, making 'Sundial' was a kind of catharsis for me it was an opportunity to go back to those more structural concerns in the image

AR - it's an amazing piece of work, it works at all sorts of levels

WR - well, that was a lot of fun to make I travelled 750 miles making that film - I logged every journey - it's shot over a whole month, it's made to look as if it's shot in one day from dawn to dusk but its physically impossible to get to all those locations in one day

AR - love the goat at City farm..

WR - llama!

AR - i just wondered - is the work in the exhibition about the coast continental drift

WR - yes - that was the second 35mm film I made, that was in 2005 and I think for me I'm always trying to relate my present to my past, where are you coming from? and I don't see such a distinction? Were you at St. Martins at The Symposium, when i gave a paper?

AR - Yes

WR - the thing I find it quite helpful to think in terms of is this concept of reflexivity which is very important to reflexivity which is very important to structural film but i can say that everything i've ever made i can relate back to that term - reflexive cinema whereas i cant say that all my work is structural - clearly its not maybe i've made maybe 4 or 5 films that fall within that category - i can even think of particular mainstream films where reflexivity's employed like Kubrick's 'A Clockwork Orange', which is a film I really like

AR - in what sense?

WR - i think it refuses passive viewing from the audience so I think it deals with the levels of violence depicted in the film - i think it's reflexive in that way - that scene where Alex is forced to watch movies with his eyes pinned open, and the way the audience is addressed through the film in the nadsat language. Watching the film, you have to work pretty hard to understand what's being said. I think a lot of it's to do with active spectatorship rather than assuming that the film's just there for entertainment

AR - I'm interested in how that happens in time - like a kind of frustration that can at first, seem problematic in some way in say Peter Gidal's films

WR - it forces the viewer back into their own time reality doesn't it?

AR - Yes which painting sculpture and photography do when they work - in an emotional engagement or contemplation, or speculation or a mixture of all those things - when i came to the co-op, those works were seen by some as being cold in some way - and yet, that notion of the active spectator is completely the opposite of that - actually about being in the world

WR - yes! about empowerment

AR - so, about reflexivity about empowerment and a very human engagement a very emotional engagement

WR - I've got this wonderful memory - it was at Fitzroy Rd at the Piano Factory - before the co-op moved to Gloucester Road. I was sitting behind these two guys who looked like they'd come straight from the city and they'd come to see a programme of structural materialist film and I heard them talking to each other and I think it was a programme of Peter Gidal's films. and one was telling the other - how much he got from watching the films, he said - you've just got to give yourself up to it and its wonderful the affect it has on you - going back to your idea of 'affect' - and if you look at Dwoskin's work which has elements of structural film within it. I think his films work with that idea of activating the space of the viewer

AR - I'd love to see more recent work - I suppose the engagement of traveling through space and thats inevitable engaged with time zones ad so on - can you comment on that - how the most recent work - engages with the passage of time?

WR - i suppose it's dangerous to talk about a film I haven't yet made?

AR - No!

WR - well I've got a project which ilm hoping to do in the autumn which has a working title of 'recession where imm interested in observing the signs of recession within the city of london landscape on the skyline and I've found the perfect location for making it in a flat which overlooks the entire city of london. and the idea is that i film in probably mostly in time-lapse I think through a very long telephoto lens so that I'm only ever catching a very small section of the city, it might be one floor of canary wharf tower for example but the whole film is conceived as a series of either panning movements of vertical tracking movements quite a constructivist approach to the landscape and its and the camera on a geared head so that its possible to get very precise small incremental movements so that the film is somehow continuous in the way that it tracks and scans but in a way the bigger idea of the film is that it could be a way of exposing the city as a kind of series of neurological networks almost within the landscape thats the idea

AR - I like the idea that within that landscape there's going to be change and decay and time passing and that then creates layers across time

WR - I'm factoring in three months shooting it wouldn't continuous but I'd be shooting more or less every day I need to escape from teaching and if I don't get money I'll do it on digital

I'd love to do it on film - it's a medium I understand - I feel that video if one can still call it video is an alien medium for me in many ways it's too instant

AR - I don't feel like that as I've found that I sometimes want to get on and do things I've been looking at - interlacing and de-interlacing and the material or immaterial - or what happens to the recording of light and so on - if I was going to do something like that, like a 'piece of time,' I can see why film is a better way to do it

WR - it's also related to what you were saying about the individual frame is somehow real in film and it's not in video, the still frame doesn't really exist

AR - I was quite engaged by that as a sort of imaginary or even magical space

WR - I think that comes back to the viewer - I've always thought, and I'm not sure if this is right any more but I've always liked the idea that with film projection half the time that the audience is watching the screen there's nothing on it and so film works by the flicker effect and this notion of the eye or the brain creating continuity between frames and somehow solving that moment of blackness when the shutter's released and creating movement that way and I've had this idea that the flicker of the shutter even though we might not be consciously aware of it does affect our reading of the screen experience

AR - I think it does - neurological networks I'm really interested in how we experience time - we think cinema is the thing that looks most like the passage of time because it records movement and so on but it doesn't really because it's divided up and our experience of just looking round all the time and seeing things isn't divided up either so that's really interesting and sometimes video seems more continuous

WR - its a fantastic area you're working with -

digression on practice based Ph.D.

also, points on early days of film coop and ideas and working collectively and sense of being in the world and comparing some contemporary political developments and dynamic art and freer time - and reflecting on difficulties of making work in a public space and needing film permit - eg WR filming on Kingsland Road - and health and safety eg 'Line Describing a Cone' and Annabel Nicholson's work with matches - and on cctv and on use of interview material

AR - ilm particularly interested in people like yourself, who have come through from painting

WR - I've always kept open the idea that I could paint

AR - I really likes seeing the David Dye piece at the Tate

WR - yes - David Dye, Tony Hill, Gill Eatherly all came through St Martins - I think St Martins was very important at that time

AR - in the 80s there was not any studio space for the film unit - art studios I mean

WR - when i was a painting student i spent quite a lot of time in fashion using sewing machines! Really what you need is great big open spaces - not divisions - now there's Sally Potter John Maybury going one way and Chantal Akerman and Chris Marker the other - not separate

AR - I was interested to see a camera for sale that had been used in 'Love is the Devil for filming like the Bacon paintings - I think that way of seeing is quite like film - slow shutter speeds and long exposures - and Auerbach - seeing across time and that's in the work - like the city film

ending on further discussion on work about the sea - cameraman and steady horizon and problems of filming on the sea and project about filming waves - in progress

2 Lis Rhodes

Weds 3rd June 2009, Whitechapel, London

AR - I understand you were working in painting before moving image work?

LR - yes

AR - and what prompted move to moving image work?

LR - sound

AR -what was it about working with sound?

LR - we hear and we see and they are not necessarily as distinct as we sometimes suppose. mostly we hear as we see.

I'm very interested in sound - I notice here there's a musical instrument department - that's very interesting.

I have built built sort of musical instruments for a much much more recent film

I used a cellar - I built sort of the inside of a piano with piano wires about 5m - in a cellar - so that one is inside the sounding box of the instrument as it were - I find that very interesting

AR - was there a link from the paintings to later work? were the paintings abstract or..figurative?

LR - depends when you mean? but yes - both abstract and - figurative as a child though that isn't always the case - these things are sometimes confused - we try to iron them out onto a straight line - but that tends to distort things to a degree

AR - I wouldn't make the distinction, but I think there's a difference when it comes to making a picture looking at something that's actually present - what were the first pieces

that you made with sound, following on from painting?

LR - there again - certain pieces of work become archived and replayed - and one begins to think that was what actually happened, but of course, it didn't at the time - that's since - so it's difficult to answer really accurately seeing them from now, 30 something years on and one obviously retells them, but I'm not sure how much bearing it has on anything really

I think one started with started with something like 'Light Music' - and certainly, as I think I put in a recent catalogue - that was lack of women's presence - it doesn't mean its the film, one could be making something where that isn't what's literally on the screen but, in a sense, motivated by that, by the emanation.. and 'Light Music' is a rackety affair!

It was also quite definitely to switch the idea of cinema and undo that straight line idea of the audience sits there and the screen is there and the two things *must not* merge in a sense or the illusion will be broken so that is a very important structure I think if that's what you want to do, to 'enthrall' and I didn't particularly so you have a different sort of space.

What is very lovely is when the audience is so very polite, they don't talk very much.. I thought they'd talk -

AR - you mean between the screens? and wander about?

LR - yes and wander about - we learn a lot of things as to how to address..

AR - we don't touch things in galleries - it [Light Music] is a very immersive experience and it was great to see it at the Tate - being between the screens, engaged inside the work itself - that's what I mean about painting somehow - not being 'enthralled' by a paintings at a distance, but when something is working in a painterly surface, being engaged in a different way - being a bit outside time - in a different kind of time

LR - I would have thought it is a different sort of time whether it's more or less immersive. Because if one considers, certainly with with film or video - the thing is, a representation is at stake - one can go backwards through it one can go forwards through it - in my experience unfortunately one cant go backwards in time! that's why it's so interesting sitting talking - because one's always talking from now - one can't do anything else but talk

from now - and that's already gone, that's already disappearing, whereas with a representation, you can bring it out on the screen or you can go backwards in time - to the previous painting, so I think it's a very different thing. I also think it's very confusing the way the phrase 'the moving image' is used - no image never moved anywhere unless someone threw it or dropped it!

I think it's a real misnomer I don't think it helps very much in understanding that the thing is quite clearly a representation, and, in that sense, although it can have a materiality, one should watch that - I'm never quite sure exactly what that means.. on - the 'elusive digital frame', in one sense, it is the case but in other ways not - the case because it is a very complete arrangement of pixels isn't it? - moment of certain.. an arrangement of things if you like - just that - it's curious the way we stick with the idea of frames - it's engaging why we think frame wise - it's obvious in European culture - we tend to put frames round things -

culturally otherwise that might not be the case

AR - frames - technical, artificial - a working method - literally re-divided & not how it works in digital - it is the presentation of still images through time - in relation to painting - paintings are made over time as well - happening because of physical movement and embodiment and gesture abstract expressionist and also in 'representational' painting, gesture that's happening across time - when we look at it, moments in time

[AR not of Bergson and continuity]

AR - could you say about how that relates to 'Light Music' ?

LR - how people may experience it? - the audience wandering?

you would change the whole orientation - that sounds very grand - of what was said to be 'cinema'..

Also, another thing I was very interested in was that you were running what are usually two distinct symbolic orders - the sound track and the image track - and I suppose I was extremely interested that one could make those things read identically - and that is partially to sort of break an illusion, where in fact, we have someone saying something that has no immediate bearing, but it need not alter all - that interests me a lot - the connection of the idea of synchronisation and film. I have found that very interesting in the sense that I think

something like 'Dresden Dynamo' and 'Light Music' are as close to a documentary or a document - whereas, some of the more recent stuff like *Running Light* is very different in that sense - almost the obverse, where you could say the potential for fiction is unlimited, except that suffering of the people involved is exactly not fictional, so one is playing again on that sense of fiction/ non fiction/ document which I do find very interesting and in a way problematic as to what a representation *is* in that sense. Its a very tricky one, and I'm sure you find in your own work, one's endlessly mulling round this one

AR - I'm very sorry not to have seen *Running Light*

LR - on the question of time within the making - well, that I think is more durational rather than clock-time and its immensely repetitive, its incredibly repetitive - I mean in the sense of going back and forth and back and forth, which is very like writing

AR - you mean in editing?

LR - yes - which is this sort of strange thing because its a representation; although it has all sorts of time-codes, but in fact its a piece of.. its a durational thing., so clock time has very little bearing because half the time it's still anyway, whilst one thinks ones way through something or finds something you've mislaid. The thing is not obviously within clock time in that sense even though the indications are that it *is*, but I don't think it is actually

AR - about perception - elastic time - something like being inside elastic time - 'Light Music' or Steve Farrer's piece [ *The Machine*] - the piece itself works with duration in a particular sort of way,

LR - no frames..

AR - no frames, or the beams in 'Light Music' and not being able to see both at once - a different time frame - the experience of movement is important - the paradox of film - that it isn't moving - it's.. you can't have time without movement

LR - time without movement.. that's interesting..

AR - movement without time, I think I mean

AR - how is there a link between film and paint practice?

LR - rather close - there is a close relationship between the work - of image and sound and drawing and writing - and there's a a political economy underwriting all of this - and I do and I don't think we can make subdivisions, I think I see those as so related and I'm certainly not willing to stretch them apart - except that we speak in those terms - and language does have a bearing on how you see things

AR - I agree, but I'm interested in certain ways of seeing by-passing language - I am interested in women being painters in the studio embodied activity is really important.. transgressive, presence ..

LR - You mean women are a transgressive presence in...

AR - in art, in painting..questioning that experience more as have had to question it because it wasn't a given

LR - I would agree - I would say the same with language - that that also is very difficult to actually use, language - after all language is arranged through a grammar and thank heavens Gertrude Stein took it apart to a degree - but that is very limiting too so that we get back to this sort of dualism - where perhaps even you are struggling to articulate a response to something because we separate out emotional responses from thinking - well that is a very interesting thing to do... why on earth? We separate out the personal from something else.. so, we are all persons and we are all in the world - so, the thing is actually very confounded together both those are immediately separated . Now the number of times I've heard women's work referred to as 'personal' is myriad, well that is delightful.. but I could equally well do it about every man. But we get these amazing divisions that do cause almost a sort of silence - so that you're almost hesitant when you're trying to explain this sort of relationship to an image - its not that you cant find the words - I almost think you can't find the grammar to work it

AR - In my understanding of it, structuralist materialist film there were readings at the time, of it being cold, too rigid and anti-imagist, paradoxically, now I can see something there

about embodiment - emotional 'affect'

LR - that I think is how you're taught to think of image - I don't think that's the case - think it is rather romantic and always was - this does come back to.. you could say a split between the theoretical work and the film work - that is a dual position, which is problematic - for both genders - it worked by one to the puzzlement of the other - that's why we both understand something about histories, European and so on, what's happened in philosophy and music, one area that's interesting - curiously enough one thing that is different is the fiction - the writing of fiction - for women, here in Europe, in the 19th and 20th centuries, the writing of fiction has a very different history, doesn't it?

AR - I wonder if it's to do with space? with painting, you need some space?

LR - that's what Virginia Woolf seemed to think.. Alice Guy Blachet once filmmaking got really expensive she was on the way out - absolutely remarkable - one part of history

AR - I wonder if you know of a painter - called Barbara Bolt - she has written about paint and materiality and handability in the studio? I'm interested in the material of film in the way that was being used - your work and Peter Gidal and William Raban..

LR- Annabel Nicholson -

AR - yes, I met her recently - I saw some pictures from the 'sweeping the sea' piece and soon,

LR - yes, absolutely - I think that's really significant

AR - yes - it relates to Bolt - what she's learned - what she's trying to say - she has showed slides of her in studio - I've really loved seeing pictures of say Barbara Hepworth, and recently I thought well that's not anecdotal, but women may be questioning, not an absolute gender division - but question what they are doing -

interruption

AR - the questioning of what you're doing -

LR - thinking about women artists in their studios - I particularly don't think i do haven't had a studio, not in those terms so it doesn't have that iconic ring to it, for many others it does -

AR - I wonder about other kinds of spaces?

LR - well I work in group not necessarily - not necessarily doing the work as a group but that has nbeen my experience and one changes ones work habits - and the actual stuff changes alarmingly - we now use exactly the same software which I think is alarming - things have changed - some things are easier and some harder - I think things have changed in many ways - it would be interesting to talk a bit more about that

AR - We are much more surrounded by images and mediated and all being filmed but I don't know how that changes peoples relationship to that - climate camp - as a kind of intervention in space - this is part of the world and you can be here

LR - you can be there?

AR well just deciding to set up camp in the city - to be in that space.  
to be in that space

LR - I would say that was a not permitted space

and further discussion - end on discussion and about politics of policing demonstrations and space - on permitted space an not permitted space

Steve Farrer

Interview conducted by Anne Robinson, 28th September, 2010

PhD research on perceptions of time and experimental film

AR: I wanted to ask you about how clear the image was in *The Machine* experiments

SF: Yes, previous to that I'd taken a Bolex, and I'd made all these different things, this was at the Royal College - this goes back to 74/ 75 - so I took the lens off so that was just light and dark and then I took the claw out and put the lens back and that was lines and that was very beautiful - because the claw was taken out that means the film just streams past, so it's analogous to a tape recorder, so it's recording time through light, but because it doesn't stop...

AR: Do you just get kind of almost 'Len Lye' lines down the film as if you'd drawn them down?

SF: You get absolutely perfect lines because the film isn't wobbling around, so it's straight lines, and if you've got a zoom lens on, then you can make the lines change from loads of lines to fatter lines, and then if, say you were shooting the street, you get this abstract arrangement of lines, green lines, red lines, but if a double-decker bus goes past, you know exactly what it is, or if somebody walks past, because it maintains its, lyrical, that's the word.. its *nature* is retained in the lines. So, the quality of light, the light through trees, or the different visual qualities are maintained even through you've got no image as such apart from the lines...

AR: So you think it's completely recognisable?

SF: Yes, completely recognisable

AR: Even though there's nothing going across?

SF: Yes, I used to have a camera sticking out the studio so, it was just a field of lines, like... There's a lot of paintings at the moment that are of lines, but they're just static. If someone walked past, then you'd see that as the motion of a human walking past, that was maintained, completely, there's no doubt about what it is

AR: But there's no frame rate?

SF: Well, it's running through at say, 24 frames a second, and then... I didn't know where it

was going though. The stuff without the lens was more interesting, because that was more dream-worldy sort of subconscious, light and dark and there is...

AR: Is that not so lined?

SF: There's no lines at all - all it is, because there's no lens on it. There are some bits where I bring a lens up to try to bring the image back in, as a reminder of where you are sort of thing. I think they were heading outside of the structural thing, even though it was highly structural, destroying the camera in that way. Then this line-y stuff I was doing, I thought, well if I move the camera, then... and it did - the image stuck. As soon as you move the camera, the lines stick to the film - well, it's not lines any more, the film is moving at the same speed as the landscape or whatever and the image sticks. When I made *The Machine*, I thought you'd have bits of lines and bits of regular image and I thought you'd get this going between the two, but you didn't. I couldn't get it to work on the Bolex. I had the Bolex on a turntable and I got people to do stand round it and do things. I was probably more interested in the set up than the experiment. It kind of worked, it was ok, but then I thought well if I linked it with a gear wheel, then it would lock on. Although what it does do, if you film out of a train window, because the train is fairly regular speed, then you just get the landscape, you get a long photograph. Then if you look at it you just think it's someone filming out of a train window because that's all you'd get anyway

AR: Yes, but if you showed it along a very very long wall...

SF: Yes, well it wasn't really like that - I showed it at the summer show at the Co-op and people couldn't really understand it until I showed them the film, I had to have the projector on its side... your expectation of it..

AR: I think I may have seen it and tried to understand it and amazed by it

SF: The Royal College got the engineering design department helped me make it

AR: About the image sticking, I saw on TV recently, an item about what they think is this new discovery about perception where someone have done some graphic lettering on a palmtop and they'd moved it through - and filmed the space between and the image stays in space - it had left the image behind, the image was stuck in space

SF: Like a holograph or at the sub atomic levels or something, almost like a Victorian thing in a way

AR: Yes but I'm interested in how human visual perception and the science of seeing relates to emotional responses and different bits of your brain dealing with what things are and where they are - you were saying that the image stayed so that you could still see human movement and that seems to do with how we are deeply programmed to recognise certain things

SF: At the Tate, the image did stick on the retina more than it ever did anywhere else - as well as the film The initial thing was about the image sticking. The world's going by and the film's going by and if you can get the two things to coincide, they'll stick...

AR: Am I right in thinking that before the Royal College, that you started out at art school with drawing and painting?

SF: Not really, I went to foundation at a regional art college and did design and all sort of things and printmaking and product design... they put me on a placement for a film crew for the Royal College making a film up in Scotland somewhere, and then I had at the back of my mind that I'd like to work with film. Then I went to the Co-op when I first went to NELP, and the first film I saw was 'Région Centrale' which completely blew mind, the whole notion that you can do anything really, that you weren't constrained, I was interested in the way things work...

AR: But you did some work with drawings...

SF: I went back to drawing, I'm working with drawings now

AR: But do you think you're think you're dealing with similar problems in both?

SF: I was always good at drawing and graphics and things and very bad at English, and proper things, so I just followed up the things I could do - which meant doing art. I left school and went to work, at ICI but there was no way I could progress really... I did A-Level art and then I gave up work and went to art school... and then never really looked back

because I was doing something that I could do and I didn't have to worry about not doing the academic stuff, because I could perform with my hands, choice of image or visual judgement, I could use that, like flower arranging, I could use that... At art school, what did I do? It's mainly been all graphic. It has a sort of graphic base. The first films I did were the silk screened films - where I silk screened on to the films. Those will be tele-cined - they got forgotten, but they're there. This new work will require me to go back. It's all gone full circle again. It's all about creating the relationship between hand and retina - the hand retinal relationship. So, I'm making drawings, not dissimilar to 'Ten Drawings' if you know that one?

AR: Yes, that's what I was thinking of

SF: 'Ten Drawings' is so brutal, that it's enough to say that's it you've done it, you don't need to do it any more, but there's a whole gamut of stuff in between, and Len Lye did all this, but then you can't do that...

AR: you could just stop

SF: Yes, we could all just stop. But in a way I'm trying to take it a bit further - by having the stuff in the hand or on the wall relate, so, as a package you get a picture and a bit of film.

AR: I was wondering if you'd actually done painting as well - how do you think that action or gesture of making drawings, in time, relates to filming something?

SF: I never painted really, I painted, only before all of this, just copying Constables, as just a discipline.

AR: What about drawing?

SF: Well, in the notebooks really, like this, about being able to capture thoughts on paper, very quickly

AR: Thoughts, rather than..

SF: It's all in here - not through the eye - I've never really been good at life drawing or

whatever

AR: Does that relate to the structural materialist, Gidal thing of film being a piece of time?  
How does that relate to drawing?

SF: Well I see time now in terms of length or blocks of time

AR: A spatialisation of time?

SF: Yes, a spatialisation of time - I'm thinking like that now, completely. That's all I've been doing for the last four or five years... I'm trying to get a repertoire of marks and mark-making in relationship to, well, the link between the surface, the temporal surface through time, and how that can.. well, it's an impossibility in a way, how can a drawing on a wall have anything to do with a film apart from being a notational thing like a piece of music? Like 'Ten Drawings' and it kind of works with 'Ten Drawings' because it's so minimal, but it denies gesture things and denies other elements of narrative - can it be sad, can it be happy? As you get older, you want to be involved, it's not just about proving anything..

AR: It's not a scientific experiment

SF: No, it's not a scientific experiment

AR: I got interested in what it is about certain paintings, the more you look, something unfolds, the more you look, the more is going on and also that time gets a bit off kilter - almost like taking drugs

FS: Well yes, it's exactly what LSD should be taken for - to knock you out of a sort of complacency

AR: There's that sort of acid experience where you have the tiny moment expanding in your perception of time, it knocks you out of everyday time, but some painting, drawing, film does that as well...

SF: Well, Gidal's films do that... totally other place, and then suddenly you come back to earth. He might say you're lazy and going off daydreaming, but he's giving the vehicle to

do that. Not really daydreaming, but the mind goes off and it's not anchored at all, and if he drops bits of stuff in there, then you keep coming and going in and out of that space. I didn't find it boring at all or waiting for something to happen because it was all happening... obviously if you fight it, then it is just boring because you deny that disbelief, well, not disbelief, but you are sitting in front of this object, that he's created that he's denying himself by making it not concrete, it is elusive, so he wants you to have some relationship with it other than just concrete one, he says it's about the material, but it's about allowing a space to dream or whatever.

AR: I agree, but they are about your response as a spectator as a person as a presence... I think there is a connection between the methods of representing the passage of time and how it has an 'affect' on people. I get what you mean, that you're setting up these things as experiments, so they may be rigorous, like with 'Ten Drawings' you describe it as 'brutal', but it's not cold. So, I wonder if you can say something about any of that, between the way you make something and its 'affect' - for example, *The Machine*?

SF: In the notebooks, there's always this thing about reaching out wanting to connect, on my terms, rather than through conventional terms, a bit arrogant really, but it's there... and always trying to create a situation that I'm not competing in. because I'm so uncompetitive. So, if you create your own cinema, then there's no competition, because it *is* my cinema...

AR: But it's so open as well, so that connects...

SF: Well, it's my world, you can follow it if you want, you can have a bit of it, but I don't have to compete....

AR: That makes sense, it's open because there's no frames and so on, it's much closer to an *experience* of being in the world, looking...

SF: Once I'd got this thing, and I didn't plan it at all - the 'round machine' - it comes purely from the work, it is out of the work... once I'd got it, then I had to deal with it. It's as if it also went through a transition from structuralism and so on, and that was breaking, at the end of the the Royal College time. I don't know if it's got to do with with my sexuality at all. It was kind of breaking free of just conforming with the boys and making my own world in a way. I had this machine that had a unique view of the world. It was a sort of sideways way

in...The film itself is full of people and it's full of gestural things. If you look at it all the way through, then it's full of stuff. There's a guy being carried.. because the HIV stuff had just started. It wasn't intentional, it was just rubbing off, like what can we do next? But because it wasn't in a rigorous academy frame, it was in a sort of.. still in the brain because I hadn't seen it projected. So it was still a conceptual piece of work. So, even though I'd filmed it and I could see it on the on the light table, I had never seen it. I thought it would be more.. I made it quite plain and quite direct. By the time you get to see it it'll all be distorted and all the rest of it and you won't really be able to pick it up and, in fact..

AR: It's amazingly clear..

SF: It's amazingly clear and so you finish up with something that you might have thought needed to be 'plain', which might have been.. you do all this stuff of smudging or disguising what you really want to say and it has to come through sort and veils of artiness...

AR: But that's like painting,

SF: Yes...

AR: Well it's coming through your body, your physical gestures and so on, but also through all the mistakes... painting's like a fantastic failure, in a way, but then something else happens...

SF: Well it was all made in the brain, and on the light-box, on the hand and in the brain. It didn't really happen until the Tate and that's why I was slightly over awed. Did you see the film thing on the Tate shorts?

AR: No, I did look after the event... probably too soon, I'll look it up now...

SF: And then there's me and Lis [Rhodes]... we were talking about all sorts of things... the whole HIV stuff, completely out of the blue... it completely threw me, even though people put things on to it, it was never there ever, it was just.. I don't mind but that's something construed from it, it was never intentional...

AR: I wondering, because of that time distance, the twenty years from filming to showing it

last year, whether, although at the time, there had been all this rigorous structural business, and then there is this 'content', which is about 'life'...

SF: My world...

AR: Yes, your life experience and so on, what happens in looking at that, from now?

SF: Well, I was a bit worried that it would look facile or silly or something, but it didn't, it looked very good. I was quite surprised how good and how it held together. But I had to chop great lumps of it out because it was a one-light print, so some of it was just dark. No matter how good *The Machine* was, you wouldn't have been able to see it. So that's the thing with the Tate... you can have *The Machine* so long as you pay for a graded print, so that in posterity or whatever, then it will be seen for what it is, rather than little bits of it. But I was a bit shell-shocked seeing it all, because the stuff at the Diorama was too light, I couldn't see anything and the lamp house wasn't working and so on. You could see the idea of what it could be like, but not be with it. They [Tate] were very good, they let me go down there and use it for a studio really, for a bit. So, in a way, it was frustrating having to take it all down. You want to get into it all again.

AR: You know people connected it with early cinema gadgets and so on, which seems like quite a straightforward connection, but also because it was film, increased that sense of it being a long time ago...

SF: It's twenty five years ago...

AR: Yes, I had quite a strong response to it recognising some of the quality of the images, but I think it's interesting in terms of *how* something was made and what the representation is... all the anti-representational work going on, and then I think it was gay filmmakers...

SF: There was super-8, I was doing this lyrical stuff with super-8, even the first film I made, about Princess Anne's wedding.. it was hidden...

AR: Yes! But it's a *way* of representing the world that's different, in *The Machine*, and so on... Can you say anything about perception that you found out through the work?

SF: Perception about..?

AR: Well, perception, as in how we see, I suppose I'm interested in emotional responses to seeing

SF: Well, seeing it again at the Tate, well, the relation between the physical act of seeing, and the physical relationship of.. so, you know that it's a construct, you know what's happening, but...

AR: If you're working with film, it's quite a 'mechanical' way of registering an image...

SF: Its more physical than retinal, maybe not retinal but it counts as going straight into the thought process, because you're not static, you're absolutely physical with it. It is truly expanded, because you're not allowed that relationship with.. where the image is transferred straight into the consciousness. Even a blank screen, it's still a window isn't it? It's still that space... whereas that cut across it. Even, a multi screen film, it's more like being in magnum or at the symphony hall.. but it's still there, whereas this was as if I was there, presenting these images as if it as live, like a live performance...

AR: Yes, exactly, different from most regular films, where you have 24,25 images going past really quickly, and your brain is superimposing them to form an image. There is something so different about the *experience* of watching this, being inside this, that I find hard to put into words...

SF: The problem it that it happened and I was very overwhelmed by it at the time, so, I've not gone into a sense of being with it and trying all the other stuff and messing about with it

AR: I was interested in what you said about, when the image comes out, it's very clear

SF: That was from the original, going back, thinking what will get?

AR: So it's not blurred...

SF: Well the original stuff was blurred, bits of lines and so on...

AR: The experience of it, say, filming off the bus.. well, I wondered, what would happen if you put it somewhere, where you're not inside it, but it's just going on along a very long wall. It seemed like it would still be different from a big panoramic photograph, because it's a moving thing. I wonder how the affect would be different from being inside it? It is in a way like a panoramic photograph but it isn't...

SF: That's what you wanted it to be but it isn't when you're there and the only way it can be like that is if you're on the outside, and of course, I'd never seen that before. When you stand *right* back, you lose that commotion and light and stuff, and it just becomes this hovering image.. it's just, is it there? Well it is, but...

AR: What about sound?

SF: Well, I was quite happy that Lis's sound was there, for me it fitted quite well.. and of course, it makes a whirring sound itself.. I'd live to get *The Machine* built, but I don't think I can get new work made until I can get new work made and a show... in the current climate, £25 grand and so on...

AR: Yes..! I was also thinking conceptually, about music and time and so on, like with a piece of film, you have the idea that the frame is a little bit of time, but with music, you can't do that...

SF: Well, you can have the music written down...

AR: You can have the music written down, but I was thinking about how it's [*The Machine*] not like anything else at all, not like film where you've got frame, frame, frame going past you, and it's not like a panoramic photograph,

SF: Well, music is *real*, whereas film is a construct completely, until it's in the projector of course...

AR: Well, it is, and yet *The Machine* is more like that experience of music

SF: Well, it's *real* and it's viscerally real, more than an experimental film in a way because it's still a hole in the wall which then transposes itself into the consciousness, and you're

drawn in, especially with Sharits's film, they're hypnotic, and you're trying to figure out what's going on...

AR: Or, even in something like the kind of multi screen Filmaction, type of space, or even *Light Music* where it's expanded and you're inside it but there's still the film frame thing going on...

SF: ... the two screens opposite... this incredible space, but that's the showing experience in a way which is different to the making, because you can change the showing experience or get the feedback from the two

AR: Have you worked with video technologies at all?

SF: Just started

AR: Any thoughts about how that relates to the frame and so on?

SF: At the moment, I'm trying to get what I'm doing quickly on to the screen even if it's a video screen, and I don't have a problem with that, except it does tend to flatten it all, it's not as beautiful as film, but that's just an aesthetic. It works mechanically. I mean, I've filmed some of *Ten Drawings*, and I just filmed it off the wall and they look great. If you don't try to lose the frame, if you keep the frame of the film, it seems to maintain some sort of integrity with it. So, up to now, I've just been filming most things.. I've got a projector set up upstairs and a digital camera and I've got it to work by various bits and bobs and it doesn't flicker, so I've got my own tele-cine set up. So I'm doing all these drawings, doing drawings as drawings and drawings on film and I'm trying to create some sort of repertoire of stuff and come up with 'something'.. like a piece of music, like Lis says about her film, that she made it because there were no female composers. I'll never forget when she said that.

AR: Yes, it's great

SF: It's not obvious when you think about the work, but it's a way in, I mean, she's not gone through a conventional musical.. like the royal college of music or whatever, so she can do it from a film background, the notion of being a composer as well as being a

filmmaker

AR: That completely made sense,

SF: It's like me being a filmmaker in the structuralist world and not wanting to do it any more but having to go sideways into something else, rather than just doing it... why do people do that? Well, it's the way you have access to a public I suppose

AR: Yes, about the digital thing, one of the things I tried to explore was the idea with digital, that the frame *really* doesn't exist at all. It's a completely artificial construct to allow people to work with it on the timeline, editing and so on. But, some of the things that I found happened are a *bit* like some of the things that happen with *The Machine*, the collapse of the frame line and so

SF: Well, I've only used it as a tool, I'm learning how to use Final Cut Pro... The round [*Machine*] stuff happened because of Stuart and Dave Curtis.. to be pulled out of memory into a reality was very good...

AR: I was delighted to see it, it was great... what do you think people's response is to that, what do you think is happening when there are people inside, looking at the work

SF: Well, it depends, if you're coming with a history of being a film nerd, then you're looking at it differently...

AR: But if it's up somewhere, say at the Tate, Diorama or wherever, what would you expect to be happening?

SF: I would hope people would look at it to begin with and perhaps think this is just some sort of device or cleverness or something, but then if they gave it enough time, would be drawn into it, so that they would begin to question all sorts of other things as well, not about life as such, but about the mechanics of seeing and so on. But while you're in that receptive mode, other things can happen

AR: Do you think there's a political dimension to it?

SF: Only in terms of the individual's need to express creativity of some sort, rather than the corporate. Because, now, we're all in the hands of the corporate. It's a myth about it being cheap, it's expensive... Super-8 was much easier in a way of keeping memories

AR: Yes, fragile though

SF: Yes, I've got old hi 8 stuff... and that's gone, whereas standard and super-8 though that's be going and going... that's just mechanical...

AR: I was interested in the conceptual thing, about the frame, if the frame doesn't exist and so on...

SF: But if you don't know anything about the frame, it's just about the retinal experience

AR: Recording, yes..

SF: And you're kind of stuck with the way you see it, it's either a telly or a video projection and they look completely different, it's either on the wall or in a box

AR: Can you see any relationship between what you're doing and painting...

SF: Well, looking at say, Bridget Riley, in a way, it's almost as if she was trying to move towards these experiences in front of the canvas...

AR: Like kinetic things...

SF: Yes, and I don't know if she was trying to take it any further. I look at the work to see what they looked like before they got to where they were, so that you'd see the origins of stuff and the working drawings or whatever...

AR: So that's quite abstract?

SF: Well, I'm just using it as a way of looking at graphic representations. The work I'm doing at the moment, that's directly related to it... Trying to make something that happens in front of it in one state and then having a different state when it's projected. It's not just

notation, there's something else happening. I'm doing some drawings that are optical, that ring in your eyes. I haven't got them transferred on to film yet. How do you bring the two together? It's like I've gone right back to *Ten Drawings* again and *Ten Drawings* I did as an accident, like *The Machine*.

AR: Well, that's how it works, these things stick around

SF: Yes, and it's what you bring to it maybe, well, the accident of wanting to make films but being in a print thing for six months... I made all these silkscreen films as a way into films. They were very strong on not doing film at college where I was, but

AR: I did that at St Martins, and when I worked in a print workshop, playing in the process darkrooms, projecting film on to lith film and I'd love to explore that, but the analogue technology has disappeared because of digital, it would be interesting to see what you could do with that, between print and film...

SF: ...yes, there's no interaction, but I assume there are kids coming up who would be so au fait with digital that they've got those mechanisms and be able to write software that would deal with that level of material, would do all that, but it'll be on a computer, it won't be hands on... I've wondered about a software version of what I'm doing

AR: But maybe they wouldn't get to it

SF: Yes, maybe coming from a different direction

AR: I wondered about your responses to paintings?

SF: I'm not sure I look at paintings all that much... in a way, it's about what can I draw from this to enrich my own work... I remember teaching and going round the painting school, and standing in front of the paintings, we'd have long conversations..

AR: The painter I've stayed interested in more than anyone else is Frank Auerbach and the what happens if you look at those paintings for a long time, and the affect of those paintings...

SF: I'm drawn to mark making and mark making which alludes to some sort of figurative rather than the other way round

AR: 'figurative' is a strange thing, it's been almost a dirty word, but..

SF: completely banned when I was at art school!

AR: Well I first went to art school in the late 70s, I was in a more old fashioned painting school where you had to kind of do life drawing every morning

SF: An education... a discipline!

AR: Well, yes, and you learned about drawing, not so good if you rebelled against it at the time, but now I think what you're doing is responding to something you see in the world and that can be amazing and there is a connection between that and expanded cinema

SF: It's also where it is, time of day, and your mood

AR: But it's not necessarily a fixed or at all conservative thing

SF: Well I thought I might one day do painting, but I think I see it as a bit of an indulgence, and maybe that's because it was banned at art school.. it wasn't allowed in the building and they used to say if you want to paint, do it at home...

AR: That's extraordinary..

SF: By the time I got down to NELP, it was ok, but I'd had this intense foundation year... and you had to think outside of the box... it was a true foundation course, it wasn't filtering to the art schools, exclusively... And also film was a gay thing as well, that's what I thought I saw *Kustom Kar Kommandos* on foundation and also a Warhol. So, those things were very strong...

AR: The thing that I saw around the time I came out was a film about John Heartfield and photomontage dada and that seemed like a queer outsider thing. It was only after I came to London that I saw experimental films.. it took me years to work my way back round to

painting...

SF: But maybe you're also looking for community, especially in the regions, I mean Manchester, then, forget it..

AR: Yes, Glasgow was a bit like that as well... Hopefully things are more open now...

SF: Well the new stuff is all going back to those formative years again, and picking up things that I didn't do at the time...