

You, Me and Everybody Else.

Explorations of self through filmmaking in the domestic setting.



By

William James Normyle

SSID: 1049821

ORCID: 0000-0001-7570-8482

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Fine Arts (Visual Arts Research)

March 2021

VCA Art

Faculty of Fine Arts and Music

Candidate's Declaration

- (I) This dissertation contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university.
- (II) To the best of the author's knowledge, it contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text.
- (III) This Research Projected has been granted ethics approval by the University of Melbourne Fine Arts and Music Human Ethics Advisory Group. Ethics ID: 2057790
- (IV) This dissertation is 13,278 words in length, exclusive of figures, abstract, preface, referencing, bibliography and appendices.

Signed:

Date: 29 November 2020

Acknowledgements

The support and guidance I have experienced has been challenging, uplifting and profoundly humbling. Without the broad network of those I love, respect and admire, the growth and learning I have undergone would not have been possible. This thesis and indeed the work *You, Me and Everybody Else.*, have been an important part of my growth as an adult. More importantly however has been the strengthened bonds between myself and others that have come as a result of this process.

To my loved ones:

Firstly to my family, Mum, Dad and most significantly Anna, who's un-wavering love and support has been shown not only throughout my life but most clearly in the past two years. Mum and Dad, you have always believed in me with care and enthusiasm. The long hours we have spent on the phone in these last years are cherished to me. I am truly grateful to you both for the incredible opportunities and love you have given me.

Anna, there is nothing I can do to express how much your help and guidance has moved me. This would simply not have been possible without you, your profound intelligence and selflessness is a gift to the world and I am so proud to call you my sister.

I also thank my dear friends, Rex, Max, Rose, Tara, Maddie and Fu who unquestioningly stuck by me in the darkest of times, never cast judgement and re-affirmed a dwindling belief in self with patience and unwavering kindness.

To my faculty:

To my supervisor Dr. Sanja Pahoki, who's challenges, support and guidance directed my artistic practice in a direction I could never have imagined. I thank you deeply for pushing me to broaden the scope of considerations both internally and externally.

Finally I send my endless gratitude to my two course conveners and mentors Dr. Simone Slee and Vikki McInnes, who's kindness, support and believe has been a grounding force in an unstable world. I have such respect for you both for your tireless work and for our personal and academic relationships.

Abstract

The self plays a central role in artistic practice, as artists have long used their work to explore conceptions of the broader human condition. In film, the temporally reflexive nature of the medium has allowed filmmakers to create a positioning of characters, sharing emotional experiences with an audience. However, to position oneself in film is perhaps less clear and more complex than that of a protagonist. This dissertation draws upon the practices of filmmakers Jonas Mekas, Max Draper, Chantal Akerman, Michelangelo Antonioni and Moyra Davey, to discuss how key elements of film, including diarism, duration and place, can inform an exploration of the subjective condition. As an accompaniment to my own moving-image artwork, *You, Me and Everyone Else.*, the dissertation draws parallels between each artist's use of visual techniques and my experimentations in practice, to initiate an intimate unravelling of self. I find the acceptance of the banal and the everyday through diarism and durational techniques clarify a process for examining self. Likewise, the embeddedness of these filmic techniques within the deeply personal context of my own home, emphasises the importance of place in affirming; and reinforcing, undulating and shifting notions of self. I additionally note, however, that the forces of context and place uncover deep insecurities and strong negative internal emotions greatly impacting artistic voice. Here, the subjective self emerges through elements of my personal artistic condition, that appears to exist beyond the influence of conscious structure, technique and the influence of others. While the making of a singular artwork may demonstrate hints of the self to both audience and maker, the recurrent, self-reflexive making of artworks clarifies the unseen self only to the artist. Thus, I conclude that there is no firm understanding of self navigable through techniques alone. The artwork is merely the by-product of a process that recognises that the self is as whimsical and subject to change as the forces which surround it.

Preface

Walking with a friend along a well-trodden dirt path, beside the Yarra river, with my usual anxious stride, our dialogue flowed, following the fluid form of the river that led our way. Our concerns of the pandemic ricocheted back and forth through the conversation. We traversed the fragments of our lives, externally (societally) and internally (personally). These movements that propelled me forward along the track, step by step, were both physical and psychological, embodying an internal shift, a change in direction and a turn in my state of mind that felt nothing less than transformative.

To contextualise my position prior to this shift, I must reveal that, over the twenty-five years of life preceding, my level of confidence as a creative practitioner was low. Whatever atmosphere it was that entered my being on that particular day, finding its way through the unruly scruffy Australian riverbank, an impact occurred, productively disordering my thoughts.

In hindsight, it is thanks to these lockdown strolls that I recognised the significantly liberating upheaval of my thinking that was taking place. In the pre-COVID-19 world, I had considered my approach to art-making as a singular, lonely process, with a defined structure, self-ordained targets, goals, expectations, premeditations and repercussions. I now see that these are the kinds of things that send artfulness running far from the openness of my thinking along the scrubby banks of the Yarra, the place where I should be, rather than sitting alone at my desk waiting for art to arrive. Looking back on the lineage of my practice, the result of this self-imposed structure, of what is or isn't acceptable to me as art, is a body of work that feels: empty, detached, avoidant and objective rather than vulnerably subjective.

I have chosen to bring my private world into the public sphere in which I am situated. The affirmation I received from peers, academics and friends has encouraged me to pursue a practice-led approach in my dissertation and filmic body of work. An observational structure binds together my work and research, a method and form which orders the events of my daily world and houses the research that has informed my practice.

Table of Contents

Candidate's Declaration	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Abstract	iv
Preface	v
Table of Contents	vi
List of Figures	vii
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
1.1 Problem: Unravelling conceptions of self.....	1
1.2 Approach: Exploring self through film.....	3
1.3 Setting: The home as self.....	4
1.4 Dissertation structure	5
Chapter 2: Diary	6
2.1 Embrace of Imperfection.	7
2.2 Diarism and Dislocation.	10
2.3 Diarism in You, Me and Everybody Else.	13
Chapter 3: Duration & Installation	16
3.1 Duration and Chantal Akerman	17
3.2 Duration in You, Me and Everybody Else.....	20
3.3 Installed Cinematic language.....	23
3.4 Installation in You, Me and Everybody Else.	25
Chapter 4: Place	27
4.1 Place.....	28
4.2 Placedness.....	31
4.3 Place and Placedness in You, Me and Everybody Else.	34
4.4 Does it Matter?.....	37
Chapter 5: Letting Go	39
Documentation	41
References	42

List of Figures

Figure 1. "Still from <i>Periphery</i> ," William Normyle, 2019.	1
Figure 2. William Normyle, <i>scan of diary entry</i> , 2020.	8
Figure 3. "Examples fom <i>Walden</i> ," Jonas Mekas, <i>Walden, (Diaries, Notes and Sketches)</i> , 1967-68.	9
Figure 4. Gillian Wearing, <i>Signs that Say What You Want Them To Say and Not Signs that Say What Someone Else Wants You To Say</i> c.1992-93.	10
Figure 5. "Progress shot, <i>Munich, August 2018.</i> ," photographed, Max Boutwell Draper, 2018.	11
Figure 6. "Stills from the conclusion of <i>Munich, August 2018.</i> ," Max Boutwell Draper, 2018. <i>Munich, August 2018.</i>	12
Figure 7. "Comparison stills of <i>Munich, August 2018.</i> (left) and <i>Walden, (Notes Diaries, Sketches.)</i> (Right)," Max Boutwell Draper, 2018 and Jonas Mekas ,1968.	13
Figure 8. "Comparison stills from <i>You, Me and Everybody Else.</i> , (left) and <i>Walden, (Diaries, Notes and Sketches.)</i> , (right)," William Normyle, 2020 and Jonas Mekas, 1968.	14
Figure 9. "Still from <i>You, Me and Everybody Else.</i> ," William Normyle, 2020.	15
Figure 10. "Scenes of stillness in <i>Hotel Monterey</i> ," Chantal Akerman, <i>Hotel Monterey</i> , 1971.	18
Figure 11. "Intimate details in <i>La Chambre</i> ", Chantal Akerman. <i>La Chambre</i> , 1972.	19
Figure 12. "Comparison stills, <i>Jeanne Dielman 23 Commerce Quay, 1080 Bruxelles</i> , (left) and <i>You, Me and Everybody Else.</i> , (right), Chantal Akerman, 1976 and William Normyle, 2020.	20
Figure 13. William Normyle, <i>scan of diary entry</i> , 2020.	21
Figure 14. "Images of New York in <i>News From Home</i> ," Chantal Akerman, <i>News From Home</i> , 1977.	22
Figure 15. "Installation photograph of <i>24 Hour Psycho</i> ," Douglas Gordon, 1993.	24
Figure 16. "Installation view of <i>You, Me and Everybody Else.</i> (formerly <i>Periphery</i>)," photographed, William Normyle, 2020.	25
Figure 17. "Installation view of <i>Self-Portrait/Autobiography: Work in Progress</i> ," Chantal Akerman, 1998.	26
Figure 18. "Lidia framed by imposing urban structures" Michelangelo Antonioni, <i>La Notte</i> , 1961.	30
Figure 19. "Davey in the process of writing <i>Hemlock Forest</i> , Stills from <i>Hemlock Forest</i> ," Moyra Davey, 2013.	32
Figure 20. "Example stills from <i>Void</i> (left) and <i>Trapped</i> (right)," William Normyle, 2015-2016.	34
Figure 21. "Process shot of <i>You, Me and Everybody Else.</i> ," photographed by William Normyle, 2020.	37
Figure 22. "Still of conclusion scene in <i>You, Me and Everybody Else.</i> ," William Normyle, 2020.	39
Figures 23-26. Images from VCA Graduate Exhibition 2020. E.B Meyer Studio. Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne. Photographed, William Normyle.	40-42

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Problem: Unravelling conceptions of self

This research project began atop a hill in far outer suburban Melbourne during March 2019 (Figure 1). Under an unusually hot autumn sun, I pointed my camera down to the sea of shining corrugated iron roofs, documenting the forms of outer urban design. My research orientation at this time sought to question urban design theory, however the dynamic shifts in my personal life and practice over the months following would direct my research away from this, toward an inward-facing subjective approach. A turbulent personal life, ethical considerations and personal disassociations with practice enforced the general lostness I encountered in 2019. This lostness however quietly angled my filmmaking towards a personal exploration of self. As my filmic experiments persisted, it was clear that two elements remained constant in my everyday life: myself and my setting. In facing destabilisation, I looked towards these constants in my life to better contemplate my position in the world, a motion which form to the title of this work *You, Me and Everybody Else*. The primary focus of this research is conclusively to question the self, asking how the self may be defined and recontextualised through filmmaking in a domestic setting.



Figure 1. "Still from *Periphery*," William Normyle, 2019.

Self-reflection has been used by artists as a method to explore conceptions of the human condition¹. To search the term ‘self-portrait’, returns an immense catalogue of familiar painted faces that pervade much of contemporary culture. Images of Frida Kahlo, Van Gogh and Picasso are replicated, re-worked and re-discussed to an inescapable effect. Such a persistent repetition of the self-portrait denotes the fascination we as the audience feel towards the identity of another, as it engenders our empathic and similarly self-reflexive responses². In 2020 visual self-representation is commonplace, as the technology we carry in our pockets provides such a quick mechanism for documenting the self. To understand how the self is defined; therefore, this research seeks to discover an intimate, more confessional understanding of the self through the moving-image. In the practice of filmmaking, the unravelling of conceptions of the self are subject to a unique set of problems, strategies and challenges. The temporally reflexive nature of film allows the filmmaker to create positioning of characters³, sharing emotional experiences with an audience. However, to position oneself in film is perhaps less transparent and more complicated than that of a protagonist.

At a surface level, we can often identify explorations of self in film through uses of visual language and written narrative as strategies for indirectly addressing the filmmakers internal processes. Agnes Varda's films demonstrate this indirect interpretation of conceptions of self her works. Examples such as *The Gleaners and I* (2000) or *The Beaches of Agnès* (2008) are notably self-reflexive despite their depictions and focuses on others.⁴ As the direction of *You, Me and Everybody Else.*, shifted toward self-reflexion, the practices of Jonas Mekas and Max Draper technically informed such a change. Here, Mekas and Draper utilise filmmaking to diaristically make sense of their world, posing questions and reflecting on experiences through the moving-image. Likewise, Chantal Akerman demonstrates an unravelling of conceptions of self in her use of duration, in particular ‘the long take’⁵. Akerman's use of the installation space as physically metonymic to identity informed the ongoing form of *You, Me and Everybody Else*.

In identifying filmmakers like Mekas, Draper and Akerman for their technical approach to self, it becomes apparent that the role of setting and place plays a crucial role in navigating my definitions of self. To further exemplify strategies for observing place through artmaking, the practice of Michelangelo Antonioni highlights an enigmatic approach to the physical and

1 Grushka, Kathryn. "Artists as reflective self-learners and cultural communicators: an exploration of the qualitative aesthetic dimension of knowing self through reflective practice in art-making.", in *Reflective practice* 6, no. 3 (UK: Taylor & Francis, 2005): 353-366.

2 Knafo, Danielle. "Egon Schiele and Frida Kahlo: The self-portrait as mirror.", *Journal of the American Academy of Psychoanalysis* 19, no. 4 (New York, 1991): 630-647.

3 Thanouli, Eleftheria. "Post-Classical Narration: A new paradigm in contemporary cinema.", *New Review of Film and Television Studies* 4, no. 3 (UK: Taylor & Francis, 2006): 183-196.

4 Bluher, Dominique, "The Other Portrait: Agnès Varda's Self-Portraiture", *From Self-Portrait to Selfie*, *New Studies in European Cinema* (UK: Peter Lang, 2019), 48.

5 Lebow, Alisa, "Identity Slips: The Autobiographical Register in the Work of Chantal Akerman", *Film Quarterly* 70, no. 1, (1 September 2016): 54.

emotional impacts of place. In particular, Antonioni's visual, filmic language addresses the physical surface of the world of place, reminding the viewer of the immense power of setting for its emotional impact on a protagonist.⁶

Initiating a shift towards self-reflexive practice, however, poses questions, which at times transcend physical processes. Correspondingly to Antonioni's conscious observations of place, my interpretations of *Placedness*, suggest there also exists a subjective, intangible self which sits beyond the realm of place and physical, filmic representation. I argue that this sense of *Placedness* is found in practice, where the processes, learnings and reflections of artmaking serve to remind the artist of their underpinning subjective self. Moyra Davey's work demonstrates this notion of *Placedness* particularly, *Hemlock Forest* (2016), in which the documentation of artmaking is primarily important to artist, reminds the viewer that the 'doing' of artmaking can cement a grounding of self in place.

The purpose of this dissertation, is to document my research, growths, failures and shifts in identifying processes for defining the self through filmmaking. *You, Me and Everybody Else.*, the three-channel installation video work which accompanies this paper, is in effect a by-product of the research I have undergone over the past 18 months.

1.2 Approach: Exploring self through film

You, Me and Everybody Else approaches explorations of self by incorporating key elements of diaristic filmmaking, alongside consideration of duration and place. In this dissertation, I focus upon these three core elements, systematically explaining how each has supported an interrogation of my connection to self within moving-image.

Firstly, though to the medium of film itself. Filmmaking has long been central to me as a practicing artist. From my humble photographic beginnings, I recognised a substantial difference between a photographic and filmic practice. In my learnings of filmmaking, the conscious use of time, movement and sound enrich the visual processes central to photography. Visual techniques present through the history of filmmaking demonstrate the mediums profound ability to convey, emphasise and express emotions⁷. A photograph undoubtedly bears the strength the express profound subjective emotions, yet for my work, the diverse temporality of filmmaking has benefited my style of image making. Beyond the immediacy of my photographic form, a filmic approach to time, sound and movement invite my work to approach emotional nuances I had not pursued in previously my photographic practice. My choice for pursuing film and particularly 'the embodied cinema' for this research project, arose from the diverse emotional surfaces of the medium.

6 Brunette, Peter. *The Films of Michelangelo Antonioni*. Cambridge University Press, 1998. 52-60.

7 Plantinga, Carl R., and Greg M. Smith, eds. "Passionate views: Film, cognition, and emotion." Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999.

1.3 Setting: The home as self

In a discussion about the conceptions and embedded understandings of self, the role of an artist's setting in directing, and reflecting their intentions cannot be overlooked. Our setting often plays a core role in constructing both conscious and unconscious understandings of self.⁸ Not only does setting present the significant sociological facets of our personalities,⁹ but it can also visually inflect our moods, emotions and underlying thoughts¹⁰. It is thus crucial for me to, define the setting of both this dissertation and the work *You, Me and Everybody Else*.

This work has been, very deliberately, set in my home in Melbourne's inner north. As I will discuss further in Chapter 4, interpreting this setting has been key to clarifying the impactful relationship between individual and place. In this instance, my cheap ageing rental is indicative of my physical placement in the temporal context of this research. As the process of observing myself through destabilisation occurs within my home; the walls, doors and windows that make up my surroundings not only bear the emotional load of those changes, but in part, enforce it. This notion orientates my filmic approach to my surrounds; my bedroom, bathroom, kitchen and hallways enable an indirect exploration of emotional experience. While the consciously framed details of my home set the scene for this work, it is in the act of such a framing that we encounter indirect interpretations of self. For myself as maker and viewer, I glance upon these images and feel connected to the underlying motivations of a previous me.

8 Watter, Seth B., "On the Concept of Setting: A Study of V. F. Perkins", *JCMS: Journal of Cinema and Media Studies* 58, no. 3 (Michigan: Michigan Publishing, 2019): 72–92.

9 Schnoefeld, Erin "Naomi Kawase's "Cinema of Place", *Arts* 8, no. 2 *Japanese Transnational Cinema*, (Basel: MDPI, 28 March 2019): 43.

10 Greco, Monica, and Paul Stenner, eds. "Emotions: a social science reader". Routledge, 2013.

1.4 Dissertation structure

This dissertation proceeds in 3 core chapters. Within each, I draw on the practices of key artists to draw parallels to the development of *You, Me and Everybody Else*.

In Chapter 2, I discuss diaristic filmmaking, noting how this mundane capture of the everyday fosters both an acceptance of the 'good, bad, and ugly' and a contemplation of *Placelessness*. Providing examples of artists Jonas Mekas and Max Draper, I discuss diary filmmaking as a confessional genre, akin to the letter. The often ritualistic process of diary filmmaking, I infer, allows a space for the filmmaker to digest and reflect in times of dislocation and destabilisation.

In Chapter 3, I then dive deeper into the filmic techniques underpinning diarism, highlighting how duration in particular 'the long take' in cinema, creates a meditative, intimate relationship with imagery. Specifically, its uses for reflecting the 'real', opens up a participatory viewing experience of intimate actions, rarely shared in the public sphere. Here, I draw parallels to Chantal Akerman's translation of temporal processes within the installation space, to position the viewer in an embodied dialogue about the self.

Finally, in Chapter 4, I pull back to a broader perspective, discussing how familiarity in practice or a *Placedness* for the artist is key in stabilising the vulnerable, subjective self. This discussion turns to the use of place, contrasting how the works of Michelangelo Antonioni and Moyra Davey highlight both the structuralism of place to the ephemerality of *Placedness* respectively. This action functions to further deepen my understanding of self amidst the shifting circumstances of personal life.

Chapter 2: Diary

The diaristic process of repeated daily observation of the everyday challenges the highly considered production structures of mainstream filmmaking.¹¹ In my practice as a moving-image artist, the rigidity of the ‘film set’ outlook has often disconnected me from myself and my creative agency. As I will outline in this chapter, however, my encounter with diaristic filmic strategies challenges this position and leans me away from my pre-conceptions of the cinematic process as one of perfection and meticulous staging. Through ritualistic and impulsive approaches to filmic pieces, artists like Jonas Mekas and Max Draper have deconstructed the role of the filmmaker, translating the mundane and overlooked elements of the human experience into the film protagonist. Here, I discuss how the adoption of diaristic strategies to observe lived experiences has oriented my own exploration of conceptions of self. Drawing upon Mekas and Draper’s daily questions, experiences and ephemeral observations, we are able to coherently link conceptions of self to everyday nuances, memory and place.

The persistent notion of ‘the diary’ pervades most of human history, from the written to the spoken, the drawn to the filmed.¹² Diarism provides individuals with a framework in which to reflect, collect thoughts, ideas, emotions and interpretations of life. The diary, if not voluntarily engaged with, is something recommended to us in times when our lives seem to be unravelling¹³. Diary’s form is uniquely free and undefined by structure and protocol. Closely relating to the letter, Laura Rascaroli describes the diary as “A confessional genre that encourages intimacy and disclosure, self-description and self-designation”.¹⁴ As this form represents an inherently subjective colouring of one’s surroundings, the diary’s reflections of place and lived experiences become potent resources in mapping definitions and ongoing re-definitions of self. Indeed, such is the power of diary-keeping for recording the changes and flows of the human experience, that its incorporation into the genre of moving-image art allows for what may be considered “a speculative and poetic border crossing”¹⁵

I liken diaristic creative practices to John Conomos’s reflection on Michel de Montaigne’s position on the essay. He states, “For Montaigne, *The Essay* was an ideal vehicle for speculating aloud and testing ideas on paramount questions of life, culture, politics, human fragility and

11 Barthes, Roland. "11. David E. James Film Diary/Diary Film: Practice and Product." *To Free the Cinema: Jonas Mekas & the New York Underground* (1992): 145.

12 Heehs, Peter. *Writing the self: Diaries, memoirs, and the history of the self*. A&C Black, 2013. 15-40.

13 Suhr, M., A. K. Risch, and G. Wilz. "Maintaining mental health through positive writing: Effects of a resource diary on depression and emotion regulation." *Journal of Clinical Psychology* 73, no. 12 (New Jersey: Wiley-Blackwell, 2017): 1586-1598.

14 Rascaroli, Laura, "Cinewriting the Self: The Letter-Film as Self Portrait," in *From Selfie to Self-Portrait, New Studies in European Cinema* (UK: Peter Lang, 2019), 13–45.

15 Conomos, John, "The Self-Portrait and the Film and Video Essay", in *Imaging Identity*, ed. Melinda Hinkson, 1st ed. (Canberra: ANU Press, 2016), 86.

society”¹⁶. As the diarist blends the technical process of image-making with the confessional nature of the diary, one may find works which visually question conceptions of self, the path of one’s life, interpretations of memory or interpretations of belonging to place. Such dialogues are demonstrated clearly through the practices of artists Jonas Mekas and Max Draper. Through a consideration of their practices, I will discuss the importance of diaristic observation for framing the individual’s subjective colouring of the world.

2.1 Embrace of Imperfection.

To embrace the ugly and the imperfect alongside the beautiful is a considerable challenge in creative practice. In my experience, I have felt it is easier for the filmmaker to become accustomed to logical, planned filmmaking to deliver the highest value output. Based on the saturation of hyper-polished media, this interpretation of visual hierarchy establishes a seemingly unshakeable link between filmic practice and the notion of entertainment. A connection which results in works which too rarely address the imperfect and the ugly alongside the pleasing¹⁷. Counter to the generic strands of high budget cinema, Jonas Mekas embraces the multiplicity of the lived experience through film, utilising the diaristic structure to celebrate the good, the bad and the ugly of his own existence.

Mekas’s practice challenges interplays between the public and the private, the correct and the technically incorrect (cinematically speaking). His works take heed of the unstructured form of the written diary embracing both the confessional and the uninteresting as they occur. Here I focus upon what is acknowledged as Mekas’ first diary film. *Walden (Diaries, Stories and Sketches)* (1969) largely reflects the whimsical nature of the written diary. Following no distinct structure, the work (shot all on a Bolex 16mm [In my opinion the Handicam or iPhone of the period]) is a series of everyday vignettes broken up and segregated by written text on card demarcating the context of the shot. Like the written diary, each text serves as a heading, allowing the viewer to feel as if we are visually turning the pages between entries. When writing a journal entry we as the diarist do not attempt to be perfect in our method, the page is a space free of judgement to focus on the most insignificant of observations or the fundamental questions of our existence. We remain unhampered by protocol or purpose, occupying a space where observations are allowed to thrive simply because they exist. This is seen in my personal diaries in Figure 2.

¹⁶ IBID, 90.

¹⁷ Wenzel, Jennifer. "Consumption for the common good? Commodity biography film in an age of postconsumerism." In *Public culture* 23, no. 3 (65) (North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2011): 573-602.

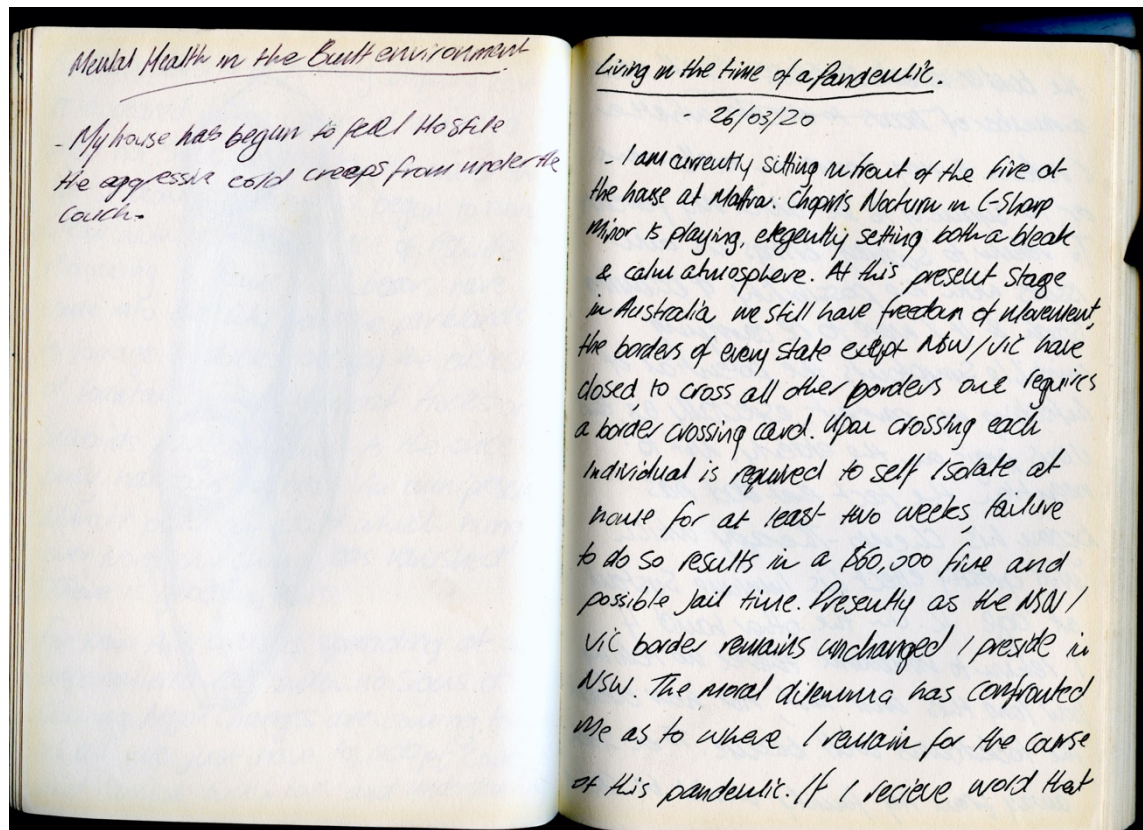


Figure 2. William Normyle, scan of diary entry, 2020.

Mekas's *Walden* (Figure 3) likewise reflects a sparse consideration for correctness; what remains of primary importance, instead, is the “real” of what is in front of him.¹⁸ The diaristic film structure in *Walden* takes us through the intimacy of detail be it painful or joyous, beautiful or banal, turning the metaphoric ‘written’ pages of his diary. We move between scenes titled, ‘Tony Conrad and Beverly Grant in their second avenue home’ to ‘Photograph the dust falling on the city, on the windows, on the books, everywhere.’¹⁹ Between watching his close friends wandering through their garden, to the stark image of Mekas, laying restlessly in a single bed in a dimly lit messy room. We see here that like the written journal, there is no hierarchy of good and bad; there is what is, as it occurs.

¹⁸ Jonas Mekas in “Jonas Mekas – Always Beginning,” online video posted by Tate, September 11, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kzkzQExJ9rc>

¹⁹ *Walden (Diaries, Stories and Sketches)*, directed by Jonas Mekas (New York, The Film Makers' Cooperative, 1968), <https://vimeo.com/2601707>.

This image/material has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

Figure 3. "Examples from *Walden*," Jonas Mekas, *Walden, (Diaries, Notes and Sketches)*, 1968.

Mekas remarks on his approach to embracing the perfections and imperfections of the lived experience, stating;

“...Nothing should be left unshown or unseen, dirty or clean: Let us see and go further, out of the swamps and into the sun.”²⁰

Without this mentality, the sense of subjectivity seen in *Walden*, which makes Mekas’s practice so unique would be lost. To diaristically accept the generally unshown, dirty and clean, provides Mekas with a framework for looking upon himself, his thoughts, memories and experiences as they occur; outlining his interpretations of self both past and present. Rascaroli makes a note of the interplay between diary and self-portraiture, stating,

‘These forms disclose something of the author’s intimate sphere: ‘Because self-portraits merge the artist and the sitter into one, they have the allure of a private diary, in that they seem to give us an artist’s insight into his or her personality’.²¹

In this instance, the intimacy of Mekas’s diary films indirectly paints a self-portrait. They disclose the intimate sphere of Mekas’s life and interweave the confessions and reflections as we have come to associate with the diary. I liken Mekas’s disclosure of imperfections in life to Gillian Wearing’s famous, *Signs that Say What You Want Them To Say and Not Signs that Say What Someone Else Wants You To Say*’ (1992-93) (Figure 4), for its emphasis on the unpleasant and complex realities positionality that lay beneath our surfaces.

²⁰ Mekas, Jonas, “Movie Journal The Rise of the New American Cinema, 1959-1971”, second edition, Columbia university press. New York, 2016.

²¹ Rascaroli, “Cinewriting the Self”, 26.

This image/material has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

Figure 4. Gillian Wearing, *Signs that Say What You Want Them To Say and Not Signs that Say What Someone Else Wants You To Say* c.1992-93.

A good exercise for inferring my point would be to find an old written diary. Flip back through the pages of your thoughts and emotional outpourings, look to those that at the time of writing were most confronting. Continue to turn through the pages and observe how your life progressed and was shaped by those confronting experiences. In hindsight, the presence of those difficult imperfections was not as ugly as once perceived; they were integral to the ongoing flow of charting experience and self. Mekas's works take this aspect of the written diary and apply it to moving image; the pen replaced with the turning on of the camera.

2.2 Diarism and Dislocation.

In a period where the fundamental stability of the diary filmmaker's life shifts beneath their feet, diary, as a framework, assists their search to reposition themselves. In essence, they are reconfiguring their relationship to self and place. In the absence of physical or emotional grounding, diaristic observations of everyday surroundings provide an opportunity to visually reflect on the profound locational and personal shifts that have occurred in the diarist's daily life. Rascaroli highlights the diary/letter film structure and its inherent connection to this phenomenon.

“The letter film has been noted as particularly common among displaced, exiled and diasporic filmmakers, arguably as a consequence of their condition of separation. This, however, raises compelling questions about the role of place as a key element of the letter film; as those displaced seek to redefine or indeed question their perceptions of self through film.²²

Evidence of this can be seen across the works of some of the most recognisably self-reflexive filmmakers. Examples such as Jem Cohen's *Chain* (2004)²³ and Wim Wenders *Tokyo-Ga* (1985)²⁴

²² Rascaroli, "Cinewriting the Self", 23.

²³ Jem Cohen's *Chain* is an organic handheld film following two characters as they aimlessly occupy time in a world fluorescence and industrial landscapes. Although not directly focussing on Cohen the use of the camera in observing settings makes for commentary on urban America that feels close to the makers subjective outlook.

²⁴ *Tokyo-Ga* is a personally reflexive documentary chronically Wim Wenders journey to Japan in search of the mystical landscapes seen in the films of Yasujiro Ozu. Wenders ongoing narration navigates the viewer across aimless footage that mirrors Wenders fascination with the countries culture of that time.

lean upon the framework of the diary film as they would a written journal. Its observations of the overlooked elements of the artist's emotional and physical position give them the means to reposition and reconfigure themselves in the wake of displacement or relocation. These works are not directly created for an audience; instead for the filmmaker to digest and seek answers in periods of immense *Placelessness*²⁵.

My oldest friend and fellow artist, Max Draper, endured such emotional and physical dislocation in 2018. At 22 he suffered the traumatic, rapid loss of his father only months after his mother's relocation from Sydney to Munich. In a short period, Draper's pre-conceptions of his life were utterly destabilised, with his grounding in his home of Sydney thrown entirely into question. He subsequently travelled to Germany for the Summer of 2018 where, without foresight, he began to film his experiences. Shot on a mini-DV Handicam (a recognisable trademark of the home movie), Draper documented this new city, filming his passing of the days around Munich with his mother (Figure 5.), he uses the framework of his recordings to seek an understanding of the emotional and physical displacement, which defined his then present destabilisation.

This image/material has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

Figure 5. "Progress shot, *Munich, August 2018.*," photographed, Max Boutwell Draper, 2018.

From behind the camera, Draper asks his mother questions which frame the painful lack of understanding he feels. This mode of questioning reflects the work of Marcus Isaacs in *Lift (2001)*, where, also from behind the camera, Isaacs asks residents of a London council flat similarly probing and emotionally uncomfortable questions. Being that the work is unplanned, Draper gains confidence in looking to both his mother and to his surroundings to make sense of his destabilisation. Early in the piece, he asks his mother about his grandfather (her father). "*Do you think Allen (Draper's grandfather) left his childhood, his life behind in England to move to Germany?*"²⁶ Draper reflects Mekas's technical process in these instances, despite the tension that is clear in his mother's behaviour, he doesn't shy away—holding in the discomfort, evidently

²⁵ Intended by the author as, the emotional response to physical dislocation. *Placelessness* refers to the feeling of not belonging to a physical or cultural context.

²⁶ *Munich, August 2018*. Directed by Max Boutwell Draper, (Private, online, 2018).

posing questions regarding his dislocation through his indirect enquiry. “*Do you remember the last thing he said to you?*”.²⁷ He is seemingly turning to his mother’s experiences of loss, trauma and change to make sense of his own profound circumstances.

The work progresses in this way and our journey as the viewer transitions between slow static shots of everyday Munich and the touching, yet painful, conversations with Draper’s mother. The camera work remains ever casual, as if an extension of Draper’s body, one is ushered to think of Chantal Akerman’s *No Home Movie (2015)*, which stylistically, references similar themes of family, dislocation and mortality. I can’t help but link Draper’s complex sense of yearning to reach out and understand, to that of Akerman’s in *No Home Movie*. The emotional climax of *Munich, August 2018.*, (Figure 6) is a conversation rewarded to Draper from his commitment to this recurrent intuitive approach to filming. The viewer feels that the therapeutic reflection of his filming both of Munich and of his mother has given him the confidence to ask his mother “*I guess the question I have really wanted to ask you is how do you mourn dad’s death?*”.²⁸ The discussion that takes place sitting on the floor of his mother’s bedroom is heartbreaking, and at times uncomfortable, still, Draper does not look away. In this moment of immense confrontation, this diary entry is the most essential, stabilising source of reflection he can grasp.

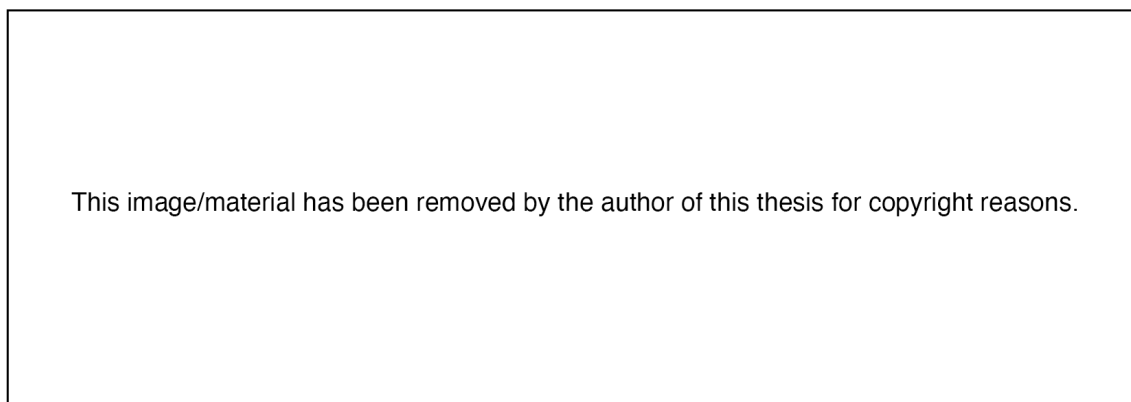


Figure 6. “Stills from the conclusion of *Munich, August 2018.*” Max Boutwell Draper, 2018.
Munich, August 2018.

The film concludes with a long-take. In a poorly lit scene in his mother’s art gallery, we watch the two (for the first time seeing Draper emerge from behind the camera) talking indistinctly. Together the two hang a poster on the window of the gallery, wandering outside to discuss its placement. This poetically simple scene is resounding in its nature. It speaks volumes to the shifts that have occurred through the diaristic process. This rounding and stable scene

²⁷ IBID

²⁸ IBID

demonstrates that the diaristic process, in its observations and questions, helps the destabilised, decentred artist (even if only temporary) to identify a sense of stability.

2.3 Diarism in *You, Me and Everybody Else*.

Central to Mekas's and Drapers practices is the implementation of diaristic strategies to ask questions and reflect on their subjective experiences (Figure 7.). Analysis of these strategies has assisted me in asking similar questions and reflecting on my practice, in turn yielding surprising shifts to my research project *You, Me and Everybody Else*.

Approaching diarism in my creative practice has positioned me to challenge the entrenched, rigid approach to image-making, which I had so ingrained into my creativity. In early trials of this research project, I intended to strictly plan my filming, invest in expensive gear and turn the camera on myself and my family. This was, in part, inspired by Draper's *Munich August 2018*. During this period, we filmed ourselves daily around our homes living as we would usually. I was attempting to capture a similar style of footage to that seen in Jonas Mekas's *Walden*. Here I sought to compare our diverse approaches to daily tasks, in theory, reflecting each of our individualities. As the participants, however, we each noted, our attempts were too contrived, something that could be seen in our body language. The process felt strangely inaccurate and irrelevant.

This image/material has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

Figure 7. "Comparison stills of *Munich, August 2018*. (left) and *Walden, (Notes Diaries, Sketches.)* (Right)," Max Boutwell Draper, 2018 and Jonas Mekas, 1968.

We noted our embarrassment, reflecting on the ugliness of our posture or disliking the sound of our voices. As these thoughts pervaded our actions, the outcome of the experiments ultimately failed to become the portraits I had intended to make. In further canvassing Mekas's use of the diary structure; however, in hindsight, it makes clearer sense to me why this occurred. Returning to Rascaroli's comments, we established that the diary is a genre of private confession and intimacy²⁹. Filming oneself for a family member's project is neither an intimate nor a personal

29 Rascaroli, "Cinewriting the Self", 23-44.

experience. Despite my withdrawal from involving my family, releasing my mother and my sister from filming, I continued to document myself in my home. The more I embraced Mekas's attention to the imperfections of life, the more confident I became with my filming of self.

Thus, my focus toward intuitive filming enabled what critic Marjorie Keller in her description of Mekas's practice described as a "dancing between domestic life and artistic production."³⁰ I was now less concerned with ugliness and imperfections and consequently wove filming into my daily life, replacing my written diary with filming.

One night I filmed a critical clip. I had come home from the pub after too many pints on a bad date. In this state, I made it to my bed; my camera always remained in position. Out of habit, I turned it on and began filming. My body language utterly defeated, I slumped with barely the will to take my shoes off. Throwing my head down on the pillow, I lay there in a dark low. This footage was my first confrontation with the bad and the ugly of myself, seen in Figure 8.

This image/material has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

Figure 8. "Comparison stills from *You, Me and Everybody Else.*, (left) and *Walden, (Diaries, Notes and Sketches.)*, (right)," William Normyle, 2020 and Jonas Mekas, 1968.

It is an uncomfortable thing to watch documentation of a drunk person especially when it is yourself. Despite such a confrontation, this moment for me marked the point where filming had become so habitual that I was no longer afraid of the ugliness in my life. I had nothing left to hide, and after all, what was the point of hiding? Gradually this instance would echo across all my experimentations, from early filming where I would hold my posture to later filming myself depressed, seated in the shower (Figure 9). Here my embrace of the elements of my life, which at first seemed so confronting, now indirectly enlighten me, giving clear insights to my inner emotional workings.

³⁰ Keller, Marjorie, "The Apron Strings of Jonas Mekas," in *To Free the Cinema: Jonas Mekas and the New York Underground*, ed. David E. James (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 93.



Figure 9. "Still from *You, Me and Everybody Else.*," William Normyle, 2020.

As I addressed earlier in this chapter, Rascaroli suggests the diary film has a connection to artists of displacement, diaspora or destabilisation.³¹ Here, I tread very consciously in reiterating that my experience is not one of diaspora. The experience of cultural disruption and generational trauma is wholly unknown to me. However, Rascaroli's comment and my discussion of Max Draper's *Munich, August 2018.*, lead me to contemplate this logic in a broader context. In Draper's circumstances (a period of mental and physical destabilisation), Rascaroli's point justifies his use of diary film for posing questions regarding the self and place. Though in this instance not directly diasporic Draper's profound mental and physical *Placelessness* are reflected upon in imagery rather than on paper. As I concluded, although through his work, Draper developed greater confidence, the notion of the self remains transient for him. Diary, in this instance, gave structure and context to the inquiries and unknowns of his life at that time.

The resulting outcome of this process has encouraged me to do away with my presupposed expectations of filmic practice. The professionalism of style, structure and technical setup feel mostly irrelevant to me. As with my relationship with the written diary, the action of diary filming is an unconscious and uncontrolled extension of my experiences. It's comforting presence now rhetorically makes sense of a transient self during immense destabilisation. To watch the footage makes me think of my home in two ways. Analytically, it is constant, its environment allows the circumstances for me to observe myself (like Draper's *Munich*). Emotionally, it's presence and features embody memories of great struggle and change.

31 Rascaroli, "Cinewriting the Self" 23-44.

Chapter 3: Duration & Installation

Cinematic time is a crucial aspect of filmmaking, with the power to suspend, excite, enliven and converse beyond the scope of the screen³². Likewise, installation practices, through their embodiment of cinematic strategies, shift audience engagement from the psychological to the physical. Chantal Akerman and Douglas Gordon inform my ongoing investigations of both time and installation as key methods for an examination of the self. In this chapter, I discuss Akerman's use of the long take and installation alongside Gordon's disruption of cinematic form. As these examples are deeply rooted in audience interaction, my focus centres around perceptions of viewership, highlighting experimentations and learnings from my own practice, which have aligned with Akerman and Gordon's practices.

In the ongoing development of a filmmaker's practice, the notion of time is inevitably flagged for discussion. In film, time can be chopped, extended, scrambled and shortened. These uses and alterations as structural strategies can, in turn, alter the intentions and achievements of a work³³. Continuing my exploration of redefining the self in filmic practice, I must acknowledge the presence of time as a tangible force in engendering of contemplative spaces. The temporality of moving-image is the clear separation between film, and other artistic mediums, save perhaps performance. Cinematic time arrests an audience, emphasises emotions, challenges understandings and visually communicates complex themes.³⁴ Given that cinematic time is a crucially well versed aspect of filmic practice, this chapter will avoid the broader discussions about time as a principal. Instead, I focus on the practice of artist Chantal Akerman, discussing her technical application of duration to address her personal and creative intentions that institute a dialogical relationship with her audience. This participatory experience embraces the core principles of transcendental cinema³⁵, clarifying her questions of displacement, gender and self. Akerman's use of duration examines what is beyond the surface, exploring a world through contemplation and imagination.

As my ongoing practical experimentations persist, I additionally interrogate the notion of of embodied cinematic strategies in "the expanded cinema"³⁶, enlighten a re-conceptualisation of the

32 Doane, Mary Ann. *The emergence of cinematic time: Modernity, contingency, the archive*. Harvard University Press, 2002, 1-5.

33 Wahlberg, Malin. "Documentary time: film and phenomenology". (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2008).

34 Carruthers, Lee. "M. Bazin et le temps: Reclaiming the Timeliness of Cinematic Time.", in *Screen* 52, no. 1 (Oxford: University of Oxford Press, 2011): 13-29.

35 Transcendental style discussed by Paul Schrader as: "Expresses a spiritual state by means of austere camerawork, acting devoid of self-consciousness, and editing that avoids editorial comment.", in *Transcendental Style in Film* by Paul Schrader, with a new introduction, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2018

36 Ballestrasse, Diego, 'Douglas Gordon's Temporary Alterations on 24 Hour Psycho', *Der Grief Artist Blog* (blog), n.d., <https://dergreif-online.de/artist-blog/douglas-gordons-temporary-alterations-on-24-hour-psycho/>.

creative decisions at the centre of *You, Me and Everybody Else*. To inform this discussion, I make reference to Douglas Gordon for his embodiment of time and expectation, as well as again to Chantal Akerman for her use of physical space as metonymic to identity. Just as the adjustments of cinematic time in film can significantly alter a work's outcome, the installation of moving images in the art gallery can notably destabilise core themes and intentions. I will, therefore, through ongoing reflection on my own work, discuss the implications of installation to moving-image.

3.1 Duration and Chantal Akerman

Whether directly or indirectly experienced, cinema as a medium remains discursively conscious. Even in a bodiless image, like that of an empty desert or in CCTV footage, the placement of the camera infers human consideration, placement and purpose. Most of our experiences with the mainstream moving image unconsciously overlook this notion, as in these mainstream cases, the camera is cloaked in autonomous intent. Indeed, the reality of the mainstream is, in fact, wholly the opposite; the viewer is subject to layers of planning, structure, control and purpose all with the intent of creating a camera-less world. In the unstoppable force of this style of narrative flow, we, as the viewer rarely stop to question or contemplate the actions and intentions behind what we are witnessing. Sean Cubitt describes this as narratology, where, "the widespread school of thought sees narration as the essential model in cinematic duration, and cinema as a machine for telling stories."³⁷ Cubitt goes on to infer that it is, "at once too narrow a focus and too neither autonomous nor authentic but the end product of a discursive strategy in which viewers are participants but not original sources".³⁸ I believe that the narratological structuring saturating contemporary moving image isolates a viewer, hindering their ability to contemplate and reflect.

For Chantal Akerman, the undoing of such dominant strategies in filmic practice can be identified clearly through her use of the 'long take'. Unlike these 'fast-food-films'³⁹ Akerman's works are not comfortable viewing; they can be laboursome and at times dull. Her long takes are drawn out for up to 10 minutes, focussing mainly on domestic scenes with little occurring. Akerman's use of the transcendental style utilises what Paul Schrader describes as "dead time"; as the lack of occurrences depicted, lean her films away from the viewer, migrating the role of the viewer from observational to participatory⁴⁰. This dead time is potently seen in Akerman's

³⁷ Cubitt, Sean, *The Cinema Effect / Sean Cubitt* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2004). 35.

³⁸ IBID

³⁹ Intended colloquially by the author as the mass-produced high budget Hollywood films which dominate popular culture.

⁴⁰ Paul Schrader in "Transcendental Style in Film," online video posted by TIFF Originals, April 17, 2017,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mFcCs8c2n6I>

work *Hotel Monterey* (1975), a 65-minute long silent film where the viewer is slowly taken through the halls and rooms of the ageing hotel (Figure 10)

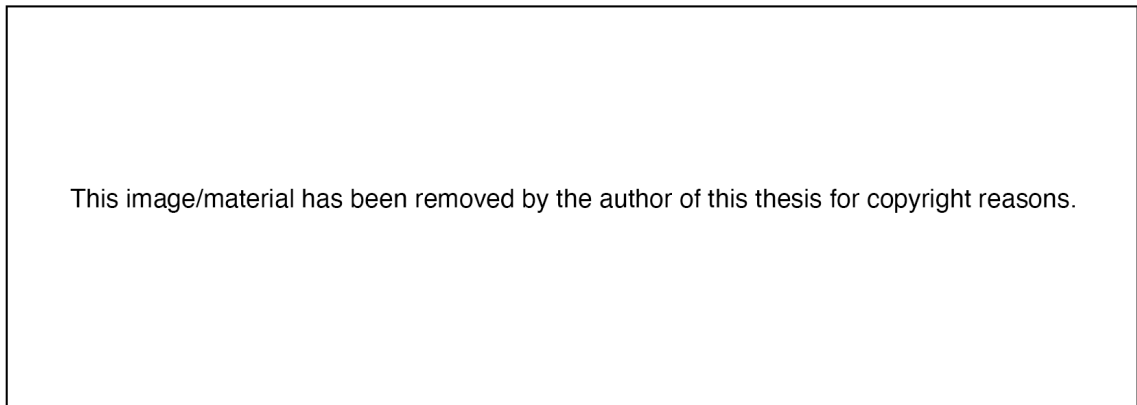


Figure 10. "Scenes of stillness in *Hotel Monterey*," Chantal Akerman, *Hotel Monterey*, 1971.

In silence and a void of action and the time we spend with the images, pushes us to contemplate questions like: Why is Akerman here? What is she telling us? And what is the camera trying to say? The audience feels the presence of the camera, it is bodied, bristling with tensions and intentions. Akerman, though not bodily present, features at the core of the work, though its materiality.

Where Akerman separates herself from other durational filmmakers is in this embrace of contemplative viewership to explore deeply personal emotional questions of placing and of self. Alisa Lebow highlights Akerman's foreknowledge of this structurally reflexive dynamic:

"What becomes clear when looking closely at Akerman's work, especially the more explicitly autobiographical projects, both documentaries and installations, and even her interviews, is that she provides all of the tools required to engage with her emotional and psychic states, fairly prompting the viewer to do so."⁴¹

Likewise, Akerman's work *La Chambre* (1972) (Figure 12), presents a single, endless, panning shot of a bedroom. Where we at first notice the objects, ephemera and architecture in our insatiable thirst for storytelling, the camera continues to pan, revealing a young Akerman languishing in her unmade bed. Through the slow, repetitive pans, we familiarise ourselves with the surroundings, with the body in the bed and with the gaze of the camera. Without the distractions of sound or cuts, Akerman invites us to slow down, to contemplate and digest her queries. How do we feel viewing a stranger in such intimacy? How does this body and this space interrelate? Who is behind the camera, and what is it looking at? Why is the camera looking? These questions go around and around my head correspondingly with each rotation of the camera. I note that without such still, uninterrupted time I would not be able to ruminate on such questions.

⁴¹ Lebow, "Identity Slips", 56.

This image/material has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

Figure 11. "Intimate details in *La Chambre*", Chantal Akerman. *La Chambre*, 1972.

In our lives, in times where we are confronted with the banal solidarity of everyday life, the mind wanders into questions and reflections, anxieties and hopes. When invited into Akerman's time, the viewer re-experiences these emotions, yet this time with Akerman's subjectivity core to our thoughts. The time spent with Akerman in not just *La Chambre* but in her practice as a whole, is, in many ways conversational. Lebow marks this concept outlining that, "Her (Akerman's) films speak to the viewer, at least those patient enough to listen, as if in profound and intimate conversation with an old and cherished friend"⁴² Akerman invites us into her world on a more complex level, to sit, observe and reflect in greater detail. From *La Chambre* (1972) to *D'est* (1995), *Jeanne Dielman* (1976) to *La Bas* (2006), Akerman's films don't let go of their interactions with time and with the viewer. Her presence as the Filmer and the filmed when examined through duration, embraces an intensely private confessional process, the likes of which one only really finds or omits in a personal diary.

Thus, to further interrogate the source of this intimacy, I must return to a comment made in my previous chapter regarding diaspora in auto-biographical films. Rascaroli's comment:

"The letter film has been noted as particularly common among displaced, exiled and diasporic filmmakers, arguably as a consequence of their condition of separation. This, however, raises compelling questions about the role of place as a key element of the letter film; as those displaced seek to redefine or indeed question their perceptions of self through film."⁴³

This notion reminds us that in the circumstances of displacement, the process of filmmaking provides an arena through which to pose questions of self.

⁴² Lebow, "Identity Slips", 56.

⁴³ Rascaroli, "Cinewriting the Self", 23.

On multiple occasions, Akerman returns to conversations of both her displaced Jewish ancestry and her ongoing position in feminist discourse. These themes of physical, ancestral and gendered diaspora are highlighted most intimately in her durational, visual language. Ackerman's pluridimensional perception of self I regard is a crucial motivation for her inhabitation of cinematic time. Here, I reach to Sean Cubitt who notes that "Only those for whom identity is incomplete and othered, those whose subjectivity, in other words, is non-identical, is zero, can inhabit time rather than regard it."⁴⁴ Through the prolific temporality across her practice, duration is as much a technique as it is a constant variable for self-assessment. I draw the connection at this point to the durational filming of my home. The familiarity of the process brings me back into myself, removing the trivia of society to expose the undercurrents of my subjectivity. Akerman's deeply intimate search of grounding and of self is rare in cinema, the confessions she gives to us as an audience feel like a rare privilege to be a part of.

3.2 Duration in *You, Me and Everybody Else*.

As it is for Akerman, the role of time in *You, Me and Everybody Else*., is a key component in addressing my contemplations of self, most specifically in periods of personal suspension. For Akerman, use of the long take enriched her connection with her audience, rendering her films as a form of discursive, therapeutic exercise. Her durational takes, described by Christine Nigianni as the "suspended image"⁴⁵, allow Akerman to nurture a participatory relationship with her audience. This aligns Akerman with core values of transcendental cinema which Paul Schrader suggests, "uses the power of cinema in itself against itself to get you into a sense that you have to participate."⁴⁶ As my own artistic practice has matured, Akerman's influence has guided me towards a process which allowed me to contemplate the suspended state of my creative and personal life (comparative example seen in Figure 12)

This image/material has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

Figure 12. "Comparison stills, *Jeanne Dielman 23 Commerce Quay, 1080 Bruxelles*, (left) and *You, Me and Everybody Else*., (right), Chantal Akerman, 1976 and William Normyle, 2020.

44 Cubitt, "The Cinema Effect", 35.

45 Nigianni, Christine, "Chantal Akerman's Là-bas: The suspended Image and the Politics of Anti Messianism," *Senses of Cinema*, Vol 67, 2013, <https://www.sensesofcinema.com/2013/feature-articles/chantal-akermans-la-bas-the-suspended-image-and-the-politics-of-anti-messianism/>

46 Schrader, "Transcendental Style in Film,"

In late 2019, I presented the work to a selection of peers for review. In the build-up to this presentation, I creatively ran aground, my instinct to create narratological films was working in overdrive. In this instance, my entrenched creative insecurities got the better of me, and I reduced the lengths of the cuts, speeding up the work to avoid boring my audience. An action that wholly counters Schrader's mention of transcendental style as a withholding device, suggesting that "you've got to hold on shots too long, you're not going to cut"⁴⁷. Despite my adoration of transcendental filmmakers like Pawel Pawlikowski, Andrei Tarkovsky and Yasujiro Ozu; who's works stimulate a similar contemplative space to Akerman's, I fell into my yearning for affirmation. My peers remarked on the limbo of the work, sitting in a place of neither narrative nor discursiveness with their primary observation that the edit felt contrived and considered. I noted in a diary during the discussion I scribbled: "Be brave, go longer" seen below in Figure 13.

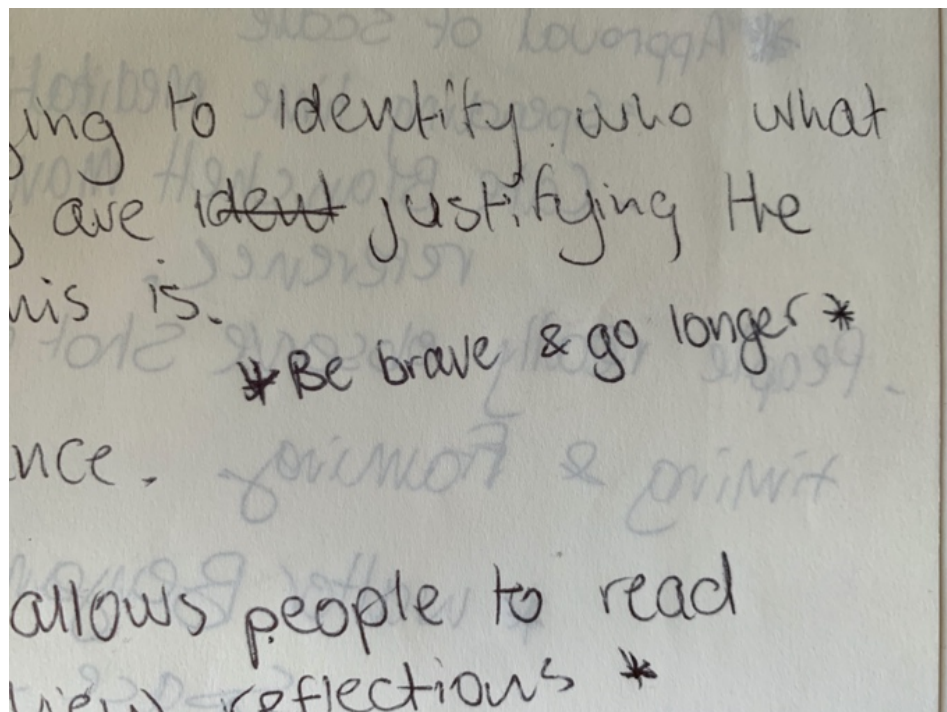


Figure 13. William Normyle, *scan of diary entry*, 2020.

Akerman's use of duration opens up space for the viewer's assumptions to evolve yet, in this formative stage of my personal evolution, it was clear that my yearning to be liked and affirmed inhibited this process. In this iteration of *You, Me and Everybody Else.*, there was no example of purposlessness. Everything was intentional, a decision which again countered my learnings from Mekas and Draper. Inspired by Akerman's films, I exhibited a rendition of *You, Me and Everybody Else.* without sound. *Hotel Monterey* for me as a lover of cinematography intrigued me in its strategy of discursive filmmaking based predominantly on imagery. The silent work pushed me to consider working with just the images of my house to outline my subjective

⁴⁷ IBID

experience, as Akerman did in the semi-empty hotel. Interestingly, however, this strategy yielded similar criticism to the preceding iteration, the work felt taxing and untrue to the subject matter, which due to the nature of the attempt did not address my internal concerns or experiences. Moving forward from these two experiences, the work felt like it was sliding away from the more eye opening earlier months of the year.

Much later, I found myself re-watching Akerman's *News From Home* (1977) (Figure 14) an observational film which speaks to themes of dislocation, separation and familial trauma. The predominantly still film, shot by Babette Mangolte, is made up of handheld images of New York. The loose form of these images here reminding me of much of Mekas's work of the same period. Binding these together (again stylistically similar to Mekas' use of the voiceover) is Akerman's reading of her and her mother's written correspondence between Belgium and New York. The immensely intimate nature of the readings is familiar in its tone, at times trivial, mundane and heartbreakingly tragic. Lines like "*My darling daughter, I was thrilled to receive such good news. Your quick reply made me feel so much better, but you still haven't told me how long you will be staying there.*"⁴⁸ are spoken over Mangolte's captivating handheld imagery of New York's architectural landscapes. The contrast in intimacy between public space and private confession suspends the viewer alongside Akerman in her sense of dislocation. The images represent a dualistic observation of the city, she is at once familiar and unfamiliar, resident and alien. The reading of the letters enforces her dislocation telling us viewers she is torn between two worlds.

This image/material has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

Figure 14. "Images of New York in *News From Home*," Chantal Akerman, *News From Home*, 1977.

Noting the observance with which Akerman regards her surroundings reminds me of my own experience in Melbourne beginning in February 2019. I spend a lot of time on the phone with my family now, filling them in as they wonder how I am. Bracketed by the stark walls of my house, I often suggest things are going well and conversations, like with Akerman's mother, skip between news, gossip and trivialities. In this period, *News From Home* illuminated the importance

48 *News From Home*, directed by Chantal Akerman, (Institut National de l'Audiovisuel (INA), Paradise Films, Unité Trois See, 1977), DVD.

of these phone calls, they are as much a part of my daily routine as vacuuming the carpet or turning on my camera. Fast forward to April 2020, we are three weeks into the COVID-19 pandemic, and I call my mum, she's at the supermarket and can't find any raspberries..interesting. She doesn't know it, but as she tells me how panic buying is affecting her intake of her favourite fruit, my laptop is recording my phone on speaker. Eventually, I told her I was recording and unsurprisingly she doesn't seem to mind. I wonder if Akerman told her mum about the letter reading?

I include this recording in an edit I make for my supervisor, and I am deeply encouraged by the results. This feels more real to my narrative, paired with a braveness to go longer; the recording speaks more to my experience. I am brought back to my diaristic insights, that our personal reflections and their banality is unique to us, to a time and to a headspace. This inclusive form, drawing material in from my personal life, engenders a more contemplative therapeutic relationship with film, reminding me that anything for my work is relevant so long as it is in my life.

3.3 Installed Cinematic language

Although *You, Me and Everybody Else.*, has been in a state of rounding out, gradually clarifying my relationship with self and creative practice, the point must be made that there remains a consideration of the audience, in particular an installation audience. So far, I have discussed filmic strategies which have greatly enriched my ongoing enquiry, these, however, remain focussed to the single screen. I therefore note that the installation of film is, in colloquial terms a very 'different beast'. In the installation of moving image, particularly that with a cinematic heartline, merges a work with the genre of what Diego Ballestrasse describes as "the expanded cinema" one which, "breaks the literary and static narrative of the unique image of cinema and incorporates visual resources that expand and question exhibition spaces and montage and distribution techniques."⁴⁹

In the expanded cinema, it is essential to note that the continuous variables present in 'singular cinema'⁵⁰ such as time, narrative flow, emotional resonance, and aesthetic composition metamorphose into embodied experiences. A key example of this is in Douglas Gordon's *24 Hour Psycho* (1993) (Figure 15). Here, Gordon extends Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960) to a speed of one frame per second, bringing the total duration of the work to 24 hours. Gordon focuses on two techniques central to cinematic practice: time and narrative expectation; and manipulates

⁴⁹ Ballestrasse, "Temporary Alterations on 24 Hour Psycho".

⁵⁰ Intended by the author as; antonymic to 'the expanded cinema'.

them through the installation space. The viewer is subjected to a reconfigured embodied experience, thus, “an inversion is produced, a symbolic void that modifies the viewer’s way of seeing and thinking.”⁵¹ With this work, Gordon reminds us that by placing cinema in the space of physical interaction, our relationship with the medium is subject to significant upheaval. The structures and familiar aspects of film we can therefore expect to be quickly undone. Jenny Chamarette re-enforces this notion in her reference,

“By forcing the spectator to engage physically in an act of attention or distraction— by moving towards or away from the film itself—the film’s critical discourses of the apparatus are complicated, and the spectator’s own interest in continuing or discontinuing participation is actively engaged.”⁵²

Rather than merely ‘artifying’⁵³ film, installation emphasises embodied forces upon the viewer, as in this space, the presence of moving image alone is not enough to hold them. The viewer, in this circumstance, can engage with film as if another active being.

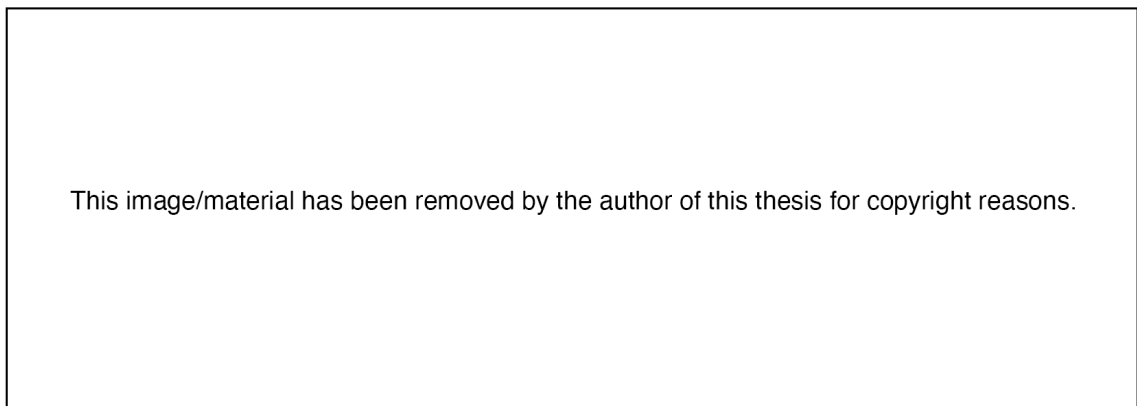


Figure 15. “Installation photograph of *24 Hour Psycho* ,” Douglas Gordon, 1993.

51 Ballestrasse, "Temporary Alterations on 24 Hour Psycho".

52 Chamarette, Jenny, "The disappearing work: Chantal Akerman and phenomenologies of the ephemeral." In *Contemporary French and Francophone Studies* 17, no. 3 (Uk: Taylor & Francis, 2013): 347-356.

53 Intended by the author as; A misconception that to simply place video into the art gallery space renders it a contemporary artwork.

3.4 Installation in *You, Me and Everybody Else*.

I encountered the potency of physical installation in March 2020, where once again I installed drafts of *You, Me and Everybody Else*. Here two screens were hung diagonally opposite to each other, on one screen, footage of my sister played while on the other was footage of myself (Figure 16). At the time, I must admit the decisions for this installation were made on a purely aesthetic basis. Feedback from the viewers experiences, however, disclosed the powerful effects of installation choices. Their comments suggested that the arrangement of the screens appeared as if two protagonists were in conflict and that the separation between the screens denoted a failure to connect between the two narrative strands.



Figure 16. "Installation view of *You, Me and Everybody Else*. (formerly *Periphery*)," photographed, William Normyle, 2020.

As *You, Me and Everybody Else*, matured I considered an adjustment about the importance of installing video work. Between Gordon's visceral occupation of the viewer and the feedback I have received from peers, to assess the use of space in (a now) autobiographical work is of heightened importance. In Akerman's work *Self Portrait/Autobiography: A Work in Progress* (1998) (Figure 17), we are presented with a significant approach to self-exploration, unlike that seen in her films. Here, the placement of six TV monitors on plinths, each playing one of her films draws Akerman's self-reflection away from the internalised experience of the film into the tactility of the real world. Where the existential presence of the films represents the multiplicity of her identity. The audio, is only audible upon close inspection of a monitor, in this instance,

Akerman's dialectic style has shifted from implied to a physical action oriented process, as Lebow notes:

*"Selfportrait/Autobiography: a work in progress, extends this practice of the films standing in as a legitimate form of self-representation. A six-monitor installation, it draws upon four of Akerman's films (D'Est, Jeanne Dielman, Toutune nuit, and Hotel Monterey [1972]) again in a type of mash-up, revisiting scenes that are meant to suggest an autobiographical register, where one's work stands in metonymically for oneself."*⁵⁴

As my work has shifted from the architecturally objective toward subjective, concerns of self, my evolving interpretation of installation is greatly influenced by *Selfportrait/Autobiography: a work in progress*. The use of space as representative of core subjective principles encourages me to consider similar processes. Like Akerman's monitors which substitute her tangential elements of self, my use of three channels, each a hanging projector screen in *You, Me and Everybody Else.*, will materialise critical aspects in the dualism of my personal life. Notably, in this case, a bracketing of self with architectural details emphasises my search for definition within the materiality of my home. In this work, the self will be centred (the central channel the only to contain footage of the body) framed by details of the world that surrounds it, an experience reminiscent of my personal reflections on this time. For the viewer, the large scale and the arrangement of this imagery will translate my thinking into physical form, creating like in *Self Portrait/Autobiography: A Work in Progress*, a space which metonymically stands in for my experience.

This image/material has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

Figure 17. "Installation view of *Self-Portrait/Autobiography: Work in Progress*," Chantal Akerman, 1998.

Here, the analysis of both duration and installation strategies has allowed me to understand the communicative forces of filmmaking. Akerman's 'long take' inspires a confidence in discursive moving image. One that has pushed me to be brave and go longer, allowing a reflective and meditative viewing experience. This viewing experience of *You, Me and Everybody Else.*, inspired by both learnings and reflections on key artistic practices, utilises the physical embodiment of image making, drawing attention to the forces of what appears on the screen.

⁵⁴ Lebow, 'Identity Slips', 57.

Chapter 4: Place

The concept of place is prominent in creative practice, as artists have long explored their relationships, experiences and desires in the context of their surrounds. However, in contemplating place, we must additionally consider the realm that transcends the physical; as a holistic experience of situatedness; or *Placedness*. Here, I define the term *Placedness*, to encompass an abstract, intangible sense of grounding across a multitude of situations and dimensions. In this chapter, I focus on the dual roles of both place and *Placedness* for their involvement in understanding conceptions of self. Drawing upon the artistic practices of Michelangelo Antonioni and Moyra Davey, I explore the dominant forces of place for each artist, reflecting on how their works have been embedded within my own practice. Particularly, I highlight the physical space of Antonioni's context as a material strategy for redirecting attention to the positionality of the individual. Likewise, Davey's visual exploration of the undulations of self-reflexive practice demonstrates a grounding of self amidst the destabilising forces of place. Through these examples, I identify my material understanding of place, as well as the growth of a more inward practice orienting toward *Placedness*. I thus outline the ongoing impact of place and *Placedness* in the development of *You, Me and Everybody Else*.

So far, this dissertation has examined diarism and duration as methods that can support an assessment of self through film. Underpinning these two processes, however, it is crucial to note the importance of both place and *Placedness* in linking the self to physical and subjective pathways. Here, I draw a critical distinction between the two concepts: just as place pertains to the physical and sociological world, *Placedness* infers an abstract, intangible sense of grounding across a multitude of situations and dimensions. In place, through observations of an individual's surroundings, we can locate a physical sense of self. However, the turbulent forces of place often subject the individual to significant destabilisation and turmoil; processes that may disconnect the artist from both practice and self.⁵⁵ In these times of substantial unknowing, where the physical self is in a state of challenge or change, the notion of *Placedness* may assist in grounding the individual's understanding of self.⁵⁶ More particularly, the notion of *Placedness* in practice returns the artist to the more complex subjective self. Here, the motions of practice in the bringing together of skills, influences and experiences gained throughout one's life clarify the artist's deeper intentions and subjective pathways.

55 Willis, Gary. *The Key Issues Concerning Contemporary Art: Philosophy, Politics and Popular Culture in the Context of Contemporary Cultural Practice*. UoM Custom Book Centre, 2010.

56 Hünefeldt, Thomas and Schlitte, Annika eds., *Situatedness and Place: Multidisciplinary Perspectives on the Spatio-Temporal Contingency of Human Life*, vol. 95, *Contributions To Phenomenology* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2018), 12.

In the context of defining self, this chapter addresses the roles of both place and *Placedness* for their influence on such malleable definitions. I mark the physical, environmental and structural elements of place as leverageable for symbolic discussion, in effect, providing an indirect framework for interpreting both a subject's and the artist's locational sense of self. For this, I will firstly give a brief analysis of the practice of Michelangelo Antonioni, whose works utilise the structural forms of place in cinema as a material tool for communication. Contrastingly, to assert the ambiguity of *Placedness*, I shall emphasise that, in finding a sense of *Placedness* in creative practice, artist Moyra Davey traverses the borders between artwork and art practice, in specific cases introducing the audience to artworks about artmaking. In effect demonstrating modes for digesting the broader dimensions of the subjective self.

4.1 Place.

place refers to the individual's situated physical and sociological context, where the sociological and environmental forces wield significant impact on one's outlook on life.⁵⁷ Thus, in place, we can identify the physical self as heavily influenced by the surrounding world and its varied contexts. A representation of the social, political and environmental forces of place in creative practice can help both the artist and audience understand the positionality of a subject.⁵⁸ place is, in a sense, inescapable. For as long as an environment is generative of experiences, memories and sociological meaning, place can be occupied. Defined as "a cultural and historical setting, in a natural environment, in a context of meaning, in a biographical and intellectual situation."⁵⁹, the forces of place are interwoven into every action, thought and choice we make whether consciously or unconsciously. The dynamic forces of place leave us susceptible to contextual shifts, altering our behaviour and outlook on the world. In some cases, (like Draper's experiences in 2018) the overbearing nature of these forces can be so dominant, that in creative practice, one may quickly lose sight of intentions and subjective grounding.

In the practice of filmmaking, as the camera is rarely unconscious, it chooses what to see (discussed in Chapter 2.) The construction of the cinematic world which surrounds a character, therefore, formulates the viewer's interpretation of a protagonist's situation. Narratological film willingly follows the character as the primary focal point only providing suggestive glimpses of place. This action consciously positions the character within the framework of social, political, economic and environmental contexts. Although not often oriented towards the setting, the

57 Malpas, Jeff. "Finding place: spatiality, locality, and subjectivity." *Philosophy and geography III: Philosophies of place* (1998): 21-34.

58 IBID

59 Hünefeldt and Schlitte, "Situatedness and Place", 4.

viewership of the lens is intrinsically inseparable from positioning individuals in various contexts. To leverage this intrinsic pairing, however instigates a visual dialogue capable of questioning the emotional human experience of settings.⁶⁰

The filmic practice of Michelangelo Antonioni re-orientates the relationship between individual and place, drawing attention to the enigma of landscapes through visual language. The setting in these cases is rendered as the primary focal point, encouraging dialogue surrounding human psychology as tied intimately to the structural forces of place. Antonioni stated:

“Some filmmakers want to tell a story and choose ‘a posteriori’(setting) the decor that suits them best. For me, the process is reversed. The subject of my films is always born of a landscapes, place, a location where I want to shoot.”⁶¹

To demonstrate this, Antonioni’s works exercised an incidental unconscious approach to setting a film. Despite his constant awareness of his placement of objects, frame and composition, Antonioni left his narratives vague and undefined, allowing them to mould to the natural ambience of a place.⁶² Examples of street lights buzzing on a still summer night, or figures starkly juxtaposed with lifeless concrete forms, emphasise the motions of place long after immediate actions have departed. Similarly observed in Akerman’s practice, this strategy demonstrates environments that remain vibrantly communicative of the body that is no longer present, suggesting that, if we are to examine the power dynamics of place as an audience, we may come closer to understanding the position of the occupant.

Antonioni’s film *La Notte* (1961), clarifies these concerns to the viewer, not through direct reflection like the poetic ‘real’ of Mekas’s work, but in powerfully enigmatic symbolic language. One never hears the voice nor sees the body of Antonioni, yet as we view his fictional characters and understand the forces of their place, thus feeling akin to his concerns of urban alienation. Antonioni’s attentive placing of characters to negotiate psychological responses to setting is observed by Joshua Hornton in *Mental Landscapes: Bazin, Deleuze, and Neorealism (Then and Now)*:

“In Antonioni’s films, particularly his trilogy of *L’Avventura* (1960), *La Notte* (1961), and *L’Eclisse* (1962), his framing of the character in relation to the landscape takes on a heightened significance, for, while the camera rarely occupies the physical point of view of the protagonist, the films “[look] and [sound] as if [they] were seen and heard through her subjectivity, It is as if the film’s visual scheme had become coloured by the psychological particularities of its characters.”⁶³

60 Forgacs, David. "Antonioni: Space, place, sexuality." *Spaces in European cinema* (2000): 101-111.

61 Michelangelo Antonioni, quoted by Jacopo Benci, in "Antonioni, Centenary Essays.", Jacopo Benci, 'Identification of a City, Antonioni and Rome 1940-62', in *Antonioni Centenary Essays* (London: British Film Institute, 2011), 21–63.

62 Normyle, William 'Behind Closed Doors: A Video Exploration of the Transgressive, Perverse and Construction of Identity in Space.' (The University of Sydney, 2017).

63 Horton, Justin, 'Mental Landscapes: Bazin, Deleuze, and Neorealism (Then and Now)', *Cinema Journal* 52, no. 2 (2013): 34.

A 10-minute long scene in *La Notte* (Figure 18) clearly emphasises the texture of Antonioni's world. In this scene, we follow Lidia as she wanders through the periphery streets of rapidly urbanising Milan. This vignette, which is unrelated to the core narrative, indulges in the power of cinematography, touching upon the surface of the physical world to stimulate further discussion; suggesting in many ways that the world as it exists, is powerful enough, that the audience in this can interpret the power of nothingness.

This image/material has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

Figure 18. "Lidia framed by imposing urban structures" Michelangelo Antonioni, *La Notte*, 1961.

Lidia is often dominated in the frame by rigid lines and concrete tower blocks which seemingly enforce her fatigued, alienated meanderings. Often our focus on Lidia is distracted by vignettes of the non-eventful activity in the surrounding streets. Local children launch fireworks, a taxi driver fuels his car saying "*I'm always waiting*"⁶⁴ or an old woman eats something from a tin can. Trademark to Antonioni's style, these motifs are without conclusive relevance. They are merely anecdotal; Lidia observes and cautiously carries on as one would in the real world.

The powerful ruminations of such a setting, in both its architectural form and everyday actions, allows us to make sense of unexplained elements of Lidia's disposition. Lidia in observing this world is as much a part of it as destabilised by it. The underlying destabilisation she later undergoes in this film is clearly in part, a response to her physical environment. Such abstraction of narrative focus, as seen in *La Notte* gives the viewer an enriched perception of place as its physical forces colour one's perception of the world. Antonioni's primary focus on the structural elements of place, in this instance, emits a non-conclusive determination. Through the inconsequential, structural form of his storytelling, the viewer is left to ponder the true meaning of place, digesting what they have seen through their own lived experiences.

64 *La Notte*, directed by Michelangelo Antonioni (1961; Rome, IT: Nepi Film 1961), DVD.

4.2 *Placedness.*

Thus far, I have focused on the forces of place as linked to the physical self. In creative practice, this physical self can be located through the use of visual language and attention to the details of a setting. In this process, the forces of place are seen to be of immense power, at times overbearing, yielding a destabilising impact on the artist's position. In the pursuit of clarity under these conditions, I contest that the notion of *Placedness* in practice may provide the artist dynamic, adaptable groundings in self. In this sense, to identify *Placedness*, the motions of reflexive practice clarify methods through which we may encounter a subjective self that is often beyond material discussion.

For this discussion, I shall thus define *Placedness* as:

A consolidation and positioning of the intangible, subjective self through the accumulated states and experiences of reflexive practice.

This definition aligns closely to Annika Schlitte's interpretations of the term. In the text *Situatedness and Place* (2018), Schlitte separates the suffix from its more concreted root term of place. Suggesting that *Placedness*, unlike place, is not so bound to the physical world; rather, it instead engenders a broader spectrum of possibilities:

“My view is that the suffix ‘ness’ means a state or condition,’ so for me, placeness is a conveniently broad term that allows me to consider everything to do with the diverse qualities, interpretations, uses and experiences of Place, from place cells in the hippocampus to a global sense of place”⁶⁵

In the context of artmaking, the various states and conditions of subjective experience are most commonly cultivated and reflected upon through self-reflexive practice. As definitions of self destabilise in the dynamism of place the actions and observations of practice remain familiarly stable in the artist's life. Such return to practice in the face of destabilising forces affirm the artist's *Placedness* through practice. This ongoing solidarity of creative action is, therefore, a cathartic exercise.⁶⁶ Max Draper's *Munich, August 2018.*, for example infers the notion that when confronted with destabilisation in the physical world, the material comfort of creative processes help Draper to adapt, understand and digest the shifting world around him.

⁶⁵ Hünefeldt and Schlitte, "Situatedness and Place"

⁶⁶ Lorusso, Lorenzo and Venturini, Simone, 'Cinema and Neurology: From History to Therapy', in *Brain and Art*, ed. Bruno Colombo (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2020), 95–120.

This conscious return to *Placedness* in practice as a grounding in destabilisation is particularly present in the practice of Moyra Davey. Often, as an audience, our primary relationship with artworks is positioned within physical spheres. Our understanding of an artists' subjective pathways are thus primarily gleaned through symbolic language and our own projections onto works. In many cases, even if the artist's practice is central to a work, we are rarely involved with the imitate process of making. The audience in such circumstances is left to connect what they know about the artist's context with what they see in person or in documentation. Davey's work *Hemlock Forest* (2013) (Figure 19), however, presents a rare opportunity for us, as an audience, to view an artwork; about artmaking, where Davey's documentation of process highlights the more intangible elements of her subjective pathways.

This image/material has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

Figure 19. "Davey in the process of writing *Hemlock Forest*, Stills from *Hemlock Forest*," Moyra Davey, 2013.

Hemlock Forest comprises two primary components; a book entitled *Les Goddesses/Hemlock Forest* (2011), and a 42-minute video. The video work depicts Davey meandering around her New York apartment reciting a recorded reading of her written counterpart *Hemlock forest*. Here, Davey's filming of herself reflects the awkwardness of her recital, as she frequently stumbles over words when the recitation in her headphones gets away from her. This casuality, Davey describes as "reflecting the messiness of real life".⁶⁷ This reflective framing of daily ephemera and her body's occupation of the apartment in many ways echoes the processes seen in Akerman's practice. For those who are familiar with Davey's works, they will recognise this approach as an invitation to enter the physical world of her artistic enquiry. This process aligns Davey's work to my discussion in Chapter 3, where, in both Akerman's work and my personal experimentations, the texture of the domestic setting is leveraged to initiate a discussion with an audience. Sarah Cowan emphasises Davey's retention of this process, stating:

⁶⁷ Hoffman, Laura, "Moyra Davey talks about her new video Hemlock Forest", interview, published online, 18 October 2016, <https://www.artforum.com/interviews/moyra-davey-talks-about-her-new-video-hemlock-forest-64029>.

“Davey tends to invite her audience in at what feels like the most inopportune moment when she is surrounded by notes, her rooms in a state of honest disarray, a mess of chairs and dishes piled in the sink.”⁶⁸

I note here that arguably the most crucial aspect of this action in *Hemlock Forest* is, however, in the work’s clarification of the contrast between place and *Placedness*. While the physical placement of Davey’s body enlightens us to her context, Davey’s return to thoughts, concerns, and reflections of artmaking, interrelating reference a self beyond the physicality of the apartment. Here, the voiceover often discusses image-making strategies inspired by other artists. This pairing of imagery and analysis identifies Davey’s use of learned, technical approaches as a means to digest the world. She speaks of Chantal Akerman’s *News From Home* in a way which uncannily aligns with my discussion in Chapter 3. Davey reflects the impacts Akerman has had on her practice through her attempt to restage a shot from *News From Home*. In this instance, Davey takes to the New York subway to film a durational still scene of strangers on their commute. When asked in an interview why she continued to draw links to artists throughout the work, she responded:

“I’ve always had an urge to tell stories that are personal and intimate, and I thought it would be a solution to link these personal anecdotes to narratives from literature and history.”⁶⁹

As the work progresses, Davey’s ongoing reflections on her practice and other artists provide her a framework to approach more confessional inflections on her personal life. At the time of making *Hemlock Forest*, it is clear Davey faced the significant destabilisation of ‘empty nesting.’ As she approaches her son moving out to go to college, it marks the process of artmaking as a frame through which to comprehend such a shift, “I began with the most pressing ideas, the things that were disturbing me most.”⁷⁰ As this challenging element of her life persists, the overtones of her practice and indeed, her work, shifts in its outlook. Davey’s once semi-academic observations dissolve into a poetic, personal closing piece where, in the epistolary form, she shifts the addressee to her son speaking of herself in the third person. Her closing passage which accompanies images of her son and his friends playing in the snow reads,

“You are the opposite of low hanging fruit, you were playful, funny, you performed, when she (Davey) watched the footage she was awed by your faces, your smiles, your jokes you’re aliveness, she feels alive behind the camera, when she shoots her own scenes, when she is making something.”⁷¹

68 Transgression and the Prohibition: An Interview with Moyra Davey, interview by Sarah Cowan, Written, 12 January 2018, <https://www.theparisreview.org/blog/2018/01/12/interview-moyra-davey/>.

69 Hoffmann, "Moyra Davey talks about her new video Hemlock Forest".

70 IBID

71 *Hemlock Forest*, directed by Moyra Davey, (Online, published by Alexander Kaluzhsky, 2017), <https://vimeo.com/169375334>.

In some ways from this conclusive scene, one can interpret that the questions that arose during the making of *Hemlock Forest* as the factors which led Davey to such a moment of groundedness. Davey's documentation of her working in its observations and learnings demonstrates the familiarity of *Placedness* to be found in practice. I argue that this *Placedness* helps to solidify Davey's sense of self under the shifting circumstances which surround her. As she confronts the destabilising shift of her son moving to college, she returns to artmaking as a means to retain familiarity and comfort. Given that Davey's conceptions of self are so intrinsically tied to the act of 'filming to film for filming's sake' this poignant closing catharsis forms a farewell to the movements and concerns which opened the piece.

4.3 Place and *Placedness* in *You, Me and Everybody Else*.

The physical forces of place have long been a central concern to my practice. To examine my body of work, one will find a consistent framing of architectural elements observed through structural minimalism. Small experimental pieces such as *Void* (2016) and *Trapped* (2015) (Figure 20) have long sought to promote discussions found in works like Emily Richardson's *Block* (2005), Edward Ruscha's *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* (1963) and of course Antonioni's body of work. As this project shifted from its origins, the visual strategies inspired by such artists clarified a structural depiction of my world. In lacking the strength of the conceptual voice that is present in Antonioni's works, the project shifted away from the lives of others to a formal assessment of place. In this instance, cues taken from Antonioni's style enabled coherent, observations of architectural nuances, textures and forms. Concurrently to this successful documentation of my physical surroundings; however, an uncomfortable 'duty-bound' relationship to the work persisted.

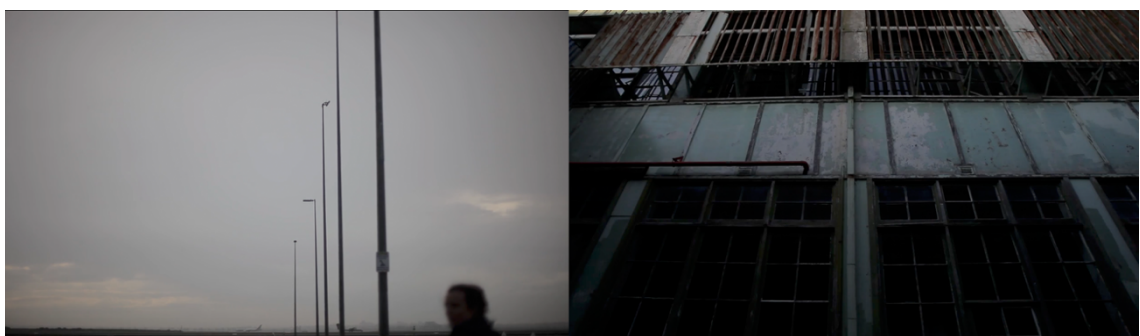


Figure 20. "Example stills from *Void* (left) and *Trapped* (right)," William Normyle, 2015-2016.

In many instances, I have observed the creation of artwork as regularly bearing emphasis on a focus for 'output'. The working artist creates work with a distracting foreknowledge of the possibility for successes and failures. Although the development of *You, Me and Everybody Else*., was able to materially identify my lived space, my intentions in practice and a sense of self beyond the physicality of place remained unclear. A Master's degree and indeed the institutionalisation

of arts education, is, by nature, a transactional experience. Here, the artist/student has the opportunity and material to create many works in return for the development of skills and critical thinking. In this context, however, the deadlines, assessment criteria, peer review and grades are rarely considered for their impact on a young artist's placing of self in their work. These factors are embraced as a non-negotiable point on a to-do list, with little consideration given to their far-reaching impact on creative voice. In such an experience, my want for delivering an outcome, affirmation and approval contrived my reasons for examining self. In a broader sense, the contextual forces of my place as an art student rendered an uncommitted insecure process for artmaking. In many ways, I can liken this to Lidia in *La Notte*, where the sociological forces of her surroundings left her disenchanted and disconnected from herself. Being that these forces are often difficult to perceive, however, like Lidia, I was unable to identify the source underpinning creative unease. Here, I found myself contemplating a more subconscious experience of place beyond that of my physical context; articulated best as the place situated at the centre of my subconscious relationship with the work.

Similarly to Davey, I began *You, Me and Everybody Else.*, with trials and experimentations which centred in place. Yet like the shifts observed in *Hemlock forest*, the dynamism of my context posed questions of self that were beyond my initial physical investigations. Facing the massive uprooting resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic and the forceful removal from my physical contexts (particularly from the environment of my Master's degree), I began a period I can only liken to Davey's experience of losing her son to college. The dramatic physical shift that occurred provoked a new reality, one where images of suburbia and interrogations of my family dynamic no longer held conceptual relevance. Where once a duty to entertain or communicate truths persisted⁷², the reality of non-work⁷³ enabled a more fluid, adaptive practice. Through its reflections and contemplations, this process of artmaking felt fresh and emotionally occupying.

Amidst this upheaval, the learned skills of diarism, duration, symbolic language and installation strategies simply lubricated the fluid motion of practice as a cathartic exercise. Speaking to Laura Hoffman, Davey quotes Rainer Werner Fassbinder, She states: "The more honestly you put yourself into the story, the greater will be its reach."⁷⁴ In the space of non-work, free from assessment, affirmation and success, the relevance of output to me, seemed to be slipping away. Such changes introduced confidence to place myself into the work further. This making of artwork, centred me in times of destabilisation acting as a comfort, in a way similar to Bettina Mathes' comment:

72 Groys, Boris, "The Truth of Art," E-Flux Journal #71 (March 4, 2016).

73 Intended by the author as, artmaking in the sphere of purposelessness without intended outcome.

74 Hoffmann, Moyra Davey talks about her new video Hemlock Forest.

“Looking, showing that there’s a “there there,” recording the present moment and thereby preserving it, can, for a time, make us not feel the nothingness within us. Making films can be a lifeline, an aid to going on living when (we feel) the world around us has disappeared.”⁷⁵

Much like in psychological therapy where the subject enters a safe space in which to focus on themselves, for me filmmaking allows similar reflections on past experiences, motivations and emotional interpretations of the world. This uninhibited making of reflexive artwork signalled a letting go of output focuses aligning with Davey’s comments;

“A work, once finished, is ‘like a tombstone,’

Sarah Cowan explains that in this:

“She (Davey) has constructed a practice conscious of its own past and reliant on radical self-doubt. Her photographs, films, and essays cross-reference and depend on one another as she makes a subject of her own process and its intentions, fears, and failures.”⁷⁶

From my newfound experience of such an approach, this mentality consolidated my *Placedness* in practice. I perceived that although the physical forces of her world are at once dominating, my retention of the dynamism of practice as primary to outcome restricted the pull of contrivance, the likes of which I noted early in this chapter. From my experiences, it felt as if, the acceptance of flaws, failures, anxieties and learnings that come with practice provided the most resonant way to interpret and reinterpret the subjective self. (Figure 21)

⁷⁵ Hünefeldt and Schlitte, *Situatedness and Place*.

⁷⁶ *Transgression and the Prohibition: An Interview with Moyra Davey*.



Figure 21. "Process shot of *You, Me and Everybody Else.*," photographed by William Normyle, 2020.

4.4 Does it Matter?

In concluding *Hemlock Forest*, one has the feeling that in some ways if Davey were not to have released the work at all, it still may not have mattered to her. The core purpose I perceive in the work is reflected in the action of a consistent returning to self through creative mechanisms. This concept is where I find a deep sense of familiarity with not only to Davey but also to Mekas, Draper and Akerman as for each artist, their *Placedness* in practice adds a sense of solidarity to the complexities of their lives.

The retention of self-reflexive approaches to the turbulent storms of the physical world suggests that the physical works are perhaps merely by-products to the more important mechanisms of this approach. As I reflect on the works of Jonas Mekas discussed in Chapter 2, I am reminded that his practice continued, mostly unchanged until the day he died; suggestive that practice remained a constant foundation to his questions of life and himself. A point inflected in his lines "I have never understood it really, life"⁷⁷. Similarly, in Draper's *Munich August 2018*, we find an example of a film that was never shown to anyone beyond a handful of his close friends and family. Perhaps this, more than anything, demonstrates Draper's practice as primarily a mechanism for reinterpreting his private world; reminding us that in finding therapy in the process

⁷⁷ As *I Was Moving Ahead, Occasionally I Saw Brief Glimpses of Beauty*, directed by Jonas Mekas, (Canyon Cinema, 2001). DVD.

of filmmaking, the outcome transcends a wider audience. Finally, returning to Akerman, we can find a similar sense of familiarity. Although Akerman's works have long been disputed by critics over their intentions and subjective pathways, the recurrence of her methods imply a similar prospect to Mekas or Davey. Akerman's meditations on the complex issues of her life through filmmaking were ceaseless in their consistency. Inferring that to see Akerman's style was to know the framework in which she best knew herself.

For us, as an audience occupying the physical world of place, interpreting these artist's works only through material clues, we are likely never to fully grasp their interpretations of self. To decode their physical approaches to their mediums grants us access to their context, allowing us to understand perhaps some motivating factors of their artmaking. But unless we are permitted access to their practice, and the placeness adjoined to it, it is unlikely we will ever truly grasp the full complexity of their notions of self.

In turning then, to a reflection of my notions of *Placedness*, I must conclude that the process of observing and learning through successes and failures has drawn me to better understand myself on a deeper level. This self that I feel through *Placedness* in practice is beyond the immediacy of responses to context. Here, I think new knowledge and acquired skills from learnings across my life have leveraged such an epiphanous outcome. Like I suspect it did for both Draper and Davey, my experience of filmmaking has mostly transcended the practical approach, forming an unintended exploration of the drivers, reflections and intentions of self. I thus reflect that filmmaking, like the self, can be swayed toward the forces of physical contexts as is often seen in primarily focussing on the outcome. In the inevitable dislocation and destabilisation of self which occurs all too frequently in the lived experience, returning to the making in filmmaking provides stability against contextual shifts. Such is the adaptive nature of practice to provide this stability, that throughout the artist's life, to return to practice reflects a profoundly comforting return to self.

Chapter 5: Letting Go

“The departing clouds and ensuing blue sky emphasises letting go. The hints of clouds coming in and out of frame remain because life continues and something always follows what came before.”⁷⁸

A friend is staying with us at our house before she flies to the US, following 5-years in Australia. She is in the process of an upturn in her personal life, one which reminds me of my experiences over the past 18 months. On a balmy September afternoon, we sit under a warm sun and watch the clouds. Quietly lost in meditation, she sings the Dwadasakshari Mantra of Om Namō Bhagavate Vāsudevāya. I understand this moment as a release. To be lost in a mantra is to let go entirely of the constructs of the world which surround you, embracing freedom beyond the physical world.⁷⁹

For my friend, mantra mirrors the state of *Placedness* I have recently discovered in artmaking. The immense destabilisation of her context wreaks havoc on her previously sound understanding of self; yet, in this mantra, the embrace of letting go lifts her from the weight and the pressure. I look up to the clouds in this symbolic moment and breathe, to share a sigh of relief (Figure 23).



Figure 22. “Still of conclusion scene in *You, Me and Everybody Else.*,” William Normyle, 2020.

⁷⁸ Draper Max, in Viewing the Conclusion to *You, Me and Everybody Else.*, October 26, 2020.

⁷⁹ Sthaneshwar Timalsina, ‘Mantras’, in *Encyclopedia of Hinduism*, vol. 2 (Netherlands: Leiden: Brill, 2010), 402–13.

In this dissertation and indeed, the past 18 months of this research, my outlooks, creatively and personally have endured significant shifts. The early rigidity of my practice challenged by the dynamic changes of my place in my world angled my practice towards self-reflection. In contemplating this new iteration of my practice, I have identified the strategies of diarism and duration as key in the process underpinning an exploration of self through film. To set such an investigation, the setting of my home inflects the motives and emotional impacts of my surroundings. This concept has been informed by the observation of place, with the study of Michelangelo Antonioni's symbolic language, demonstrating that the setting of the individual yields significant insights into the self. Likewise, the notion of *Placedness* provides an additional lens, to observe the comforting stability of the self. As the motions of place are subject to constant change, *Placedness* in practice grounds the self amidst such shifts. Here, the return to familiar strategies and influences through learned techniques re-iterates a self that is often beyond the physical world.

As I leave my house for the last time and as the clouds and rivers continue in their perpetual motion, I am reminded that the forces of the physical world will return to me again. My context will change, and destabilisation will no doubt shift my understanding of self. In this, I recognise there is little left for me to do, the changes that have been and will come are beyond my control. Similarly, it has become clear to me that my practice is now far beyond my conscious control. For now, I must quietly lean back, accept and let go.

Documentation



Installation view of *You, Me and Everybody Else: Work in Progress*, "Chantal Akerman, 1998.



Figures 23-26 William Normyle *You, Me and Everybody Else*. 2020 Images from VCA Graduate Exhibition 2020. E.B Meyer Studio. Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne. Photographed, William Normyle.



Figures 23-26 William Normyle *You, Me and Everybody Else*. 2020 Images from VCA Graduate Exhibition 2020. E.B Meyer Studio. Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne. Photographed, William Normyle.

References

- Akerman, Chantal. *News From Home*. Institut National de l'Audiovisuel (INA), Paradise Films, Unité Trois See, 1977.
- Antonioni, Michelangelo. *La Notte*. Nepi Film, Sofitedip, Silver Films, 1961.
- Aragonés, Juan I, María Amérigo, and Raquel Pérez-López. "Perception of Personal Identity at Home." *Psicothema* 22, no. 4 (May 2, 2020): 8.
- Atherton, Claire, and Translated by Felicity Chaplin. "Tribute to Chantal Akerman." *Camera Obscura: Feminism, Culture, and Media Studies* 34, no. 1 (2019): 91–97. <https://doi.org/10.1215/02705346-7264124>.
- Barthes, Roland. "11. David E. James Film Diary/Diary Film: Practice and Product." *To Free the Cinema: Jonas Mekas & the New York Underground* (1992): 145.
- Ballestrasse, Diego. "Douglas Gordon's Temporary Alterations on 24 Hour Psycho." *Der Grief Artist Blog* (blog), n.d. <https://dergreif-online.de/artist-blog/douglas-gordons-temporary-alterations-on-24-hour-psycho/>.
- Bergstrom, Janet. "With Chantal in New York in the 1970s." *Camera Obscura: Feminism, Culture, and Media Studies* 34, no. 1 (2019): 31–57. <https://doi.org/10.1215/02705346-7264084>.
- Bluher, Dominique. "2 The Other Portrait: Agnès Varda's Self-Portraiture1." From *Self-portrait to Selfie: Representing the Self in Moving Images*. Oxford, Bern, Berlin, Brussels, New York, Wien: Peter Lang (2019): 47-76.
- Brennan, AnnMarie. "Life at the Periphery: The Urban Politics of Neorealism in Post-War Rome." *Interstices: Journal of Architecture and Related Arts*, March 11, 2011. <https://doi.org/10.24135/ijara.v0i0.413>.
- Bruno, Giuliana. "Passages through Time and Space: In Memory of Chantal Akerman." *October* 155 (January 2016): 162–67. https://doi.org/10.1162/OCTO_a_00247.
- Buongiorno, Federica. "Extended Selves: Phenomenological Remarks on Digital Processes of Subjectification." In *Phenomenology as Performative Exercise*, edited by Lucilla Guidi and Thomas Rentsch. BRILL/Leiden, 2020. https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004420991_014.
- Cairns, Graham. "Historical Cinematic Space: The Architecture of Culture in Jean Renoir's *Le Grande Illusion* and Yasujiro Ozu's *Tokyo Story*." *Film & History: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 44, no. 2 (2014): 22-44.
- Carruthers, Lee. "M. Bazin et le temps: Reclaiming the Timeliness of Cinematic Time." *Screen* 52, no. 1 (2011): 13-29.
- Chatman, Seymour. *Antonioni, or, the Surface of the World*. Univ of California Press, 1985.
- Chamarette, Jenny. "The disappearing work: Chantal Akerman and phenomenologies of the ephemeral." *Contemporary French and Francophone Studies* 17, no. 3 (2013): 347-356.

- Nigianni, Chrysanthi. "Chantal Akerman's *Là-bas*: The Suspended Image and the Politics of Anti-Messianism." *Book Reviews* (2020). <https://www.sensesofcinema.com/2013/feature-articles/chantal-akermans-la-bas-the-suspended-image-and-the-politics-of-anti-messianism/>
- Cohen, Jem. *Chain*. Antidote Films, 2004.
- Conomos, John. "The Self-Portrait and the Film and Video Essay." In *Imaging Identity*, edited by Melinda Hinkson, 1st ed. ANU Press, 2016. <https://doi.org/10.22459/II.08.2016.04>.
- Cubitt, Sean. *The Cinema Effect*. MIT Press, 2005.
- Davey, Moyra. *Hemlock Forest*. Online, published by Alexander Kaluzhsky, 2017. <https://vimeo.com/169375334>.
- Draper, Max Boutwell. *Munich, August 2018*. Online, 2018.
- Doane, Mary Ann. The emergence of cinematic time: Modernity, contingency, the archive. Harvard University Press, 2002, 1-5.
- Forgacs, David. "Antonioni: Space, place, sexuality." *Spaces in European cinema* (2000): 101-111.
- Garin, Manuel, and Amanda Villavieja. "Willful Voices: A/Synchronic Sound in Chantal Akerman's Self-Portrait Films." *Feminist Media Studies* 16, no. 6 (November 2016): 1117–20. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2016.1234236>.
- Grassi, Carlo. "The Cinema and Objects of Daily Life Living without the Simplifying Gaze of Habit." *The Cinema and Objects of Daily Life* (2009): 1000-1008.
- Greco, Monica, and Paul Stenner, eds. *Emotions: a social science reader*. Routledge, 2013.
- Groys, Boris. "The truth of art." *E-flux Journal* 71, no. 4 (2016): 74.
- Grushka, Kathryn. "Artists as reflective self-learners and cultural communicators: an exploration of the qualitative aesthetic dimension of knowing self through reflective practice in art-making." *Reflective practice* 6, no. 3 (2005): 353-366.
- Heehs, Peter. *Writing the self: Diaries, memoirs, and the history of the self*. A&C Black, 2013.
- Hoffmann, Laura. Moyra Davey talks about her new video *Hemlock Forest*. Video, October 18, 2016. <https://www.artforum.com/interviews/moyra-davey-talks-about-her-new-video-hemlock-forest-64029>.
- Horton, Justin. "Mental Landscapes: Bazin, Deleuze, and Neorealism (Then and Now)." *Cinema Journal* 52, no. 2 (2013): 23–45. <https://doi.org/10.1353/cj.2013.0005>.
- Hünefeldt, Thomas, and Annika Schlitte, eds. *Situatedness and Place: Multidisciplinary Perspectives on the Spatio-Temporal Contingency of Human Life*. Vol. 95. Contributions To Phenomenology. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2018. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-92937-8>.
- Jasinskaite, Ieva. "Aesthetic Puzzlements: Jonas Mekas's Diary Films and Ludwig Wittgenstein." *Film-Philosophy* 24, no. 2 (June 2020): 162–84. <https://doi.org/10.3366/film.2020.0137>.
- Keller, Marjorie. "The Apron Strings of Jonas Mekas." *To Free the Cinema: Jonas Mekas and the New York Underground* (1992): 83-96.

- Knafo, Danielle. "Egon Schiele and Frida Kahlo: The self-portrait as mirror." *Journal of the American Academy of Psychoanalysis* 19, no. 4 (1991): 630-647.
- Konewko, Simonetta Milli. *Neorealism and the New Italy*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.
- Krstić, Igor. "A Foreigner in One's Own Tongue: Jonas Mekas, Minor Cinema and the Philosophy of Autobiographical Documentary." *New Cinemas: Journal of Contemporary Film* 15, no. 1 (March 1, 2017): 97–117. https://doi.org/10.1386/ncin.15.1.97_1.
- Kwon, Miwon. *One Place after Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2002.
- Lebow, Alisa. "Identity slips: the autobiographical register in the work of Chantal Akerman." *Film Quarterly* 70, no. 1 (2016): 54-60.
- Lebow, Alisa. "The Self at a distance: Simone Fattal's *Autoportrait* (1972/2012)." (2019): 123-148.
- Lorusso, Lorenzo, and Simone Venturini. "Cinema and Neurology: From History to Therapy." In *Brain and Art*, pp. 95-120. Springer, Cham, 2020.
- Mangolte, Babette. "NOW , Chantal Akerman's Last Work." *Camera Obscura: Feminism, Culture, and Media Studies* 34, no. 1 (2019): 67–73. <https://doi.org/10.1215/02705346-7264094>.
- Margulies, Ivone. "Our Way of Working." *Camera Obscura: Feminism, Culture, and Media Studies* 34, no. 1 (2019): 13–29. <https://doi.org/10.1215/02705346-7264074>.
- "Marlon Riggs: The Subjective Position of Documentary Video." *ART JOURNAL*, 2020, 5.
- Mathes, Bettina. "All My Toys Are Dead: Chantal Akerman's *No Home Movie* (2015)." *International Forum of Psychoanalysis* 29, no. 1 (January 2, 2020): 14–21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0803706X.2018.1556805>.
- Mazière, Michael. "Chantal Akerman in London." *Camera Obscura: Feminism, Culture, and Media Studies* 34, no. 1 (2019): 185–95. <https://doi.org/10.1215/02705346-7264196>.
- Multiple. *Cartographies, Poststructuralism and the Mapping of Bodies and Spaces*. Allen and Unwin, 1991.
- Normyle, William. "Behind Closed Doors: A Video Exploration of the Transgressive, Perverse and Construction of Identity in Space." The University of Sydney, 2017.
- Rascaroli, Laura, "Cinewriting the Self: The Letter-Film as Self Portrait," in *From Selfie to Self-Portrait, New Studies in European Cinema* (UK: Peter Lang, 2019), 13–45.
- Rascaroli, Laura, and John David Rhodes, eds. *Antonioni: Centenary Essays*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2019.
- Rifkin, Ned. *Antonioni's Visual Language*. UMI Research Press, 1982.
- Schoneveld, Erin. "Naomi Kawase's "Cinema of Place"." In *Arts*, vol. 8, no. 2, p. 43. Multidisciplinary Digital Publishing Institute, 2019.
- Standish, Isolde. "The Ephemeral as Transcultural Aesthetic: A Contextualization of the Early Films of Ozu Yasujiro." *Journal of Japanese and Korean Cinema* 4, no. 1 (January 2012): 3–14. https://doi.org/10.1386/jk.4.1.3_1.

- Sthaneshwar Timalisina, 'Mantras', *Encyclopedia of Hinduism*, vol. 2 (Netherlands: Leiden: Brill, 2010), 402–13.
- Suhr, M., A. K. Risch, and G. Wilz. "Maintaining mental health through positive writing: Effects of a resource diary on depression and emotion regulation." *Journal of Clinical Psychology* 73, no. 12 (2017): 1586-1598.
- Thanouli, Eleftheria. "Post-Classical Narration: A new paradigm in contemporary cinema." *New Review of Film and Television Studies* 4, no. 3 (2006): 183-196.
- Timalisina, Sthaneshwar. "Mantras." In *Encyclopedia of Hinduism*, 2:402–13. Netherlands: Leiden: Brill, 2010.
- Transgression and the Prohibition: An Interview with Moyra Davey. Interview by Sarah Cowan. Written, January 12, 2018. <https://www.theparisreview.org/blog/2018/01/12/interview-moyra-davey/>.
- Tuan, Yi-Fu. *Space and Place*. University of Minnesota Press, 1977.
- Wahlberg, Malin. *Documentary time: film and phenomenology*. University of Minnesota Press, 2008.
- Warhol, Andy. *Empire*. 1964. Video.
- Watter, Seth Barry. "On the Concept of Setting: A Study of V. F. Perkins." *JCMS: Journal of Cinema and Media Studies* 58, no. 3 (2019): 72–92. <https://doi.org/10.1353/cj.2019.0023>.
- Weir, Peter. *Whatever Happened to Green Valley?* National Film and Sound Archive, 1974.
- Wenders, Wim. *Tokyo-Ga*. DVD, n.d.
- Wenzel, Jennifer. "Consumption for the common good? Commodity biography film in an age of postconsumerism." *Public culture* 23, no. 3 (65) (2011): 573-602.
- Willis, Gary. *The Key Issues Concerning Contemporary Art: Philosophy, Politics and Popular Culture in the Context of Contemporary Cultural Practice*. UoM Custom Book Centre, 2010.
- Wilson, Jenny. *Artists in the University*. Singapore: Springer Singapore, 2018. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-5774-8>.