

University of Cape Town

Cirque du Pan
Panic Circuit

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Cirque du Pan

Panic Circuit - an Exploration of the Accelerative
Effects of Information Communication Technology.

Charles Maggs 2006

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For Belinda

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Introduction

None of the difficulties, none of the fevers of the first half of the twentieth century has entirely disappeared from our horizon. But, even while it is still a difficult business constructing modernity in certain parts of the world, it has been overtaken across the whole surface of the planet by powerful movements of acceleration and excess. (Auge 1999:22)

Much of the developed world operates under what is referred to as liberal democratic capitalism. This implies government by the people, operating in a free and profit driven market, which in theory suggests an equality of voice and access to markets for personal profit. However the 'powerful movements of acceleration and excess' which Auge refers to above are less to do with the intentions of a liberal democratic capitalist system and more accidental effects of it. This dissertation explores the constant push of commerce and the digital communication revolution as contributory factors to this hypermodern or globalised state.

My body of work - Cirque du Pan - comprises three acts. Each act contains three video pieces. They are not triptychs in the traditional sense, although the works developed out of each other and exist in triangular dialogue. Each of the groups has a thematic title, the first is *Powercycle*, the second is *The Individual Distressed*, and the third is *Innocence Remapped*. These themes radiate around the systems of power and projection, within the hypermodern context, as probed by this dissertation.

My work could be described as symptomatic of this hypermodern state. It operates within the mode of the global media system, both accepting and questioning it. While it understands there is no singular global media system that exists as a truly all-pervasive and homogenous entity, it is instead concerned with the specific limitations of projected and constructed realities and their similarities, as imposed by commerce.

The work explores several key states that operate within these systems. Repetition, construction of reality, cyclicity, and acceleration are states or symptoms that the works probe. This reflects the inherent repetition at the heart of any global media

Capitalist liberal democracy implies government of the people and freedom of speech. In an increasingly globalised world, bodies such as the G8 and the World Bank have a powerful influence upon world affairs and yet they are not subject to the liberating effects of the democratic process.

www.davidson.co.uk



system, that requires a series of broadcast worthy events 24 hours a day all year round, and more broadly as part of the human condition. Within this context reality becomes constructed or manipulated to fit the requirements of information communication systems. Cyclicity talks about the emergence of non-linear time frames and an infinity of virtual time and space within the context of digital technologies, While acceleration refers to the logistical pressure exerted by new communication technology such as mobile phones, the internet and e-mail.

At the heart of this technologisation of culture is a shift in the mechanics of power, the appearance of power and the construction of reality, the very boundaries of which are limited by the media mechanism by which it is projected. It is the limitations of what is sound-byte worthy and the mechanics of meaning within this context that the body of work is investigating. These hypermodern conditions are explored by the work and unpacked in this dissertation

The first chapter locates my body of work within a theoretical and historical context. Section 2.1 explores the desire for similarity as a filter of progress and the socio-economic mechanisms that drive it. The desire for similarity, being the desire to conform or to fit in with a perceived set of norms. With these norms or projected reality being increasingly read from the global media system, social and other norms become increasingly constructed by the media. A system which is ultimately driven and limited by

the capitalist mode it operates within. The role amplification and repetition play within the mechanics of meaning is explored. The need to amplify or extend a particular effect yields a pressure that is accelerative. With repetition judged the engine of similarity, the probe shifts to the effects of similarity upon urban space.

Section 2.2 shifts the focus toward repetition in world events, with special reference to war and warfare as one of the most dramatic kinds of world events, the structure and effect of war and the military triggers this exploration. It is here that the repeat event is identified. The repeat event is the repetition of some kind of event or occurrence that has come before such as The Second World War being structurally similar to The First World War. This can apply just as easily to the state of war as it can to any other cultural event. When repeat events are viewed in the context of the pressure of an accelerative time, as a result of the amplifying effect of capitalism, it becomes evident that they are becoming increasingly similar and frequent.

In Section 2.2.1 the relationship between the military and commerce is explored. The Military Industrial Complex is the meeting point between the effects of commerce and war. This complex is identified as a driving engine of national economies, in particular the US economy from whence it developed. The perpetuating effect commerce has on the war machine yields a state of constant war. The cross pollination of these two bodies is identified by commercial strategy influencing current military action, and military technologies being transferred into the civil realm.

Section 2.2.2 focuses on the transfer of military technologies to the civilian realm and its effect. The history of this relationship is explored followed by a probe of some of the technologies that have been transferred. Among these are the communication tools we use as part of our daily lives today. I explore an emerging culture of logistics within civil society that exists as part of this digital communication revolution. The primary tools here are mobile communications and the world wide web, both are military technologies. The synchronising effect of these tools extends this probe.

In Section 2.2.3 I identify the media as our primary source when it comes to experiencing wars and other world events, how the media is subjected to the mechanics of commerce and the limitations this causes. With reality being increasingly projected into our lives by the media, our attitude towards reality itself is

shifting as a result of this state. We are at once enthralled and yet distanced or mediated from it.

Section 2.3 looks at how the repeat event and the desire for similarity influences the effect of history. In the context of an accelerative time, a projected reality and the amplifying effects of capitalism I explore the notion that history itself is receding as opposed to accelerating. This as a result of cultural velocity, pervasive repeat events and a lack of time or space for reflection. This effect on history would appear to be an aberration of capitalism as opposed to an intention of it.

Section 2.4 concludes the theoretical probe with a look at the individual within this accelerative, mediated context. Accelerative time removes the space for reflection so that the Cartesian subject can no longer define themselves as being. Ways of finding the self within the current context are explored. The effect of digital technology upon Foucault's optics of control are examined. This chapter concludes with a dystopian reading of the contemporary human condition contrasted by a pragmatic one, in order to explore both the negative and positive influences of technology.

In the third chapter I locate my practice within contemporary art. I discuss the absurd and its manifestations in the creative arts, followed by an exploration of the work of Bruce Nauman and Mark Wallinger under the lens of the current human condition. I find commonalities between their work and my own practice. In the next section of this chapter I explore the effect and implications of post production on contemporary and my own art, by examining theoretical background and the method and process of several South African and international artists working in this mode.

The fourth chapter is an exploration of my own method and process. Starting with a brief look at the notion of synchronicity and how it enables my own practice. My practice is then explored through the media I have used to create this body of work. I locate my sonic pieces within an historical and contemporary context and then explore my use of both found and shot footage. I conclude this chapter with an exploration of repetition and cyclicity in the works. The fifth chapter explores the individual works in detail.

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2 Theoretical & Historical Context

2.1 Capitalism and the desire for similarity

The desire for similarity is that very thing within ourselves that we use as a measure to define our place in our chosen society. It is how we engineer that we are not the other, the outsider or stranger in our context. The desire for similarity operates in a space that can be defined as regular or normal. In a society that is affected by the constructions and projections of its information communication systems, broadcasts and other cultural media, increasing reference is made to projected norms as a frame of reference to define that which is not other. The limitations of these systems, such as restrictive time schedules, the need for profit, effective sound-byte information and the like, results in a limitation on what can and does get projected and thus regarded as normal.

The capitalist mechanism is the prime operator within this context, as the overarching mechanism that fuels the need to profit, and thus limits what is or isn't projected by virtue of whether it will be profitable or not. This represents a particular filter or mode within which that which is projected can be constructed. Invariably underlying this system is some or other committee of 'specialists' whose responsibility it is to ensure that that which is constructed yields profit. Similarity is often the touchstone that is turned to in these instances because it is the nearest reference point. These 'specialist' decision making bodies, become mechanisms of similarity or sameness with a mandate to filter out uncertainty and the unknown.

Within the capitalist mode, the linear route to success is to repeat and expand on your previous successes. This can happen on any scale, and it speaks of the repetition inherent within commercial society. The simple act of repeatedly selling a product; the art of engineering identical products for sale within multiple markets around the globe; re-engineering cultural artefacts for consumption by a tested audience or market; the mechanism for being elected to some political role over and over again: these are all examples of operating in this repetitive mode, where the similarities are the repetitions intrinsic to these operations and not the actions themselves. Action in this mode becomes about operating within realms of similarity and using artefacts and processes that are familiar. Similarity and expansion work hand in hand to yield a market that commerce can operate within.



Multinational companies put great effort into developing similar products and services that are vended in environments that have been engineered as similar to each other.

[www.how_to_learn_any_language.com/]

Repetition within our actions is the element that speaks of the desire for similarity. This desire can be seen in any consumptive environment where, primarily, products rely on degrees of similarity in order to exist in a particular market segment. Managing to engineer and sustain similarity, in a market segment, is a route to success. Multinational companies put great effort into developing similar products and services that are vended in environments that have been developed as similar to each other, in similar situations to people whose needs have become increasingly similar. Amplification and repetition are the primary elements that morph micro successes into macro successes and then onto global successes.

This similarity or sameness is a transparent concept and yet it operates in very subtly engineered ways, modes and places, sometimes appearing as complex and impenetrable, layered and necessary. The simplicity of the concept masks the needless complexity of many of the systems that have been designed to operate on our culture. Mechanisms that we regard as symbols of our systematic civilization, such as the mechanisms of commerce, or law or politics (that are in many instances intertwined) have become adept at simulating this complexity to mask their simple, repetitive and amplificatory mode of operation. These systems of civilization have become so complex that we require



A typical transit plaza, this one at Kaihira Makuhari Station in Japan.
 (www.resagers.name/images)

the help of specialists to guide us through them. We have come to accept this and yet this complexity operates like a mirror does in a small space – creating an illusion of space where there is a shortage. The complexity of our systems are perhaps also for the sake of sustainability for those that guide us through these systems or the sustainability of those systems themselves. Guy Debord talks about how intrinsic this has become when discussing the technologisation of the present

(t)echnological innovation ... is an essential component of capitalist society. But since its most recent acceleration ... it has greatly reinforced spectacular authority, by surrendering everybody to the mercy of specialists, to their calculations and to the judgements which always depend on them (Debord 1998:12).

However many of these systems, technological or otherwise, retain complexity, as result of their lengthy and layered genesis, over time and through generations, and reflect this in the way that they operate. Similarity remains the comfort point from which many of these operations take place.

The desire for similarity operates not only on the psyche itself



More and more places - airports, malls, 24hr convenience stores, themed holiday destinations, franchised fast food outlets and so on are engineered for maximum convenience and efficiency.

image references clockwise from top (www.aerial-photography.com) (www.cosmocandia.com) (www.ace.caed.gd.uk/nonplaces)

and within the consumptive mechanism, but also upon space and time. An increasing number of places - airports, malls, 24-hour convenience stores, themed holiday destinations, franchised fast food outlets and so on - are engineered for maximum convenience and efficiency, which is understandable in large complex cities, where large volumes of people move and operate. These spaces have been designed so that no residual traces of those that move through them remain. The anthropologist Marc Auge refers to these manipulated spaces as non-places - places where we operate in transit, convenience or commerce and the like (Auge 1995:75). The net effect, however, with a burgeoning of non-places is a stultifying of culture, because of the teflon-like nature of these spaces, nothing other than that which has been chosen by those that engineer these non-places may remain in them for longer that is strictly necessary. Auge explores the factors the comprise place and non-place thus

If a place can be defined as relational, historical and concerned with identity, then a space which cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity will be a non-place (Auge 1995:75).

These non-places filter out that which is 'relational, historical or concerned with identity' in the name of convenience or efficiency, which are logistic concerns. The pace or smoothness of the flow of people operating in these zones guarantees an efficiency that operates for the benefit of commerce, although mastery of logistical mechanism has its roots in military theory.

2.2 War, Time and the Repeat Event

War appears to be an inevitable part of the project of humanity. The march of human progress, both technological and cultural, is often driven by war. It is the intrinsic logistical requirements of war that triggers technological progress, to the point that much of the technology that drives the information communication technology revolution we find ourselves in today comes out of the military industrial complex.

Wars revolve primarily around control of geographic regions, natural resources or ideologies. It was with the advent of nuclear weapons, where for the first time humans had engineered the mechanism for our ultimate annihilation, that the structure of war began shifting away from the space of analogue armed conflicts and toward wars fought in other realms by other means. One of the precursory markers for this shift in the structure or nature of warfare was the Cold War, where direct armed conflict was replaced by political conflicts, propaganda wars, espionage and technological wars, such as the arms race or the space race. The act of dominating the enemy nation becomes more about appearances than actualities. New zones of conflict are developed, new theatres of war emerge as war moves away from physical terrain toward the realm of ideas, opinion and appearances, and new mechanisms for accounting the status of the enemy are developed. This is no surprise given that this age has been broadly described as the age of information. Power begins to reside increasingly in the mechanism of information flow or projection.

As with any cultural shift, the overall effects are not all-pervasive and instantaneous. The effect of these transitions are more gradual within societies and human progress as a whole. The Cold War was the ultimate war of illusion, a drawn-out but progressive stalemate almost without direct conflict, terminating with the collapse of the Soviet Union. During this period, many traditional territorial wars involving the Western world were also fought, the wars in Korea, Vietnam, the Falklands, and the first Gulf War being a few examples. With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War in 1991, the purpose of this conflict was removed, while the mechanism of the conflict remained. Wars of conflict continued to be fought in Eastern Europe, Africa and the Middle East, after the end of the Cold War, the most recent of which is the second Gulf War. Much like

Opposite page. It was with the advent of Nuclear weapons, where for the first time humans had engineered the mechanism for our ultimate annihilation, that the structure of war began shifting away from the space of analogue armed conflicts and toward wars fought in other realms by other means.

(www.acm.vt.edu)





The fall of the Berlin wall in 1989 was symbolic of the collapse of the Soviet Union; by 1991, the cold war had ended.

(www.freedomagenda.com)

the two World Wars fought in the early and middle twentieth century there has been a pairing of these Gulf wars, or repetition of this particular world event. And while there have been different triggers and different groupings of allies or coalitions in these two pairs of wars, they have ended up being similar as world events.

This twinning or repetition of events indicates a struggle humanity has (particularly Western capitalist societies) with progress itself. The return to a previous event, to re-roll the dice or re-enact it, exposes the repetition within the human condition. Repeat events are not unique to our times, they have long been part of the human condition. There exists however an increase in both frequency and velocity of repeat events and the 'raw material' from which they are constructed also appears to be in decline. Less is being repeated more often hence repeat events are becoming increasingly similar. To understand the operation of the repeat event, particularly within Western capitalist societies plugged into 'global projected culture' one must explore the mechanisms that yield or amplify its presence.

2.2.1 The Military Industrial Complex

The relationship between the Military Industrial Complex (MIC)¹ and civilian society is of key interest in understanding the repeat event. The term Military Industrial Complex was coined by Dwight Eisenhower in 1961 and it refers to 'partial integration of economic and military institutions for the purposes of national security' (Koistinen 1980: 23). The MIC model has been transferred to other industrial liberal democratic nations in varying degrees. The US, owing to its current engineered centrality of stage in matters of world affairs and global culture, remains the model around which discussions of the MIC will revolve in this paper.

The MIC commercialises the production of arms and military technology in ways that amplify the effect of repetition within the economies that are driven by them. Success, in the liberal capitalist sense, is only regarded as real if it can be repeated and amplified. This capitalist need for success, repetition and amplification is the industrial contribution to the military industrial complex. The effect of commerce on war is similar, driven by the mode of success - repeat and amplify, and repeat - which then drives the military machine in ways that are less about the need to control space, resources or ideas, and more about the need to be self-perpetuating and continually expanding in the manner of commerce itself.

Looking at repeat events within a military context, the most recent of which is the second Gulf War (GW II), the link between the commercialisation of the military and the political mechanism becomes more evident. Propaganda formed a large part of the build up to GW II, the transparency of which remains, for now, a hotly debated topic in the global media. Much of this propaganda emanated from military and civilian intelligence, and this perceived threat was amplified by the military and projected by the media system allied to it. This relationship between the media and the military is one also driven by commerce and brokered by an industry profiting from the need to proliferate arms. GW II is also symptomatic of increased commercialization of politics and the military, in that it is a manifestation of a mutated corporate strategy - the pre-emptive action/strike, rather than a response to an existing invasion or overt military action. This is emblematic of the end of the Cold War and a decentralization of military thought within the political arena.² The pre-emptive

strike unmasks a theoretical lag in political and military systems and unmasks a growing vacuum of power within these bodies. These political and military bodies are reduced to behaving in a manner that evokes power, where the actual power in these bodies is in decline, and in doing so, are imitating their merchant masters. Mirzoeff talks about the pre-emptive strike as symptomatic of the shifts in focus surrounding the locality of the nation state (and its boundaries) 'which requires careful supervision of the flows of digital culture' (Mirzoeff 2005:120) The relationship between the collapse of the Soviet Union and the dissipation of importance of the nation state is the starting point for this shift within the mechanism of power.³ This is amplified by the digital communication revolution and the emergence of the 'nomad class' (ibid.). The nomad class operates with the aid of new portable logistic systems, email, the world wide web, and mobile phones which are evolutions of military technologies.

2.2.2 Civilian Military

The parallel genesis of military and civilian technology systems is widely explored by a number of theoretical probes. Paul Virilio explores symbiotic aspects of the cinematic and military optic

From the first missiles of World War Two to the lightning flash of Hiroshima, the *theatre weapon* has replaced the *theatre of operations*. Indeed the military term 'theatre weapon', though itself outmoded, underlines the fact that the history of battle is primarily *the history of radically changing fields of perception*. In other words war consists not so much in scoring territorial, economic or other material victories as in appropriating the 'immateriality' of perceptual fields (Virilio 1989:7).

Friedrich Kittler investigates precursory military effects prior to a cohesive military industrial complex and the revolution brought about by digital communication technologies. The North American arms manufacturer Remington developed the first mass produced typewriter for the US market in 1865, triggering the relationship between civilian and military manufacturing (Kittler 1997:44). Contemporary symptoms of the ongoing military creep into civilian culture are the pervasiveness of 4x4 or recreational vehicles - vehicles which are contemporary versions of the World War II military Jeep and Land Rover (Virilio 1999:64). More recently the Hummer has also been converted and downscaled for popular civilian use in cities and suburbs. This militarization of culture can be also seen in high street fashion, where camouflage has been a fairly persistent trend in mainstream clothing



An Australian soldier equipped for desert combat.

(www.media.militaryphotos.net)



Urban camouflage has been a fairly persistent trend in high street fashions

(www.telephoneart.com)
(www.slipmats.be)

and accessories. Civilian society has developed its own particular camo colour palate, where the dull natural greens, browns and sandy colours of the outdoor theatre of war have been replaced by a bright vibrant urban camouflage.

There are many other indicators of this militarization of civil culture, but primarily it is a way of operating that necessitates certain kinds of behaviours. Military culture is about efficiency and the synchronisation of actions. Much of the digital communication equipment that has been assimilated by the civilian realm relates to these behaviours. Mobile communications (such as cell phones and wireless communications devices) allow for efficient and synchronized communication, enabling users to operate in a perpetual now.

Logistics is a key aspect of military culture. It drove the development of communication technology. This technology forefronts logistical thinking within the communication culture we occupy. This culture of logistics within civilian society also requires increased synchronisation, not merely of operational systems in the name of efficiency, but also synchronisation of media streams, communications, information, events and opinions, all of which operate in ways that increase the perceptions of that which may be regarded as other.

2.2.3 Projected reality

Aside from physically being at the site of a conflict, the civilian experience of war and other world events is a primarily mediated event, projected by global media networks. These networks, such as CNN, SKY and the BBC World Service, have their own specific needs and motivations, many of which relate to liberal capitalist systems within which they operate, where they compete for audience share, revenues and the need to be up-to-date with nearest rivals. Where media networks are owned or financed by the state or by revenues collected from its citizens, they remains tools of nationhood, which, while they may be obliged to cater for a multitude of citizens and cultural perspectives, nonetheless remain limited to the context of the specific nation.

The media remain, however, most peoples' primary link with the apparent events of the world. The dislocation from actual events and the mediation of reality, specifically in relation to mediated projections of war, is explored by Jean Baudrillard in his book *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place*. He describes this contempo-

Jean Baudrillard argues that contemporary war, with its simulation technology, has become like a video game.
(www.mediaonlinephoto.com)



rary war as being more like a video game, where a simulation of reality exists in place of the real thing, a remote controlled reality, with no 'face to face' meeting with the enemy. In the case of the first Gulf War, he sees the opponents lost in their particular trance, 'the one lost in its virtual war won in advance, the other buried in its traditional war lost in advance' (Baudrillard 1995:62).

If one is to apply the optics of the Western media mechanism to the aftermath of GWI, and the civilian casualties following the medical and food shortages, these did not happen either. With this media mechanism being built around the projection of similarity, that which happens to an other, with their 'differences' amplified by this system, an other that the viewer is no longer able to empathise with becomes invisible.

2.3 The History Symptom

History as a cultural reflection mechanism exists as a kind of filter of human action and progress. The historian John Tosh argues 'if the individual cannot exist without memory, neither can society, and that goes for large scale technologically advanced societies as well' (Tosh 2000:3). Within a self-aware society, history has an effect because it accrues within the linear con-

ated liberal democracy appears to be heading for a collapse, repeat events are perhaps the symptom of this fever. A society that is enraptured by appearances as opposed to actualities (Debord's society of the spectacle), a society locked in a feverish and amplified set of repeat actions, driven by accumulation and obsessed with logistics, where time is accelerating and space is virtual and endless, may be a society that requires the services of history to prevent its destination remaining a constant present.

2.4 The self at velocity. Destination?

The upshot of this acceleration, of an amplified and perpetually accumulative society, is that progress becomes illusional. Events, objects and situations repeated with slight variations, at infinitum, project this illusion, while variation, movement and progression are halted by their own simulations. Is this simulation so fully engaging that we forget ourselves as well? Do we become the illusion? Do we accept this illusion as we gleefully wave goodbye to history? How do we locate the self within this context?

If the Cartesian maxim 'I think, therefore I am' no longer applies because the reflective state has been jettisoned in our accelerated condition, what are the implications for the individual? New definitions for confirming individual existence have been proposed such as Lacan's 'I see myself seeing myself' (Foster 1996:138) which forefronts the visual as the marker for existence, moving away from the reflection proposed by Descartes. This model is further extended by Mirzoeff's 'I am seen and I see that I am seen' (Mirzoeff 2002:10-11). Reality or existence, as defined by the probe of the surveillance cameras and of 'eyes in the sky'. Certainly these extensions speak of the forefronting of the visual within culture and the notion of continual surveillance of the individual, as a result of the pervasive eye in the sky camera systems that populate our urban spaces.

The optics of power and control that Foucault has identified as 'Panoptics' has been extended by this surveillance technology (Foucault 91:200). It is no surprise that surveillance is a military tool now transferred into the civilian realm. These organs of sight are amplified by cosmic panoptical seeing devices like Google Earth⁶. Perhaps, then, this model can be extended even further to 'I see myself, seeing myself being seen in my space from space⁷.'

www.itsgita.com



Jean Baudrillard argues that we have lost that which we need to define our 'limits':

Stripped of a stage and crossed over ... the schizophrenic (us now ?) cannot produce the limits of his very being, he can no longer produce himself as a mirror. He becomes a pure screen, a pure absorption and resorption surface of the influent networks (Baudrillard 1988:27).

It is as if the rational world and the enlightenment have been replaced by a wilderness of civilization, and a primal jungle or wild state has been re-engineered. Only the fittest may survive in these circumstances, they favour the reactive, the speedy and shun the spatial, the reflective. The notion of reason has been replaced by noise. Meaning has been eroded by the perpetuation of signs and objects that the commercial mechanism will have us focus on and then discard in ever shortening cycles. Truth becomes elusive and private, this inward state contrasts the exterior reactivity.

These contradictions occupy the everyday and guide the course of our civilization toward the reactive. A pragmatist could surmise the following: While the panoptical state remains, its zoning extended by digital technologies, our place within this context has shifted. Where we were once merely dressed in our prison clothes (as subjects of the Panopticon), wandering within the delineated space of our permissible borders. Occasionally glancing in the mirror to see that we were still ourselves, we are now armed, with our logistical equipment, and protected, by our virtual armour and our all purpose vehicles. That same pragmatist could say; 'I can operate anywhere and feel safe, therefore I am.'

3 Contemporary Practice

3.1 The absurd now

In a world where reality is affected by commercial media projection systems, digital entertainment envelops us, time is accelerating and events are repeating themselves, and the absurd, with its own mechanisms of senselessness and repetition, has become a poignant reflection of our times.

The virtual space offered by networked computer technologies has nudged aside linear dialogues and time frames, instead offering infinite possibility and endless exploration of this vast realm, so long as the user is in the mood for infinity and endlessness and continual probing while remaining sedentary in physical space.

Jorge Luis Borges understood the space/time hole that was gashed into our lives by technology, before its effect had been widely observed. The cyclical form and realms of virtual or dreamlike realities, which echo our condition, are explored in Borges' short story *The Circular Ruins*. The protagonist journeys to the circular ruins of a temple, to dream up a man in perfect detail, to be his progeny. These ruins represent, perhaps, some damaged logic circuit in his own mind, his own past or his reading of events and personal histories.

He knew that this temple was the place required for his invincible intent; he knew that the incessant trees had not succeeded in strangling the ruins of another propitious temple downstream which had once belonged to gods now burned and dead; he knew that his immediate obligation was to dream (Borges 2001: 43).

Further into the story reality and the nature of existence is questioned, the dreamed man becomes 'real' and in his father, the dreamer, attempts to conceal the fact that his son is a product of these dreams.

... by some means find out he was a mere simulacrum. Not to be a man, to be a projection of another man's dreams - what an incomparable humiliation, what madness! (ibid.: 45)

It is at this point the dreaming man realises he is trapped in a kind of repeat event, a vacuum of history, and that he too is a product of another's dreams.

For what had happened many centuries before was repeating itself.... With relief, with humiliation, with terror, he understood

that he also was an illusion, that someone else was dreaming him (ibid.: 46).

The American artist Bruce Nauman's interrogation of the human condition and his explorations into the meaning/lack of meaning in language call into question our own view of this 'reality' that we are spectators to. Nauman's work comes out of 'being frustrated about the human condition.' He acknowledges, in the face of pervasive human cruelty, that he can't change it, but it remains for him 'a frustrating part of human history.' (van Assche 1998:80).

Nauman's works are executed in a wide range of media from sound to video, sculpture to neon lights, drawing to photography. He is not as concerned with the material as he is 'in the experience itself, in the encounter with the other' (van Assche 1998:13). These engineered encounters with the other 'direct one's attention to one's contradictory inner voices' encouraging the audience to explore that uncomfortable internal reflective space (Simon 1994:61). His video works *World Piece (Projected)*, *World Piece (Received)* from 1996 explore how media operates and how it is consumed, hence 'Projected' and 'Received.' *World Piece (Received)* explores the dialogue between viewer and TV set, and the dialogue between multiple sets. The pace of the work is accelerated, quite deliberately leaving the viewer little space for reflection, forefronting the 'hyper' of the now.

Repetition, cyclical behaviour, actions frozen and reiterated and absence of meaning are elements that Nauman invokes in much of his work, all these are explored by the absurdist movement in literature. The central writer in this movement is Samuel Beckett. Absurdism explores notions of futility of an existence, which one is either trapped within physically or existentially. There are close thematic parallels between the absurd movement and Dada in the fine arts. These strands are extended in Nauman's work. Nauman 'openly acknowledges' Samuel Beckett's and the absurdist influence in his own work which 'tend to function less as conventional works of art and more as behavioural models forcing participation from the viewer' (Shaffner 1997:19). Meaning and the mechanism for its construction within society and artworks themselves is another pervasive theme. Absence of meaning too can be an essential strategy:

Withholding meaning is a defence against getting sucked dry by communicating with an individual or public that cannot or does not reciprocate. However to refuse to say something is also a way

Jorge Luis Borges understood:
this same time hole that
was gashed into our lives, by
technology, before its effect
had been widely observed

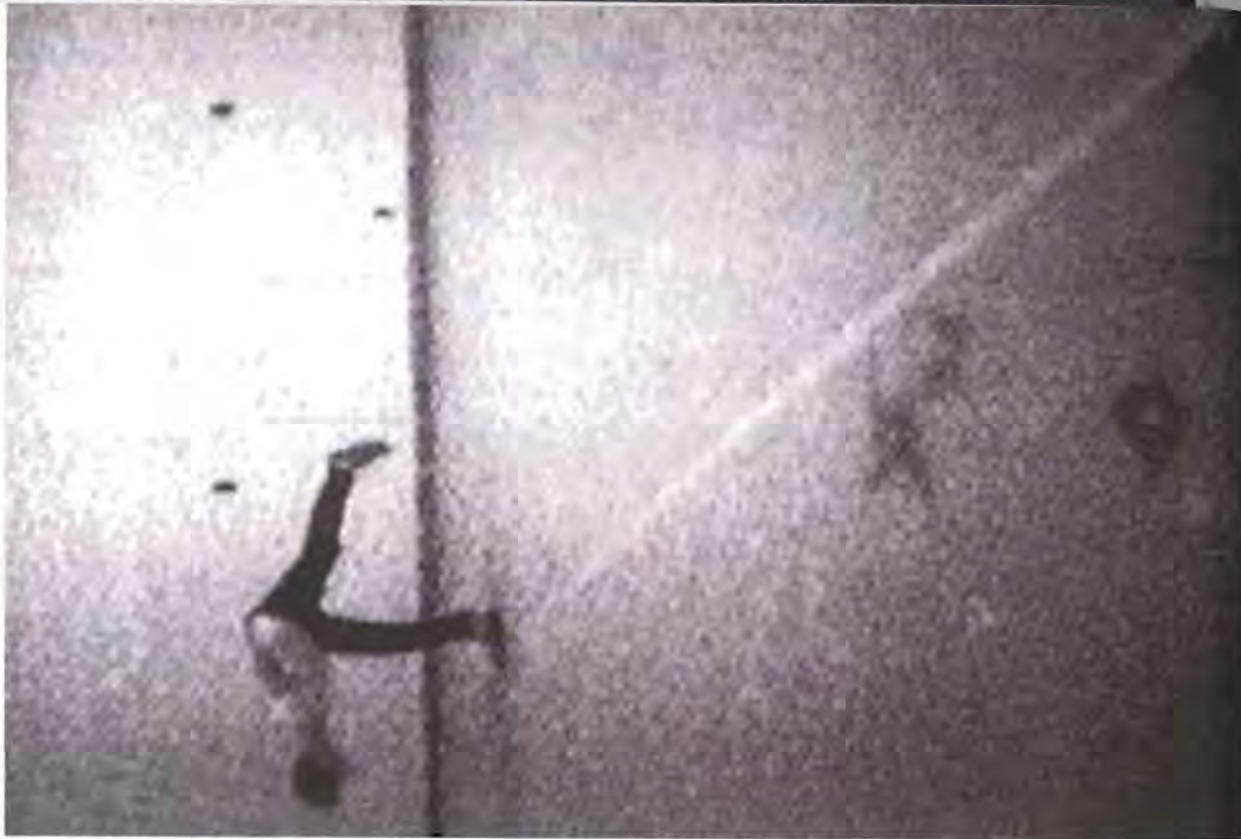
(www.madpoint.co.uk/ibid/)



Bruce Nauman openly
acknowledges Samuel
Beckett's and the absurdist
movement influence in his
own work (ibid.)

(www.madpoint.co.uk/ibid/)





Bruce Nauman's 1968 piece
Slow Angle Walk

(www.mediakunstnetz.de)

of saying it; it points toward an idea by pointing in the opposite direction indicating implicit presence by explicit absence (Simon 1994:61).

Nauman uses language in much of his work, deploying a logic that betrays the construction of meaning, a logic that is often infinite, shifting and nonlinear. Nauman told Jane Livingston about his 1968 piece *Slow Angle Walk*: 'My problem's to make tapes that go on and on with no beginning or end. I wanted the tension of waiting for something to happen, and then you would get drawn into the rhythm of the thing...' (Shaffner 1997:19).

Nauman's looped or cyclical shifting logic is informed by the writings of Ludwig Wittgenstein, a thinker whom he remains openly indebted to. His 1966 piece *A Rose Has No Teeth* is a direct quote from Wittgenstein's 'philosophical investigations' where Wittgenstein has pursued 'an illogical premise to its self evident and absurd conclusion' (Simon 1994:21). Wittgenstein's seminal work *Tractatus Logicus Philosophicus* (1921) set out to solve all the problems of philosophy. The logical probes flows thus:

- 2.223 In order to tell whether a picture is true or false we must compare it with reality.
- 2.224 It is impossible to tell from the picture alone whether it is true or false.

2.225 There are no pictures that are true a priori.

3 A logical picture of facts is a thought.

3.001 A state of affairs is thinkable – this means we can picture it ourselves.

3.01 The totality of true thoughts is a picture of the world (Wittgenstein 1961:19).

But can we surmise, eventually from 3.01, that a picture of the world represents the totality of true thoughts? I'm not sure this is a reversible logic condition. This stream of logic and the reversal of it, are the kinds of spaces Mark Wallinger navigates in his work.

The world has been stood on its head and in order to read its truth you need to have a mirror or to stand on your hands, or to play the soundtrack backwards, or slow down the images. What we see is not to be believed and needs above all to be corrected (Durand 2001: 31).

This quote about Mark Wallinger's 2001 contribution to the Venice Biennale speaks about these contemporary existential probes, where a mediated reality may require corrective, analytical or reverse viewing techniques. These reading techniques, mirroring, upside down, backwards or slowed down, speak about a digitisation of vision, these kinds of filters are generally available in the digital film editing software, used by the media industry, which ultimately speak about manipulation of reality.

Wallinger uses reversal of both time and language in his 1997 video work *Angel*, shot literally in the bowels of the earth - at the foot of the escalators at London's deepest tube station at

Still from Mark Wallinger's
Angel 1997

(www.artnet.com)



Ludwig Wittgenstein.

(www.individual.utoronto.ca)



Islington's Angel. In order to realise this work Wallinger had to learn Psalm 16 in reverse and speak it while on the final step of the escalator, a kind of treadmill. To the left and the right around him 'souls of the damned and the redeemed' alternately ascend and descend. In this work Wallinger plays the absurd character *Blind Faith* - a kind of visionary who doesn't see, a preacher or prophet, a blind man to lead the blind. Time is reversed in the final showing of the work and the initially reversed language mostly corrects itself, however the obscuring of meaning by this corrected reversal calls into question the manner in which reality is to be read from that which is constructed. In this case he is referencing belief systems but he is invoking other bodies or systems where power resides.

Wallinger works often play on established binaries such as 'humour and pathos,' 'irony and sincerity' 'popular and sublime' pushing the boundaries of what could be regarded as established or normative views, within an English culture that is both steeped in tradition and fiercely contemporary. It is this space between what is established and what is new within this context that Wallinger has developed this particular oeuvre of sympathetic satire.

Regis Durand writes about his work being 'based on freedom of individual and political conscience'. (Durand 2001: 1) Wallinger has developed a talent for deploying iconography that has 'the densest distillations of ideas and ideologies like cultural zip files' (O'Reilly 2005:84). He invokes a God's eye view of the electric chair in his work *Promethius* (1997), explores public transit spaces and imbues them with religious significance in *Angel* (1997) and *Threshold to the Kingdom* (2000). He uses a live horse in *A Real Work of Art* (1996), all these layered symbols situate the struggles of the past in the space of the present in a manner that is both readable and efficient, facilitating the audiences experiences of these works and bringing particular fevers into view.

3.2 The Aesthetics of Post Production

Post production refers to that phase in film video and digital media production when the raw material for the product has been captured and now must be processed into its final form. Traditionally, in film for example, it would refer to that stage where footage is edited, the sound effects and voice-overs are added along with the musical score to yield the final product as seen by audiences in cinemas.

With the development of digital technologies a lot can be achieved in this stage, such as special effects, image and sound manipulation and virtual character development, to the point that it is no longer a mechanical finishing stage but an intrinsic part of the creative process. Digital technologies have become increasingly affordable and easy to use. Post production tools used to be the sole domain of the industries that could afford them, but are now widely available and easy to use by anyone with a computer and some knowledge of computer applications.

As a result many fine artists, including Douglas Gordon, Kendell Geers and Candice Breitz, use varying forms of postproduction in their practice. This is not merely a case of being technologically enabled, it represents a shift in the manner in which the projected world is viewed, as a result of being able to participate in it rather than merely spectate it. Nicolas Bourriaud argues that this eradicates the 'distinction between production and consumption, creation and copy, readymade and original work' (Bourriaud 2002:7). He continues: 'the artwork is no longer an end point but a simple moment in an infinite chain of contributions' (ibid.: 14). This 'infinite chain' reflects the infinite space that the virtual world brings to our attention, making us more aware that we are merely part of human progress and not its splendid end result.

The revision of cultural artefacts represents a re-evaluation of modes of seeing, constructing, projecting or operating, within an increasingly mediated culture. Post-production techniques offer the means to question the very structures of our liberal capitalist system such as time, the media, the structures of power, the status quo and the construction of identity, while using the predominantly established language of the mainstream media and entertainment systems to do this. It is a widely understood language and its translation into artistic mode is seamless. There is a certain subversive (and satisfactory) symmetry that exists by using the predominant projected language to interrogate its own form. Guy Debord labled this 'political use of Duchamp's reciprocal readymade' *détournement* and regarded it as the sole strategy in generating works (ibid.: 30).

Douglas Gordon has produced a series of works using Hollywood 'film noir' movies as his raw material. The intentions he inserts into the original works move them away from the specific narrative intentions of the original films. 'Gordon's intervention diverts us from the usual pattern of watching movies, where real time is nullified in the spectacle; he infinitely postpones the ca-



A still from Douglas Gordon's
24 Hour Psycho

(www.rochester.edu/visible-culture)

tharsis associated with this genre of entertainment' (Monk 2003: 60). Gordon probes a range of issues acting upon contemporary culture such as control or manipulation of time, repetition and cycles of existence, existential probes into the dualistic space of the modern psyche. Most notable is his work *24 Hour Psycho*, where the original Alfred Hitchcock movie is slowed so that the action takes place over 24 hours and not the 104 minutes of the original. The overall effect on time and narrative is dissociative and yet somehow the slowness concentrates the iconographic nature of the classic cinematic form while being essentially iconoclastic. It is this space that his works navigate, calling into question our readings of the original works and indeed the broader culture itself. Phillip Monk writes

Gordon's intervention focuses our attention first perceptually, through an initial distraction where our expectation of the original film are not met, then conceptually as we fully enter the perceptual and psychological distortion that the projection plays out. This dissociative effect links all Gordon's interventions and binds formal structure to thematic intent (Monk 2003:62).

There are many examples of South African artists working with found footage, the use of which has particular resonance geographically, perhaps because of the widespread re-use or redeployment of cultural artefacts within the creative disciplines as a whole. From the use of pop cultural iconography juxtaposed with the gritty proto-urban reality of the 'struggle township' or place of siege in the art works by Willie Bester, to the widespread re-use of packaging and other promotional artefacts within the manufacture of crafts and interior design, South Africans have long had ways of revising and taking ownership of the flotsam and jetsam of consumer society and ways of reconfiguring this mundane detritus.

In the fine arts there are many practitioners working specifically with found mainstream movie material. However this is perhaps a more inadvertent element that links their work rather than something that is fundamentally thematically binding. Kendell Geers used found footage from *Bad Lieutenant* and *The Exorcist* for his 1998-99 video installations *TV Shoot*. Geers frames it thus: 'I have witnessed firsthand the expediency of morality in South Africa, the easy changing of sides and positions without guilt or remorse. What was good is now simply bad and bad is good' (in Williamson & Jamal 1996:58). What is acknowledged is a regionally developed and persistent, but not specific, culture of appropriation, an underlying anarchic behaviour, resulting from a pervasive disrespect for anything institutional. A past where be-

A Still from Kendell Geers'
TV Shoot

(www.artnet.com)



trayal, exploitation, control and abuse has left a certain residual cynicism within the populace, and an ability to smell imperialist behaviour, even when it is camouflaged in the most elegant prose.

Another South African artist, Candice Breitz has widely used found footage in her practice, which interrogates the language of global media systems, notions of celebrity, the mediated images of gender, and our engagement with a projected popular culture. She questions the constructed language of popular culture, focusing on spoken language and the projected meaning inherent within it. Her work *Diorama* uses footage from the TV series *Dallas*, that ran from 1978 until 1991. The on screen characters are trapped in absurd repetitive states, Jock Ewing for example repeats, 'my barbecue, my house, my barbecue, my house...' The viewer is not offered any kind of narrative relief and 'is left to ponder the relationship between personal memories and social memories shared as consumers of the global media (<http://www.artpace.org/aboutTheExhibition.php> accessed 10-02-06).

Breitz retains a dystopian view of the role media plays in constructing reality (Hunt 2000:84). She also talks about fine art becoming the 'research arm of the fashion and entertainment industries'(ibid.). The use of found footage, for her, is a creative strategy that acknowledges the commercialization of 'narratives of resistance' while perhaps still being able to point out the 'limitations' of consumer culture (ibid.).

Breitz's work probes the boundaries between individuality and 'role specific behaviour' as suggested by the media. How much of who we are or what we think comes from projected norms and how much of it is a result of personal reflection, in an age where time is a precious commodity? Who retains the luxury of identity and who reflects the thoughts that have been projected by popular opinion? Breitz explores notions of violence within language, where language projected has become a discreet yet powerful mechanism of control.



Candice Breitz's *Diorama* uses found footage from the popular TV series *Dallas*.

(www.mattleweekly.com)



Stills from Candice Breitz' work

(www.shugoarts.com)



Top (www.shugoarts.com)
Right (www.johnen_schoet-1@e.de)



University of Cape Town

4 Method & Process

4.1 Moving On

Through interrogating systems of control, I have identified synchronisation and repeat events as signs that we are focused on a perpetual present. Continual interrogating of systems of control however is a distraction in itself, a place to become stuck, because it centralizes hierarchy as the discursive focus point and prevents the dialogue from developing while encouraging repetition.

Dutch new media theorist Rob Van Kranenburg⁸ (who visited Michaelis in 2004) pointed out the futility of standing in front of a speeding train. Being a passive consumer is no longer an option. Issues such as globalization and hyper-capitalism and 'broadcast' reality are not going to be rendered obsolete in the mid-to long term as they are structural aspects of the global dialogue we find ourselves within. What can shift however, is the way we regard them and how we operate within these paradigms.

It becomes useful to develop creative strategies to participate in these kinds of explorations. Remaining locked within the parameters of this debate without being productive could be a fatal strategy in itself. In a dictionary, to move from synchronise to synchronicity takes the merest dart of the eye and yet synchronicity requires a kind of openness that synchronized viewpoints would appear to exclude. Synchronised thinking works to the benefit of logistics. Those with the same mindsets never question the reality that has been constructed around them, and thus operate more efficiently. Synchronicity⁹ however is regarded as unrepeatable, unscientific and difficult to prove. It can however be particularly sympathetic to the creative process.

Synchronicity is symmetrical to the notion of the happy accident - a thing I have used in my creative endeavours. Paul Virilio points out the accident as the unintended consequence of human engineering feats, where to invent the Jumbo jet is also to invent the jet disaster (Virilio 2004:8). Creative accidents however have fewer casualties. Entire art movements such as DADA and Surrealism took as point of departure the notion of chance and accident leading to new creative solutions.

4.2 Repetition and Cyclicity

Repetition and cyclicity are elements that I enjoy working with. It is these - in conjunction with time - that forms the central part of my chosen digital palette.

The argument in the preceding pages has looked at the cultural impact of repetition in the liberal capitalist societies we operate within. Personally I perceive repetition as an inability to progress. Characters in my works become trapped in ever repeating cycles of behaviour in their endeavours to engage meaningfully with the world around them. It is the pathological nature of this repetitive action that suggests they are living according to some plan over which they have no authorship.

Cyclicity relates to repetition but also moves away from linearity. Circular forms, cyclical elements and non-linear narratives are interrelated elements that link the body of work I have created. Cyclicity is perhaps a more positivist view on the repetitive nature of the current human condition - there is an element of balance in cyclicity, it talks about the return of conditions that are essential to the sustainability of life, the cyclicity of the seasons for example. Cyclicity ensures that conditions move away from states that could be considered negative, destructive or absent of some element that is necessary to sustain life, change or advancement. My work sets out to explore the tensions between a pathological state of incessant repetition and the essential balancing force of cyclicity.

4.3 Toward Process

Working with the tools of post production is a strategic response to the mediated reality of today. It suggests a particular aesthetic alignment with the language of constructed media and yet allows for much of the work to be process generated (processes that mirror commercial broadcast techniques). The bulk of my works employ re-edited found visual material from films that are part of popular culture. Some of them are iconic and part of the mainstream of popular culture, some of them are more obscure. Once I have selected a work to appropriate, I use a similar strategy in 'finding' my own work within the form that the films director has created, much like Henry Moore spoke about releasing a fundamental form that exists within the raw materials he used.

I believe that, sometimes by accident, often by design, the director has left scraps for me to recycle in my own creations.

© 2004 by Rob Van Kranenburg
www.kranenburg.com





(http://www.ambientmusic.com)

(www.ambientmusic.com)

It is essentially similar to the making of jewellery and other craft items in the third world out of first world cultural flotsam and jetsam. I believe that it is necessary, in order for culture to remain dynamic, alive and progressing, to remix and reuse its cultural artefacts, to revisit and re-evaluate its truths, its beliefs, its very constructions of reality.

4.4 Sound - Ambient

The soundtrack or musical aspect of the video pieces have primarily been composed, performed and processed by myself. They often also served as starting points for the completed works. They are primarily abstract, yet emotive soundtracks, that could be classified as ambient music.

The term 'ambient' in reference to music was proposed by Brian Eno 'to refer to music that would envelop the listener without drawing attention to itself.' (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ambient_music accessed 18-02-06). While Eno is regarded as the father of modern ambient music, Eric Satie (1866 - 1925) is the most obvious precursor to the modern ambient music movement. Satie worked toward stripping the classical from to its most essential elements, and fused this with the moods of French café music which was popular at the time. Mark Prendergrast writes

Eric Satie changed the whole course of musical history, 1887-1893 - with three sets of minitures...with their clear melodic phrases, exquisite lightness and fresh texture he literally blew away the pomp and rhetoric of the older order (Prendergrast 2003:6).

Some elements of this ambience flowed into works of his contemporaries Claude Debussy and Maurice Ravel. But this movement was only to gain pace as a result of the contributions of Pierre Schaeffer, Karlheinz Stockhausen, John Cage and finally labelled and concretised by Brian Eno Himself (ibid.).

Eno's seminal work, *Music for Airports*, forefronts the anxieties experienced in these kinds of contemporary transit zones. The music is specifically composed to have a 'calming effect on nervous travellers adrift in worry, confusion and perpetual motion.' (Toop 2002:70) The modern ambient music movement is reflective of the contemporary urban condition that David Toop refers to as 'hypermodern' or Marc Auge as 'supermodern'. This movement is perhaps symptomatic of this accelerative state,

which serves as a starting point for my own body of work.

The ambient music movement continues today, aided by digital technology that has been particularly enabling for practitioners of this genre of expression.

The fact that music is a displacement of air, a periodic vibration, a movement of sound waves, always raises the ambiguity of what is being said when words such as time, space and memory are used in isolation. Digital technology can take away the space, or the air from music production (Toop 2004:99).

Toop speaks about the effect digitisation has on sound and memory here and yet sound remains mostly free from the burden of the mediation of screen, mouse and keyboard that other digital interactive media require. Aside from the equipment you need to play it, the sonic experience happens in the ears and the mind, the focus is internal, the space it offers is reflective.

For me, sound is colour, emotion, space and place, a state of mind, a story, an escape. And while being all these things it is also perfectly abstract which allows a certain freedom of response to the listener. Sound does however impose very efficiently a kind of emotional colour, which in my process, marries with the visual to result in the final pieces themselves.

4.5 Video - found

In constructing the video pieces the sonic element serves as the starting point. I generally compose this, sometimes I use existing music. The sound serves as a structural spine upon which these works are created. A time map of the soundtrack is generated, with the song's typical structural elements (such as introduction, verse chorus, middle 8 etc.) drawn onto this map. The video loops are cut into segments that relate to the pacing of the song. For the most part the video cuts are synchronised with the beat or pulse of the soundtrack.

The found film footage once chosen is mostly detached or 'laundered' from the original movie I source it from. While some residual traces do remain, they are very useful in pointing the viewer in specific directions. The use of the footage in the works themselves are less a comment on the specific films and more about appropriation of the cultural iconography I find useful.

With the Cold War being a marker for the shift in the structure of

warfare, the fact that I grew up at the tail end of this period and the impact it had upon power structures in South Africa, much of the cultural iconography used in the works relates to this period of recent western history. Once I have chosen, what are often the more abstract elements from the film I am using, I then edit these together to create my works.

Similar to a DJ remixing other artist's music, it is primarily a loop or clip-based space where digital manipulation and conjoining or blending of pre-existing and manipulated cultural artefacts takes place. Primarily I manipulate time, with extensions and compressions of it to point the footage in directions away from their original readings or contexts. In this way the footage becomes quite pliable and working in co-operation with the sonic elements can be nudged in various directions. Through time compression or expansion and careful editing, most footage can be extended in a direction that the piece requires. I have also found that detaching the found footage from its original sound track renders it even more flexible.

4.6 Video shot

Act 2, The Individual Distressed includes the works *I am not Ronbeck, Jed* and *The Man Without a Trace*, and radiates around the anxieties of the individual who exist in a world of illusion. These works explore and attempt to find the limits of the mechanism of construction. The form is a simplification of the video biography, the kind that you would see on television about a celebrity or politician. A single subject in a simple setting, shot frontally, sets up the discomfort that suggests interrogation. This invites the viewer to reflect on the 'truth' or lack thereof that the speaker is constructing. Deliberate contradictions and absurdities further encourage reflection. The form of the celebrity video biography is turned inside out with its frailties made evident.

5 The Works

5 The works

My body of work examines anxieties that radiate around the highly systematised and increasingly digitised contemporary global culture, that can be referred to as hypermodern. The work probes the mechanics of meaning within this culture of projection. It operates in a paradigm which favours a reactive mode of operation over a reflective one. It operates in a context where objects, things, places and events, more by an accident of market pressures than design, are increasingly similar. The work understands these similarities and explores how much of this projected reality is constructed. The nature of construction yields similarity, which the work accepts and yet an uneasy tension remains between the work and this state.

The work operates within the mode that it is probing, using this mainstream mode to probe the mainstream itself; the films explore the boundaries of commercially-fueled, media-constructed realities while using the same tools and language of these systems.

Furthermore the work understands the necessary velocity of this hypermodern existence and is geared to the attention spans available within this space. While the work accepts the global, hypermodern space it operates within, there remain tensions between the works and the structural aspects of this condition. Technology is enabling and yet we should remain wary of its promise. Communication tools are efficient, and yet we become slaves of logistics. Global media systems are means by which we can read a broader reality, beyond our own geography, and yet what they reflect is governed by the laws of commerce.

It is within this context that I have created a body of work *Cirque du Pan*, which comprises of three acts. Each act comprises of three video pieces. While they are not triptychs in the traditional sense the works were developed out of each other and exist in triangular dialogue. Each of the groups has a thematic title, the first is *Powercycle*, which explores the projected iconography of power. The second is *The Individual Distressed*, which explores anxieties revolving around the construction of identity in the media age. The third group is *Innocence Remapped* using the iconography of innocence to explore the darker side of contemporary human existence. These themes radiate around the systems of power construction within the hypermodern context I have explored.



5.1 Act 1 Powercycle

Cadillac (2005)

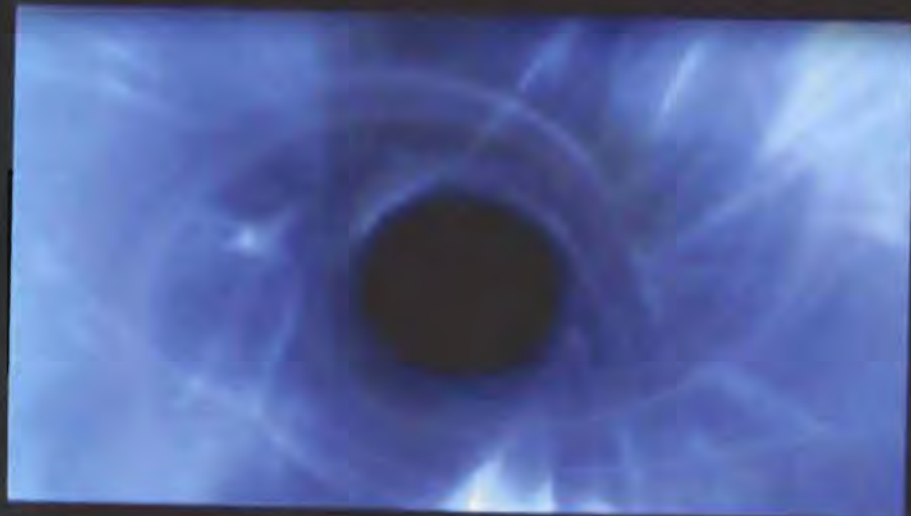
(Includes footage from *Sing Blue Silver**). Music by Charles Maggs.

This video piece shows various Cadillac limousines in motion, moving from A to B but never quite reaching a destination, never quite resolving the purpose of the journey. The identity of the occupants is obscured so it remains for the viewer to consider who these vehicles are conveying. The soundtrack suggests a level of disquiet which is extended by the altered time structure of the original footage. The Cadillacs themselves suggests notions of power or celebrity, they are status symbols amplified by their physicality.

The cars are the visual element that links the work, they are subtly different and yet mostly similar. The cars are in continual motion throughout the piece, always arriving, always travelling, always leaving but never quite getting there. The status of the journey is interrupted by the repetition of various states. The action presents the following kinds of questions: Who are they? Where are they going? Why? Do I even care? The amplified disquiet suggests that the constructed reality projected by these symbols be revisited.

* *Sing Blue Silver* 2004 83min.

Directed by Russell Mulcahy



Right (2005)

(Includes footage from *The Right Stuff**) Music by Charles Maggs

The Right Stuff documented the velocity and space race from the North American perspective, during the height of the Cold War. This mode of technological race was initiated in modern times with a race between the Nazis and the North Americans to be the first to produce and use the atom bomb. The need to compete on the technological front becomes a driving force within the military industrial complex. This marks a shift in the theatre of war from analogue armed conflicts to wars of illusion.

Right explores the kinds of questions that were asked by the myth of Icarus, probing perhaps the notion that while we have experienced millennia of human progress, human vision remains predominantly the same. While *Right* intends to question the perils of human engineering, it is not only a probe of the possible accidents of machismo, it also intends to be a broader, more metaphysical probe of the human condition.

* *The Right Stuff* 1983 193min.

Directed by Philip Kaufman



Cowboy Boy (2006)

(Includes footage from *The Unforgiven**). Music Maximum Black by Boren & Der Club of Gore**

Existing within this cycle of the Cirque du Pan, *Cowboy Boy* extends the use of the constructed iconography of projected power. The Cadillacs from the earlier piece and the horses here are transposed cultural symbols that talk about the New World and the structural changes to the balance of power this implies. The use of such obviously North American iconography talks about how the balance of power in today's world resides with the nation that has mastered the art of projection systems and constructions of iconographies.

There remains little truth in the Hollywood projection of the cowboy - it is a transparently constructed icon that is an intrinsic part of the projected iconography of the United States. The cowboys here alternately invoke the All-American Marlboro man and the Three Horsemen of the Apocalypse. The wide open spaces suggest an epic narrative and yet this work is structured in a cyclical manner, with the narrative always repeating itself and never resolving itself. The riders go around and around seeking, journeying and finding nothing, it evokes the philosophical concept of the eternal return.

**Unforgiven* 1992 131min
Directed by Clint Eastwood.

** *Maximum Black* 7min.38s. from *Black Earth* 2004
by Boren & Der Club of Gore

5.2 Individual Distressed

I Am Not Ronbeck (2005)

Video, Performance by Sean O'Connor (music *Alina* by Arvo Part*)

This existential interrogation, explores the structure of individuality in relation to who the individual is not. The subject is forced to inhabit a found identity, that of *Ronbeck*. In denying this identity, this otherness, aspects of his own individuality are teased to the surface. Toying with the Cartesian method of doubt, the subject must eliminate the other in order to become himself. We define ourselves in relation to that which we are not, and yet can we be so certain, that that which we are, or believe ourselves to be, does not contain residues of otherness? The vacillation in the subject's denial of that state of being *Ronbeck* exposes the contractions of meaning within language, particularly language that is employed in the art of constructing identity.

* *Fur Alina* 10min.47s. from *Alina* 2002
by Arvo Part





Jed (2006)

Video, Performance and Music by Charles Maggs

The constructive quality of the media is probed here. *Jed* is a fictional individual rendered manifest by the dialogue, he is entirely constructed by the dialogue and in the mind of the viewer. *Jed* exists in dialogue to *I am not Ronbeck*: Where *Ronbeck* is a denial, *Jed* is an affirmation, although the existential tone of *Jed* converges with that of *Ronbeck*.

The unease of the interviewee and the fractured, repetitive dialogue suggest space for the viewer to question their own construction of *Jed* himself and perhaps constructions of other people, with whom they only have a mediated relationship with, or a 'constructed' picture of.



The Man Without a Trace (2006)

Video, Performance by David Malan. Music by Charles Maggs.

In this work individuality is reduced to a mere strategy.

Ironically *The Man Without a Trace's* identity is constructed around a strategy of invisibility. Some residual traces of personality do remain in order for the narrative action to take place but the space of identity is reduced to that of an idea, much like a celebrity will use the media as a means to construct a persona, that is designed for consumption that has done away with the banal limitations of everyday life.

The mystery of *The Man Without a Trace's* desire to disappear is never revealed, the fragments of his personality suggest he may be a covert operative or secret agent, but this picture fails to resolve itself as his strategies of invisibility become increasingly absurd or banal.



5.3 Innocence remapped

Sound (2005)

(Contains footage from *The Sound of Music**). Music by Charles Maggs

Sound radiates around notions of innocence and education.

Many pedagogical experiences rely on a certain degree of synchronised behaviour, as do festivals, dances and celebrations. The burden is on the individual to synchronise their emotions and behaviours with that of the mass consciousness.

This work interrogates notions of organised and synchronised mass emotional events and practices. It queries the space that remains for the unique expression and feelings of the individual within these circumstances and society as a whole. The metronomic aspect of the music evokes the clock that we synchronise all our actions to, the clockwork nature of our behaviour as productive individuals and the machines against which we measure this productivity. The work suggests re-evaluating constructed or imposed behaviour patterns triggers or events.

* *The Sound of Music* (1965) 174min.

Directed by Robert Wise



Lagoon (2006)

(Contains aspect of *The Blue Lagoon**) Music by Charles Maggs, remixed by Brendon Bussy

Lagoon explores the pressure of time upon the individual in our current paradigm.

The found footage comes from *The Blue Lagoon*, based on the novel about innocence by Henry de Vere Stacpoole. The pressure upon the individual within a capitalist system is instantaneous, success requires that one maintains a continual performance. Individuals must exist under the increased pressure of velocity in this age of logistics. This work reflects the velocity and structure of the contemporary human condition, and the soundtrack imposes this push, pause, push, pause structure that reflects our daily cycle. The pace, abstractness and repetition suggest that we occupy a matrix that is unfamiliar and infinite. Action is never rewarded by some kind of narrative relief, instead the protagonists are trapped in mechanical repeat actions.

* *The Blue Lagoon* 1980 104 min.

Directed by Randal Kleiser

Elliot (2006)

Video, (Contains footage from *E.T The Extra-Terrestrial**) Music Red Swan By Susumu Yokota**

Elliot is a story of a small boy who occupies a world absent of affection. He explores this world but it fails to make sense. The story starts at night, where at first he is at play, and then waiting. Waiting turns to searching, but it appears he is being watched and then he is chased. He uses a series of illusions to escape. As a result of this he sees through the illusion that has been constructed around him. He is quarantined and probed, but none of this is for his benefit. He must escape this realm in order to retain his innocence.

* *E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial* 1982 115min.
Directed by Steven Spielberg

** *Red Swan* 4min.27s. from *The Boy and the Tree* 2002
by Susumu Yokota



In Conclusion

The relationship between the individual and the world projected is increasingly mediated.

I have created a body of work which is symptomatic of contemporary conditions. In a world where reality is projected by the global media systems, progress is relegated to a state of illusion, governed by the notion of consumer trends, which are less about the will of humanity and more a mechanism of commerce. Time and space have become so elastic that we can hardly locate ourselves within them, instead we must rely upon reflections or images of the self to be sure we still exist. Within this context people, things, places and events have become increasingly similar. World events as projected by the global media system appear to be repeating themselves endlessly in a vain attempt to break out of the perpetual now. My work sets out to explore the mechanics of meaning within this context.

The works use construction and projection as a reflection of the realm within which they operate, accepting the current condition while still probing its outer limits. The reiteration and cyclical forms in my works evoke the repetitive nature of the human condition while still questioning its structural necessity. The works also understand the pressures of cultural time in the age of logistics and acknowledge this state in their format.

By engineering a space for reflection the works encourage the viewer to reconsider the constructed reality that we exist within. The works revolving around the construction of identity unmask the transparency of this technique, that is so central to constructions of the individual by media. This so often becomes the mechanism by which power or status are achieved. Redirecting existing cultural artifacts is a strategy that acknowledges the power in constructed media, while still questioning its supremacy in global culture.

Endnotes

1 The Military Industrial Complex (MIC) has its roots in the War Industries Board (WIB), a body that emerged to steer the 'economy of war' in the USA from 1915-1918. The WIB was staffed by unpaid experts from the industrial sector, who while apparently operating altruistically were guaranteeing their own slice of the pie by ensuring that their own factories produced this military hardware. Since 1812 the US military was in a unique position in relation to other industrialised nations, in that it was in charge of its own procuring. The WIB's influence waned as it tried to wrest control of procurement from the military. Ultimately restructuring of this system led to the emergence of the MIC. Post World War II the US foreign policy requirements in respect of the Soviet Union and the Cold War were driving its military hardware requirements. The MIC emerged more as a symptom of this as opposed to a structured and cohesive body. The MIC is more behavioural than legislated. Koistinen maintains that the MIC is also symptomatic of a United States where there has never been a significant peasant uprising or challenge to the leadership elite like there has in other industrial nations. This results in a sense of entitlement to power by this elite and entrenches imperialist behaviour. Hence in the 1950's the US built massive peace time military to police the world. Source (Koistinen 1980: 1-16)

2 The post Cold War phase could be thought of as the golden age of capitalism, when the collapse of the Soviet Union saw capitalism triumph over communism. Capitalism is amplified and extended in this period. Military siege thinking starts to look outmoded and capitalist strategy appears more stealthy and efficient. WWII represents a conflict between these two modes of operation each vying to be the predominant guiding force of the political machine.

3 Mirzoeff also talks about the emergence of the 'detain-and-deport' system ten years prior to 9-11 (Mirzoeff 2005:120), representing a convergence of liberal and far-right thinking. For the left this was used as a means to gain power (Tony Blair's New Labour taking over in the 1996 elections) while the far right maintains 'the unfailing belief in their own redemption'(Mirzoeff 2005:121). This explains Blair's alignment with George W. Bush in respect of WWII. The preemptive strike represents the state turning its back on the notion of needing to prove guilt, instead focusing on the need to protect itself from the other.

4 The acceleration of real time, the limit-acceleration of the speed of light, not only dispels geophysical extension, the 'life-size' character of the terrestrial globe, but ... dispels the importance of the local time of regions and ... nations (Virilio 2000:118).

5 Gordon Moore, co-founder of the Intel chip company, posited that chip speed and hence computational power doubles every 18 months. This is referred to as Moore's Law. Moore's Law has become a mechanism by which we measure technological progress as a whole.

6 Google earth (www.google.earth.com) is a full satellite image of the earth from space that the viewer can zoom in and out of, thus gaining a terrestrial view of one's situation.

7 This paragraph contains aspects of my seminar paper *In Response To On Looking Both Ways (and That Space between)* which was written and presented at Michaelis School of Fine Art in the 2005 seminar series, as an answer to the seminar paper *On Looking Both Ways (and That Space between)* by Lorraine Koury.

8 Rob van Kranenburg teaches theory at Post St Joost and EMMA (Ma Interaction Design) at the HKU, Hilversum, and Medialab Amsterdam.

9 South African Concise Oxford Dictionary

Synchronicity the simultaneous occurrence of events with no discernable causal connection 2 the state of being synchronous or synchronic.
(Kavanagh 2002: 1188)

Penguin English Dictionary

Synchronicity the coincidence in a person's life of two or more events which seem to be linked in significance but have no causal connection. (Allen 2004: 1425)

Wikipedia.org

Synchronicity is a word created by the Swiss psychologist Carl Jung to describe the alignment of "universal forces" with the life experiences of an individual. Jung believed that many experiences perceived as coincidences were not merely due to chance, but instead reflected the creation of an event or circumstance by the "coinciding" or alignment of such forces (www.wikipedia.org/wiki/synchronicity accessed 18-04-05)

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Planning Sketches

UNFORGIVEN.

OPENING SCENE SUNRISE.

00:13 - 01:00
 01:04 - 01:06
 00:33 - 00:36

01:10 - 01:20 - WYOMING SCENE
 01:38 - 01:40 - FRANKS IN WINDOW
 02:46 - 02:53 - NIGHT VILLAGE
 06:44 - 06:48 - VILLAGE SCENE DAY.
 12:45 - 12:47 - ROADWAY - 37 THRESHOLD
 13:14 - 13:20 - DISTANT RIVAL
 13:40 - 13:41 - RINGS FAST HORSE
 14:16 - 14:20 - RIDING OFF WITH
 16:31 - 16:35 - SHOOTING PRACTICE
 Rewatch.
 17:34 - 17:43 - OUTDOORS WITH A TREE.

18:06 - LIVE IN PASTURE WAY.
 18:32 - 18:34 - GET ON HORSE
 GOOD SCENES - 18:34 -
 Rewatch this too 20:46
 27:06

27:02 - 27:06.
 27:07 - 27:38 - RIDING.
 27:46 - 27:53 - FIRE AT NIGHT
 30:26 - 30:33 - TRAIN.
 32:28 - 32:40 - PHEASANT
 33:00 - 33:09 - WINDOW SCENE 2
 33:09 33:15 -
 33:32 - 33:40
 33:55 - 34:07 - INTO TOWN.
 34:10 - 34:20 - WINDOW SCENE ENDS
 37:20 - 37:28 - BARBERS SCENE
 (CONTINUITY.)

amount of bars.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64 65 66 67 68 69 70

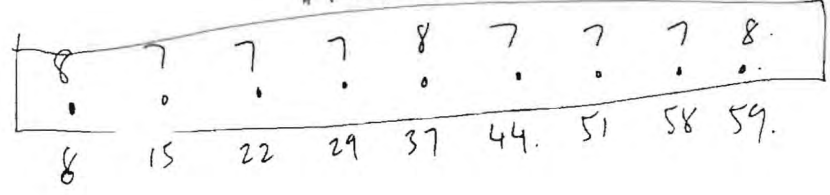
2,667 MIS 18
 2,667
 2,16
 2,16
 2,16
 6,48 = GOT 2.67

7,23
 1/2
 3:06 = Full.

2.657 per beat

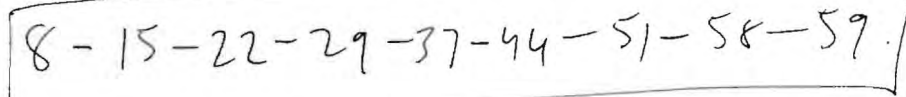
with suffice. Bar length
 in seconds. 3:04 = 69 BARS.
 Real memory. 2.6667
 2.66? 2.67

mathematical.

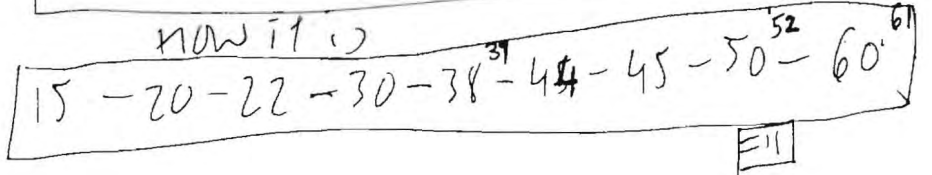


8 15 22 29 37 44

mathematical.



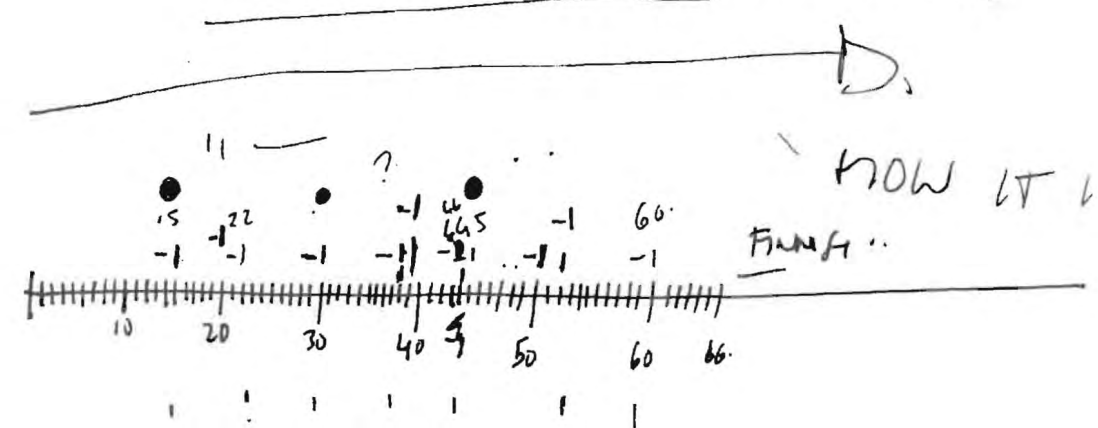
now it is



S.F.

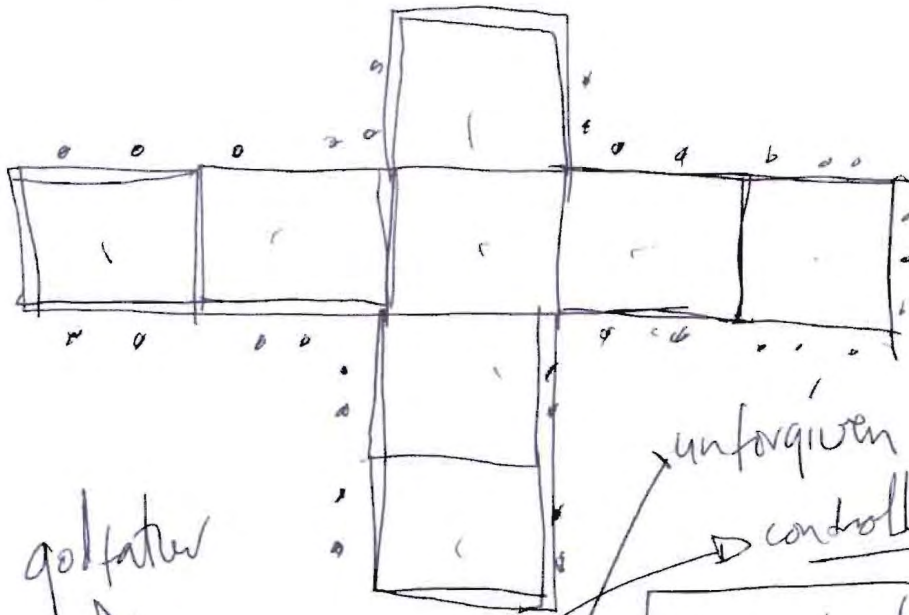


2 FRAMES LESS EVERY. 22 SECTIONS



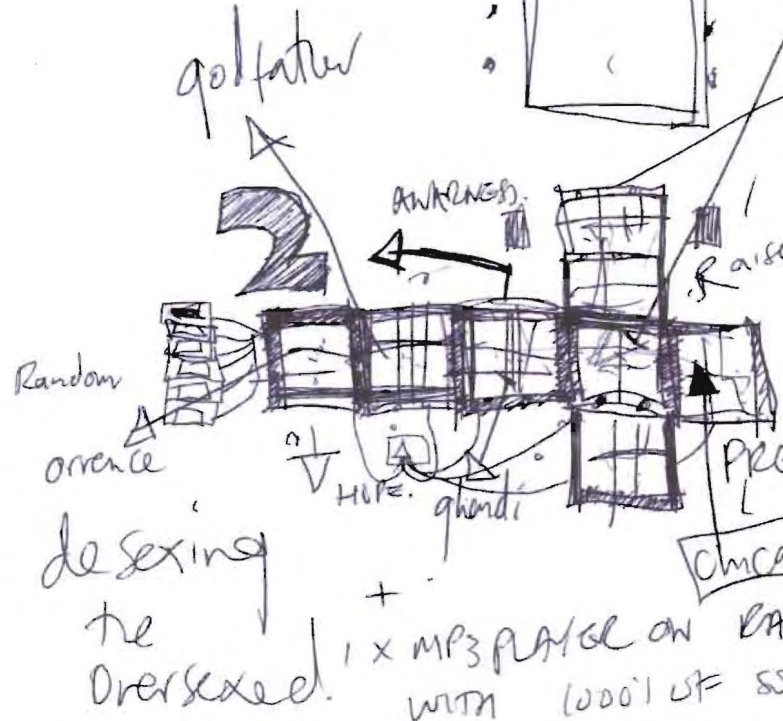
formalist Conceptual

generative remixed theatrical



unforgiven
controlled

it's an object
of strange
beauty

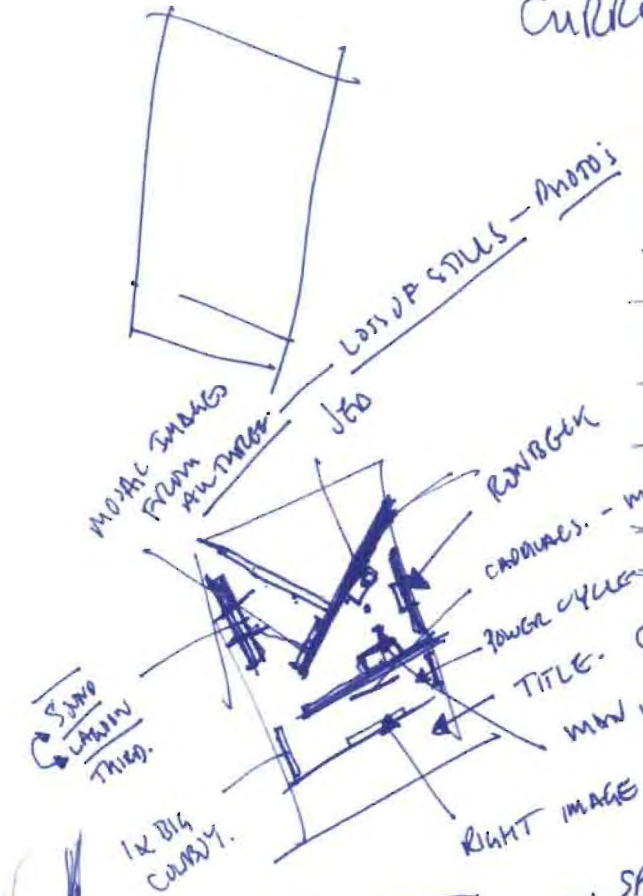


NOW
YOU
ARE
HERE
mechanical
random
properties

100 x 72 | RZ75-00 | 1 x 66 | 2249-00 | 1 x 50 | R219-00

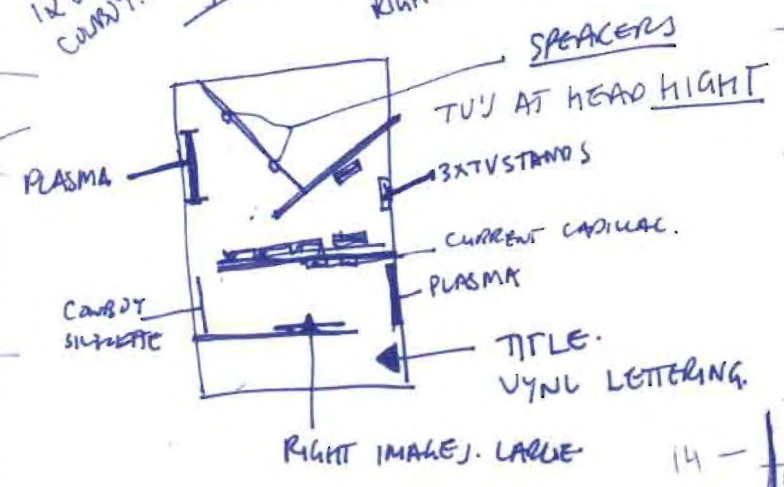
CIRQUE DU PAN

THE MAN WHO LOST
HIMSELF.
CURRENT



- LIST - equipment
- 2 x 42 inch Plasma + SPEAKERS? (1600)
 - 3 x 74cm TV'S + STANDS ??
 - X meter of Screens
 - 3 x 74cm TV STANDS - refer to NATHAN SUN PATRICK
 - 5 x DVD PLATES
 - POWER CABLES

- PRINTS
- RIGHT
- CADILLAC
- MAN WITHOUT SERIES
- SOUND LADDOON VAPORAL
- TEXT
- TITLE
- COWBY?



- VIDEO WORKS
- CADILLAC ✓ ON
 - RIGHT ✓ ON
 - COWBY ✓ ON
 - RANDOM ✓ ON
 - JED ✓ ON
 - MAN WITHOUT ✓ ON
 - SOUND ✓ ON
 - LADDOON ✓ ON
 - POPPINS ✓ ON
- 14 - R456.00
back them BY ASAP

