

2012

Embodied abstraction in cinema virtual prosthesis and forests of light

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EMBODIED ABSTRACTION IN CINEMA:
VIRTUAL PROSTHESIS AND FORESTS OF LIGHT

by

JON M. PEREZ

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Honors in the Major Program in Film
in the College of Arts and Humanities
and in The Burnett Honors College
at the University of Central Florida
Orlando, Florida

Spring Term 2012

Thesis Chair: Christopher Harris

ABSTRACT

Our impressions of this lifeworld are contingent upon our ability to see (in every conflicting meaning of the word). This paper reviews a body of scholars who often share disparate, “incompatible” ontological commitments in effort to examine how their ordering of concepts may reveal a deeper fluidity and permeability between all states of inquiry, creation and investigation into Being and Time. It begins with perspective, examining our subjective presence in the context of the camera apparatus and considers how the mirroring of mechanical instrumentation, namely the rotary shutter and optics of the camera has limited the true function of the cinema to a narrow, representational form. It considers the spiritual implications of the apparatus, exploring, regardless of what is filmed, what the method of inscription from still photos into motion means in regards to consciousness. The paper then investigates what the role of abstraction is in the context of a spiritually minded camera apparatus and attempts to reconcile Deluzian and phenomenological perspectives about film consciousness.

All of this is, after all, is in the conceptual support of the four channel video installation *Phase Space*. The paper does not seek to, or claim to apply readymade philosophical concepts to

cinema, rather it explicitly attempts to examine and discuss cinema on its own virtues and investigate how it can express itself as an experimental form of philosophy.

DEDICATION

For my mentor, Christopher Harris, for giving me the freedom to find my voice as an artist, you have my deepest and most sincere respect.

For my parents, Carlos and Toni Perez, my role models, for giving me the love and support to follow my heart wherever it might wander, you have my unconditional love and gratitude.

And for Piper Rae Patterson, my lighthouse, my muse, for always urging me to look further into the depths of my being; you are my greatest source of inspiration, you are my light.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my most sincere gratitude to all those who helped make my thesis possible. Thank you Jon Bowen, your guidance and support throughout this process has made my time at UCF Film the richest, most fulfilling time I've yet been lucky enough to be a part of. To my Professors, Ula Stöckl, Sam Rohdie, Lori Ingle, Mark Gerstein, Randy Finch and Lisa Mills, your minds, advice, and commitment to change have inspired me throughout this process. Thank you Edgar Jorge and Christopher Carullo, your friendship and unbridled passion for the cinema have opened up a world I never dreamed existed. To Kelly Astro and Denise Crisafi, your leadership and encouragement throughout this process helped bring my thesis to life. To my committee members, Christopher Harris, Stephen Schlow, and Dr. Bruce Janz, your constructive, unwavering support has empowered me to create something I am artistically and academically proud of. I am honored to share space on the same page as your distinguished names. I especially would like to thank my family, who has made it to every esoteric screening, read anything I ever wrote, and offered their unreserved love to me and asked nothing in return, this is for you.

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INTRODUCTION

In Phenomenology of Perception, Maurice Merleau-Ponty writes, “My body is the fabric into which all objects are woven, and it is, at least in relation to the perceived world, the general instrument of my comprehension.” (60) In my installation *Phase Space*, the viewer is positioned to enter into the virtual world of spirit imagination through visual abstraction. Once reached, the lifeworld evaporates, and the body, emancipated by the oscillation between abstraction and representation, reverberates with all of its being in a state of perfect fluidity between all other states of being. I propose then, a cinema likened less to the idea that perception reveals objects as a flashlight illuminates a dark room at night, but rather perception which is more akin to the photo taking process itself, where radiation, an expression of the very matter of things, is absorbed long enough to reveal itself to us in its pure form. The camera apparatus is a prosthetic for the virtual world we inhabit within the aesthetic dimension that liberates us from our quotidian experience. In order to enter this dimension, however, we must first recognize the domain of a limited perspective before we can free ourselves from it. Cinema, as it expresses itself as the differences between things, is a spiritual, emergent object. During the inalienable presence of projection, there exists no division between the viewing subject and the viewed object. The exchange of material between the differences of frames opens us to the dawn of ourselves. Cinema is consciousness.

THE REALM OF THE VISIONARY: SPIRITUAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE CAPTURE APPARATUS

Beginning with perspective, my interest is in the ecology of the optical experience itself.

According to Erwin Panofsky, the familiar optical perspective based on traditional Euclidean compositional logic and geometry disseminated as a result of a technological mirroring of the curvature of the human retina. This echoing of a biological mechanism into mechanical scopic technology for spatial recognition in the linear, three-dimensional world naturally became responsible for what we have been calling the “Renaissance perspective” in art. Furthermore, my interest is focused on the dissolving of boundaries limited by this perspective. The familiar “representational aspect” of the photographic image can be problematic. It reflects a teleological assumption of photography (and ultimately, of cinema), essentially conceding that the ontology of the photographic image is “supposed to be,” or worse, “had to be,” bounded and destined to remain limited to the perspective born out of a narrow anthropomorphic reality of existence. If there is any objective truth to be learned from the experience of cinema, it must also be true in the very form of the recording apparatus. The apparatus of the camera is, by all accounts, simply a precise assembly of mechanical and optical instrumentation. Jean-Louis Baudry in his essay, Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus elegantly describes it as a machine, which:

... carries out a certain mode of inscription characterized by marking, by the

recording of differences in light intensity (and wavelength for color) and of differences between frames. Fabricated on the model of the *camera obscura*, it permits the construction of an image analogous to the perspective projections developed during the Italian Renaissance. Of course the use of lenses of different focal lengths can alter the perspective of an image. But this much, at least, is clear in the history of cinema: it is the perspective constriction of the Renaissance, which originally served as model. (27)

Writing on the implications of Baudry's theory, Maureen Cheryn Turim notes that the perspectival image produced by the camera is "based on the principle of a fixed point, by reference to which the visualized objects are organized, and the perspectival image thus specifies the position the viewing subject must occupy." (8) Baudry calls this position, "the space of an ideal vision capable of fulfilling the idealist conception of the fullness and homogeneity of being which speaks to the camera acting as a machine working to create a transcendental subject." (10) Here, Baudry rejects the immaterial typological interpretations of film, which rely on generally problematic, but in certain cases, useful semiotic readings of the film surface in order to extract meaning codified by signs, signifiers, etc. This type of film theory assigns privilege to the body as a perceptual agent, but neglects the body of the apparatus as a perceptual agent. He writes: "And if the eye which moves is no longer fettered by a body, by the laws of matter and time, if

there are no more assignable limits to its displacement – conditions fulfilled by the possibilities of shooting and of film - the world will not only be constituted by this eye but for it.” (Baudry 30) The recording process, then, is a process of reflection in which visualized objects are translated and organized from three-dimensional scene space (the lifeworld) into two-dimensional screen space. Baudry adds, “... the optical construct appears to be truly the projection-reflection of a ‘virtual image’ whose hallucinatory reality it creates.” (28) From a realist, scientific perspective, a technology like film transforms our ability to understand the natural world. However, as Spencer Shaw observes, “...the danger of a non-phenomenological approach such as this is that it categorizes film experience as a non-intentional medium, silencing film’s voice, trivializing its aesthetic effect and effectively denying the aesthetic content of the technological artifact.” (35) The result of a strictly apparatus focused concept of cinema is that it creates a binary division between two opposing bodies, one technological and one human. More complete, is a positioning of cinema as an affect that is not separate from our bodies, but rather an extension. The camera apparatus is a prosthetic to the human body. It is a crystallization of the body extending outward into the unknown, taking full advantage of all of our preexisting faculties to understand or expand Being. The advent of cinema in regards to its technological preconditions is more than adequately accounted for historically, yet its mystical, which is to say, spiritual implications as a medium capable of something no other medium had

yet been capable of, is rarely the subject of academics or film historians. Based on, as Baudry observed, “ a certain mode of inscription characterized by marking, by the recording of differences in light intensity (and wavelength for color) and of differences between frames,” cinema offers yet another possibility of Being. It is in a pure Deleuzian sense, a consciousness that reaches far beyond the human, into something gaseous. It is an enzymatic catalyst, pushing us towards a phase transition of consciousness, where one form inexplicitly transforms into another, like the intensive change from liquid water into ice. The “peculiar carrying over of artistic objectivity into the domain of the phenomenal,” has the ability, according to Panofsky, to enter the domain of something utterly unique: “the realm of the visionary.” (72) Here, he says, “... the miraculous becomes a direct experience of the beholder, in that the supernatural events in a sense erupt into his own, apparently natural, visual space [...] it expands human consciousness into a vessel for the divine.” (72)

AN UNTUTORED VISION

Stan Brakhage's work radiates a singular recognition of perspective's potential as "a vessel for the divine." In Metaphors on Vision, he writes, "Imagine an eye unrulled by man-made laws of perspective, an eye unprejudiced by compositional logic, an eye which does not respond to the name of everything but which must know each object encountered in life through an adventure of perception." (1) For Deleuze, American experimental film of this nature "sought to express direct perception as it is in things, or in matter rather than be limited to the constraints of a disciplined and sensory-motor subjective vision." (Powell 103) Brakhage accomplished this by targeting the specific functions of the apparatus which serve the 19th century Western compositional perspective that he thought had strangled cinema. He writes, "... film, like America, has not been discovered yet, and mechanization, in the deepest possible sense of the word, traps both beyond measuring even chances [...] let film be. It is something...becoming." (2) Brakhage literally embodied the untutored cinema of his imagination by subverting perceptual conventions. He sought to remap the human body's topography by first confronting the body's connection with the apparatus. For Brakhage, the technical inscription of the cinematic image from the physical into the virtual reflects the final perceptual experience of the viewer, or as Panofsky put it, the "beholder:"

By deliberately spitting on the lens or wrecking its focal intention, one can

achieve the early stages of impressionism. One can make this prima donna heavy in performance of image movement by speeding up the motor, or one can break up movement, in a way that approaches a more direct inspiration of contemporary human eye perceptibility of movement, by slowing the motion while recording the image. One may hand hold the camera and inherit worlds of space. One may over-or-under-expose the film. One may use the filters of the world, fog, downpours, unbalanced lights, neons with neurotic color temperatures, glass which was never designed for a camera... (2)

Nevertheless, the transcription of the body into the virtual must be addressed in terms of our ability to perceive such a transcription in the first place. Here, Maurice Merleau-Ponty's ideas on phenomenology of perception are of particular importance.

ABSENCE AS PRESENCE

Even brief study of the history of philosophy would suggest that Gilles Deleuze's neo-materialism, and phenomenology like that of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, are mutually exclusive conceptual frameworks and are incompatible based on the striking differences of their ontological commitments. Deleuze even consistently criticized the modern phenomenological movement. (Shaw 20) Yet, both Deleuze and phenomenology are integral to understanding film consciousness as it relates to my installation. "Film consciousness pervades a spectrum, one end of which is phenomenology tending towards spiritualized matter, the other end of which we find an insistence on materialized spirit." (Shaw 32) "Phenomenological description does not argue in favor of a particular style or genre for cinema as social institution. It rather looks, in a presuppositionless way, at what filming would mean in order for it to be subsequently viewed cinematically." (Shaw 22) In addition, phenomenology usurps film theories concentrated on spectatorship that have dominated much of the academic criticism of cinema since the publication of Laura Mulvey's seminal essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" in 1975. Such theories explicitly divide the viewed object and the viewing subject, thus ensuring an incomplete understanding of cinema as an emergent, spiritual object. In Film Consciousness: From Phenomenology to Deleuze, Spencer Shaw writes:

Contrary to this dualism, phenomenology's immanent correlation of consciousness rather makes film experience reciprocally alive, eliding fixity. Film's phenomenological aesthetic takes shape as a metacritique, an intricate dialectic of a consciousness of consciousness and a perception of the perceived. This makes the film experience a subject-object correlation that switches back and forth like a fusing mirror, a Janus-face alternation between spatio-temporal awareness and spatio-temporal perspectives. Traditional ways of describing film spectatorship in terms of escapist identification or voyeurism are clearly not radical enough to understand spectatorship in the presuppositionless way demanded by phenomenology. (23)

Shaw indicates that, although Merleau-Ponty would seem to occupy an opposing camp to Deleuze, his idea of "non-individuated consciousness and subjectivity in terms of temporalization would resonate with him." (24) In Phenomenology of Perception, Merleau-Ponty writes:

We are saying that time is someone, or that temporal dimensions, in so far as they perpetually overlap, bear each other out and ever confine themselves to making explicit what was implied in each, being collectively expressive of that one single

explosion or thrust which is subjectivity itself. We must understand time as the subject and the subject as time. (422)

Shaw's aim is to reconcile Merleau-Ponty with Deleuze on the subject of Being and time, he writes, "The fusion of consciousness implies a (return) journey comprising a kind of visitation to where Being appears and a completion that involves absence and displacement before any return to self." (25) Merleau-Ponty understands this notion in the context of vision as an essence comprised of a presence through absence, "Vision is not a certain mode of thought or presence to self; it is the means given me for being absent from myself, for being present at the fission of being from the inside – the fission whose termination, and not before I come back to myself." (Merleau-Ponty, *Eye and Mind* 186) Shaw notes that, not unlike that of Deleuze, with Merleau-Ponty, if there is a sense of agency "it is not a causal one but one made up of a fluid and shifting force... The whole is made up of configurations sensitive to what happens in all the others, and knows them dynamically." (28) Most explicitly in regards to the sharing of concepts, Merleau-Ponty's emphasis on embodiment is contiguous with that of Deleuze. With respect to embodiment, self-presence locates expression not singularly in the mind, but in an earlier experience in concrete reality. Shaw continues, noting that this idea is a "...fundamental change of emphasis from the Cartesian position; prior giving of oneself to self via vision supersedes the transcendental vision of reflection on self." (25) In more general terms, Merleau-Ponty's

phenomenology is defined as the study of essences in that, “It tries to give a direct description of our experience as it is, without taking account of its psychological origin and causal explanations which the scientist [...] may be able to provide.” (preface) It is, “a philosophy for which the world is always ‘already there’ before reflection begins [...] and all its efforts are concentrated upon re-achieving a direct and primitive contact with the world, and endowing that contact with a philosophical status.” (preface) Writing on the ontological status of art in the conclusion of Difference and Repetition, Deleuze notes, “It [art] aesthetically reproduces the illusions and mystifications which make up the real essence of this civilization...” (293). Here, Deleuze articulates that the “real essence” of this civilization is in the reproduction of illusions and mystifications. However, he is quick to apprehend the danger in this reproduction, and sees a way out through the innate expressiveness of the virtual. The aesthetic dimension that art elicits is itself a virtual world. Not a world, in the sense that a world is made of language, and that our experience of it is an experience of symbols, signifiers, etc., but rather, a world the way a dream is a world: infinitely complex, and born out of, but always reflecting, non-human stimuli. It is in this sense, then, that the same way the brain is not simply reducible to the neurons that compose it, our experience of the virtual world is not simply reducible to the combinations of colors, rhythms, and forms that populate it, nor to the physiological mechanisms we have to experience them. Rather, the facticity of emergence itself is the medium of the aesthetic dimension. Our

sensory mechanisms are literal apparatuses for revealing the different virtual worlds we inhabit.

Even Deleuze refers to the virtual as a physical modality, that is, it is subject to the same type of discourse the physical body is subject to in terms of the corporeal networks: the nervous system, viscera, and musculature (DeLanda 193). “The virtual is fully real insofar as it is virtual.”

(Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 208) It is in this regard, then, that the act of making a film

(through the use of the camera as a prosthetic of the body) is homologous, that is, similar in

position but different in function, to the act of “seeing” a film. The cinema experience is

meaningful in this regard, as Vivian Sobchack writes, “not to the side of my body, but because of my body.” (60) In *Carnal Thoughts*, Sobchack introduces the neologism of the film viewer as a

“cinesthetic subject.” (68) The scientific term, coenesthesia, refers to a “... prelogical and nonhierarchical arrangement” seen mostly in young children who “experience a greater

horizontalization of the senses and consequently a greater capacity for cross-modal sensorial exchange than do adults.” (69) Merleau-Ponty adds, “synaesthetic perception is the rule.” (266)

This fluidity and permeability of the senses is heightened during the cinematic experience, that is,

it is accessed as a low intensity artifact of the more primitive experience. Similarly, Sobchack

posits that the “lived body (as both conscious subject and material object) provides the

(pre)logical premises, the foundational grounds, for the cinesthetic subject, who is constituted at

the movies as ambiguously located both “here” off-screen and “there” onscreen.” (72) Years

before, in The Aesthetics and Psychology of the Cinema Jean Mitry voiced a prototypical version of Sobchack's insight, "In the cinema I am simultaneously in this action and outside of it, in this space and out of this space. Having the power of ubiquity, I am everywhere and nowhere." (179) This state of images is what Deleuze calls the "gaseous image." It reaches a new perception entirely. "Camera-consciousness raises itself to a determination which is no longer formal or material, but genetic and differential. We have moved from a real to a genetic definition of perception." (85) Any ontology of cinema must contain a syntax that accounts for the movement of material through various dimensions. Inscribed into a two-dimensional image, material from the lifeworld passes a phase transition back into raw intensities of light, color and crystalizes (becomes embodied) into an image-object that passes yet another phase transition back into raw intensities of light and color, crystalizes once again in the human body, then passes through its final phase transition, sublimating into the imagination, the divine, or the spirit. This is what Deleuze means when he speaks of a gaseous state of perception. He continues, "... it is a pure vision of a non-human eye which would be in things. Universal variation, universal interaction (modulation) is what Cézanne had already called the world before man, 'dawn of ourselves,' 'iridescent chaos,' 'virginity of the world'." (84) Again, for Brakhage, this was possible by allowing "so-called hallucination to enter the realm of perception" through manipulation of the apparatus and visual abstraction. (2)

THE PRIMACY OF THE FELT MOMENT OF DIRECT EXPERIENCE

Knowledge gathered from a phenomenology of hallucination is integral to a phenomenology of cinematic perception. In other words, the faculties and mechanisms by which we experience a hallucination or a dream, are the same faculties and mechanisms by which we experience a film. That is, they occupy the same space within the aesthetic dimension. This explains why the memory of a film is aesthetically identical to the memory of a dream, or even the memory of a memory. These acts are explicitly low intensity versions of the original experiences in their pure form. As a cinesthetic subject, then, we are susceptible to all of the same experiential phenomena as we are in a dream, a memory, or a hallucination. It is insufficient to say, rather, it is not phenomenologically useful, to study the ways in which films can share the effects of hallucinogenic drugs, as Anna Powell does in parts of her book, Deleuze: Altered States and Film. Rather, it is more interesting to encounter the ways in which bodies orientate themselves in an “altered state,” or in say, the aesthetic dimension of cinema that provokes such altered states. The fundamental lesson of anthropology on the topic of shamanism or trance in general, is that above all, altered states of consciousness are boundary-dissolving acts that deterritorialize the strictures of language in consideration of pure, untutored perception, to show that we are others among others. In other words, that our unique perceptions are simply the crystallizations of one virtual possibility of being. Deleuze was aware of the perception altering

reality that hallucinogens have on neurological processes, and the capacity for external stimuli (i.e. the movement-image) to provoke fundamental perceptual changes. Anna Powell writes, "...cinema offers an aesthetic parallel in its capacity to expand mundane modes of perception and thought." (11) Merleau-Ponty offers a reduction, "If hallucinations are to be possible, it is necessary that consciousness should, at some moment, cease to know what it is doing, otherwise it would be conscious of constituting an illusion, and would not stand by it, so there would no longer be any illusion at all. (401) Merleau-Ponty's account of hallucinations is problematic insofar as it is concerned with the categorization of the perception in these altered states into fields of "real" and "not real." Here, Brakhage's words seem ever more pertinent, declaring us to allow hallucination "... to enter the realm of perception and to accept dream visions, day-dreams or night dreams, as you would so-called real." (2) It only appears as an illusion because it is abstracted from our regular experience in the lifeworld of three-dimensional space. He evokes Deleuze's notion that the "actual world," any world we have the ability to perceive, has the same ontological status regardless of how it is arrived at, or what spatial or temporal scale it assumes.

THE ILLUMINATED ROOM

My installation video, *Phase Space*, posits an idea of cinema that can only exist within the present tense, during the time of projection so that its experience by its subject exactly reflects its existence in the world. It is a sculptural object in the sense that it requires the subject's body to be actively present in its center in the flesh. Traditional sculpture has always been concerned with representing the body by explicitly making the body its subject. Instead, the installation considers the body in relation to other bodies (the film's body, other spectator's bodies). This creates a state of continuous transition and exchange. Its title, *Phase Space*, is an invocation of the mathematical concept of phase space, a way to represent all of the potential states a system might endure. On this subject, philosopher and Deleuze scholar Manuel Delanda states, "This set of states may be represented as a space of possibilities with as many dimensions as the system has degrees of freedom. (Halter) The present, and our ability to perceive it, is constituted on our understanding that the present is simply the difference between states. Baudry writes, "the projection operation (projector and screen) restore continuity of movement and the temporal dimension to the sequence of static images." He adds, "the relation between individual frames and the projection would resemble the relation between points and curve in geometry – the meaning effect produced does not depend only on the content of the images but also on the material procedures by which an illusion of continuity... is restored from discontinuous

elements.” (29) This observation echoes Deleuze’s thoughts on Henri Bergson discovering that duration is identical to consciousness. Concerning Bergson, Deleuze writes, “For, if the living being is a whole, therefore, comparable to the whole of the universe, this is not because it is a microcosm as closed as the whole is assumed to be, but, on the contrary, because it is open upon a world, and the world, the universe, is itself the Open. Whereby anything lives, there is open somewhere, a register in which time is being inscribed” (10) For Deleuze the Whole is precisely that which changes; it is the difference between states, and the repetition of those differences that explains the emergence of time. Meaning, the subtle, almost imperceptible differences expressed through duration is what makes the present the present. The image one can draw from all of this is a gaseous space of unlimited fluidity and permeability in which “... the sole cinematographic consciousness is not us, the spectator, nor the hero; it is the camera.” (10) The differences between its parts (each shot is itself a cut) are constantly reuniting into a whole once again through the material projection apparatus. A complete and sustainable image of a cinematic event must take into consideration the weight of its procedural implication. Deleuze writes, “Now, because Bergson only considered what happened in the apparatus (the homogenous abstract movement of the procession of images) he believed the cinema to be incapable of that which the apparatus is in fact most capable, eminently capable of: the movement image – that is, pure movement extracted from bodies or moving things. This is not an abstraction, but an

emancipation.” He continues, “it is because pure movement carries the elements of the set by dividing them up into fractions with different denominators – because it decomposes and recomposes the set – that it also relates to a fundamentally open whole, whose essence is contently to ‘become’ or to change, to endure; and vice versa” (23) In the same thought, Deleuze recalls Jean Epstein:

Epstein has most deeply and poetically extracted this nature of the shot as pure movement, comparing it to a cubist of simultaneity painting: all the surfaces are divided, truncated, decomposed, broken, as one imagines that they are in the thousand-faceted eyes of the insect – descriptive geometry whose canvas is the limit shot. Instead of submitting to perspective, this painter splits it, enters it... For the perspective of the outside he thus substitutes the *perspective of the inside*, a multiple perspective, shimmering, sinuous, variable and contractile, like the hair of a hygrometer. (23)

Gaining momentum in his seminal essay, Baudry muses, “To seize movement is to become movement, to follow a trajectory is to become trajectory, to choose a direction is to have the possibility of choosing one, to determine a meaning is to give oneself a meaning.” (30)

PHASE SPACE

In many ways, a film is a document of the image creator's body in geometric space during the inscription of the images. In that regard, everything he does, every breath is ultimately inscribed into the image of the virtual world. This is how the body first enters the virtual world: during the very moment of inscription with the camera apparatus of material from the lifeworld into the light-world. Therefore creation of images using the camera apparatus must be assessed in terms of its prioperceptive function as a virtual prosthetic (note the pervasive bodily allusions the camera has entertained throughout its history (i.e. the third eye, kino eye, etc.). For the installation, I'm focused on an investigation of the primacy of the felt moment of direct experience through the act of watching a series of four screens that trace a progression of abstraction through a walk in the forest, into the imagination. In Poetics of Space, Gaston Bachelard reminds us that in considering the imagination, the function of unreality is always to awaken, "the sleeping being lost in its automatism. The most insidious of these automatism, the automatism of language, ceases to function when we enter into the domain of pure sublimation."

(35) His use of the word sublimation is interesting in that it represents a unique iteration of a phase transition in which matter inexplicable skips the next logical phase, like dry ice transforming from a solid straight into gas, bypassing the liquid phase. The viewer steps into a space, surrounded by four suspended screens, as if the screens formed the four walls of a room.

This conception of the installation space comes from the desire to materialize the interplay between two key archaic dialogues: presence and absence and, fluidity and permeability. Here, the forest is the ideal model, ascending upward, and extending outward in all directions into what always seems like infinite space. Bachelard writes, “we do not have to be long in the woods to experience the always rather anxious impression of ‘going deeper and deeper’ into a limitless world.” (185) He adds that forests accumulate infinity within their own boundaries. The installation is an infinitely looped movement from representation into abstraction. It is elliptical in the sense that there is no single screen that represents the beginning of this movement. All images will be created the in the same way, that is, with slow shutter speeds and varying rapid bodily movement that will translate into excessive motion-blur. All screens are at once, both the beginning and end of the process of entering the imagination. The critical goal is to achieve a temporary meta-awareness of time and space, where the viewer may briefly walk around inside a world (a virtual world of abstraction and prosthetics, but a world nonetheless) the way a dreamer walks within a dream, where perception itself is not compartmentalized as some object belonging to alterity. Instead, instigated by strobing, rapid motion or other abstract visual techniques in one virtual world, the body reacts physiologically, entering an altered state (a virtual world of its own) and is subject to the same metaphysical questions that persist in the lifeworld. This effectively dissolves boundaries concerning where the aesthetic dimension begins, ends and the

liminal state of transition in between. Foregrounded is the question of how these same bodies respond to, or reject the “actual” perceptive models we construct, be they “virtual” or “natural.”

In order to accomplish this, the mode of inscription utilized for the film is abstraction through dilation, and the subsequent repetition of this action across every frame directly through manipulating the shutter of the camera apparatus. Most of the perceptive qualities associated with figurative or representational films can be reduced to the effects of specifically machined parts of the camera apparatus, namely the mechanical rotary shutter. Far more academic attention in regards to cinematic perception has focused on the movement between frames than the movement within frames. This movement within the frame happens before exhibition, and therefore is not often regarded as a component of cinematic perception. This movement within the frame is accounted for as exposure time per frame, and I argue that it has more of a capacitive potential to lead to time based abstraction than the movement between frames.

Meaning, this has far less to do with what is captured than how it is captured. By dilating the amount of exposure time within the frame, the natural faculties we have for visual apprehension of the lifeworld is challenged. Once the subtle threshold of our inability to recognize something figuratively, because of how it is assembled in time, is crossed, true abstraction occurs, opening our vision to a new encounter. Furthermore, the installation explicitly oscillates between representational forms and forms abstracted from their anthropomorphically informed optical

representation. Their pure form, is revealed somewhere in its ability to change, which is to say, in its difference, and the repetition of that difference. Foregrounding this further is the placement of the viewer within the center of the cinematic object. It is impossible to experience all screens simultaneously in our singular field of vision and limited perspective. In order to experience a different screen, the subject's body must physically re-orient itself in the installation space, mirroring the action that the camera undergoes within every frame. The viewer becomes present to one screen, while ensuring his absence from the others. Again, his consciousness of the experience is located between the shifting of perspectives. There is, at all times, presence and absence and the multiplicity of absence as a form of presence and visa versa. Finally, inside the installation space, the cinesthetic subject may experience new contacts with the world. Bachelard writes, "... each new contact with the cosmos renews our inner being, and that every new cosmos is open to us when we have freed ourselves from the ties of a former sensitivity." (206)

From its indiscriminate center, the luminous forests simultaneously extend outward and inward in all directions as the Spirit's prosthetic, its phantom limb, crystalizes and becomes sensitive to all things at once; it is, in the end, its light in extension, its absolute domain.

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