

Is/Land Life

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Is/Land Life

The Fluidity of Dislocation as an Experience of Transnational
Identity through Moving Images

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Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning, except where due acknowledgement is made in the acknowledgements.

Attestation of Authorship

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You are still and always will be my inspiration.
To my father I dedicate this work.
Volim te najviše.

ABSTRACT

Is/Land Life: The fluidity of dislocation as an experience of transnational identity through moving images

1.0 ABSTRACT

This research project concerns itself with a paradoxical experience of dislocation as a consistent experience of belonging through the increasing global phenomenon known as transnationalism. Central to this sense of non-belonging belonging are the temporal mediums of film and video. They are the key signifiers for locating my own familial connection to place through a family's process of archiving stories through moving image. The paradoxical nature of this project suggests that it is through movement (moving image, moving homes) that an ontological experience of being "situated" is discovered. The project questions whether others who experience dislocation (whether they be termed transnationals or not), experience also a sense of belonging through the mediums of the image archive — and further, how this experience becomes articulated through spatial installation practice.

This project employs or appropriates existing archival family moving-image footage that has been shot in various locations established as my 'home' at one time or another. It is layered with contemporary moving image footage to add a complexity around the question of location in relation to past, present and future situatedness. This work takes up the motif of the island as a topological and allegorical figure. It does so because three locations that establish my trajectory of home-life have been islands. Further, the Island acts allegorically as both a figure of ubiquity whereby islands are generally those spaces that signify floating lives, somehow resort/ing to a life disconnected from the proper flows of larger contemporary and continental progressive urban living. The Island for me becomes an establishing motif governed by water that surrounds it. Its milieu is water and in this sense the fluidity of this condition marks the paradoxical moment of my stability as consistency. This condition finds further currency through critical thinking such as Gilles Deleuze's notion of the fold and Giorgio Agamben's Extra-territoriality. Filmic practices such as Claire Denis and Philippe Grandrieux's sensate cinema provide another conversation of shifting borders for material participation with moving image. Artists, S. Neshat, Jonas Mekas, Christian Boltanski have concerns and conversations around home and displacement. And, it is H. Naficy that brings together the cinematic and exile as a theoretical question for transnationalism. Language becomes a key inscriptive device in the moving image installation, whereby there exists the hybrid and crypto language of Serbo-Croatian and English that give me my marker's identity.

INTRODUCTION

2.0 INTRODUCTION

Is/Land Life as suggested by the title, breaks borders of a secure identity based on land. Rather it brings land-living as the allegorical condition for security of home as origin into a fluctuating and fluid economy of displaced living. The exegesis introduces the reader to a range of critical conditions that mark out the projects fluid economies through an initial discussion on transnationalism. Transnationalism is a condition of displaced living to which I myself identify with, and through the moving image installation find an appeal to the spectator's own sense of displacement as another condition of finding 'place' through embodiment. Through a range of art and design practitioners — S. Neshat, Jonas Mekas, Christian Boltanski, Claire Denis and Philippe Grandrieux and critical philosophical theorist such as H. Naficy, M. Foucault, M. Heidegger, G. Agamben, G. Deleuze, L. Irigaray, J. Derrida, Rene Girard, Peter Weibel and E. Casey — the practice evolves as a contemporary discussion on other possible conditions for thinking about place and being in relation to the phenomena of moving image capture. These phenomena enable me to articulate and activate other possible ways of thinking about home from that of a secured place (origin) — which I propose has been inherited through Western Metaphysical thought. The project brings into being the material conditions of moving-image encounter that 'originated' from familial tactics of belonging through moving homes and moving archival footage. It is comforting for me that my legacy and understanding of identity comes through the practices of film-making that I have inherited through my father. Further, the project discusses how the use of archival footage becomes translated as a contemporary and living archive shifting away from nostalgic values that have commonly provided one with a sense of place. Rather, place becomes, through notions of extra-territorialism and indetermination (Agamben), the fold (Deleuze), supplement (Derrida), mimetic desire (Girard), fluidity (Irigaray), a transgressional (Foucault) border crossing element, where I come to situate myself and my viewers' in relation to an increasingly global phenomenon of displacement. That is to say, it is often today, through the use of new digital image capture media that those who are feeling a sense of displacement find their sense of belonging. And yet paradoxically, it is precisely this media which contributes to an increasing sense of displacedness based on notions of fixity and stasis. This kind of paradoxical encounter will be explored here as a way of making sense of the increase in a loss of historically and culturally (anthropologically) understood notions of place (akin to rootedness and fixity). Marc Augé's notion of supermodernity and non-place is something that addresses this increasingly ahistorical and acultural sense of place through his focus on particular sites such as supermarkets, airports, train-stations, malls, ATMs, (particularly places of transit). However, it is not his project that is taken up here, although, I am aware of his framing of our contemporary globalised phenomenon of displacement as supermodernity. The project found more currency in particular in the political philosophical work of Agamben and Deleuze. Further, Naficy's ideas on the cinematic with respect to exilic conditions, provides excellent territory for the crossings this project desires to make. The moving image archive is further discussed in terms of its manifestation or testimony to our contemporary urban lives as one of a more continuous state of displacement. Through the work of Giorgio Agamben we observe a new paradigm for urban living as one of displacement. His paradigmatic figure here is the refugee — a nominal figure that deconstructs the borders of proper citizenship. This gets folded into his notion of extra-territoriality as the transgression of borders and finding of indetermination as a new condition for belonging in the world. Deleuze's fold is a central concept for bringing into the project a concern with material imminence. It finds some eloquent originality in terms of a fluid economy that appropriately satisfies the practical work's articulation of material and supplementary embodiment as constituted through a dialogue between projection, surface, depth, superimposed spaces, temporal becoming (via past, present and future interlacements) and scaled and floating embodied states.

The filmic work of Claire Denis and Philippe Grandrieux brings about advancement on the notions of embodiment and materiality through their sensate cinema. Both provide openings for my treatment of image and space in relation to another conversation of cinema shifting from conventions of a viewer knowing through narrative drive to one of embodied sensate immediacy. Both practitioners are engaged with proximal encounter that undoes the distant gaze of a viewer where they gain mastery of the image (content) through comprehension of story and psychological know how. Rather, these (mastery) mechanisms are suspended for the experiential encounter of film's material condition and affect on our bodies. My aim is to remove the notion of viewer and bring in a more participatory spectator to the installation encounter. Their work is discussed in detail in relation to my practices and process that demarcate Part Two of this exegeis, with the former Part One as the mainstay of critical contextual material. *Is/Land Life* investigates and presents the complexities of both the singular (personal) and larger societal (community) implications of a transnational condition as that which re-locates place as a fluid, changing, material and immaterial form of embodiment. It does so specifically in relation to the moving-image archive and spatial design installation practice.

Part 1:

CRITICAL FRAMING

3.1 TRANSNATIONALISM

I've permanently lost a complete sense of centre. I can never call any place home. I will be forever in a state of in-between.

Quote by Shirin Neshat as cited in (Horsburgh, 2000)

The transnational condition is a well known phenomenon in contemporary urban living, produced through immigration, exile, refugee, asylum seeking etc., as well as states of permanent travel enabled by new technologies that allow one to work and live in mobile conditions. It has produced a significant condition of displacement, whereby the notion of citizen is becoming less understandable in today's world. This project explores the question of displacement as becoming more the norm, partially through the work of political philosopher Giorgio Agamben. Many people that are termed transnationals experience a type of in-between liminal floating sense with respect to identity. A condition that this project responds to personally. We are caught between a here and a there and are thus dislocated and left somewhere in the between — a liminal space. Today transnationalism has led to a floating/fluid economy where centrality is no longer the dominant condition for identity. In terms of this project, is a dialogue about my life, water becomes my marker (both allegorically and literally).

Shirin Neshat is a video installation artist and photographer who also responds to this notion of a lack of centrality to her life given her transnational status. Her work primarily is concerned with the notions of transnationalism, identity, displacement and memory discussing complex issues of social development with respect to contemporary Islamic women and their Islamic identity. Global forces have complicated the identity of Islamic women with respect to what it is to be a gendered and non-western subject. Western influences have complicated the situatedness of Islamic traditions thereby displacing some classic values. Further, with the rise of diverse educational systems Islamic women become exposed to other epistemes creating possible other lives that take them to other cultures and places. Regardless of whether they stay their entire lives in the place they were born or leave to live elsewhere, a transnational condition of displacement has its affect on their identity. While I am not Islamic, my life has encountered a range of culturally different values and ways of knowing. My identity as a women is something that finds similarity to Neshat's work but gender is not the question of this project — rather it is displacement in a more generalised sense.

Neshat's work *Soliloquy* (1999) tackles notions of self-identity, displacement and splitting of oneself. *Soliloquy* is comprised of two projections, one showing Neshat veiled walking through an unidentified city on one screen and on the other Neshat dressed much the same but walking through a traditional Eastern city based in Turkey. As you watch the screens you are faced with the piercing differences between the two, highlighting the condition of difference and living in a liminal zone between the two homes. At the end of the films there is a type of unity between the two through a synthesis of traditional Islamic and Western music — The end can only be summed up here as a coming together in the sense that the viewer becomes familiarised through a condition of being led through two varying landscapes. My project does not appeal to a synthetic moment across the "two" possible scapes set up in my installation. Rather, I appeal to something beyond synthesis that I describe later as an extra-territorialial experience.

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Figure 1: Shirin Neshat [Filmmaker]. (1999). *Soliloquy* [35mm film transferred to video].

Retrieved April 3, 2010, from: <http://www.cmoa.org/international/html/art/neshat.htm>

&

http://quotequotidian.blogspot.com/2009_01_01_archive.html

As my abstract suggests through the critical and material motif of water, the experience this project aims to articulate is one of situatedness through fluidity and change. Neshat's project in a sense does this too — whereby her figure is a central ground that somehow is displaced through a range of landscapes that start to superimpose themselves — they become interchangeable but, perhaps, another reading is that they become extra-territorialised.

Critical and Postcolonial theorist, H. Naficy's work is based on his study of exile with respect to the cinematic, with reference to Iranian immigrants in Los Angeles, who he terms exiled Iranians. He discusses that these exiles are permanently in a state of in-betweenness and create a split within their minds about their past and present home. He speaks of these people as having a constant longing for home but they are not able to assimilate to their new home through an inability of a type of assimilation process. This is problematic for identity that is secured by a notion of home as one originary place.

'All cultures are located in place and time. Exilic culture is located at the intersection and in interstices of other cultures. Exile discourse must therefore not only deal with the problem of location but also the continuing problematic of multiple locations.'

(Naficy, 1993, p.2)

It is interesting to note that Naficy's emphasis is on a problem with respect to multiple locations — my work tries to work through this problem with an embrace of difference that is not assimilable. Further, he describes a new world where people are no longer attached to any fixed identity. They are constantly changing, floating in between two places, which they may either locate themselves (uneasily) in forever, or eventually assimilate to their new environment.

'A process of perpetual becoming, involving separation from home, a period of liminality and in-betweeness that can be temporary or permanent, and incorporation into the dominant host country that can be partial or complete.'

(Naficy, 1993, p.9)

Naficy argues that an important quality of the exilic condition is fundamentally doubt about home, culture, tradition, reality and the self. Transnationals are permanently searching for something fixed, something that they can be sure of, a place they can call home. One would want to critique what a 'home' is and why human subjects have such a longing for belonging based on certainty. Certainly particular Croatian rituals and values imbue my life in New Zealand, and I realise that they are critical to a secure sense of my being. For someone like the existential phenomenological philosopher Martin Heidegger, human beings are the most uncanny creatures of all because primordially they are perennially homeless. His position is that we are thrown into this world toward an unknown future and the notion of 'home' is something we conceive as a result of our mortal status. Mortality, the fact that we are not permanently on earth and our life is in continuous flux given our temporal status, highlights both that we are homeless creatures and the manifestation of home is a construct that enables us to feel more permanent in our impermanent status (refer to Being and time: Heidegger, 1962). Naficy goes on to emphasise that an exiled condition heightens this impermanent status due to the knowledge that an exile is no longer at their originary home and will perceive that they never quite fit into their new locale. Ironically, if histories of Imperialism, Colonialism, Empire building etc. were reviewed, we would be reminded that place is always in a perpetual state of change and that even with those who have a more 'fixed' identity (through families existing in one place over a long period of time), are in fact produced through instability. Home for transnationals often becomes a place that is carried with them, which starts to manifest as a mobile construct. Naficy emphasises that exiles or transnationals construct a new home through memory and nostalgia in an attempt to mimic and represent a place where they feel they most belonged.

'Home is anyplace; it is temporary and it is moveable; it can be built, rebuilt, and carried in memory and by acts of imagination. Exiles locate themselves vis-a-vis their houses and homes synthetically and synecdochically.'

(Naficy, 1999, P.1984)

It is with these thoughts on being perennially homeless, home as a mobile and mimicked condition through imagination and memories that my work starts to take shape. As someone who identifies with the exilic condition of transnationalism, my identity has been most certain through the moving image apparatus and means. That is, moving image has been a significant means of continuity in my life through a family legacy of documenting family experiences. This archive and activity of family footage has been a strategy that my father has used in order to create a sense of stability in my life through the disruption of moving homes. These images were both helpful throughout dramatic periods of shift and now create stronger memories and histories. In this project, I have adopted my father's filmic strategy, partially given it is a familiar and familial tactic in terms of belonging and becoming, but also as a way of creating a dialogue between the person that I am today through the footage that hosts my memories. The project attempts to locate the viewer in a similar condition of fluid becoming and belonging through setting up a relation of disjunction and nostalgia through the material possibilities of moving image.

'In the cinema, too, we can find similar, if scarce, examples of losing one's orientational moorings in a vertically elongate and polyphonic space-time that conflates past and future in and with what becomes a vertiginous and all-consuming present.'

(Sobchack, 2004, p.26)

Throughout this project I have become more aware of how a sense of loss of secure ground is also a transgressive condition that is based on the vulnerability of borders. Borders on a map make up our global, continental, national, state, regional, city, suburb, street identity. However, as exilic conditions testify, home is an experiential state that transcends and transgresses fixed bordered identity. Identity becomes transgressional. Transgression here reveals the impossibility of having one fixed identity and deconstructs a privileged metaphysical value of centrality, fixity, certainty and essentialism as the privileged mode of being a subject in the world. No longer is the rational self-certain subject of Modernity valid, given the discussion above on transnationalism, home as a mobile entity and experience and the increase of displaced lives.

'Transgression is an action which involves the limit, that narrow zone of a line where it displays the flash of its passage, but perhaps also its entire trajectory, even its origin; it is likely that transgression has its entire space in the line it crosses.

(Foucault & Carrette, 1999, p.60)

As political philosopher Michel Foucault argues, transgression is something that overcomes limits and boundaries. The quote above suggests paradoxically that the transgression has an origin that is one of limit-crossing. This project has increasingly questioned the notion of the origin as that which can give me a deeper sense of security. In hearing Foucault's words, I have paradoxically realised that my origin is a condition made up of crossing borders. I could say that I was born in Croatia and that many of my family still exist there however, to return to this place as a place of origin does not take me back to where I was. Rather, the shifting border crossing experience has meant that every return to Croatia is a new crossing, a new encounter that builds up the locale into an extra-territorial state through the multi-layered experiences I bring to it — each time I return, Croatia becomes more complex and shifting. This has led me to perceive that the origin of place is never recoupable, only ever re-imaged.

As a child I lived in Croatia on an island named Hvar, moving to another island called Cyprus when I was four and at the age of six, I moved to New Zealand where I have been living ever since. My parents, however, have a much deeper history with Croatia than I, and yet it is through them that I have always had some type of Croatia with me. Like the other two Islands my life inhabited, New Zealand also has a sense of island economy with its physical removal from larger continental living — particularly for me, with respect to an intensity of my European heritage. Film-makers such as Terrence Malick have often appealed to the notion of a physical landscape as that which sculpts the psyche and being of its people. New Zealand is more than just physically removed from what for a long time has been described as the epicentres of western civilisation (Europe and America), but this physicality leaves a deep impression on the psyche of its people. The installation work inaugurates a sense of materiality that works across this notion of physical-psychic mapping of identity. It also works with mythic notions of belonging that manifest in the physical security of landmass. Rather the installation, as previously mentioned, works with a fluid economy where flux constitutes our sense of belonging (not longing). The viewer is to encounter this topological schema of an island that is simply not inhabitable or able to be reached. It plays with the desire for secure landings while remaining more secured in the bodily encounter of a jetty-like raft that sits between two projected surfaces. The jetty as a motif for launching or landing ashore is here dislocated from its 'origin', set adrift but locates the viewer as participant in the in-between shifting scenes of bodily staging. The body or material encounter is far more important here than the projecting of oneself into the illusory mythic projection. That is not to devalue the importance of the moving-image in my installation, as I have already stated it is key to my own tactics and identity formation. Rather, it is the frustration of one's desire that is created through the privileged means of viewing — thereby unsettling the metaphysical notions of essence (that for Plato would be in thinking/ mind and not in material worlds) and mind. This project does not entertain the binary splits of the Cartesian legacy.

This project attempts to answer the question of home – an otherwise state of becoming that emerges through the floating and fluidity of being between. In this sense, *Is/Land Life* investigates and presents the complexities of both the singular (personal) and larger societal implications of a transnational condition. It does so specifically in relation to the moving-image archive.

3.2 Archive

'Time is not a thing, thus nothing which is, and yet it remains constant in its passing away without being something temporal like the beings in time.'

(Heidegger, 1962)

Why do we record our lives? What is it about us as human beings that make us want to archive our lives and our children's lives? Is it the memories and sentimental value that this archival footage will hold for us in the future that makes it so special and significant for us? Do we archive our lives so that one day we will be able to reminisce over it all and in some way feel as if we are once again reliving the moments? These series of questions have evoked in me a deeper question around my identity in relation to the moving-image archive. Further, how has a familial archive – predominantly, a moving-image one – articulated a profound connection to transnational being? That is, is there an ontology of moving-image archival material (i.e. its coming into being) that is so much more available, prevalent and everyday in today's 'globalised' reality that coincides with an increasingly moving world? Part of my hypothesis here is to suggest there is. That is, today travel is no great voyage of discovery for new worlds but rather it is a constant everyday changing activity, whereby moving-image capture is becoming more compelling than the photographic still. I could suggest that there is something to be gleaned from the coincidental manifestation of moving images as popular archival material and the increasing movements of people that incorporate a spectral range from asylum seeker to corporate traveller. While this suggestion may stretch or contaminate the borders of the transnational concept, it does this only to update the conversation with respect to contemporary uses of moving-image (amateur) archival capture and a world, which people such as political philosopher Giorgio Agamben have observed as a new paradigm for urban living as one of displacement. His paradigmatic figure here is the refugee — a nominal figure that deconstructs the borders of proper citizenship.

'Political community. It is even possible that, if we want to be equal to the absolutely new tasks ahead, we will have to abandon decidedly, without reservation, the fundamental concepts through which we have so far represented the subjects of the political (Man, the Citizen and its rights, but also the sovereign people, the worker, and so forth) and build our political philosophy anew starting from the one and only figure of the refugee'

(Agamben, 2003, p.11).

'Only in a world in which the spaces of states have been thus perforated and to pologically deformed and in which the citizen has been able to recognize the refugee that he or she is- only in such a world is the political survival of humankind today thinkable'

(Agamben, 2003, p.12).

Here Agamben discusses the notion of the refugee not in a traditional sense but as he states, this concept of the refugee is something that is within all of us. He discusses that this is a conceptual state which he describes as a limit-concept that spatially does not correspond with "homogeneous national territories nor with their topographical sum, but would rather act on them by articulating and perforating them topologically ... where exterior and interior in-determine each other." (Agamben, 2003, P.10). We can start to see how he was influenced by Foucault's thinking of border-limit and transgression. He goes on to describe this relation of in-determination as 'extraterritoriality'. Here I align the notion of in-determination as something articulated in my spatial installation practice (which I will discuss later). Further, the term 'extraterritoriality' opens up my 'transnational' condition as that of constant floating dialogue between is/land states — one island (Hvar) borders topologically intersect with others (Cyprus, New Zealand). And, further as discussed in reference to Nushat's work linking to the discussion on my own return-state to Croatia as one of layering, place becomes more than it is knowable as it increasingly changes with each new inhabitation. In this sense, extraterritorial is particularly apt.

Where does my familial moving-image archival legacy come from? As mentioned earlier, my father has always been involved with films and has worked in television all his life, so this naturally led to his passion of directing films to overflow into his everyday life. Since my birth, it has been rare to find my father without a camera of some sort to capture the moment. This inevitably led to a considerable archive of my life. Further, this archive was used strategically within my family as a kind of anchor in relation to the ongoing experience of travel we encountered. In this sense the moving (image) archive became coincidental to time-travel, where every new locale encountered, familiarity was attained through viewing previous archival material. From an early age, places multiplied in one moment. In-determinate relations started to be encountered as I witnessed myself in more than one place and one time. This excess superimposition becomes witnessed in my own practice as I experiment with the affects of diffusion and overlay both spatially and temporally (something which will be clearer later when discussing my discrete practice). It is important to realise that my father's generation worked analogically and it was this specialist knowledge of film practice that he seamlessly used and intersected into the everyday family archive. This specialist knowledge has become much more commonplace since the inception of digital media as we witness the increasing array of home and travel amateur videos making their way across all types of social networking phenomena (TV; reality TV, internet sites i.e. YouTube, Facebook, blogs, art: performance works etc).

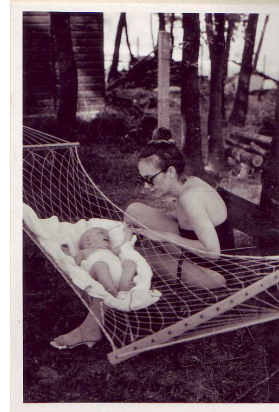
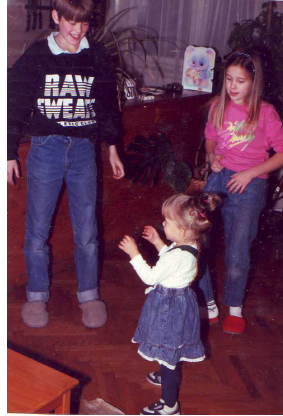


Figure 2: Sara Romano. *Archival footage (created by father)*, 1987 – 1997. Varied sizes, Film & Photographs.

Appropriating my family archival footage has been a strategic method for experimenting with this complex relation of non-belonging and belonging in relation to my being 'home' — a state of home that engages a complex spatio-temporal encounter of past, present and future where topologically, Agamben's extraterritorial notion speaks to the in-determinate bleeds of is/land encounter that articulates me. There is no linear conclusion here, nor discrete spatial horizon. Time and space are everywhere (extra) and nowhere — my connection to my past life and European home amalgamates with my present life in New Zealand. Place and home very rarely exist without memory. Home is something that is not necessarily physical but something rather imagined or re-membered, it is a place that exists almost completely in memory — and in this respect the archive becomes a living breathing memory distributing myself, where by the fixity or centrality of my being is not a valid notion. As I watch familiar footage now, I am taken away by the weight of memories and sentimental value they hold for me. This particular footage used in is/land life serves as an amazing emotional trigger for me in relation to the weight of memories. The project plays with the concept of weight in relation to that of floating or fluid trajectories as previously discussed. Weight is that which comes from nostalgia and pulls back to a state of origin as memories house loss and recovery. My work aims for these states of weight to be offset by the qualities of floating or limbo effects that are part of transnationalism. This offset could be viewed as a series of relations that manifest in the work across analogue and digital material. The digital moving-image footage is placed in the installation and comes through contemporary footage I have shot this year. One imagines, the difficulty for my father having to relocate his family more than once. Attached to this difficulty was the physical weight of analogue capture that made the practice of filmmaking (in comparison to digital) more cumbersome. However, this consideration of digital versus analogue is only a subtle register in the concerns of the project. It is an aside that helps to build consciousness around how new digital technologies of image capture contribute to an increasing and paradoxical condition of displacement and belonging as previously discussed.

Jonas Mekas is an artist I have been studying due to his work and research into the notions of the archive, memory and the transnational. Meka is an experimental filmmaker who uses footage of daily life and fragments of his past, present and future to create his films. He immerses his personal life into his films by using shots of his family, himself and moments in time putting his life on film.

'I'm a displaced person on my way home in search for my home, retracing bits of past, looking for some recognisable places of my past.'

Jonas Mekas quoted in a voiceover from
Reminiscences of a Journey to Lithuania: (Mekas, 1972).

Jonas Mekas has lived as a transnational, a displaced person between Lithuania and America, and thus his films reflect this longing of a stability created by a home once lost. *Reminiscences of a Journey of Lithuania* (1972) is a film that consists of three parts filled with notions of longing, memory, archive and the underlining notion of a transnational condition. The first part of the film depicts the first years of Mekas' life in America, the second depicts images of Mekas' family and friends after his return to Lithuania. It is all shot and seen through the eyes and memory of Mekas. The third part is in Manburg and Vienna also depicting certain memories Meka has created within his life.

All of the parts have been created through the use of archival and current footage to create a feeling and longing of home and longing of a life now lost, stability he once had. The way in which this film was constructed and experienced is through Mekas' memories. Instead of filming modern Lithuania as it is today he filmed what has remained the same, the Lithuania he knew as a child, the place that place that lives on in his memories such as his mothers earth stove, people, and certain images of the surrounding environment. Through the use of archival footage both physically and allegorically Mekas brings the past to the present and reveals a present that has changed the past. Two worlds come together to form a much more complex encounter of place. Both the past and present do not remain the same for the viewer or Mekas through his films. How could they? From my reading of the film it depicts Agamben's extra-territorialism, as superimpositioning that layers up our experience of Lithuania.

As he states (talking in reference to his film *Reminiscences of a Journey to Lithuania*, 1972), "you don't see how Lithuania is today: you see it only through the memories of a Displaced Person back home for the first time in twenty years." Mekas, J. (Interview 1971-72). He cleverly edits his films by letting his memory drive the work. Mekas does not necessarily use a chronological order to create his films but instead puts them together through the nature of his memory. Memories do not appear chronologically, they are unpredictable and fragmented, and they can appear and disappear at any time. Initially I intended to use in my installation work a certain piece of footage of myself as a young girl, set up in a studio setting (with "green" screen techniques), which seemed intuitive and arbitrary. But through considering memory, I came to realise that this footage was working over my sense of self today. The child I was then now inhabits my life today in a profound manner. At the time (although impossible to remember the authentic experience of this encounter) it was quite a different experience of identity formation. Memory from archival footage has become a significant method of editing and ordering that I have been using throughout my project finding more proximity to my identity than the mythos of remembering an originary moment.

'And what are those moments, what makes me choose those moments? I don't know. It's my whole past memory that makes me choose the moments that I film.'

Quote by Jonas Mekas about his work
Just Like a Shadow cited in (Mekas, J., 2000).

'The experience with time is direct but multifaceter; a succession of states that melt into one form. Related to this sense of time is the capacity to evoke memory, displacing a past in a present... Here nothing is fixed; all is only as construct. Here memory is a fiction of the present. The utilisation of codes that reside within objects to convey aspects of memory, are ultimately an audience's own memory as a fabricator of narratives.'

Quote by Zofia Slezziak cited in (Slezziak, Z., 2000).

The above states that installation and screen art is a spatial and temporal experience, it is a medium that plays with the viewer's mind through disorientating and constructing an experience of space and time that undoes constructs of identity based on linear and chronologically (synchronic) truthfulness. Through the viewer being left to uncover and identify through temporal-spatio art and design practices there is an ongoing changing un-static condition that mimicks truthful conditions of memory as linear — this is the medium's nature. However, through its systematic application of edit, cut, framing, scale, texture and other such formal properties, this medium becomes an embodied encounter through a disruption of linear comprehension. Rather than allowing the viewer the mythic and passive encounter of film states as natural reflections of our everyday teleological perceived lives (birth, living, death) — it works against this grain. Thus work like Mekas' and ideas from Slezziak operate by activating the viewer's archive with no stable or linear sense of time and space. The past activates the future and the future leads us back to the past.

Artist Christian Boltanski's artwork is haunted by issues of death, memory working with materials such as photographs and sentimental objects from his youth. His videos attempt to trigger past memories and feelings that create a sense of longing and loss from the viewer's experience through Boltanski's personalised constructions as well as the explicit memories on display from the artists' archives. He suggests: 'I am fundamentally convinced that the observer completes the work of art, I provide the stimulus, and the observer reacts in accordance with all of his past, his deepest experiences, turning it into something else.' Quote by Christian Boltanski cited in (Boltanski, C., 2006).

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

Figure 3: Christian Boltanski. (1990). *Reliquarie* [Photograph installation].
Retrieved April 15 2010, from:
<http://www.medienkunstnetz.de/artist/chistian-boltanski/biography/>

My own work attempts to perform a similar response on the viewer, partly through the self-referential archival material. To what degree I desire my viewer to feel a sense of longing and recall past memories will ultimately be over to them. However, I also construct their experience and the degree to which explicit reference to objects of nostalgia, off-set against what I have described above as a more ethereal and floating trigger points, should fundamentally perform more than just a notion of return that Boltanski's melancholic work engages. I do realise and am aware that I have to take into consideration that my own personal attachment to the images within my work, will not fully translate to others, but certain content that is in my personal archival footage such as the notion of a child playing with dolls may bring in some kind of universal nostalgia for childhood. Though the viewers memories of their childhood may either be good or bad through this kind of open and ambiguous reading of my archival footage, I do have to be careful and aware of how I treat this and what experiences at the end of the day I would like for the viewer. It is possible that by the time the final installation is realised the content of these images is stripped back and reformulated to construct a more open plane of potential belonging. Increasingly, my work is drawn to the relations of the foreground and background information. I draw the reader's attention to this consideration of grounds in a latter section named "Immaterial/Material".

3.3 MIMESIS AND APPROPRIATION (OR MIMESIS AND IDENTITY?)

'Nature creates similarities. One need only think of mimicry. The highest capacity for producing similarities, however, is man's. His gift of seeing resemblances is nothing other than a rudiment of the powerful compulsion in former times to become and behave like something else. Perhaps there is none of his higher functions in which his mimetic faculty does not play a decisive role.'

(Benjamin, Bullock, Jennings & Eiland, 1996, p.333)

Previously, I have drawn attention to Heidegger's idea that we are perennially homeless creatures and through making home a secure entity we repress our knowledge of mortality and change. Similarly, I have described that the film archive has been used in my life as a securing notion of place through my father's attempts at keeping alive past memories for future stability. Both situations suggest that human beings desire to see themselves reflected in the world around them. In this sense, mimesis (and appropriation) become important conditions for our sense of security in the world. Rene Girard and Jacques Derrida are two theorists with opposing views in terms of mimesis and yet, each has supplemented my work in individual ways.

'In the science of man and culture today there is unilateral swerve away, from anything that could be called mimicry, imitation, or mimesis. And yet there is nothing, or next to nothing, in human behaviour that is not learned, and all learning is based on imitation. If human beings suddenly ceased imitating, all forms of culture would vanish. Neurologists remind us frequently that the human brain is an enormous imitating machine. To develop a science of man it is necessary to compare human imitation with animal mimicry, and to specify the properly human modalities of mimetic behaviour, if they indeed exist.'

(Girard, 2003, p.7)

'Imitative desire is always the desire to be another.'

(Girard & Freccero, 1976, p.16)

Rene Girard argues that people do not just mimic spontaneously but that this action stems from a deep desire of filling the hollowness of not having an identity or a self and desiring certain things that they do not have that they perceive another has. We then see an object or something else that the *other* appears to have, Girard suggests that a type of substitution occurs in our own minds. We begin to take on the desires of the other and take on an identity, a similar identity of the "other" in attempt to fill our hollowness and lack of a self. This Rene Girard refers to as *Mimetic Desire*. This is the same school of thought from psychoanalysis that suggests via Jacques Lacan that desire comes from the place of the other and our identities are construed from the outside of that which can never be fulfilled — an insatiable desire to know what the other wants.

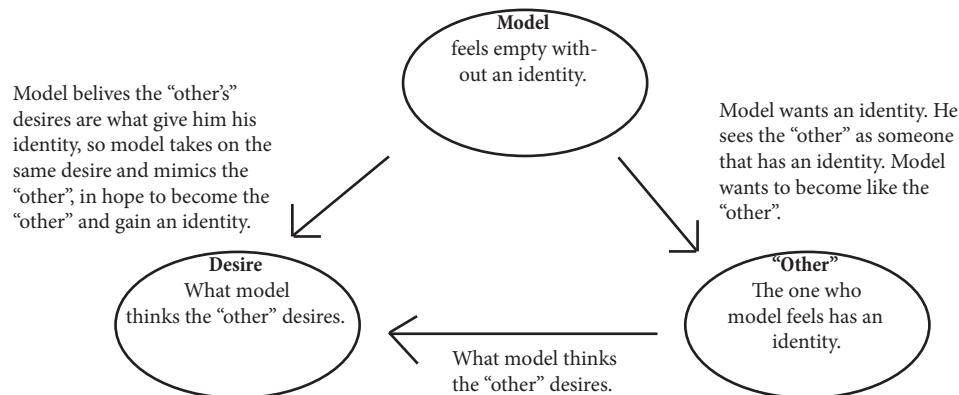
'I want you to know, Sancho, that the famous Amadis of Gaul was one of the most perfect knight errants. But what am I saying, one of the most perfect? I should say the only, the first, the unique, the master and lord of all those who existed in the world ... when a painter wants to become famous for his art he tries to imitate the originals of the best masters he knows ... In the same way Amadis was the pole, the star, the sun, for brave and amorous knights, and we others who fight under the banner of love and chivalry should imitate him. Thus, my friend Sancho, I reckon that whoever imitates him best will come closest to perfect chivalry.'

Don Quixote, cited (Girard & Freccero, 1976, p.1)

Here Girard uses an example by referring to the famous novel *Don Quixote* by Honoré Daumier (1868) to explain Mimetic Desire. Don Quixote does not have his own identity to begin with but he believes he can obtain this through mimicking the character in his fictional book Sir Gawain the Knight. Don Quixote idolises this Knight and sees someone with particular desires and an identity. As Don Quixote craves for an identity himself he decides to mimic this knight and take on his identity and desires, for example rescuing a damsel in distress, having a horse...

Through taking on the desires of the Knight, Don Quixote hopes he will feel as if he has an identity. Rene Girard does say that this can never happen as all the desire is mediated through the other – the Knight in this case and thus the identity and thing that makes Don Quixote whole is merely mimicked and borrowed instead of owned.

Figure 4: Sara Romano. *Diagram: Mimesis and Identity*. 2010



Appropriating my father's footage and installing it in my work has been a reflective attempt at questioning where I locate my identity. The primary footage of me as a child in a studio playing with two barbie dolls is interesting in many ways for the mimetic folds upon folds: a child mimics the actions of being with others through the use of dolls, she potentially mimics the mother, the studio asks her to mimic being a child playing with dolls for an advert, her father appropriates the footage for her to have as a reminder of her childhood that is ironically in a staged venue — an endless cycle of mimetic qualities evolve in the reading of this work. However, what is most interesting here for the project is that mimesis is an act of locating an identity that is based on otherness and therefore an impossible identity to recoup. We will never have a fixed sense of self because it comes from the place of the other. We will never know what the other's desire becomes as it is beyond comprehension. Through my own interrogation of this work, I have been able to find a sense of belonging through the impossible fixity of home that moves into a more complex state of indeterminacy.



Figure 5: Sara Romano, *Studio footage (Barbie Dolls)*, 1991. Film

3.4 MIMESIS AND THE ORIGINAL

Through an understanding of mimesis I have begun to grasp a better understanding of the myth of origin as fixed and recoupable. Gilles Deleuze discusses key contradicting versions of mimesis through concepts of the *naked/mechanical* and the clothed. The difference between the two, he suggests, is that the *naked/mechanical* concept is only theorised purely for the sake of argument as it begins a discussion between the original and the copy that desires to mimic it. *Naked/mechanical* repetition is supposed to refer to pure and absolute reproduction of an original. *Clothed* is something that manipulates, changes and adds to the original creating a difference within in labelling it as a copy and not the original as there would be no conception of the original if there was not potential for mimicry. The debate on mimetic faculties has been broadened today by advances in thinking mimicry as simulacrum. No longer do we consider the origin and copy model but rather only copies of copies exist whereby any given origin is no longer viable.

One such advancement is with respect to Derrida's notion of the supplement. The supplement is this strange essence that is without essentiality: it may not have always taken place. One is never certain of the origin as it is more likely to be another supplementary encounter of another. To be quite literal here we could think of a place such as Croatia as having not just one identity but rather multiple identities that have shaped it over time and space. My Croatia is not the Croatia of my forebears and the forebears before them who were never labelled Croatian. Where exactly is the origin of Croatia? Moreover specifically, it has never taken place: it is never present, here and now. If it were, it would not be what it is, a supplement. "Less than nothing and yet, to judge by its effects, much more than nothing. The supplement is neither a presence nor an absence. No ontology can think its operation". (Derrida, 1998, p.314). This is a complicated notion of time and space that is somehow outside of presence and absence and is most understandable through Derrida's notion of *différance* — a containing word that suggests time is always that of deferral and space of difference. Identity of any kind is only ever situated on the threshold of this deferral and difference. I am only me because I am not someone else (difference), and myself in the living present is always changing from one moment to the next. I am never the same as myself — I only exist now because of the past that makes up the condition of my projected future (deferral) and this present is forever shifting hence the myth of real time. Mimetic faculty inaugurates the manifestation of this complex identity that is always one of deferral and difference, supplementing our living for a recouping of a life on the move that is never the same at any one time/place.

Through my installation and moving-image practice mimesis, appropriation and archaic un-original footage create my living 'original' embodied archive. Derrida argues that mimesis or imitation is a *supplement*; it differs and is distinct from the original it has originated from. He uses an example of the repetitive qualities within writing as something that is not necessarily producing exact reproduction but something unique and new. Mimesis here becomes something unique within itself. Every copy that is not an exact or direct copy brings with it something that is original, something that Jacques Derrida refers to as the supplement, thus the supplement can be seen as something original and unique but absolutely irreducible — and this is the major critique of originality.

Deleuze also states that one can never go back to the original as it is unattainable through mimesis as the mimicked entity always differs through the subtle supplements added to it that create an entirely new entity. What we create must be an entirely new entity as the only reason we recognise it as a mimicked thing is because we are able to compare it and see the difference of what it is desiring to be: the original.

3.5 IS/LAND LIFE: A LOGIC OF FLUIDITY

'For dwelling-as-residing is not necessarily sedentary; not the literal absence of motion but finding a relatively stable place in the world is what matters in such dwelling. Such finding is possible even when in motion. The earth offers continual if sometimes uncomfortable accommodations as one moves across its surface. If human beings may peregrinate in place, so they may also dwell stably even as they move from place to place.'

(Casey, 1993, p.133)

Just as the physical body should not be reduced to merely a physical or literal thing, so too place should not, as Edward Casey argues. He divides the notions of place and space and argues that place comes first and is merely a physical location while space is the thing where all our perceptions and memories are located. So we are able to find stability in a constantly moving and changing environment. He gives an example of a dwelling within a moving condition:

'The various pre-positionings of architectural experience rejoin and reinforce the fundamental twofoldness of dwelling. On one hand, to move "around" a built place instead of entering it, to be "outside" it, to be constantly "between" (especially when taken to a nomadic extreme), is to dwell in a migratory, unsettled sense in which displacement is much more evident than emplacement, homelessness than habitation.'

(Casey, 1993, p.132)

As previously highlighted, this project aims at an articulation of experience as fluid and transitory through the coincidental framing of moving home and moving image. At the heart of this is the desire to deconstruct the notion of belonging as coincidental to fixity. The notion of the Island is something that is more than just a nominal topographical figure coincidental to three significant geographies that have located my 'home'. Rather, in its allegorical (tropological) conceptualising this figure becomes the topological paradigmatic trope for transnational dispersed in-determinate existence. The logic of this 'ground' (topos) is a place of fluidity activated by the material substance of 'water' as an allegorical undoing of place as a stable substance. As arbitrary as lines drawn on a map that somehow have actualised places into notions of globe, continent, nation, state, region, city, suburb, street, home, water is not a material where lines are so easily drawn. For example, in my research I came across a discussion from a legal perspective around what happens when new land-masses occur that are not previously on the legislative map? What would happen if a new volcano emerged from the sea? Who would 'own' this property? What happens in natural disasters where homes are moved from their original boundaries? This starts to suggest that my investigation is beyond an argument of ownership or origin. However, the law states that if anything that moves beyond its proper borders then it no longer belongs to its origin. If your home moves and slides into a neighbour's property by law the home belongs to the neighbour. This is just one obvious example that places value on stasis with very little room to move. Property, ownership, origin and home are something fixed according to this pervasive Western logic.

To encounter an island one usually encounters it from the perspective of the water. Here the water becomes a new horizon of possibility for movement and encounter that topographically deconstructs the privilege of stability. Luce Irigaray (feminist, psychoanalyst) has developed her theories on fluidity as a deconstruction of masculinist privileging of fixity. In spatial design, the discipline of architecture has often been discussed in light of its patriarchal origins and metaphysical values of stability, certainty, rationality and correctness. Irigaray will allegorically bring in the sexual organs of man and woman as a theoretical underpinning to her arguments. American feminist, Katherine Hayles, summarizes Irigaray's argument from her essay on fluid mechanics as follows:

The privileging of solid over fluid mechanics, and indeed the inability of science to deal with turbulent flow at all, she attributes to the association of fluidity with femininity. Whereas men have sex organs that protrude and become rigid, women have openings that leak menstrual blood and vaginal fluids. Although men, too, flow on occasion -- when semen is emitted, for example -- this aspect of their sexuality is not emphasized. It is the rigidity of the male organ that counts, not its complicity in fluid flow. These idealizations are reinscribed in mathematics, which conceives of fluids as laminated planes and other modified solid forms. In the same way that women are erased within masculinist theories and language, existing only as not-men, so fluids have been erased from science, existing only as not-solids. From this perspective it is no wonder that science has not been able to arrive at a successful model for turbulence. The problem of turbulent flow cannot be solved because the conceptions of fluids (and of women) have been formulated so as necessarily to leave unarticulated remainders.

(Hayles, 1991, p.17)

These unarticulated remainders, productive of turbulent flow, encapsulate the chaos of water — the most dominant material environment for island existence. Turbulence for island life is a mainstay — arrival and departure in relation to island living is tantamount to conditions of flow. While my project does not frame the problem of transnationalism and displacement in terms of sexual difference, it does find coincidentally the bias and binary privileging of fixity or rigidity over fluidity and change. Perhaps secreted within my work another might read the significance of sexual difference as this is the potentiality of fluidity.

But is it possible to talk about fluidity without some notion of fixity? Wouldn't the two conditions be inextricably linked? According to Gilles Deleuze's theories on the fold, these conditions are co-existing. For example, in a particular section of his seminal text on the fold, the fold: Leibniz and the baroque Deleuze discusses the relation between the atomistic hypothesis of an absolute hardness and the Cartesian hypothesis of an absolute fluidity. Fluidity is that which is absent from coherence or cohesion and further, according to his reading of Leibniz, two really distinct categories such as absolute fluidity and absolute hardness are inseparable:

'Thus, it must be stated that a body has a degree of hardness as well as degree of fluidity, or that is essentially elastic, the elastic force of all bodies being the expression of the active compressive force exerted in matter. When a boat reaches a certain speed a wave becomes hard as a wall of marble.'

(Deleuze, 2006, p.6)

These coherent parts form a fold and further, they are not separate any longer but divide into infinity in smaller and smaller folds that always retain some kind of cohesive formation or connectivity. Is/land living, which stands in here as the metonymic condition for transnationalism, becomes this topological trope productive of many spatio and temporal folds. Infinite folds that condition a networked existence that are not only coherently static according to a place of origin one calls home. Home in this context a wave formation that refracts, swells and hardens against the edges of topos — these waves infinitely hold together the conditions of the land and vice versa.

'Fold of winds, of water, of fire and earth, and subterranean folds of veins of ore in a mine, in a system of complex interactions, the solid pleats of 'natural geography' refer to the effect first of fire, and then of water and winds on the earth; and the veins of metal in mines resemble the curves of conical forms, sometimes ending in a circle or an ellipse, sometimes stretching into a hyperbola or a parabola.'

(Deleuze, 2006, p. 6-7)

Deleuze's fold is often cited in the simple example of a fold of paper resembling the work of Japanese 'origami'. My project aims to articulate these multiplying folds through the concepts I have discussed so far termed as: extraterritoriality, diffuseness, in-determination, fluidity and floating affects in relation to the immaterial reality of moving-image. Rather than paper, my medium is that which is often described as non-absolute and unstable.

Throughout my life there has been a reoccurring theme of the Island, it is both a topological and allegorical figure. As mentioned earlier, I have spent all my life living on three different islands; Hvar, Cyprus and New Zealand; it is something that has created a stability and instability for me at the same time. By moving to these islands I have in some sense lost my stability of what home feels like as the islands have qualities in them that are constantly changing and unfamiliar. An island represents something not connected physically due to its separation from other land and because of its constant floating and shifting condition, but it is also disconnected allegorically due to its separation from larger contemporary living.



Figure 6: Sara Romano. *Island*, 2010. 3 x 16:9, Video Installation.

At the same time an interesting occurrence and connection in my life is the established motif of an island which gave me some stability through mimesis, appropriation and replication of the original island (Hvar) that I called home. The notion of an Island becomes even more interesting when you become conscious that it is governed by water, water is its milieu which in itself represents the paradoxical nature of an island's stability and instability. The fluid condition of the water surrounding the island creates a moment of paradox as it creates stability with its consistency.

'Is it possible to find a dwelling, a place within the world, while moving across it? We are fixated with property claims and the possibility of embedding ourselves and of finding our identity in our surroundings. But if identity itself is fluid, the identity of place as much as that of ourselves, is it not natural to be in a constant state of movement rather than standing still? In a world of global exchange, perhaps we are all of us always moving.'

(Casey, 1993, p.149)

In this day and age we live as permanent transnationals both physically and allegorically. We are always being scattered and destabilised throughout place due to photography, the digital image and technology in general but also due to our self reflective, reminiscing nature and memory. Edward Casey argues that even though we may not find a dwelling and stable condition physically, as we have become constantly moving beings, we have come to know this constant movement and fluidity paradoxically as our home.

Part 2:

METHODS: PROCESSES AND PRACTICES

4.1 INTRODUCTION: MOVING IMAGES: FILM AND VIDEO ART - AN IMMATERIAL AND UNSTABLE MEANS

We can ask ourselves the question of why it is precisely art that is trying to avoid the influence and changes manifesting within our society. We can also wonder why precisely art is tenaciously trying to hold on to concepts, values and standards which date back to before the industrial revolution and were developed in a society based on a static image of the world, a society which by nature denies the essence of media art, because this kind of art is dynamic, immaterial and non-absolute, in contrast to the traditional forms of art, such as painting, graphic art and sculpture.

Artist/philosopher Peter Weibel wrote about this in his essay *Transformationen der Techno-Ästhetik* (Digitaler Schein, Suhrkamp, 1991) retrieved from (V2., 2006).

Peter Weibel alerts us to a contemporary conversation with respect to art, aesthetics and new media art and design practices. In a discussion of how the static is still a priority of the gallery aesthetic of art, where the elite ground for art practices is housed, there exists a lack of theorization and critique of contemporary culture as one that is inhabited by immaterial and ethereal conditions due to the affects of digital media. While it is obvious that more and more temporal art and design practices inhabit both the galleries and wider everyday environs, the values installed in what is contemporary aesthetic practices is still lodged within some traditions of art as absolute. My practice does not bring into dialogue much of a contemporary discussion on the politics of these art practices but rather coincides itself with a practice that critiques what is to have a proper home. If the proper notion of art still resides in the galleries and notions of absoluteness, then this coincides with the absolute concept of a home as something that is measurable, knowable, fixed and unshifting. Art has the opportunity to move and embrace the ephemeral nature of living. Weibel's critique goes on to suggest that traditional art has no movement within itself and is controlled by the authorial agency, which neglects currents in our ever-changing, developing and dynamic society and nature, a fluid condition. Is he suggesting that art is still caught up in notions of authorial intent and originality? I think the art world has come further than this, but I also perceive that these concepts are still deeply entrenched in our perceptions of the world. It is not that they should disappear but rather an ongoing critique of these concepts remains at the forefront of contemporary debate — whatever shape or form these contestations may take. New Media art has the potentiality for enabling the viewer to co-determine the end result of the work itself, bringing emphasis to the unstable shifting components and ever-changing manifestations of human existence today — art practices become fluid and interactive experiential encounters. Thus interactive art can never abide by the same guidelines or perceptions of traditional art as being an ultimate truth, absolute and definitive entity — something static.

4.2 EXTRATERRITORIALITY (IN-DETERMINATION)

'In the cinematic too, we can find similar, if scarce, examples of losing one's oriental moorings in a vertically elongated and polyphonic space- time that collapses and conflates past and future in and with what becomes a vertiginous and all-consuming present.'

(Sobchack, 2004, p. 26)

Vivian Sobchack's quote alludes to a compression of time and space with respect to the moving image medium. As discussed earlier with respect to the archival footage, my working methods have employed appropriated footage alongside newly shot footage to explore what I have earlier described as the phenomenon of extra-territorialism (noted by Agamben). Through a series of experimentations that bring questions of space and time into proximity, different levels and depths of encounter are realised. For example, extra spaces are created through the manipulation of the projected image, nominated footage in relation to other physical objects within the site. Everyday objects that adorn the studio space, have in a ready-to-hand and arbitrary way been explored for what extra-territorial casting of space and time that they create. For instance, studio chairs were engaged, like vigilant sentient beings to bring into proximity an imagined relation of viewer to the work. The chair was important for projecting into the scene of the installation a body: an anybody as the ultimate spectator with no fixed identity. To me the chair became the transnational character per se. Further, relating the chair to qualities of projection, light, scale and composition, it provided further evidence of a dialogue between the two key images: one the old footage that I described of me as a child in a "green" screen studio set up and the other, new footage I shot of an unidentified island border (foreshore). There is an obvious graphic and literal conversation with the footage in the studio setting as I am seated on a chair, however, the studio chair is so banal in comparison it looks abandoned in comparison. Nostalgia inhabited the image from interaction with the three-dimensional object-chair. In relation to the island border/foreshore footage the chair finds a home in that which is uninhabitable, unattainable, but forever watched (by the viewer). This notion of the impossible launch was alluded to when I discussed the jetty earlier, but is also developed more at length in the following section 'Immaterial/Material'. Lastly, by playing with everyday objects that intervened with the image through their shadow play, I was able to discern how extra-territorial spaces were conceived through ethereal and immaterial layering. The concept of extraterritorialism is key to this work as I am suggesting that exilic, transnational and displaced living is characteristic of excess. An excess from the superimposition of borders that construe different perceptions of space and place. Perceptions that go beyond the official versions of place conceived in cartographical naming, mapping, and claiming. Agamben's paradigmatic figure of the refugee as the new condition of urban living contests such border control and rather opens up our lives to hybrid and indeterminate borders. The formal condition of superimposition through layering up images, objects, spaces, and time is a key tactic to express this contemporary state of indeterminacy. The superimposition of images produces diffusive affects onto the viewer, now participant, where depth and surface become ambiguous and disorientating.

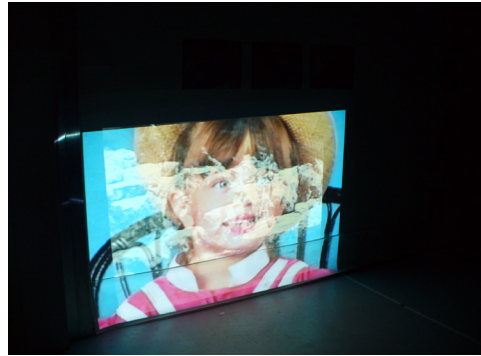
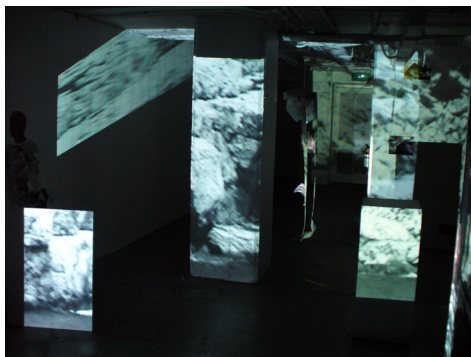
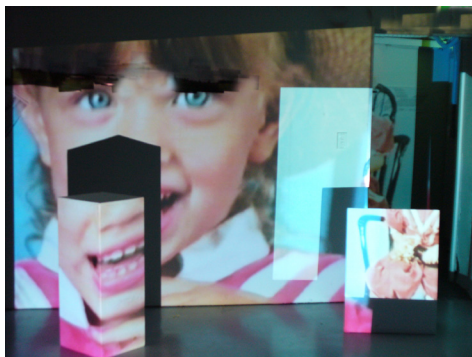
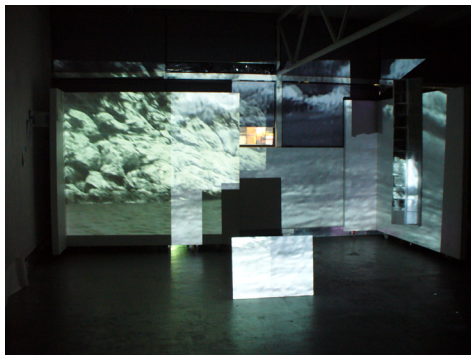


Figure 7: Sara Romano. *Now and Then*, 2010. 4:3, Multiple videos and projections.



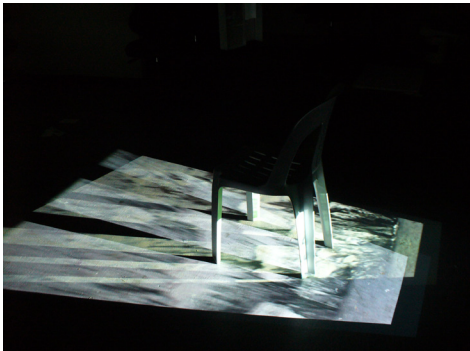
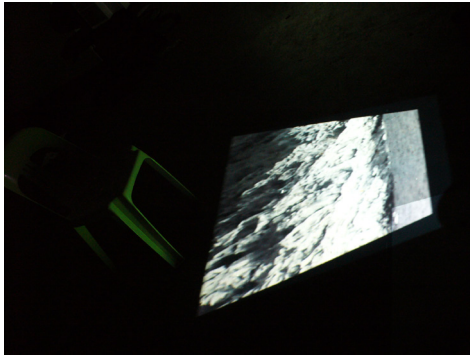


Figure 8: Sara Romano. *Untitled*, 2010.
Varied, Multiple Video Installations.

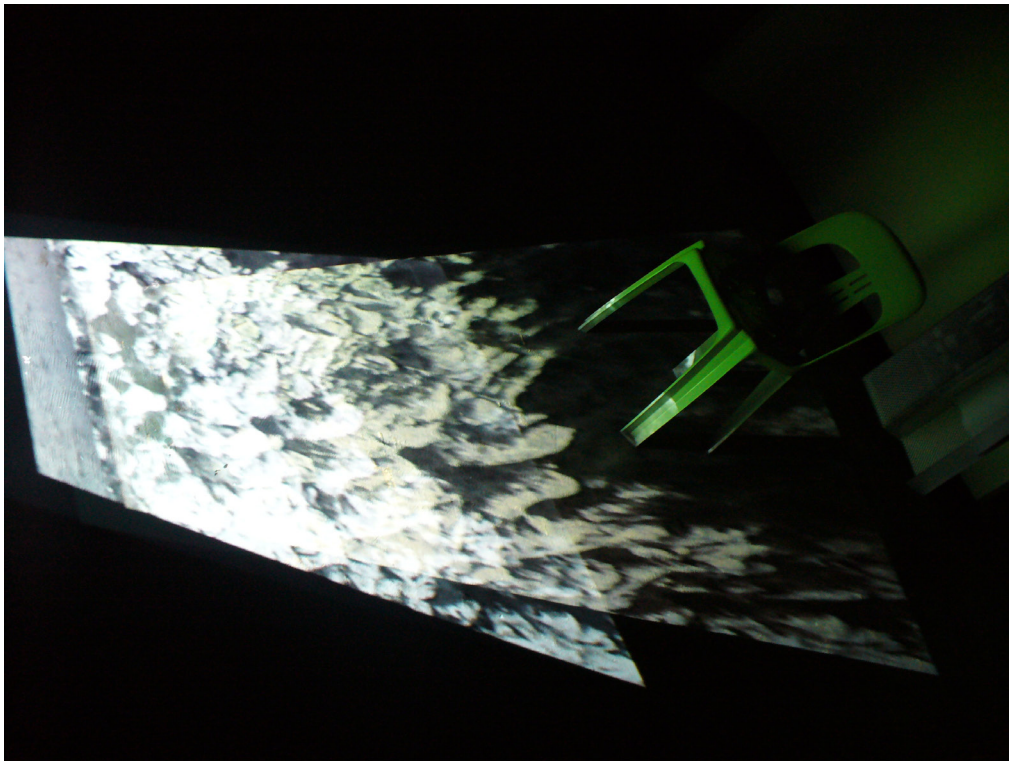


Figure 9: Sara Romano. *Chair #1*, 2010. Varied, Video Installation.



Figure 10: Sara Romano. *Chair #2*, 2010. Varied, Video Installation.

Figure 11: Sara Romano. *Chair #3*, 2010.
Varied, Video Installation.

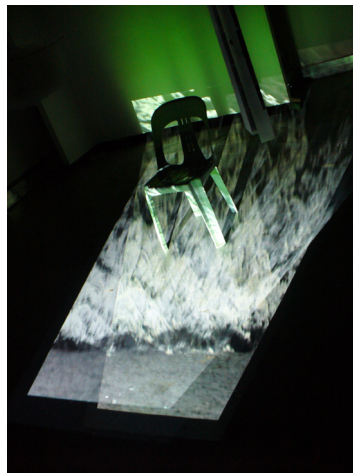
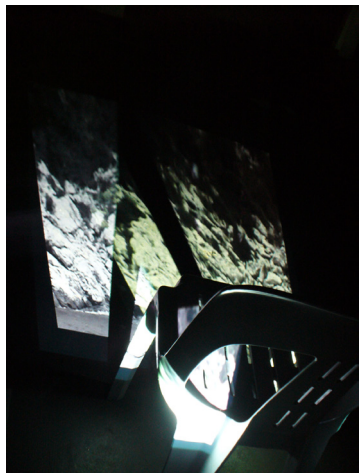
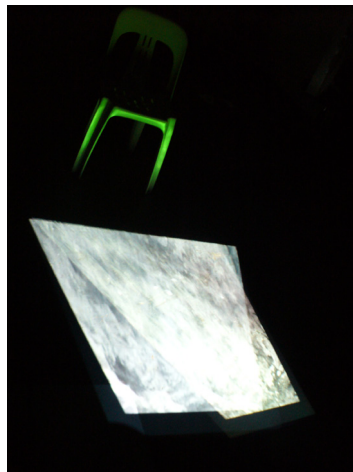




Figure 12: Sara Romano. *Chair #4*, 2010. Varied, Video Installation.

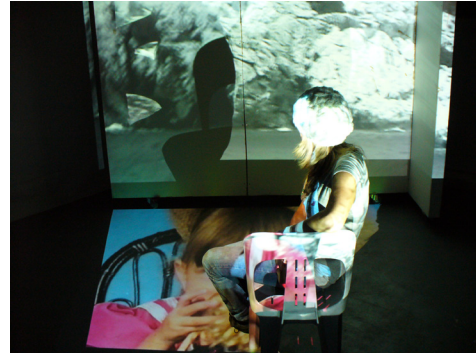
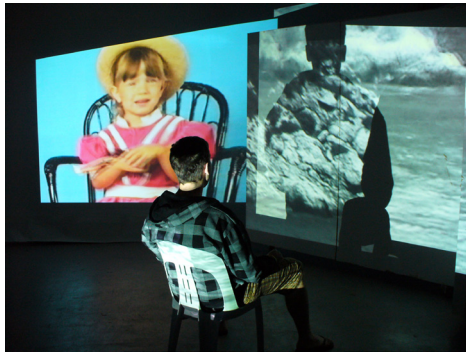
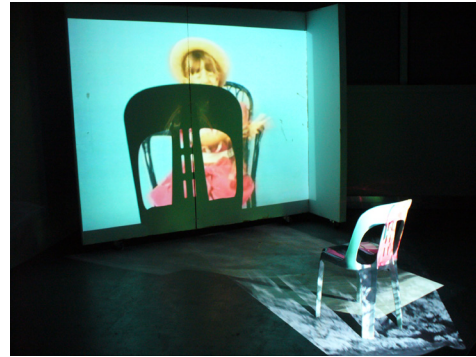
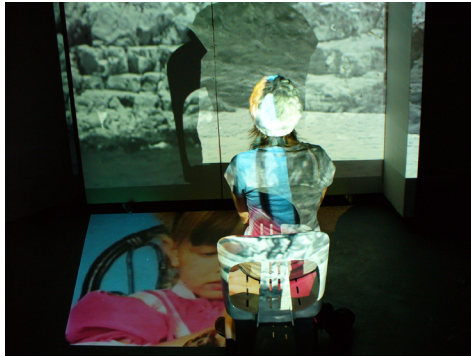


Figure 13: Sara Romano. *Chair #5*, 2010. Varied, Video Installation.



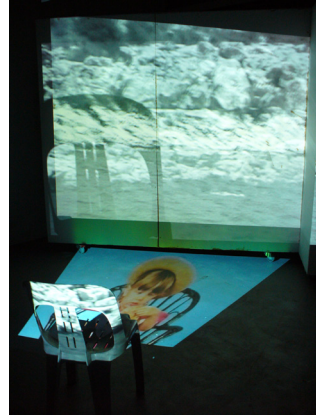
Figure 14: Sara Romano. *Chair #6*, 2010. Varied, Video Installation.



Figure 15: Sara Romano. *Chair #7*, 2010. Varied, Video Installation.



Figure 16: Sara Romano. *Chair #8*, 2010. Varied, Video Installation.



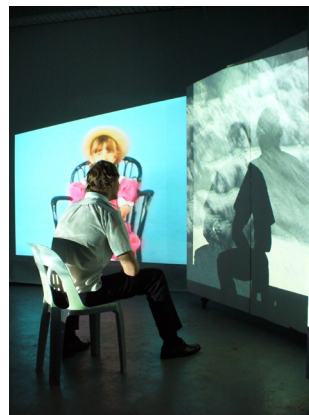


Figure 17: Sara Romano. *Chair #9*, 2010. Varied, Video Installation.

I have wanted to address the issues of proximity to the screen and space for the viewer/participant, of past and present; these layering effects led me to an exploration of projecting onto actual three dimensional surfaces — the chair has been discussed, yet many other objects became part of these experimentations such as polystyrene plynth like forms —perhaps conceptually suggesting something of Sobchack's "vertically elongated and poly[morphic]phonic" space-time conditions — were partly literally figures for a response to wave formations. Given, the fluid economy I have been discussing, the plurality of the wave evolved as an epitome of Deleuze's folding concept — that which is repetition, iteration and difference, and likewise Derrida's supplement that is repetitive (like writing) but is never the same — each wave can never be repeated, copied, but rather organises a new force, a new generation. My work contains literalisms such as a coincidence of a wave and water with the philosophical concept of Deleuze's fold and fluid economy. Further, the motif and tropological logic of the Is/land living as that which is never stable, identifiable only through flux and movement and rejects the static 'landscape' of fixed placeness, is produced in the imagery of the indiscript island footage. However, as the reader should be fully aware, the imagery is more than just content, it is an experiential encounter that is instigated through a spatial design installation project. Material qualities are highly significant in this work. The affect of the island footage in terms of the way it is shot and installed, the light that it produces and the engagement across other projected surfaces and image content or form is all part of a transformative stage in which I appeal to the viewer/participant to encounter sensory dislocation as location through fluidity. Surface and depth, weight and levity are all properties inherent in the material encounter of the projections onto the polystyrene material and plynth forms. Polystyrene became an incredibly malleable material finding kindred relations to the effervescent bouyancy of the froth from the white horses produced through the turbulence of sea water.

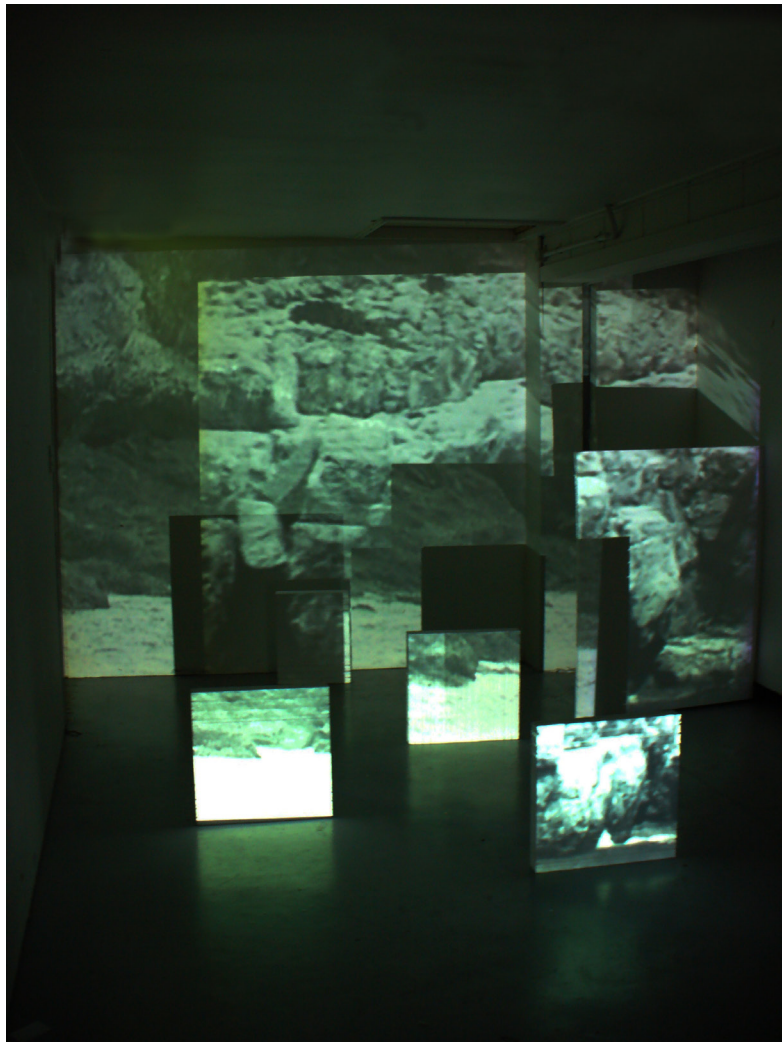


Figure 18: Sara Romano. *Waves #1*, 2010. Varied, Video Installation.

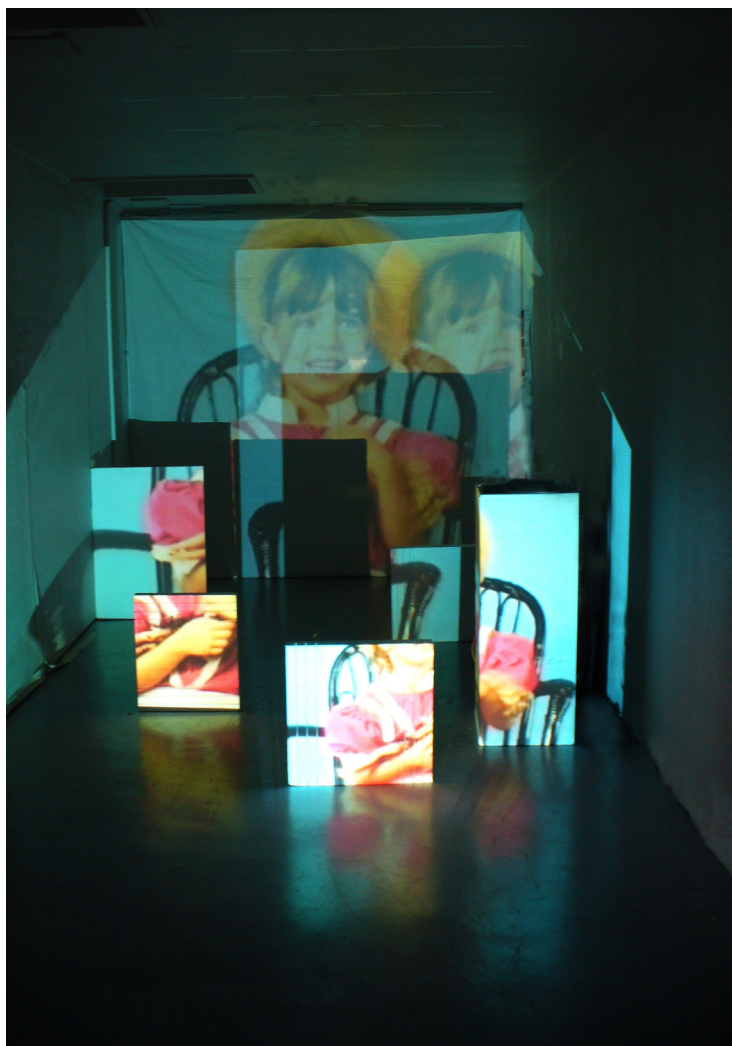


Figure 19: Sara Romano. *Waves #2*, 2010. Varied, Video Installation.

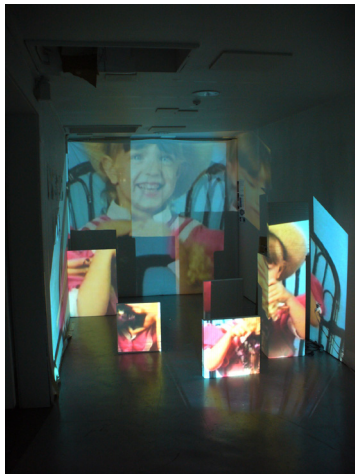


Figure 20: Sara Romano. *Waves #3*, 2010.Varied, Video Installation.



Figure 21: Sara Romano. *Waves #4*, 2010. Varied, Video Installation.

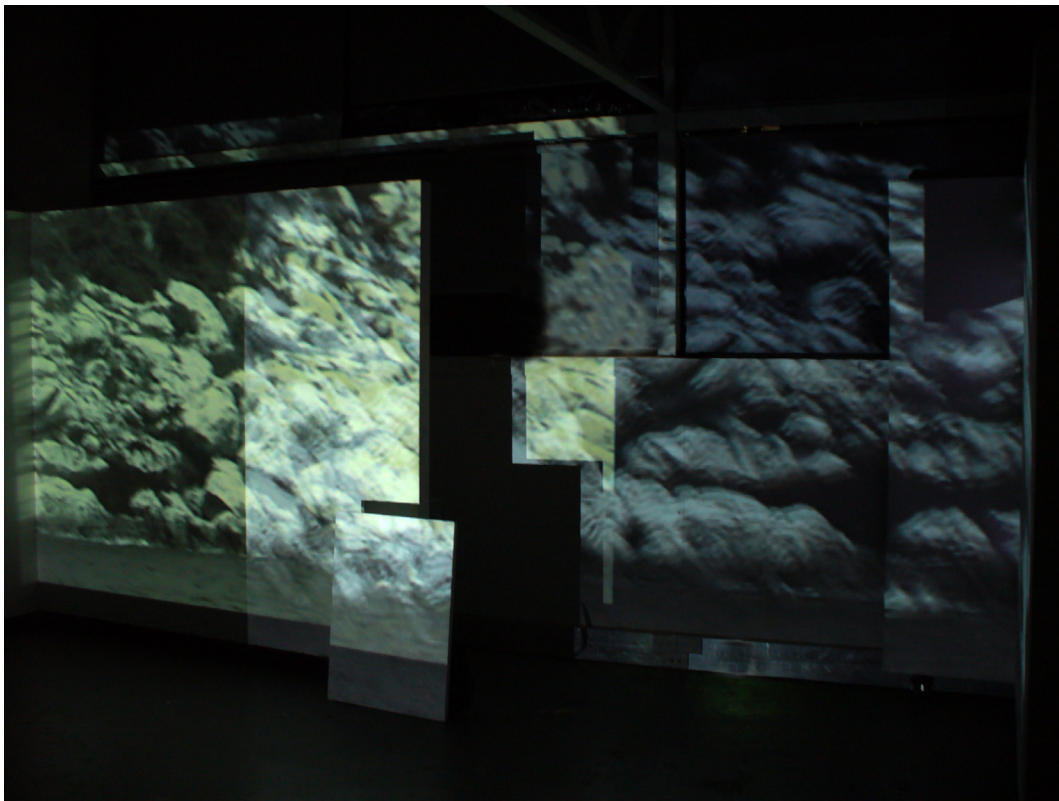


Figure 22: Sara Romano. *Waves #5*, 2010. Varied, Video Installation.

4.3 JETTY-SONED IDENTITY

Through experimentations with the chair (in particular) it became evident to me that I needed to further explore a means to activate the viewer as the liminal participant in the installation — an installed bodily encounter between the projected worlds that compressed past, present and future lives. As mentioned, literalism became an intuitive point for moving the work forward. Gaining confidence in my practice, I realised that the literal was much more complex than some simple symbolic or representational schema but rather a force of embodiment. Working again with found material brought into the studio, I began to experiment with packing pallets (realising immediately their connotation with locating and relocation of goods). I was also struck by their material properties as I experimented with projecting light and image onto them. When placed horizontally, flat on the floor the palette created a liquid water like appearance when projected on and gave the impression that the palette was floating on the liquid archives. While I have not continued projecting onto the materiality of the pallet what became more engaging was using the pallet as a stage (a sentient subject) located in relation to the projected work. It moved much more into a raft like entity and I realised that this incorporated the notion of travelling through space particularly in relation to the reflective qualities surfacing on the floor and other objects which I placed in between the projectors and image. This material effect was that which produced the notion of the jetty. What I have come to realise through all these processes of experimenting is that I am able to create a material quality and weight for this immaterial screen by cleverly placing the projection on certain angles, objects and a certain placement. I made sure to experiment with the projection size and shape to use it to my advantage. In an attempt to give the projection a weighted appearance I aligned the bottom edge of the screen with the floor. Through this paradox I was also able to create a floating island utilising the method of projecting onto a surface that captures the projected light. As the floor's surface was shiny, the projected image reflected on to the floor, creating a beautiful water like appearance that surrounded the screen. Much like the water around an island thus creating a floating effect.

As stated earlier, the installation work inaugurates a sense of materiality that works across this notion of physical-psycho mapping of identity. It also works with mythic notions of belonging that manifest in the physical security of landmass. Rather the installation works with a fluid economy where flux constitutes our sense of belonging (not longing). The viewer encounters this topological schema of an island that is simply not inhabitable or able to be reached. It plays with the desire for secure landings while remaining more secured in the bodily encounter of a jetty-like raft that sits between two projected surfaces. The jetty as a motif for launching or landing ashore is here dislocated from its 'origin', set adrift, but locates the viewer as participant in the in-between shifting scenes of bodily staging. The body or material encounter is far more important here than projecting oneself into the illusory mythic projection. That is not to devalue the importance of the moving-image in my installation, as I have already stated it is key to my own tactics and identity formation.

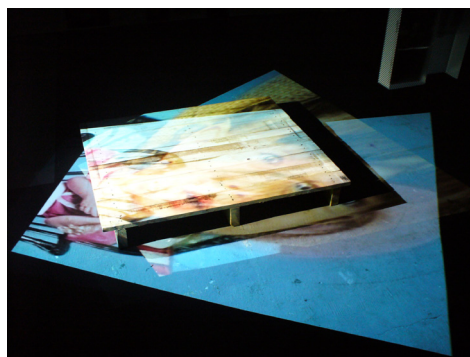
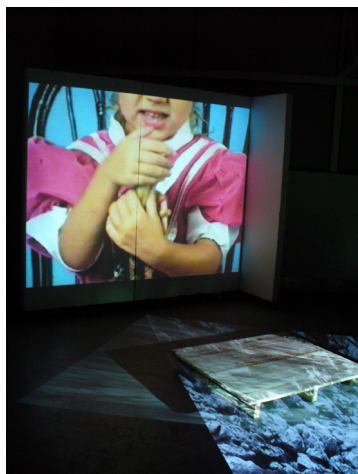


Figure 23: Sara Romano.
Jetty #1, 2010. Varied,
 Video Installation.

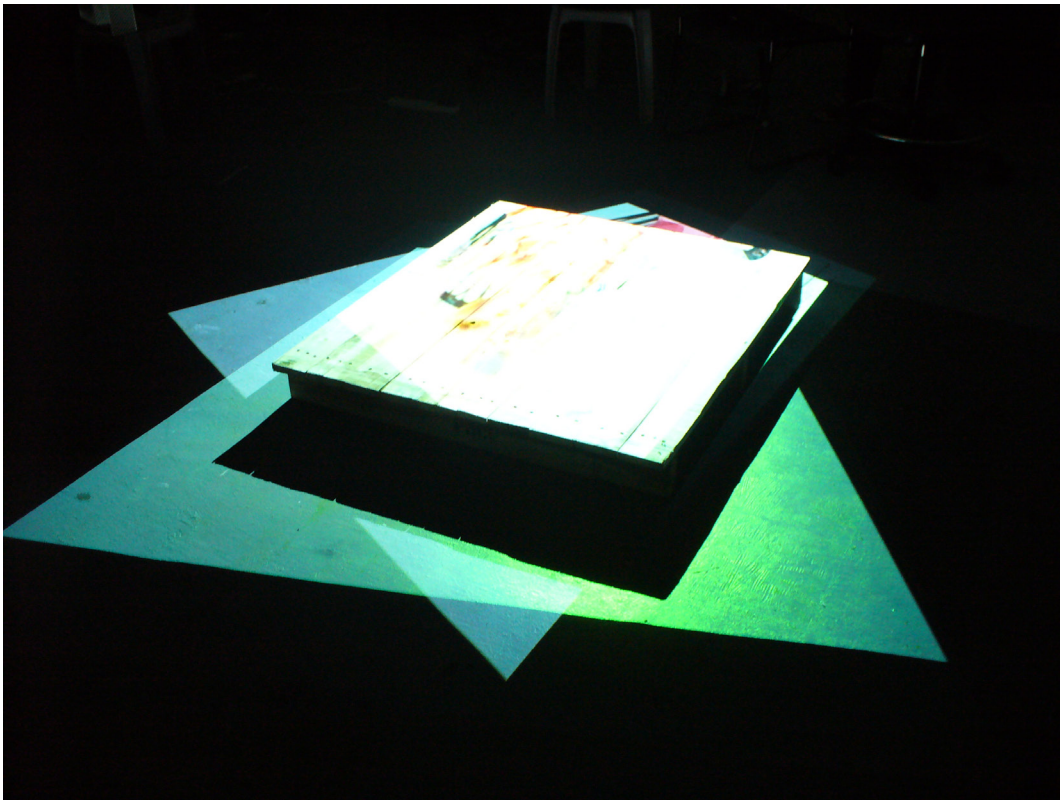


Figure 24: Sara Romano. *Jetty #2*, 2010. Varied, Video Installation.

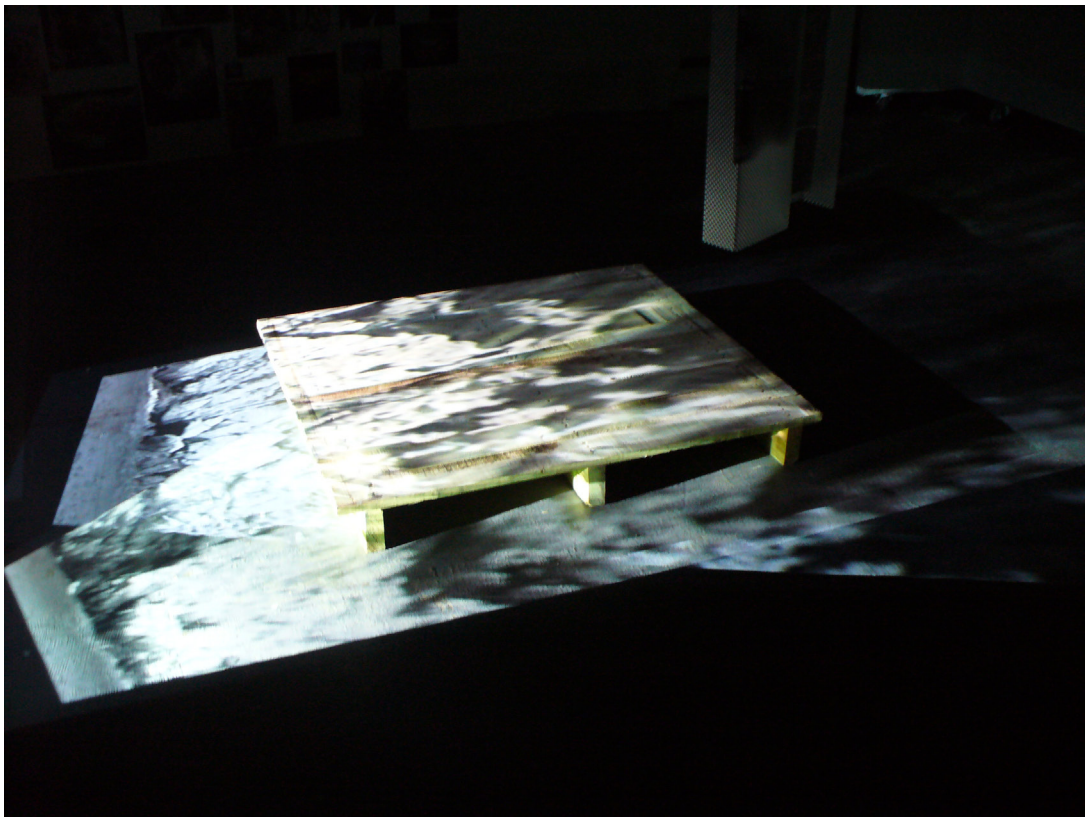


Figure 25: Sara Romano. *Jetty #3*, 2010. Varied, Video Installation.

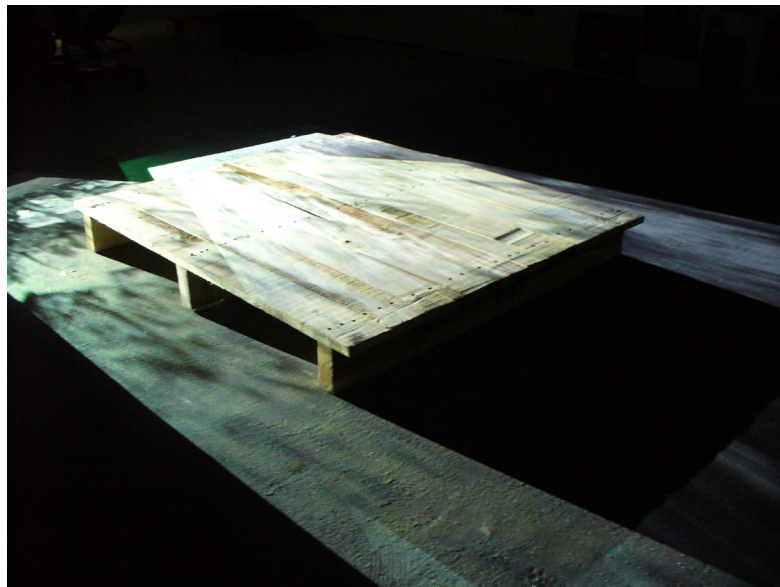
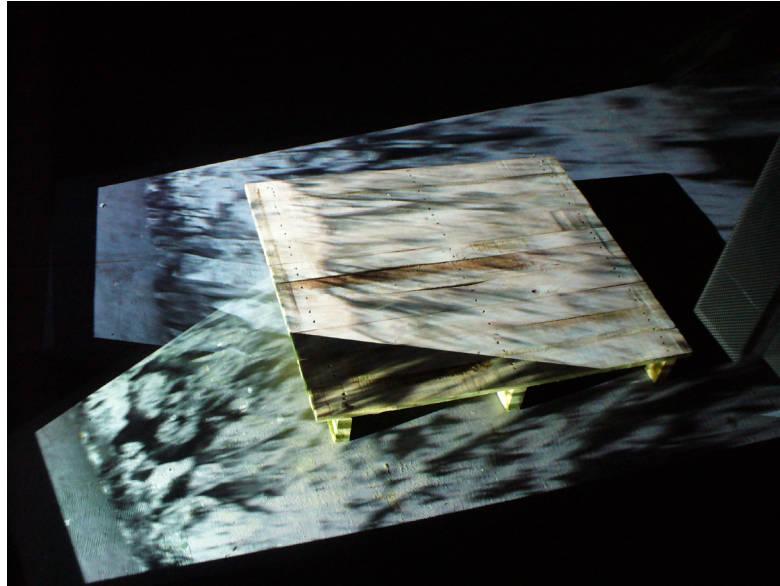


Figure 26: Sara Romano. *Jetty #4*, 2010. Varied, Video Installation.

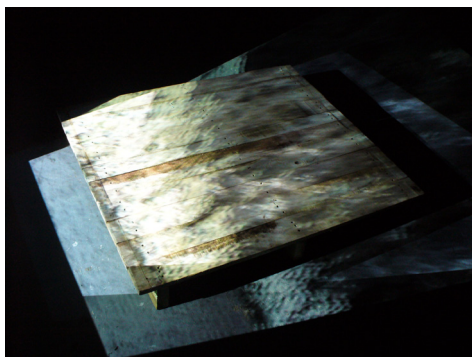
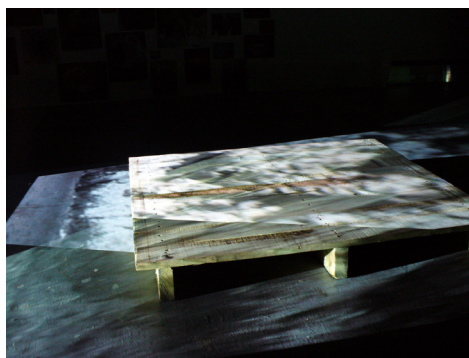
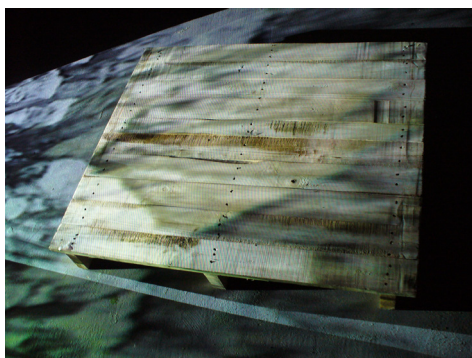
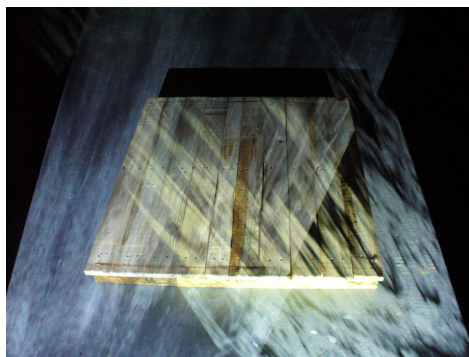
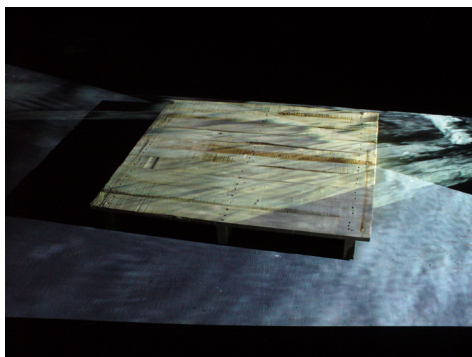


Figure 27: Sara Romano. *Jetty #5*, 2010. Varied, Video Installation.

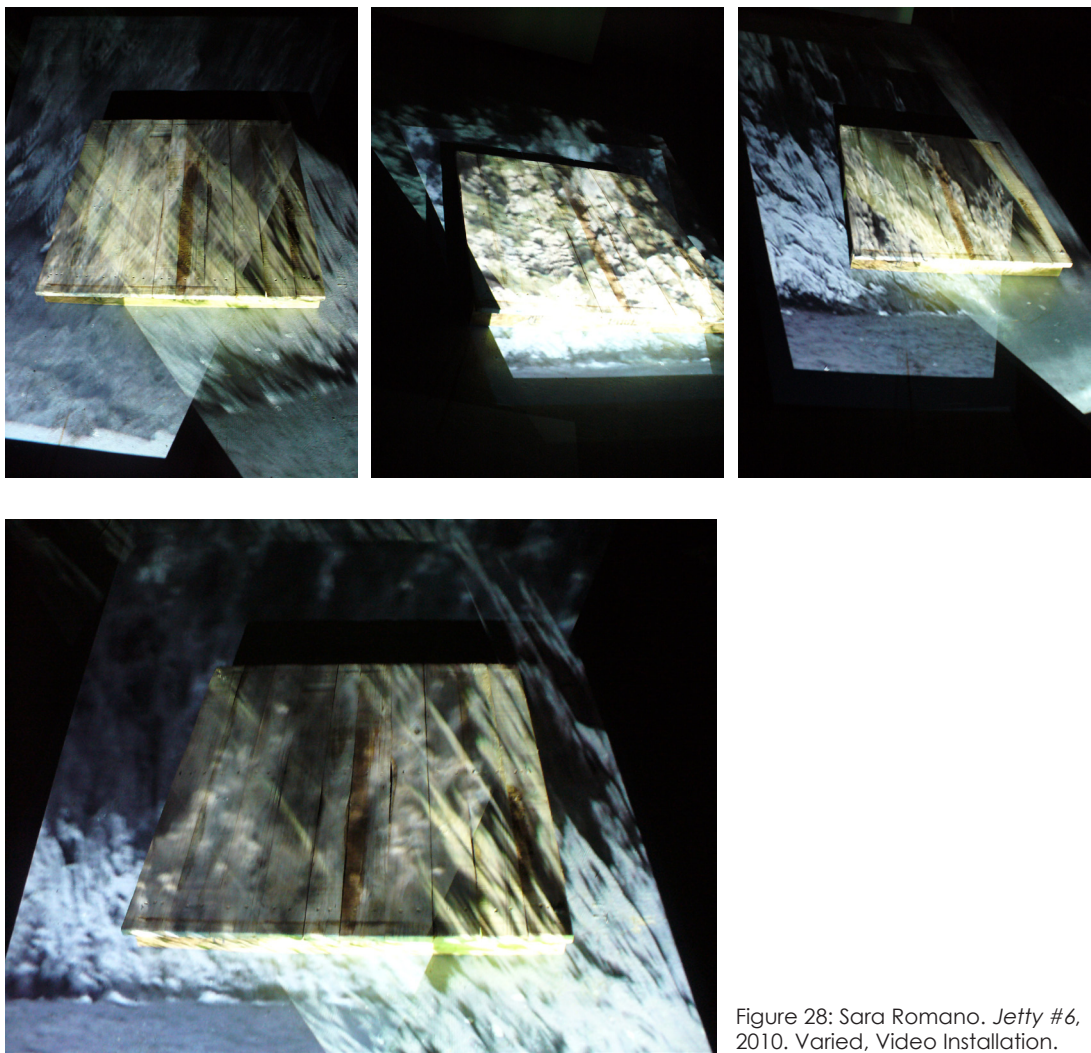


Figure 28: Sara Romano. *Jetty #6*, 2010. Varied, Video Installation.

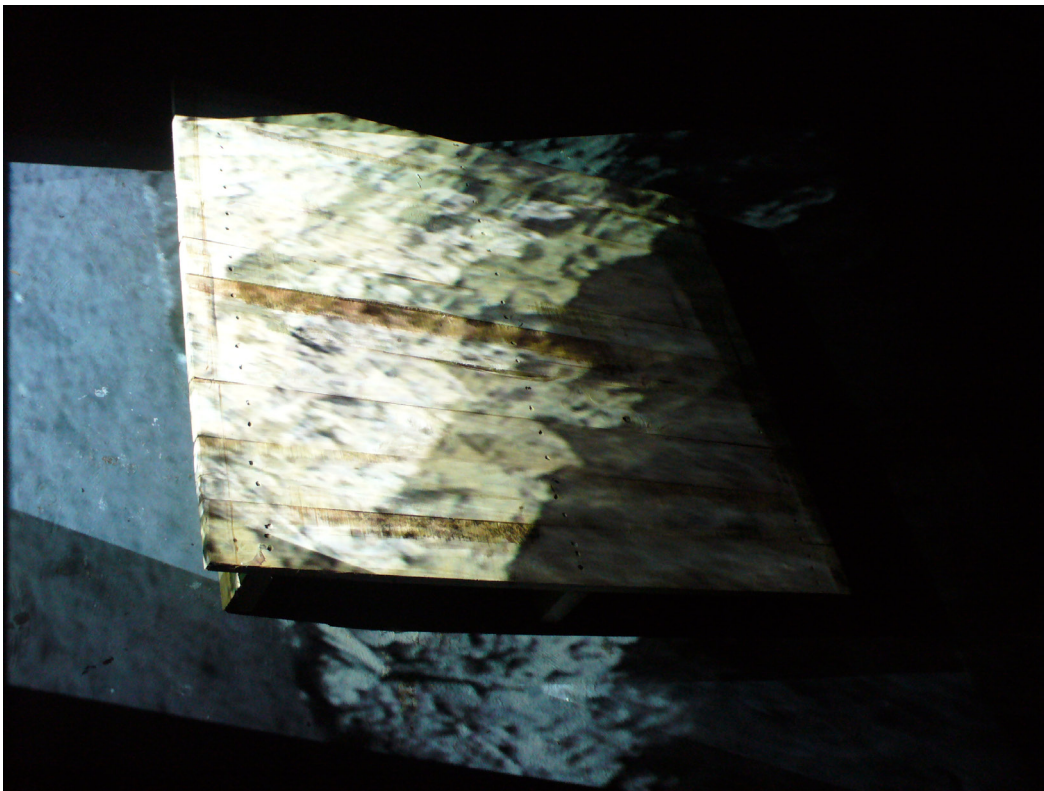


Figure 29: Sara Romano. *Jetty #7*, 2010. Varied, Video Installation.

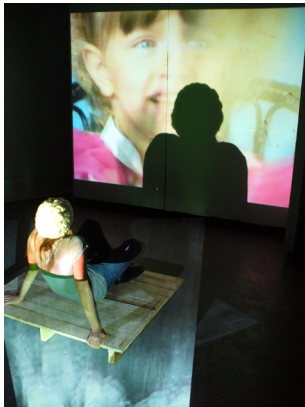
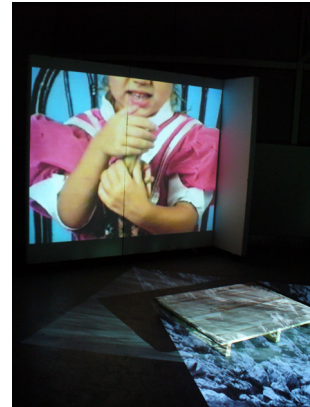




Figure 30: Sara Romano. *Jetty #8*, 2010. Varied, Video Installation.

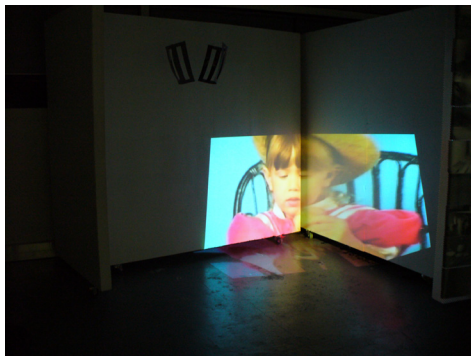
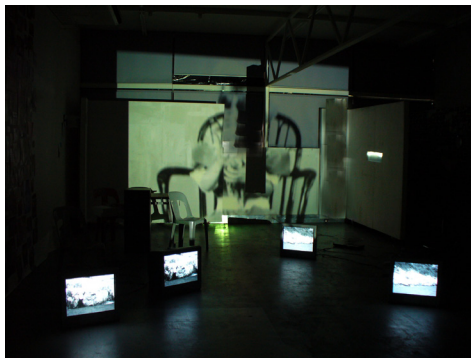


Figure 31: Sara Romano. *Weighted #1 (Experiments)*, 2010. Varied, Video Installation.

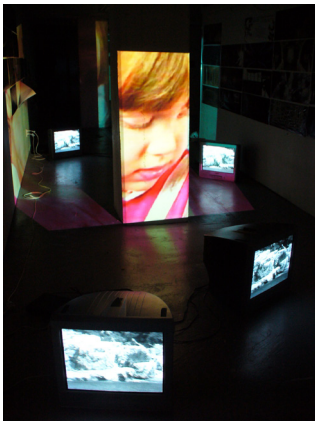
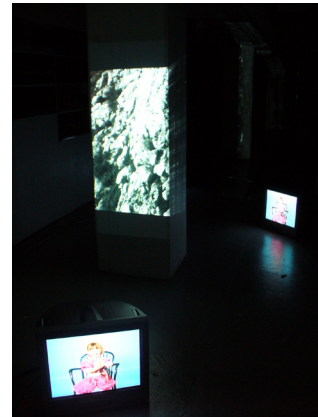


Figure 32: Sara Romano. *Weighted*
#2 (Experiments), 2010. Varied, Video
Installation.



Figure 33: Sara Romano. *Weighted #3 (Experiments)*, 2010. Varied, Video Installation.

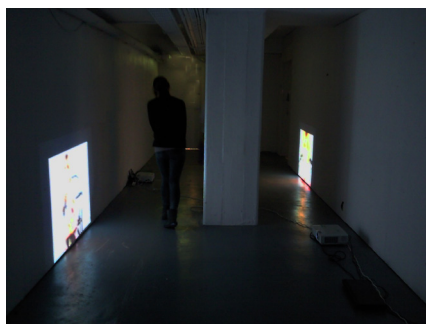


Figure 34: Sara Romano. *Reflections #1*, 2010. Varied, Video Installation.

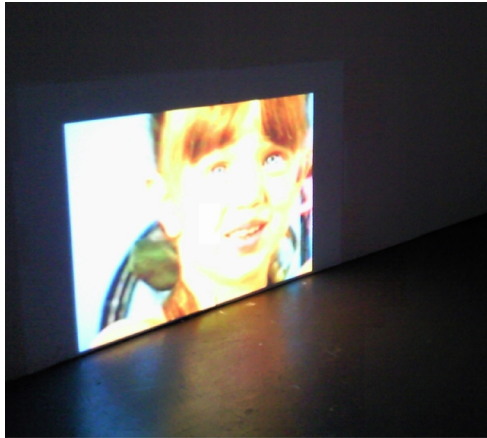


Figure 35: Sara Romano. *Reflections* #2, 2010. Varied, Video Installation.

4.3.1 *Dislocation and Location through the language of the archive*

Filmmaker Phillipe Grandrieux has been greatly influential in my work. His films are very ambiguous and have an ominous presence particularly due to the creative use of sound within his work. His use of darkness uncannily awakens an experiential embodied quality through a suspension of a desire to make sense through intellectualisation. The narrative is abandoned in favour of immediate and sensate encounter.

Sombre, Grandrieux's first feature film initiates the viewer into the embodied experience of elemental concerns with the use of screaming children. We simply do not know what they are screaming at, and yet their screams evoke such an immediate reaction — a child's scream is thrilling, ecstatic and alarming. It is such a powerful encounter that it exceeds, becomes extra-territorial in terms of knowing their situation. We know it through a physical and psychic interplay. How does this impact on my methods? Grandrieux's work suggests that something that is not fully revealed is more sustaining to our embodied understanding than mapping out the transparency of the context. My work attempts to replicate this condition through a continuously slow horizontal navigation around an indeterminate shoreline from the point of view of the sea/boat. The viewer enters into this frame, longing for some relief of an identifiable move onto land, away from land, beyond land. But the frame continues to carry the viewer along its unidentifiable shores, without relief. Grandrieux's work is suggestive of this claustrophobia through his close ups and use of darkness. We are never relieved from the image through the distance of light and transparency of situation. My work attempts to evoke the intensity of not-knowing through the framing and panning of the image (as well as its scale and composition). An intensity that appeals to the translation of another kind of condition of being that is forever in flux, floating, suspended, in-between. It will never have the privilege of mastery of place.

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

Figure 36: Grandieux. P. [Filmmaker]. (1998). *Sombre* [Film]. Retrieved May 15, 2010, from: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wuCYmGcYPwc>

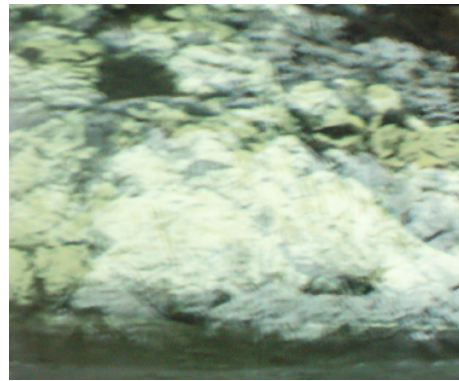


Figure 37: Sara Romano. Island #1, 2010. 4:3, Video Projection.

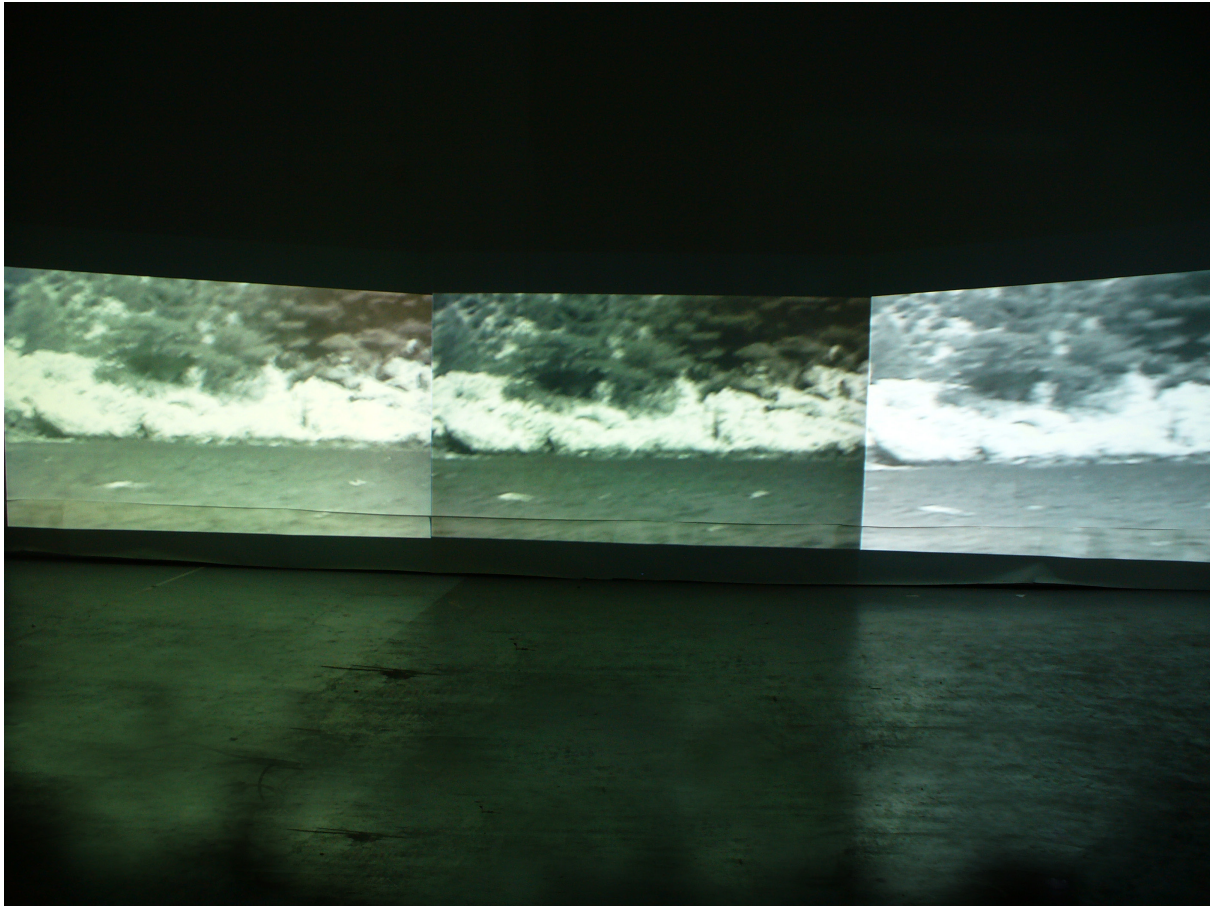


Figure 38: Sara Romano. Island #1, 2010. 3 x 16:9, Video Projection.

4.4 IMMATERIAL/MATERIAL

4.1 *Interstitial Space: Space/Image*

My work is structured through an appeal to the viewer/spectator that may somehow embody a sense of transnationalism. Ultimately it is an appeal through finding relations between space and moving image. This work develops methods for working across the immaterial and material conditions that both these means (3D space as the space of the installed work and the moving image) construct. Multiple projections are a device in my work for constructing interstitial paradoxical relations between immaterial and material experience. With the aid of four projectors, archival and new moving image footage sutured with random black space, and a combination of scaling devices (within the projected frame and spatial arrangements), I worked to construct mnemonic conditions. That is, the set up both simulated and embodied our experience of memory as a diachronic condition undoing a trajectory of linearity. Like the transnational condition, place is not located in an origin but rather becomes multiple and fragmented, where one material place is located by fleeting immaterial memories delivered by the image capture. We are forever moving and located in our dislocation of fixed chronology or origins of place. Claire Denis is a filmmaker who has inspired me in terms of how she privileges the extended black space in her cinema to locate her viewer in an embodied experience of the materiality of film. That is, darkness (as the antithetical condition of cinema) becomes the physical recess for enveloping our bodies, rather than the transparent and knowable light image that has traditionally been used for distancing an audience's body by privileging the intellect (as in the trajectory of narrative based filmmaking). Multiple scales of image projection created interstitial spaces as images overlapped within the installation space. This evokes an invitation for viewers to explore in-between relations of two spaces (image and physical) complicating the relations of materiality and immateriality further to further my aim for an embodied experience.

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removed by the author
of this thesis for copyright
reasons.*

Figure 39: Denis. C.[Filmmaker].
(2005). *l'intrus* [Film]. Retrieved
June 1, 2010, from:
[http://sullivanandaniel.wordpress.
com/2009/10/page/3/](http://sullivanandaniel.wordpress.com/2009/10/page/3/)



Figure 40: Sara Romano. *Memories #1*, 2010. Varied, Video Installation.



Figure 41: Sara Romano. *Memories #2*, 2010. Varied, Video Installation.

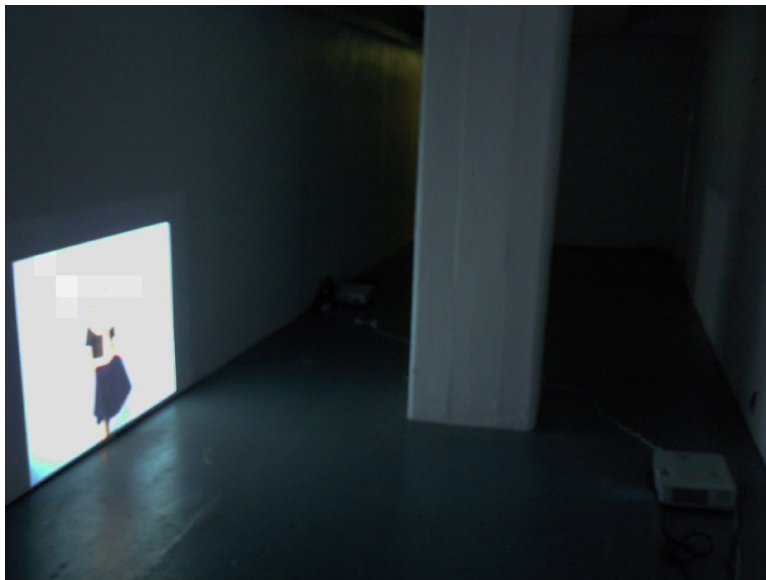


Figure 42: Sara Romano. *Memories #3*, 2010. Varied, Video Installation.



Figure 43: Sara Romano. *Untitled*, 2010. Varied, Video Installation.

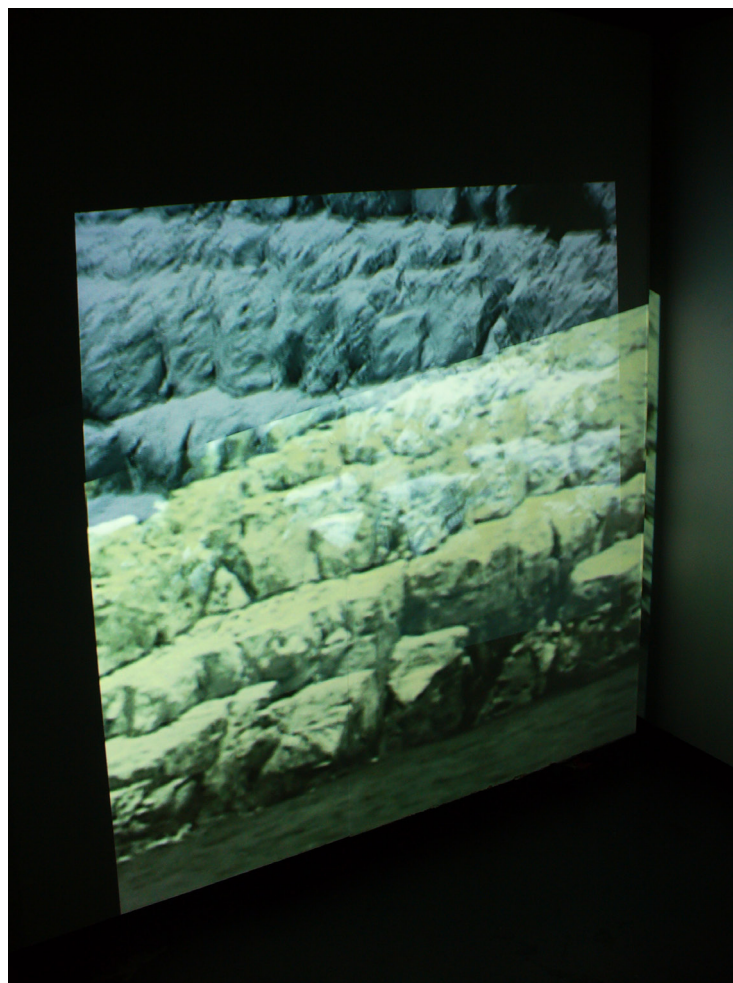


Figure 44: Sara Romano. *Untitled #1*, 2010. 4:3, Video projection.

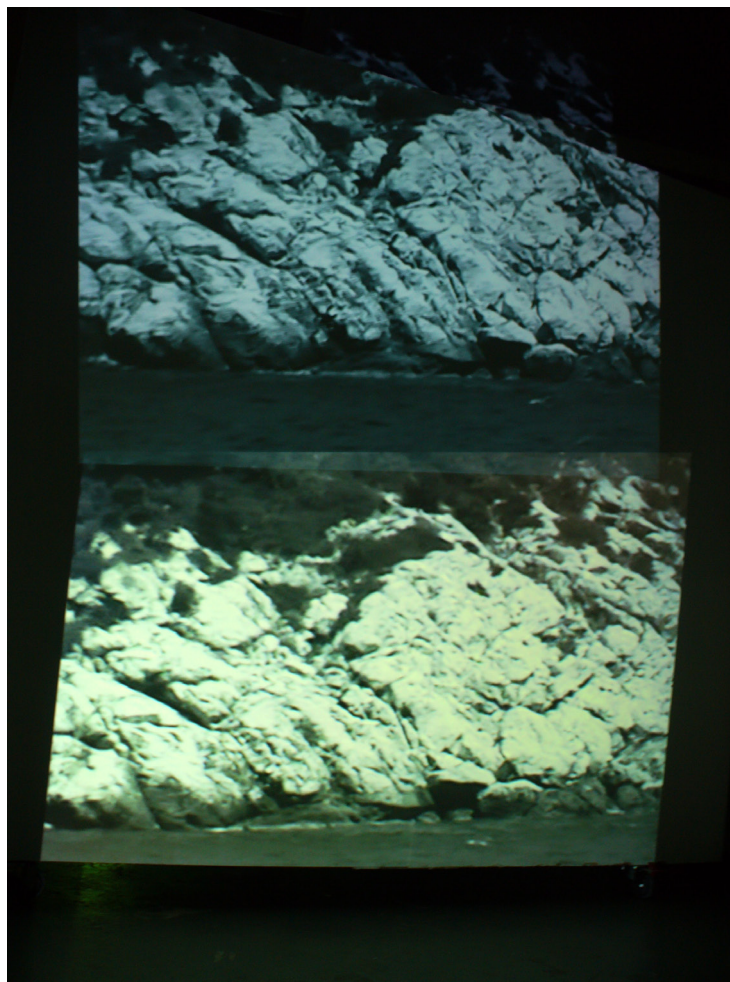


Figure 45: Sara Romano. *Untitled #2*, 2010. 4:3, Video projection.

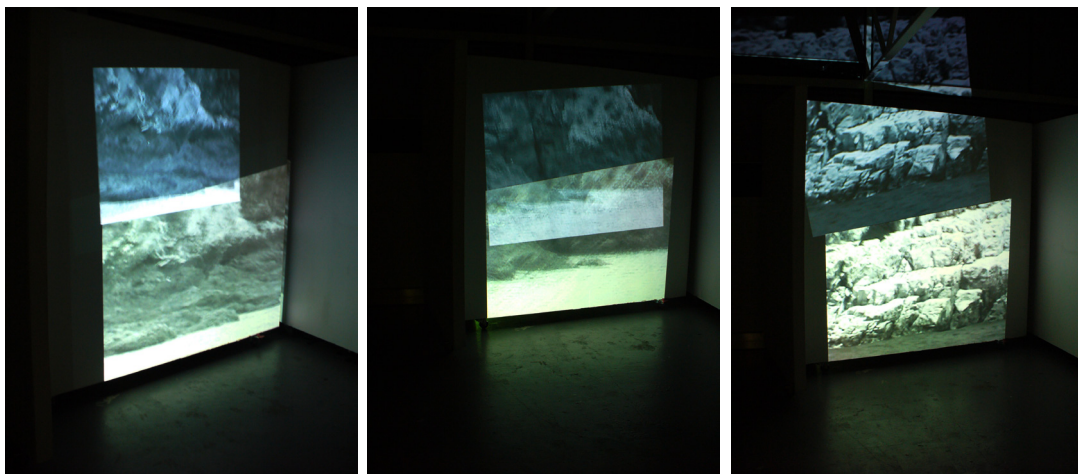


Figure 46: Sara Romano. *Untitled #3*, 2010. 4:3, Video projection.

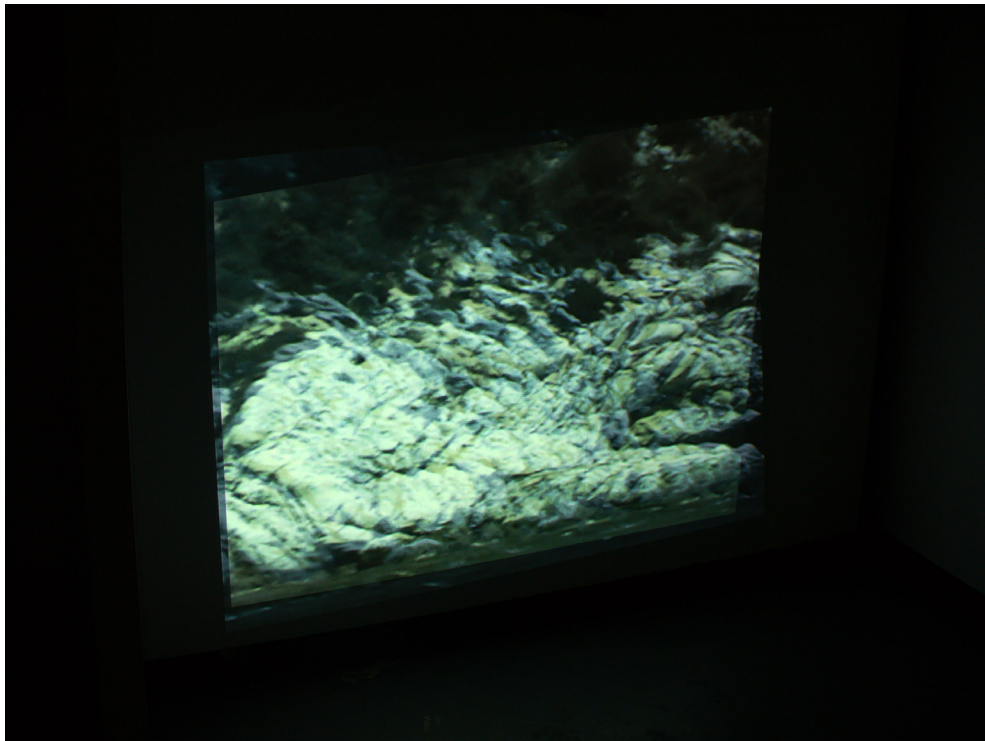


Figure 47: Sara Romano. *Untitled #4*, 2010. 4:3, Video projection.

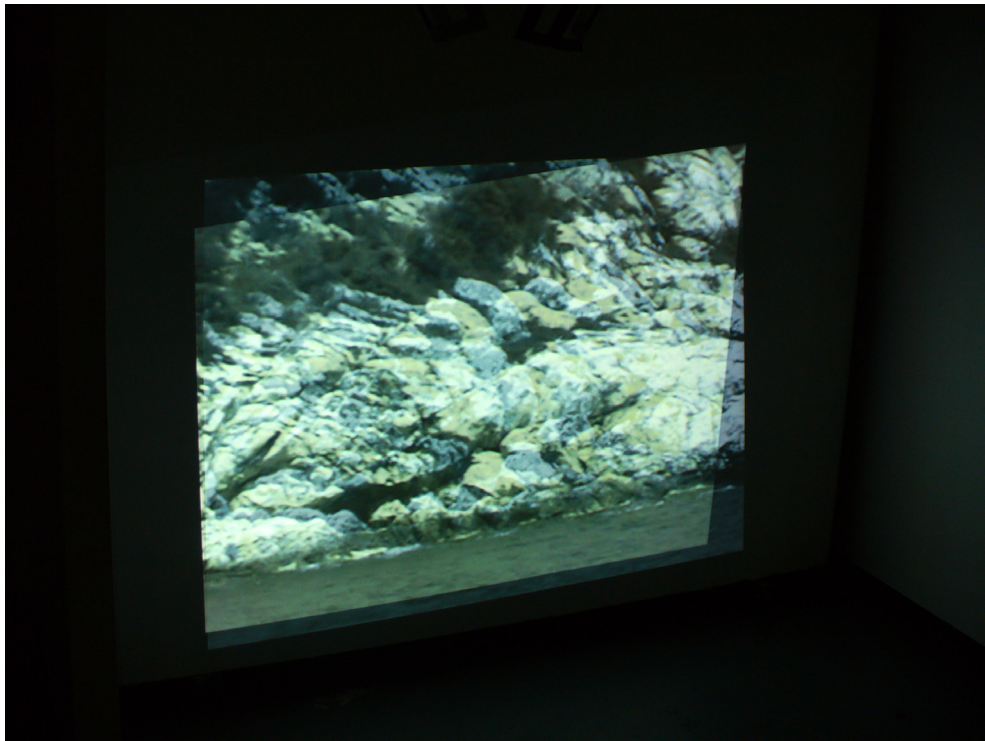


Figure 48: Sara Romano. *Untitled #5*, 2010. 4:3, Video projection.

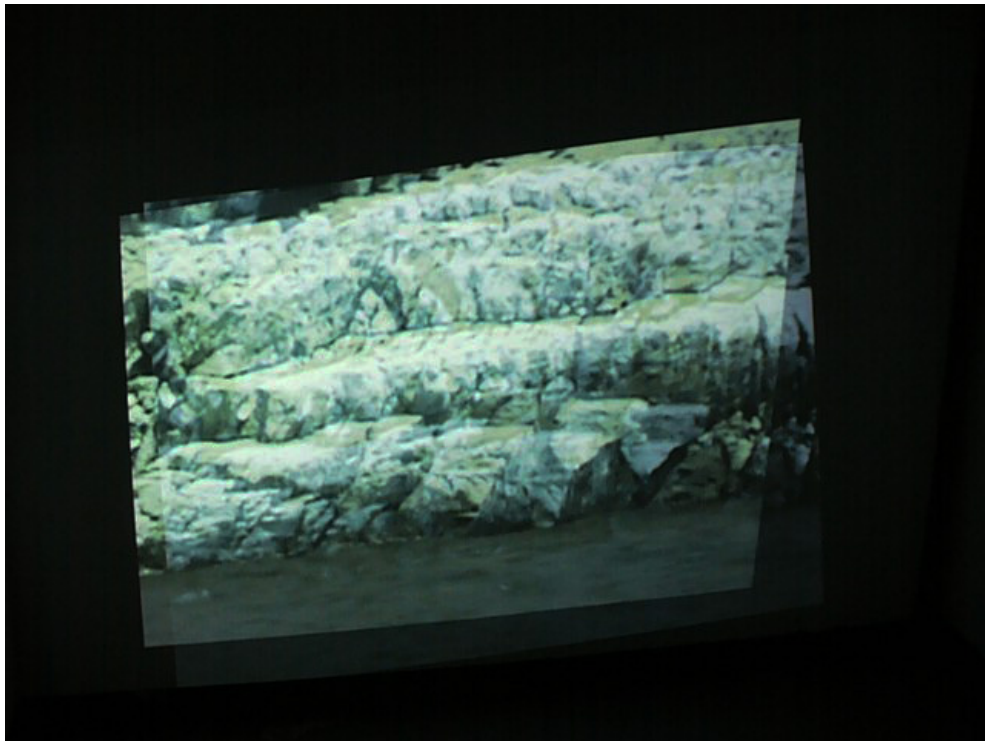


Figure 49: Sara Romano. *Untitled #6*, 2010. 4:3, Video projection.

4.4.2 *Interstitial Blues: Floating between material and immaterial worlds*

I have attempted to also play with the privilege of some footage I shot recently of an island from the point of view of water. It is a slightly oppressive encounter, whereby the footage only captures the relationship between shoreline and its rocky outcrop, which the viewer continuously circumnavigates. The looped footage privileges horizontality without ever allowing the viewer to see beyond this rocky façade, only ever moving around it. The condition of water as the fluid and less secure material mimics the immaterial reality of a secure ground of placeness. This is further enhanced by a faint dogma-styled treatment of the image-capture. As a transnational condition, it is not the secure place of land that is privileged here, but rather the insecure, immaterial fluid quality of a watery economy that brings meaning to my existence. In this image, water is constantly breaking against the shoreline, revealing its ongoing change in relation to the stability of the implacable rocks. While water is a material, it evokes an immaterial or flexible economy for this project's aims. All projections find their common ground in the axis of the floor creating a material (gravitational) weighted reality, drawing the viewer's attention to the relations of the immaterial image threshold of water as ground-plane as it reflects onto the surface of the material floor in the installation. Reflective surfaces on the floor mimic the water to give an immaterial floating quality like multiple islands in the installation space. In dialogue with adjacent images installed on other surfaces in the room, attempts to emphasise this floating quality have come through a consideration of figure and ground relations. Archival film footage of me as a child in Croatia have been interesting in working with these relations of immateriality and materiality. Significantly it is the site of the studio, which has evoked a complex reading of floating worlds. As I revisit this footage what became apparent are the relations of (two) colours in the image. Two surfaces compete through the vibrancy of pink and blue (I am dressed in a pink dress sitting in front of a vibrant blue studio wall). Of course this footage (originally set up for an advert) will be split discarding the blue background for another more fitting (ad) scenario (as is the system of "green"-screen technology). However, in revisiting this studio shot footage what is compelling for me is that it is the blue background that I locate my transnational condition. It speaks with vitality to shifting scenery and yet as scenery in and of itself it is the most accurate embodiment of my dislocated identity. It does not evoke a contextless economy but rather an economy of extraterritoriality i.e. multiple contexts — a moving and shifting scenery that will forever fold in absolute dialogue with the interstitial watery threshold between boat and shoreline in its adjacent footage. In opening this discussion here, I wish to emphasise the ambiguity between figure and ground. No longer do I see myself as a figure on a landscape, but rather, the figure of me or my transnational identity is the figure of the expanding blue (studio) landscape. This blueness evokes an expanding immaterial reality that communicates an embodied material experience of suspended living.

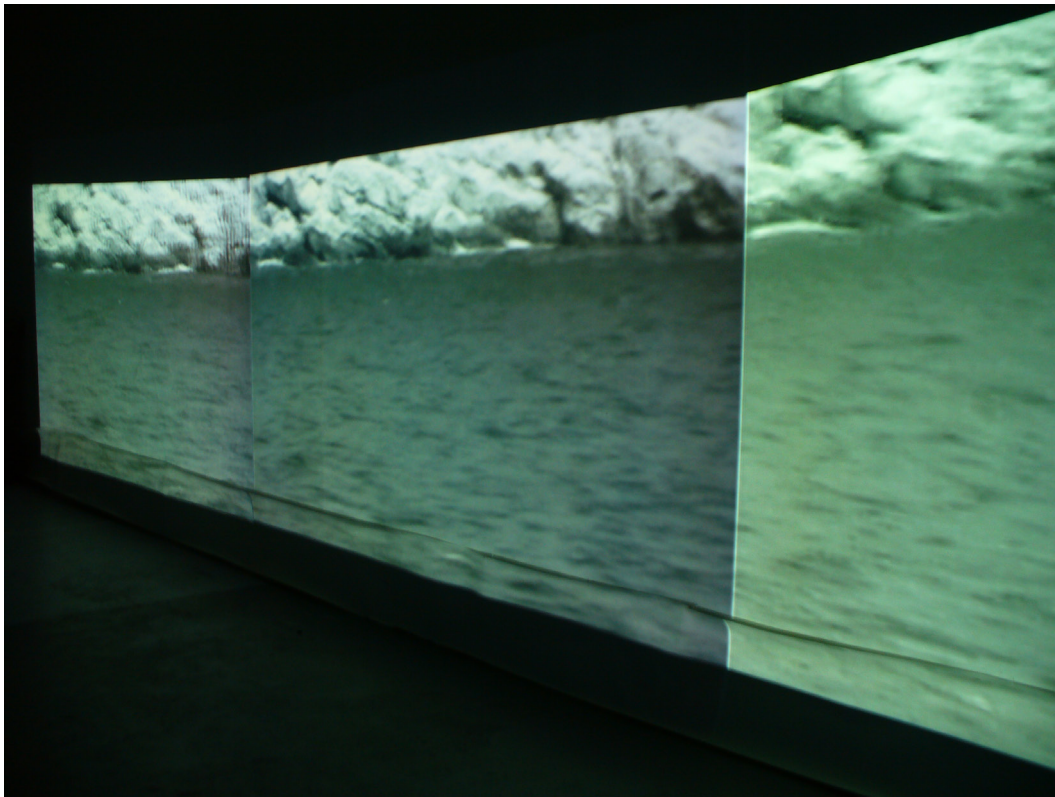
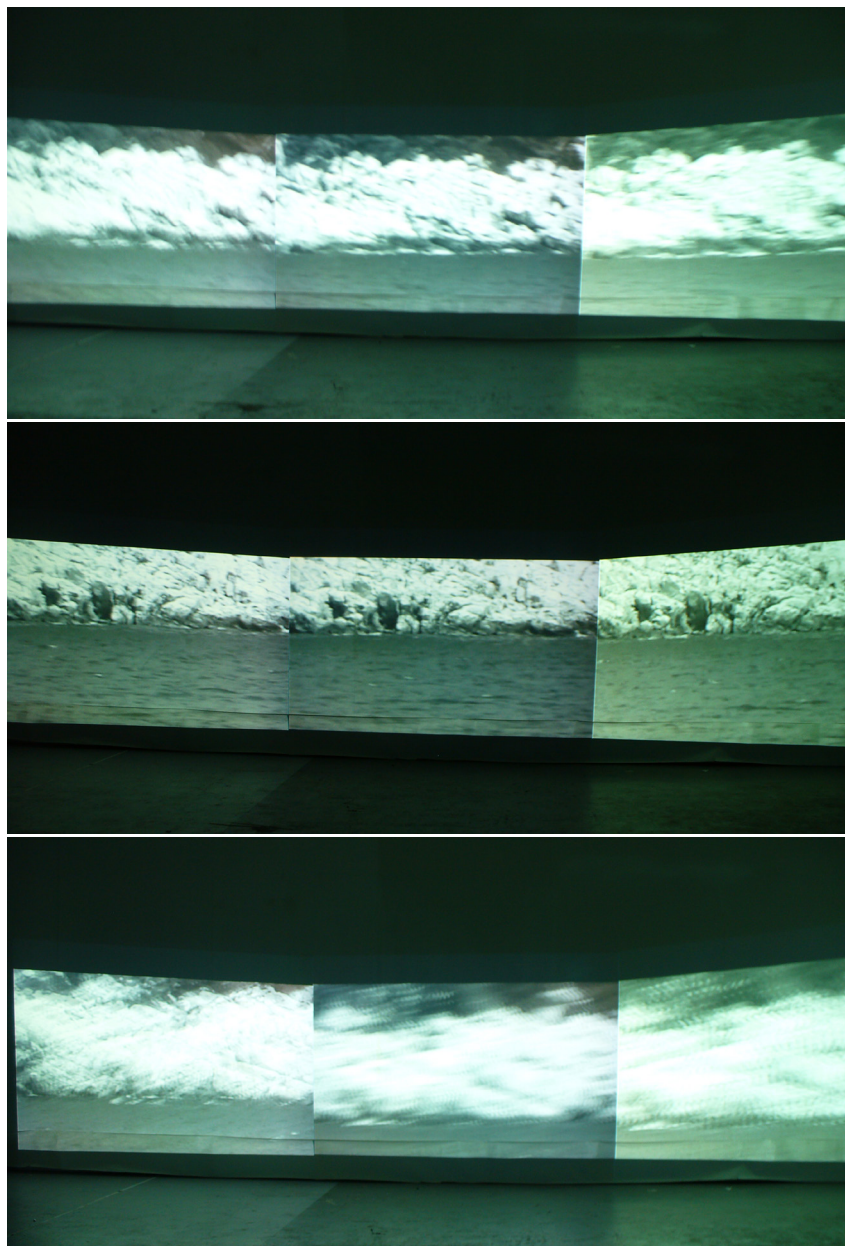


Figure 50: Sara Romano. *Island #1*, 2010. 3 x 16:9, Video Installation.



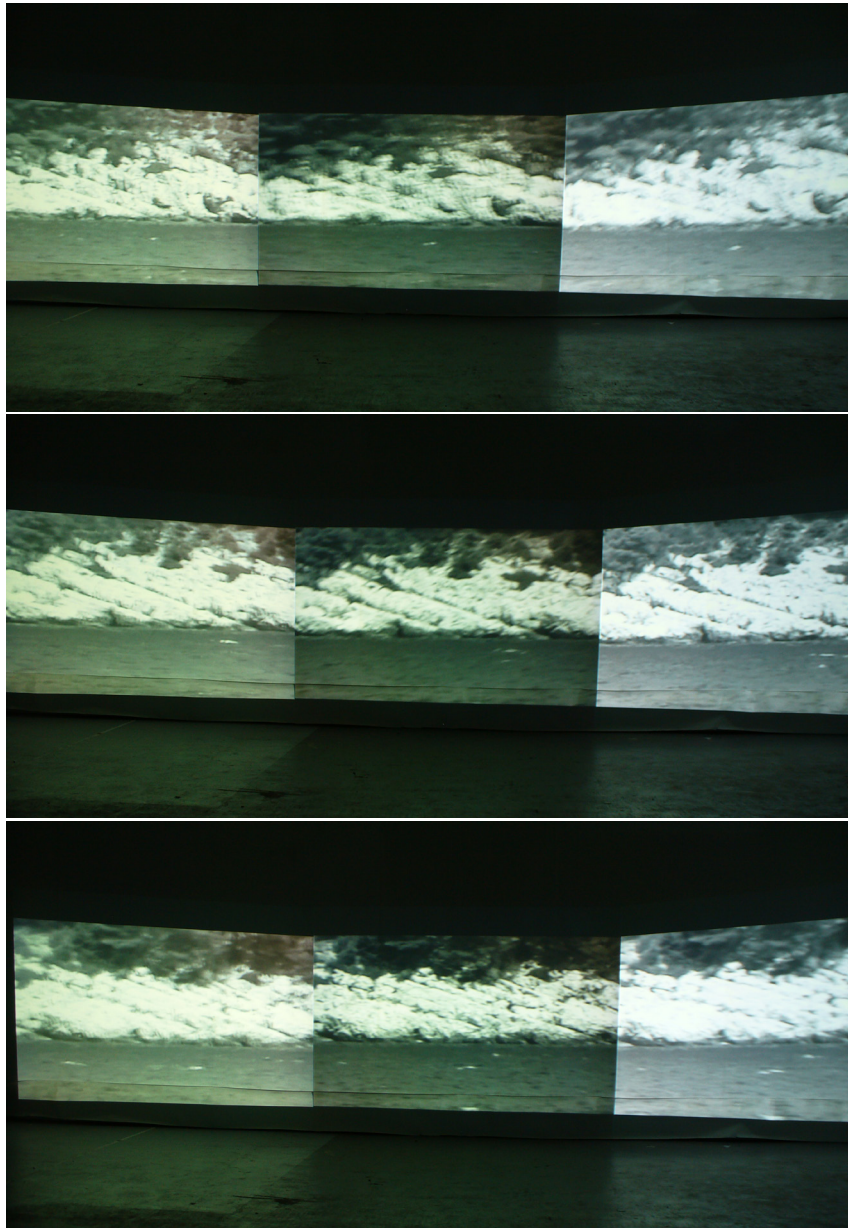


Figure 51: Sara Romano. *Island #2*, 2010. 3 x 16:9, Video Installation.

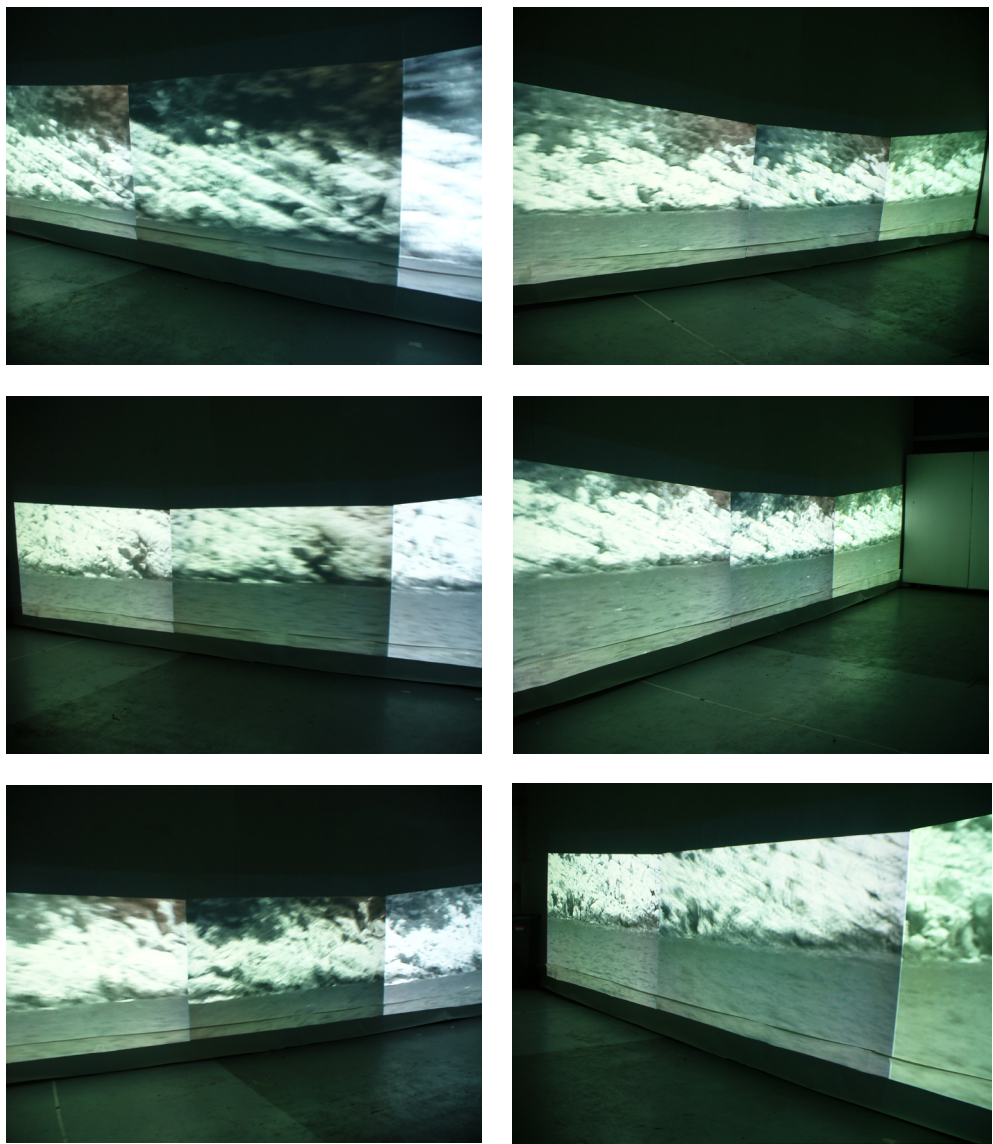


Figure 52: Sara Romano. *Island #3*, 2010. 3 x 16:9, Video Installation.

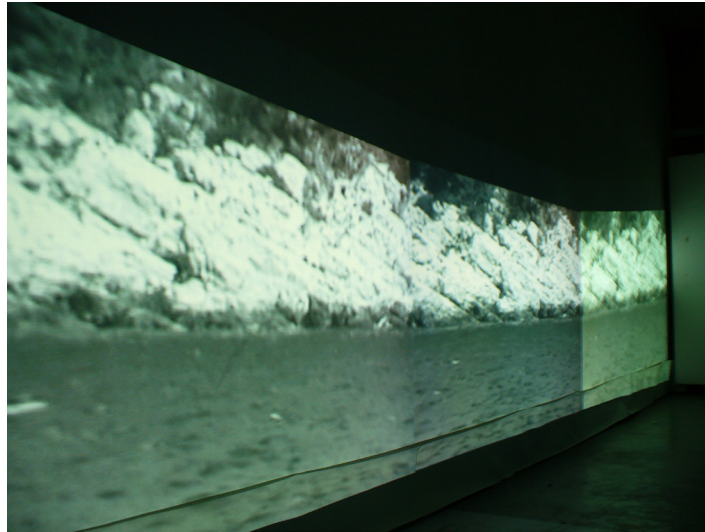
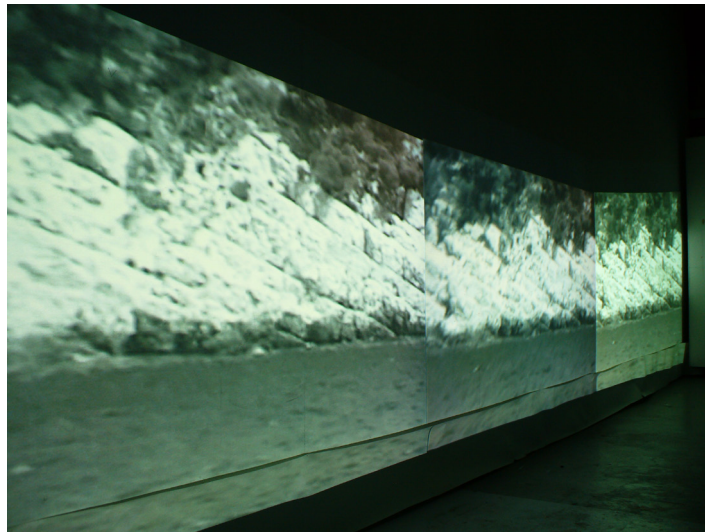


Figure 53: Sara Romano. *Island #4*, 2010. 3 x 16:9, Video Installation.



4.4.3 *Translation: A method of the foreign*

What is language if not a condition of translation? We move from what we think (in our immaterial thoughts) to the actuality of spoken language. By evoking for the viewer the condition of interpretation I have played with different language systems (Croatian, English, Serbo-Croatian) to emphasise how our lives are always undergoing translation. In moving around the world to new locales, one is always in the condition of translating or making sense of their new environments (new languages, new spatial codes). What is most knowable to the encounter of foreign films, for the other, is the device of subtitles. Somehow the image translates without necessarily too much effort, but it is the dialogue that distances or re-situates the viewer. As a personal repository of knowing, I have explored the imposition of the Croatian language onto the image, knowing that my viewer will most likely be English-speaking (for the purposes of this exhibition). What is it to encounter the image (that evokes like the blue studio background an immaterial reality of shifting scenes), is it in the locating of a foreign language? Here I have strategized to adopt a system of locating a viewer through contradictory means whereby they will encounter a dislocating effect. This experimentation is to evoke, not a knowing through understanding the content i.e. through assimilating and comprehending meaning through familiarity, but rather, like the extended black screen intervals, my aim is to embody my viewer in the relations of immaterial and material remains. That is, I desire for the viewer to give up on understanding through a conventional sign system and, to suspend themselves for another kind of experience where betrayal of meaning coincides with the experience of ongoing translation. The transnational experience is to find stability in knowing uncertainty. Subtitles, of course, simply evoke a dismantling of a hierarchical privileging of English as the global dominant way of being in the world.



Figure 54: Sara Romano. *Translate*, 2010. 4:3, Video Projection.

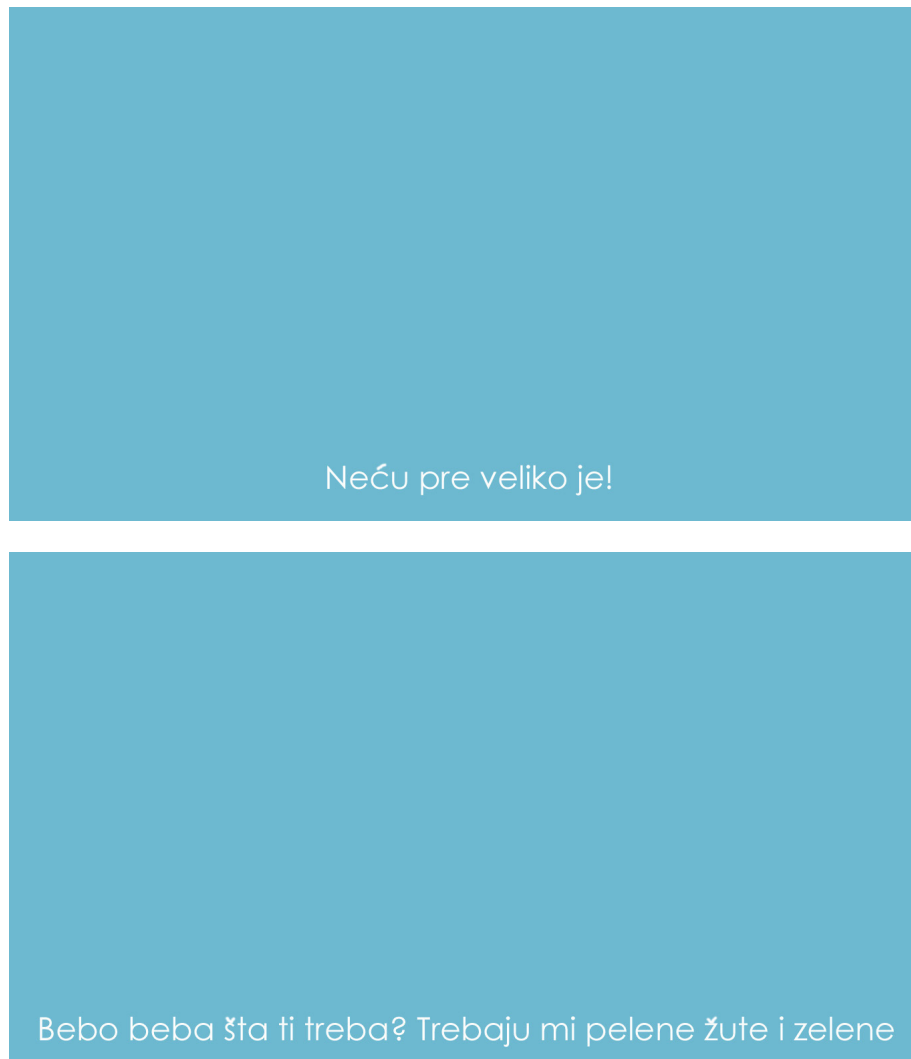


Figure 55: Sara Romano. *Subtitles*, 2010. 16:9, Video Projection.

5.0 CONCLUSION

Moving image/moving lives conflate into a discussion of an extra-indeterminate condition theorised through transnationalism, exilic conditions, and displaced peoples. A condition that is rapidly on the increase due to the effects of globalisation and digital media that produces massive shifts in scale of time and space with respect to economic and cultural flows that produce identity. In this work I have attempted to develop critical positions through a range of political and cultural philosophers (Deleuze, Agamben, Heidegger, Derrida, Casey, Irigaray, Girard, Naficy and others) and practitioners such as Grandjeux, Denis, S. Neshat, Jonas Mekas, Christian Boltanski that mark out the impossible horizon of place as static, fixed, permanent and original notion. Rather they suggest that contemporary living is more constitutive of multiple flows and forces of becoming that equates in this project as states of indeterminacy, extraterritorialism, floating and fluid, multiple and complex. Literally and allegorically I have appropriated found footage and tropes (such as the island) as a way of expanding a discourse on a fluid economy of living. The water becomes the most palpable material encounter in this work whereby it's reflecting, changing, fluid and forceful properties communicate shifting horizons of knowing home. The archive material superimposes onto the newly formed image capture to produce a layered economy of extra-embodiment. The aim of this work is to initiate the viewer as an active participant into the Is/Land Life of future and uncontested border time-space.

THE EXHIBITION

DOCUMENTATION

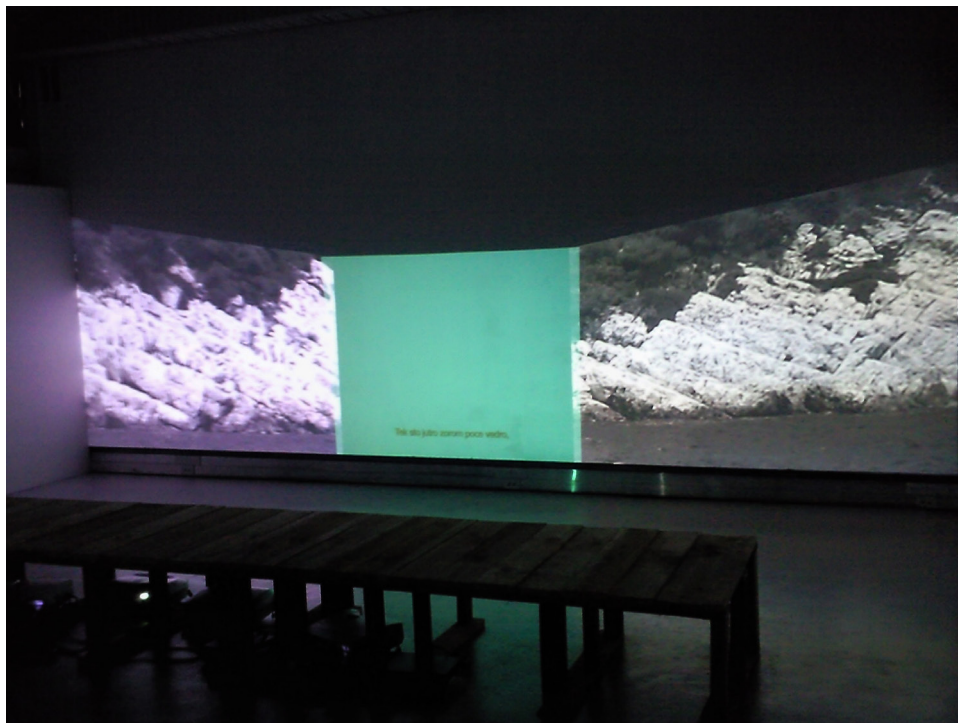


Figure 56: Sara Romano. *Is/Land Life*, 2010.
Still photograph of *Is/Land Life* in the Graduating Exhibiton, 2010.

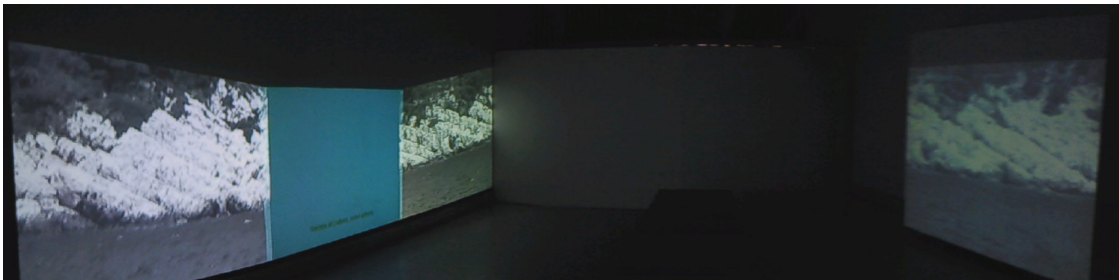
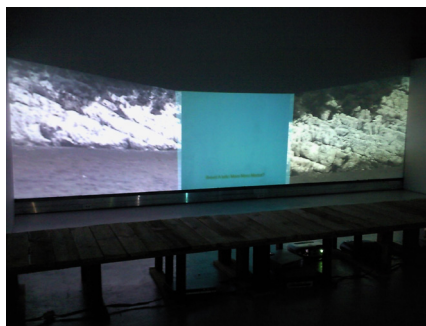
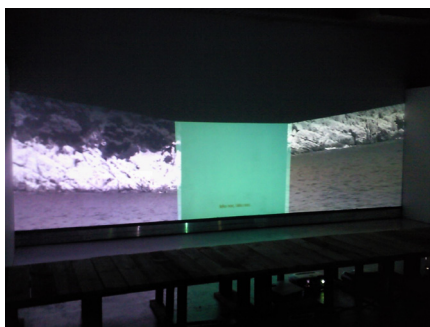


Figure 57: Sara Romano. *Is/Land Life*, 2010.
Still photograph of *Is/Land Life* in the Graduating Exhibiton, 2010.



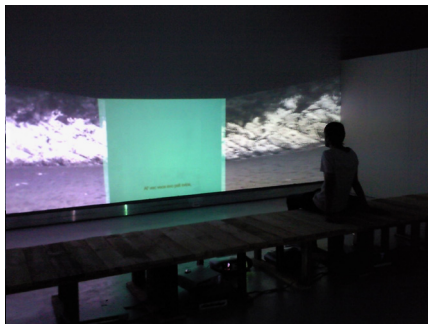
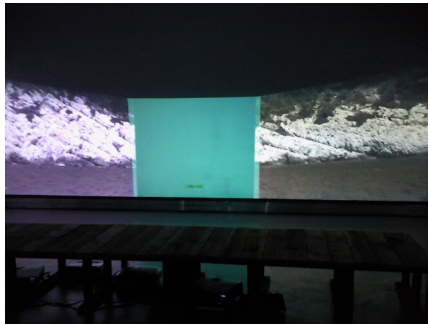


Figure 58: Sara Romano. *Is/Land Life*, 2010.
Still photograph of *Is/Land Life* in the
Graduating Exhibiton, 2010.

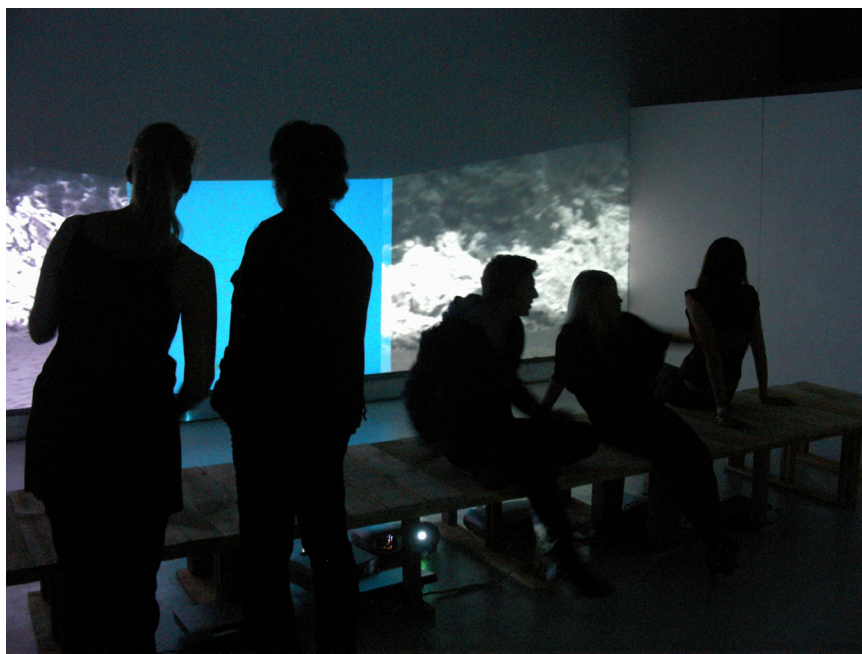


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Still photograph of *Is/Land Life* in the Graduating Exhibiton, 2010.



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Still photograph of *Is/Land Life* in the Graduating Exhibiton, 2010.

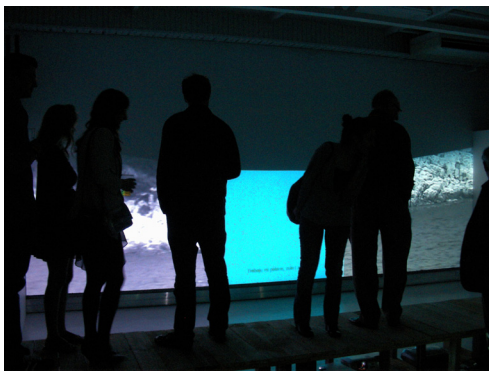
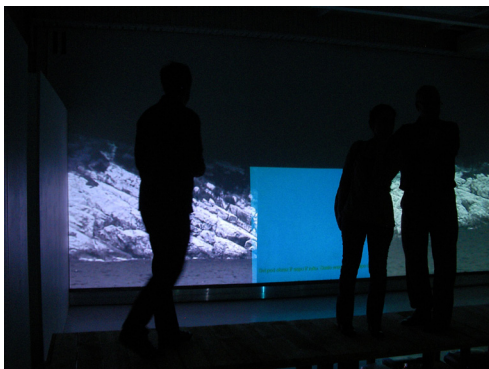




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