

*Pulse, Pulse, Somersault*

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A thesis submitted to Auckland University of Technology in partial fulfilment of  
the requirements for the degree of Master of Art & Design

(MA & D)

2009

School of Art & Design

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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 by another person nor material which has to a substantial extent been accepted for the qualification of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning, except where due acknowledgement is made in the acknowledgements.”*

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank the supervising staff for their valuable contribution in the form of shared knowledge and experience, I would like to acknowledge the support of: Chris Braddock, Fiona Amundsen, Dale Fitchett, and Dienneke Jansen.

And with special thanks to Martin Selman for his encouragement, help and support throughout this thesis project.

## ***Pulse, Pulse, Somersault***

### **1.0 Abstract**

This project explores notions of seeing and knowing, underpinned by performative and phenomenological fields of enquiry that relate this exploration to the sensate experience of the viewer. A specific interest considers ideas of embodied vision with an aim at generating events that vacillate *in* the bodies of the audience. A primary focus is on the arena of encounter as a multi-sensory experiential event, and within this context this project proposes a temporal and spatial framework for exploration.

Studio methods develop a cinematic-body of video work negotiating performative practice involving video projection and temporality.

Pivotal goals are to explore the significance of the ‘chiasm’ between seeing and knowing, raising questions about how humans see, and how humans make how they see matter. Therefore, this thesis project progresses along experimental approaches to video installation, particularly in relation to the phenomena of encounter, the viewer, and film experience. The central motivation of this video practice is aimed at corporeal affect *in* the body/s of the audience.

This thesis project is constituted as 80% practice-based work accompanied by a 20% exegesis.

“What else is film but an expression of experience by experience?”

(Sobchack, 1992: 3)

## 1.1 Introduction

This visual arts thesis project negotiates performative and phenomenological fields of sensory experience, and within this framework activates video installation practice as a tool for raising questions concerning the role and place of the viewer. A specific focus is directed at the phenomenological relationship experienced in film encounter between the body/s of the audience, the film, and the inter-subjective fluidity involved in this process. Therefore this project develops an experimental position that evolves out of an ambition for a reciprocal relationship between audience and work. This is a non-didactic<sup>1</sup> approach, aimed at encouraging contact between viewer and film in an embodied exchange.

Methods are applied striving for an unhindered aesthetic that limits studio post-production to a bare minimum, with a utilitarian strategy that incorporates a real time methodology. The option of framing with the camera involves a specific choice of imagery positioned within a strong historical cinematic sensibility. The movement of the camera through space is a discerning factor, where a visual sense of the uncanny, horizontality and pulse, underpin the choice of video ‘sets’ as a means of enhancing a kind of visual ambiguity and uncanny encounter in the works, that are aimed at affect *in* the body/s of the audience.

The following exegesis is outlined in four major chapters commencing with a brief preliminary introduction to the arena of corporeal visibility and how humans see. This idea is also considered in relation to the French phenomenologist and existential philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty's (1968) theory of the 'chiasm', a dynamic hypothesis of how humans see and embody vision.

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<sup>1</sup> A non-didactic position refers to a position that avoids being instructive. See French philosopher Jacques Ranciere in *The Emancipated Spectator*, (2004). Where he outlines a radical alternative methodology for mediating what he terms the master pupil relationship, in relation to art and politics. Ranciere cites the political implications of the pedagogical scheme as a method based on an inequality of two intelligences, when the master continually reaffirms that the pupil knows less than the master this effectively creates a gap between knowledge and ignorance and Ranciere's term for this process is 'stultification' in (Ranciere: 2007). For Ranciere emancipation is the process of a verification of two intelligences inferring that there is no gap between knowledge and ignorance. Ranciere introduces the notion of the paradox of the 'ignorant master' where the pupil will learn what the master does not know, because the master validates she/he is also learning.



The first three chapters are divided into thematically grouped areas of exploration as follows: Chapter one introduces ideas of the uncanny, vacillation, chiasm, dehiscence and horizontality, and also explores a sequence from the motion picture *Bladerunner*, (1982, dir. Ridley Scott), and video works by Shaun Gladwell and Daniel von Sturmer. This chapter covers specific approaches toward seeing and knowing that encourage embodied vision pertaining to a bodily exchange in cinematic encounter. Chapter two introduces ideas of pulse, rhythm, memory, the afterimage and flicker, and also considers the 1977, video work *Box* by James Coleman. This chapter explores ideas that pertain to operations of the mind body and sense body in embodied vision. Chapter three looks at early cinema, methods of haptic visuality in cinema, and notions of temporal disjuncture, and deals with a sequence from the motion picture *Vampyr*, (1932, dir. Carl Theodore Dreyer). This chapter establishes approaches and studio methods that pertain to registering the screen in cinematic encounter as a material surface in it-self, rather than encountering the illusion of optical narrative. Finally, Chapter four references my own studio methods and practice that develop in parallel to the strategies discussed in Chapters one through three. All works included in this exegesis possess characteristic qualities that could be linked approximately in manner to notions of the uncanny, horizontality, and pulse. By tackling this exegesis with this approach the text serves as an adjunct to a video installation exhibition, rather than an evolving account of my own practice development *per se*.

\*

In her book *Carnal Thoughts*, 2004, film theorist Vivian Sobchack explores ideas concerning film encounter and the viewer. She discusses Synaesthesia<sup>2</sup> a clinical condition that affects the sensory system in the human body. The Synaesthete experiences her/his world very differently from the majority of people. Therefore this condition becomes a poignantly clear example of how a world-view that favours the

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<sup>2</sup> Sobchack proposes that the Synaesthetic suffers a form of cross-modal sensory being. This is considered a clinical condition only when symptoms become extreme. The person concerned might experience colour as a flavour or a number as a taste. Sobchack asserts that this condition actually describes the profound methodology of how the physiological body senses, and makes sense. Most people experience Synaesthesia to a certain degree as part of the normal function of the sensory system involved in perception. This idea may well explain why the viewer can almost smell a movie when encountered visually, or when the hairs on the back of the neck raise in response to something frightening, at these times human beings actually feel touched in the act of viewing with their bodies. Consequently this also explains how the ‘blind’ manage to see without being able to see with their eyes. Therefore, it follows that the notion of the *cinesthetic-subject* points towards a sensate system in film experience that may hold far richer possibilities than currently imagine see (Sobchack: 2004).

intellect over the body fails to accommodate alterity.<sup>3</sup>

In researching the cinematic experience and what it is to see, what is of interest to this thesis project are how ideas surrounding the human sensorium and perception hold richer possibilities for exploration. Here, a main aim is to explore emerging poetic potentialities, through an inquiry into the chiasm<sup>4</sup> between seeing and knowing. The chiasm is specifically accessed in encounters with performative video installation practice. When Sobchack discusses film viewing and the chiasm in embodied vision; she describes it as “the potential of one's whole sensorial being” (2004: 68).

This thesis project argues for embodied vision supported by Merleau-Ponty's theory of ‘chiasm’. This view proposes that it is only within the relationship in-between oneself and an-other that humans see and are seen in the world. This is a phenomenological perspective that challenges notions of a mind/body split. Film theorist Laura Marks, is interested in the nature of embodied vision and the reciprocal relationship involved between viewer and film, she comments that, “haptic<sup>5</sup> visuality implies making oneself vulnerable to the image, reversing the relationship of mastery that characterizes optical viewing” (2000:185). Therefore, the action of seeing becomes an embodied act always actively engaged with the world. Accordingly, this project focuses on the relationships between seeing and Being<sup>6</sup>-in-the-world and knowing. It raises questions about how humans see, and how seeing affects and is connected to the sensate experience of the viewer.

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<sup>3</sup> Alterity is a concept that acknowledges the difference of an-other. In her book *The Skin of the Film*, 2000, film theorist Laura U. Marks considers embodied vision through the methodology of filmmakers who produce what she terms intercultural cinema. This idea implies that there are diverse approaches involved in seeing and knowing that differ from person to person and culture to culture. Although notions of alterity in this instance are aligned with a feminist perspective, they are mentioned here in order to acknowledge cultural difference as an area of possible further interest in the future, and this exegesis leaves this discussion here. This thesis project however, does consider notions of alterity through an interest in exploring the significance of how human beings connect to the world through notions of an-other in relation to seeing and knowing.

<sup>4</sup> The chiasm is Merleau-Ponty's term for his theory that unpacks the mechanics of how humans see and perceive the world see (Merleau-Ponty: 1968). This will be discussed in greater detail later on in this exegesis.

<sup>5</sup> Haptic visuality is performed in the body as a multi-sensory system of seeing and knowing. Marks suggests that: “...haptic perception privileges the material presence of the image. Drawing from other forms of sense experience, primarily touch and kinesthetics”: see (Marks, 2000: 163).

<sup>6</sup> Being is the central theme of philosopher Martin Heidegger's thought. He proposes that Being or existence (Dasein) is an immanent poetic force constituted by thought. Therefore Being is aligned with notions of immanence in relation to consciousness and the physical body in relation to temporality and Being-in-the-world. The Being body discussed in this exegesis is therefore not only an object of study but, a profound sensory system of Being-in-momentum see (Lechte: 2003).

Merleau-Ponty equates a visual sense of seeing optically with the tactile sense of touch. Essentially his approach horizontilizes the senses allotting equal weight to all the faculties at play involved in the action of seeing and knowing. In his final text *The Visible and the Invisible*, 1968, Merleau-Ponty uses such terms as ‘to palpate with ones eyes’. Thus in relation to these issues his thought in general recognises vision as a system of touch,<sup>7</sup> he argues that:

...he who sees cannot possess the visible unless he is possessed by it, unless he is of it...It is that the thickness of flesh between the seer and the thing is constitutive for the thing of its visibility as for the seer of his corporeity; it is not an obstacle between them, it is their means of communication. (1968: 134-135)

## **Chapter 1: 2.0 The Uncanny, Vacillation, Chiasm, Dehiscence and Horizontality**

### **2.1 The Uncanny: Sensory Experience and Film**

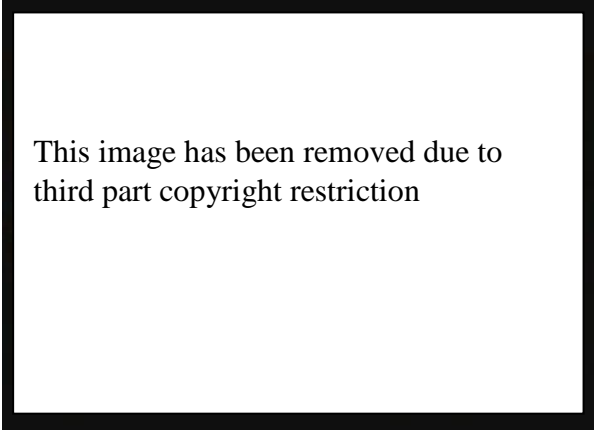
In her essay ‘I Think, Sebastian, therefore ...I Somersault’, 1997, film theorist Lesley Stern posits her thoughts on the uncanny in relation to the viewer and film experience. She discusses her ideas about figures of doubling, disembodiment, momentum and the unfamiliar. Stern asserts that the genre of cinema plays with notions of the visible and the invisible arguing that, “cinema...systematically plays on a slide between the familiar and the unfamiliar” (1997: unpaginated www). She suggests that the cinematic encounter can become unusual in the experience of the viewer when fed back within the temporal form of cinema, and this occurs because the cinema plays with certain ‘uncanny procedures’:

The cinema gives us the experience of time, but in temporalizing it plays *all the time* on a series of indeterminacies: here/there, appearance/disappearance, life/death, past/future...The cinema taps our imagination, our unconscious, to produce a sensory affect of dissonance at the very moment of identity. (1997: unpaginated www)

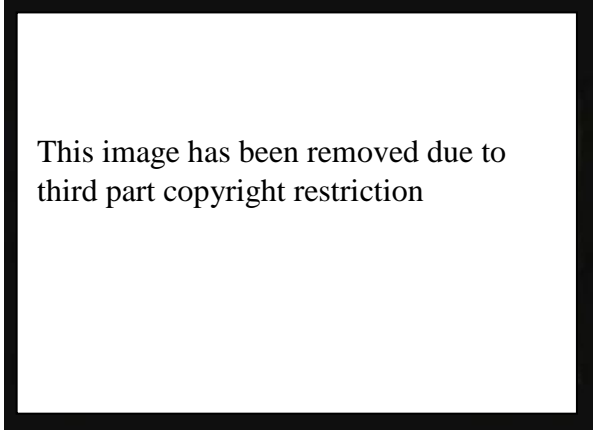
From this perspective a key interest for my research project focuses on ideas of uncertainty and sensory experience that can occur within the cinematic encounter.

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<sup>7</sup> Merleau-Ponty’s (1968) ideas on vision as touch may appear to reduce sensory experience to a purely phenomenological state. However, this exegesis will demonstrate how notions of embodied vision expand to include ideas of memory, temporality and the vast network of intellectual labour involved in human seeing and knowing in relation to Being bodies that see.



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Ridley Scott, *Bladerunner*, 1982

Stern discusses the film *Blade Runner* (1982, dir Ridley Scott), she describes a mise en scene where Pris, a replicant, hides from Deckard amongst a room full of mannequins and automata (1997: unpaginated www). Deckard studies Pris closely trying to ascertain whether she is human or replicant. The framing of the camera cuts to Pris as she heaves at Deckard in a sudden action that is simultaneously directed at the audience. Unexpectedly, she erupts into rapid movement somersaulting through the air before landing on Deckard's shoulders. A fight ensues and Pris is shot and killed. Stern describes her own sensory response to this scene as follows:

...One moment she is immobile (in a room full of mechanical and artificial toys she appears to be a wax doll); the next moment she is galvanized into life, her body moving at the speed of light. The force of her somersault charges the air; reconfiguring space and time, her bodily momentum is transmitted and experienced in the auditorium as bodily sensation. My stomach lurches. (1997: unpaginated www)

This is an example of the uncanny as sensory affect, with the event itself manifesting as an almost palpable sensation *in* the body/s of the audience, where “*my stomach lurches*” (1997: unpaginated www). There is an undetermined quality of uprootedness from one's own Being that is unfamiliar: *unheimlich*. Stern argues that in *Blade Runner* this affect is brought about because the activity on screen happens so quickly that the viewer does not have time to catch up with her/himself. Therefore there is a slippage between the action on the screen and the recognition of the viewer. She suggests that, “its like what happens when you are in a lift and suddenly without warning it drops-instantaneously the movement of the lift *is in you*” (1997: unpaginated www).

And with regard to the somersaulting action on screen, as the body of the viewer returns to an upright position, there is “a charge, a whoosh, a sense of exhilaration” (1997: unpaginated www). Like going over a bump in the road at high speed when your stomach unexpectedly leaves your body for a moment, then abruptly it drops back in to place leaving a kind of corporeal charge within your Being body, a sensation that shifts somewhere between fear and excitement. The sensation remains *in* your body akin to a kind of thrill. Stern argues that the uncanny in film experience is embodied *in* the body/s of the audience because it is *performed* in cinema, and this uncanny experience occurs through a reconfiguration of time and space through movement<sup>8</sup> (1997: unpaginated www).

## 2.2 Being Bodies that See

Theorists Catherine Vasseleu and Sobchack are both interested in the problem of Being bodies that see. This idea introduces the paradox of Being, which brings together the notion that humans are both an essence and a physiological entity, the notion that humans are Being bodies that see, have conscious awareness of self as consciousness, and simultaneously are objects or Being bodies that can be seen by others. In relation to this paradox, Vasseleu discusses Merleau-Ponty’s notion of ‘flesh’ and the ‘lived body’, which retains an alternative modality to that of the body as merely physiological:

...Flesh is Merleau-Ponty’s term for the prototypical structure of all subject-object relations. In every instance of this relation, flesh defines a position which is both subject (a subjective reality) and object (objectifiable for others), and also simultaneously a subjectivity which is internally divergent with itself. In other words, flesh expresses the inscription of difference within the same. (1998: 26)

Therefore she asserts that the flesh of the, ‘lived body’ is constituted as “a cultural identity produced within the perceptions that dawn through it” (1998: 28). The ‘lived body’ negotiates the world engaging imagination, thought, and all modes of sentient activity within a synoptic<sup>9</sup> physical body. This is involved in the action of corporeal experience as part of a world gestalt.<sup>10</sup> And this world reciprocates a model of seeing and

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<sup>8</sup> Following on from Stern’s ideas the performative action of the movement of the camera through time and space becomes key to this thesis project: this will be followed more closely in Chapter four.

<sup>9</sup> Synoptics, in relation to perception, are localized in a biological body see (Sobchack: 1992).

<sup>10</sup> Gestalt is an idea relating to wholeness which considers experiences as more than the sum of parts: “For both the Gestalt psychologists and Merleau-Ponty, the figure-ground correlation is the fundamental basis of perception-whether- it is prereflectively lived-through as existential engagement with the world or

Being through a constantly reversible exchange. Again Vasseleu suggests that, “The body is therefore a hinge; an articulation of the world; an *entre-deux*.<sup>11</sup> Alternatively, it is a fold – never reducible to the difference in which it is created” (1998: 27). These ideas consider the act of viewing as reversible, and subsequently reversibility has become central to this thesis project. If embodied vision performs a reversible exchange between viewer and viewed: what is it to be a Being that sees, and a Being that is seen?<sup>12</sup> This thesis project raises these questions through video practice that urges embodied responses in the viewer. The visual movement on screen in the accompanying video work encourages a sensory response in the body/s of the audience. And these sensory encounters give rise to a type of perceptual questioning in the lived experience of the viewer, a questioning of her/his Being-in-the-world.

The arena of the uncanny becomes a key focus for this thesis project in that the uncanny appears to have this quality that can manifest as a profoundly *affecting* sensory experience. In relation to 'affect' and how the human body sees, in his book *Parables for the Virtual*, 2002, theorist Brian Massumi argues that perception within the human body involves “multiple levels that have different logics and temporal organizations”. He asserts that these levels resonate and coexist, proposing that: “Affect is their point of emergence”. This resonating pitch builds in affect, developing a deeply profound sensing in embodied vision by way of intensity and the ‘intelligent body’ (2002: 32-33). An uncanny sensation can *vacillate* in the body/s of the audience hovering around the periphery of understanding. By focusing on the area around the edge of 'an articulation in words' this thesis projects ambition for the audience is to encounter 'affect' in uncanny or ambiguous experience in the subsequent video work produced.

### 2.2.1 A Kind of Self-Doubt, a *Vacillation*

In the film *Blade Runner*, Stern posits that, “Pris’s performance is not a demonstration of presence. It is an assertion that subjectivity, history, memory (manufactured or not) are lived through the body; but simultaneously it is an enactment of the momentariness of the body” (1997: unpaginated www). In relation to film viewing and the effect of

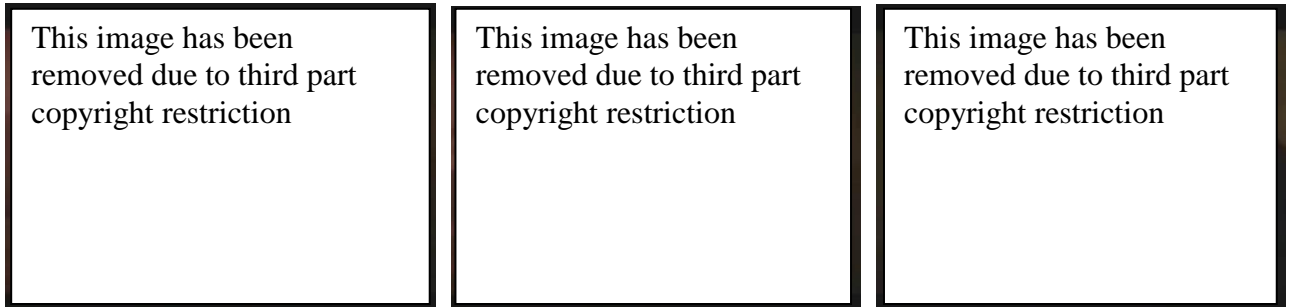
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whether it is reflectively and reflexively turned back on itself and transformed in the action of consciousness to its object”: see (Sobchack, 1992: 70).

<sup>11</sup> *Entre-deux* refers to the action of the chiasm as 'in -between-two' see (Vasseleu: 1998).

<sup>12</sup> Research question adapted from questions originally used by Sobchack in *The Address of the Eye* (1992: 49).

encountering uncanny procedures on the screen, this may also be linked to ideas of disembodiment in viewing and how this affects an undetermined sense in the viewers immediate space. The space of her/his body in the world is fraught with doubt as it hovers between a sense of *in-dwelling* and uprootedness.<sup>13</sup>



Ridley Scott, *Bladerunner*, 1982

Stern argues that Pris's somersaulting scene in *Blade Runner* performs<sup>14</sup> the uncanny with a play between mobility and immobility, and uncertainty between the characters of Pris and Deckard. It is through the action of doubling or indeterminacy in the viewer that the uncanny is performed, like a kind of self-doubt, *a vacillation*. Therefore, the viewer's capacity to determine between that which is her/him self and that, which is the self on screen is brought into question (1997: www. unpaginated). Sobchack concurs that embodied experience and the uncanny at the movies, "is an experience of seeing, hearing, touching, moving, tasting, smelling in which our sense of the literal and the figural may sometimes vacillate, may sometimes be perceived in uncanny discontinuity" (2004: 76).

### 2.3 The Chiasm and Film Experience

In relation to the significance of seeing and knowing Merleau-Ponty's notion of the chiasm offers an innate ability to corporeally sense the uncanny, and as such the chiasm signifies both viewer and viewed. It constitutes an 'in-between momentum', and is an

<sup>13</sup> Martin Heidegger is also interested in notions of uprootedness in terms of Being in its uncanniness. He discusses this as Being that is "...not-at-home...naked...thrown into the nothingness of the world" see (1996: 255).

<sup>14</sup> 'Performs the uncanny' is addressed here as the way that the uncanny is experienced in the body of the viewer when encountering the temporal movement on screen. The uncanny is also simultaneously performed in the body of the film.

idea related to human consciousness in its performative actioning within a world gestalt. The chiasm therefore signifies a theory of how humans see, and how humans make how they see matter. It intertwines in a criss-crossing motion always in a contingent state, performing an inter-subjective, and sentient, mode of 'Being-in-momentum'.<sup>15</sup>

In relation to the phenomenology of film experience, the action of the chiasm suggests that there is a reciprocal relationship implicated in the act of viewing; and this act constitutes a reversible exchange that is engaged in by both the body/s of the audience and the film. In support of this idea Sobchack (1992) argues that the act of seeing and knowing can be related to performing the chiasm in film experience, where both film and viewer perform the act of viewing. Marks discusses the role of the viewer at the movies:

If one understands film viewing as an exchange between two bodies-that of the viewer and that of the film-then the characterization of the film viewer as passive, vicarious, or projective must be replaced with a model of a viewer who participates in the production of the cinematic experience. (2000: 149-150)

This idea of 'exchange' between viewer and film also suggests that the act of embodied vision involves the viewer as auteur<sup>16</sup> in film experience. And by extension the intertwining exchange between viewer and film raises questions: how does seeing exist and have meaning for the body/s of the audience, and what is it to see and encounter film?<sup>17</sup> Both Sobchack (1992) and Marks (2000) infer that the production of meaning in the cinematic encounter happens because the filmic body and the body/s of the audience are both implicated as Being bodies that see.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> The set of terms inter-subjective, sentient, and Being-in-momentum, will become a significant set of terms of reference as I discuss my studio methods in greater detail in chapter four.

<sup>16</sup> The term auteur implicates the viewer as author, via his or her own contribution to film experience in film encounter.

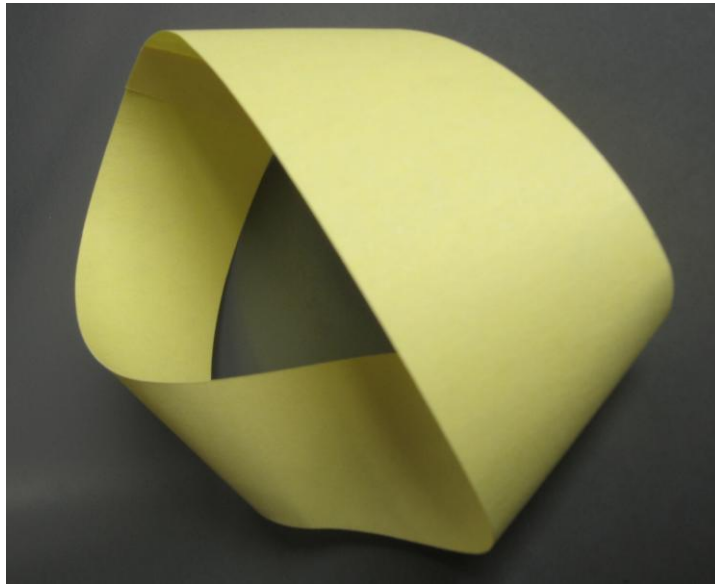
<sup>17</sup> Research question adapted from questions originally used by Sobchack in (1992: 49).

<sup>18</sup> In his 2007, article *Machines to Crystallize Time*, philosopher and sociologist, Maurizio Lazzarato discusses video and Bergsonian theory of time as duration. This values memory and temporality as equal forces in relation to the multi-sensory function of human perception. The human Being body that sees acts like a kind of recording device for vision as memory as time. Thus allowing the viewer the ability to comprehend a past and present through the mechanism of the body, because it crystallizes time as memory. Following on from this if this idea of 'seeing' is transferred to the mechanism of the camera as a Being body that sees, this also crystallizes time through memory by recording what it sees as a Being body that sees. Lazzarato stresses an emphasis on Bergsons theory of temporality as a, "duration as force, and it acts like one because it produces the capacity to 'feel', to be affected" (2007: 95). This is also aligned with the thought of French philosopher Gilles Deleuze that also acknowledges an immanent force at play in the actioning of a perceptive field see (Lazzarato: 2007). This particular topic is related to a peripheral level of research involved in this thesis project.



### 2.3.1 The Mechanics of the Chiasm, and Dehiscence

In relation to the question what is it to see and encounter Merleau-Ponty (1968) suggests that there is a breaking open in the mechanics of the chiasm; he uses the term *dehiscence*.<sup>19</sup> The action of dehiscence describes a continual opening out onto the horizon of perception, when seeing is almost realised,<sup>20</sup> it subsequently folds back inside the flesh of the lived body in a perpetually performed act that could be visualised in terms of a Möbius-strip.



Möbius strip, 2009

The Möbius strip is a mathematical equation that forms a loop with a single twist in it. If one follows the strip around its circumference it becomes apparent that it is one sided. The chiasm is thus implicated as an action of doubling, like being both sides of the same coin, or two hands of the same body touching. As humans *palpate* with their eyes the chiasm is *performed* perpetually moving back and forth between the visible and the invisible. So for Merleau-Ponty humans see but *at-a-distance*, as visibility is folded back into invisibility add infinitum creating a perceptive field. Therefore the chiasm

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<sup>19</sup> Dehiscence is a biological term that is described as “the natural bursting open of capsules, fruits, etc, for the discharge of their contents”: see *Webster Encyclopaedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language*. (1996). NY/Avenel: Grammercy Books.

<sup>20</sup> Vasseleu discusses dehiscence and the chiasm:

The challenge of the chiasm for Merleau-Ponty is to gather, if incompletely, what comes of nothing, what comes out of the void. Chiasm is the name Merleau-Ponty gives to the motion of perpetual dehiscence, in which perception is understood as a being in momentum. (1998: 30)

suggests an inter-twinning action that connects a persons Being-in-the-world to themselves through notions of an-other. Vasseleu supports the issue of seeing at-a-distance, where she posits that: “This negative is not nothing. It is an unrepresentable meaning which is expressed in the visible – as an intangible or invisible or silence which none the less we touch and see and hear” (1998: 30).



Shaun Gladwell. *Double voyage*, 2008

#### **2.4 Shaun Gladwell, *Double Voyage*, 2008**

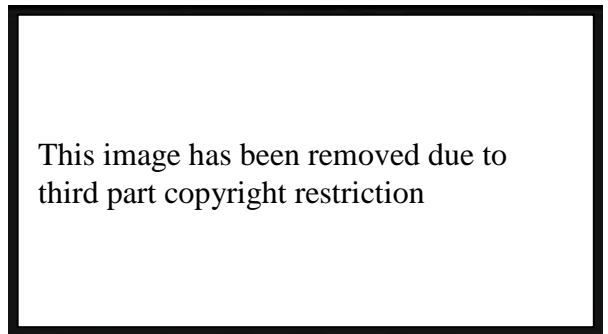
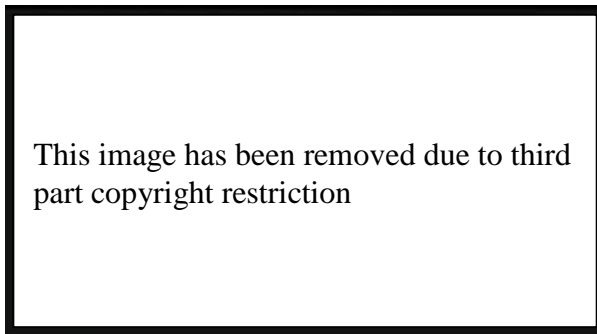
In his exhibition *Double Voyage*, 2008, video artist Shaun Gladwell poses visual conundrums that undermine social and visual expectations. The camera follows a man with no legs who is riding a skateboard hanging from his arms. This action is rendered in slow motion as the skateboarder rides down the ramp of an indoor car park. The image has been inverted, what ought to appear upside down, is corporeally and paradoxically experienced as the right way up. The visual method of inverting the image

encourages affect in the body/s of the audience. There is an intense sense of indeterminacy in the body of viewer. It would seem that the methodology of inverting the image affords the viewer a profound corporeal sensation of dissonance, a doubled sense. The viewer begins to question what is seen, and there is an uncanny discomfort as the viewers body attempts to catch up with the image on the screen. While trying to adjust to this gravitational impossibility yet simultaneously knowing that what is presented as real, is unreal. Subsequently this video work is experienced as a poetic force, as a form of sensory immediacy kicks in and the encounter takes on its own momentum.

So the uncanny as a phenomenological state questions notions of truth, and in comparison to the rapid action of the ‘somersaulting charge’ that Stern (1997) discusses with the film *Blade Runner*, Gladwell’s video work incorporates the effect of slow-motion action that appears to heighten an uncanny dissonance in the body/s of the audience.<sup>21</sup> Gladwell’s work raises questions about the potential success of video work in relation to affect and intensity. For example: how might a video work resonate in the body/s audience after the actual encounter, and what makes the work carnally memorable? *Double Voyage* is Gladwell’s simple play with the ontology of the visual, with what is before ones’ very eyes and how this incredibly simple approach can become intensely powerful.

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<sup>21</sup> As will be discussed in Chapter four, in comparison my own practice uses the method of real-time, the eye of the body of the camera *sees in real time*.



Daniel von Sturmer, *Tableaux Plastique* (sequence 2), 2008

### 3.5 Daniel Von Sturmer, *Tableaux Plastique* (sequence 2), 2008

Video artist and sculptor Daniel von Sturmer's practice, like Gladwell's, challenges the viewer's expectations, his practice poses visual questions around notions of truth. Von Sturmer's work, *Tableaux Plastique*, 2008, comprises of a multi-video screen presentation. This work appears to straddle the boundaries of video installation and painting. The installation is presented in a black and white format, and this black and white method suggests a historic sensibility. The imagery is technically simplistic, and when viewed over a period of time the methods of how these images are made are revealed to the viewer. One becomes acutely aware that paint is being dripped dropping from a height onto a horizontal surface that consequently suffers the liquid to bleed and expand, as it slowly forms formal patterns. Could this suggest some 1960s educational television programme where a presenter might be demonstrating simple ways to perform scientific experiments for children? This moving painting appears to defy gravity, questioning notions of truth with the strategy of play between the vertical and the horizontal. This questioning occurs because the work is presented to the viewer to be read vertically. This reading however, soon gives way to the suggestion of its birds-eye construction and method.

There are similarities between Gladwell's *Double Voyage*, and von Sturmer's *Tableaux Plastique* (sequence 2), in that both artists use methods that disturb both the viewers sense of expectation, and a visual gestalt.<sup>22</sup> With *Tableaux Plastique* (sequence 2), von

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<sup>22</sup> In relation to notions of a visual gestalt, in the book *Formless a User's Guide*, 1997, art historian and theorist Rosalind Krauss asserts that human perception is of a vertical paradigmatic disposition. In relation to gestalt psychology and perceptual space, she suggests that:  
...for the subject of vision, the subject who is using the image to stabilize his own ego around a centre of consciousness, all images – whether seen on a horizontal plane or not – will enter the space of his or her

Sturmer disrupts notions of an upright reading of space in the filmic encounter, with methods that question the human body's sense of verticality. However, in terms of embodied vision, von Sturmer's practice appears to emphasise a more lateral reading, encouraging more of an intellectualised response. In comparison it would seem that while both von Sturmer and Gladwell use the method of inverting the image, Gladwell's blend of methods overall, appear to afford the viewer a more bodily uncanny encounter and affect, whereas von Sturmer's practice tends to urge the viewer to access more of a mind response through a kind of narrative: both these artists work with methods that reveal the structures of how their work is made.

## **Chapter 2: 3.0 Memory, the Afterimage, Pulse<sup>23</sup> and Flicker**

The previous chapter argues for 'uncanny encounters' as affect in embodied vision that paradoxically disembodies the viewer in her/his own space in-the-world, and discusses methods involving horizontality that can question the viewer's sense of a visual gestalt. These affects of 'uncanniness' are established as powerful multi-sensory processes that resonate as profoundly evocative encounters in the embodied experience of the viewer. Accordingly, these methods give rise to a transparent approach to making video work and this transparency affords the audience the opportunity to experience the work as sensual immediacy in the body, rather than buying into a narrative response driven by the mind.

This chapter argues for 'pulse' as a method that sensually disrupts the body, urging multi-sensory affects that *palpate* both with the body of the film, and the body/s of the audience, while also considering the operations of the mind within memory. The human body produces a space of immanent potential in film encounter that accesses memory in

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imagination as upright: aligned with the verticality of that viewer's own body" see (Bois, Yve-Alain. & Rosalind, E Krauss, 1997: 90).

<sup>23</sup> On this notion of pulse, see Krauss (1981) who argues that repetition as method developed through the 1960's with the minimalist notion of 'one thing after another'. She asserts that repetition as a method was a way to escape setting up rational relations, where mechanical repetition works to resist intellectualised meaning. She describes *Hand Catching Lead*, 1969, a 3-minute film by sculptor Richard Serra that involves this method. This thesis project experimented with the strategy of 'one thing after another'. Experimentation with repetition as an approach was successful at pushing out the boundary of understanding and the viewer's sense of perception. This area of interest involved thinking about how the action of repeating an image relentlessly could work to defy an intellectualisation of the event, and therefore, enhance sensory experience.

the action of creating a perceptive field. The afterimage is the field of memory in the human body which surfaces in this *performed* process.

The performed act of disruption in pulse, also resonates in the lived body at a higher pitch, where 'affect' creates a sense of connectedness in-the-world through notions of an-other in embodied vision. The action of dehiscence and the Möbius strip alerts humans in the act of perception, to their connection with the world in an embodied exchange as Being bodies that see. On the character of this exchange and notions of an-other, Vasseleu sights the chiasm and the intercorporeality of 'flesh', by proposing that:

...Merleau-Ponty literally extends the body and its *entre-deux* into the communion and solidarity of self and other by transposing the motif of the double touching into the objective world...The concordant operations of the other's body and my own are one intercorporeal being, which supports a perceptual faith in a common world. (1998: 30-31)

The above mention of 'faith in a common world' points toward ideas of 'a priori'<sup>24</sup> common experience in human perception. This raises questions: Are there common qualities made manifest in perception. Is there a kind of general encounter experience triggered through disruption in pulse, and is this common experience accessed through an operation of the mind within memory?

### **3.1 The Flicker in Cinema, Disrupting the Flow and the Afterimage**

When Rosalind Krauss discusses her theory of the 'flicker' in cinema, she proposes that "the flicker film was invented to stop time, to disable the afterimage's perceptual mechanism by means of which the visual 'persistence' of information contained in one film frame would bleed into the next" (Bois & Krauss, 1997: 161). This idea of the flicker as a method was applied in early cinema by interchanging each still frame in a flow of motion. The idea behind the insertion of the 'gap' between the still frame was an attempt to break the visual 'flow' with a view to provide the means by which the viewer could 'see beyond the illusion'. Theoretically this would enable the viewer to see the real frame with more clarity, and this idea could be compared to Martin Heidegger's notion of 'revealing that which is concealed'.<sup>25</sup> According to Heidegger this idea can only occur once there has been a disruption to the normal flow of events. He contends

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<sup>24</sup> The term a priori implies making assumptions about human nature rather than the testing of empirical evidence.

<sup>25</sup> Heidegger seeks to uncover that which has been concealed. This involves the notion of uncovering the essence of what is, in Heidegger's sense Being, as *Dasein* see (Heidegger: 1996).

that:

The structure of being of what is at hand as useful things is determined by references. The peculiar and self-evident “in itself” of the nearest “things” is encountered when we take care of things, using them but not paying specific attention to them, while bumping into things that are unusable. Something is unusable. This means that the constitutive reference of the in-order-to to a what-for has been disturbed. The references themselves are not observed, rather they are “there” in our heedful adjustment to them. But in a *disruption of reference*-in being unusable for...-the reference becomes explicit. (1996: 70)

This thesis project incorporates disrupting the visual flow of motion on screen as a studio method in video practice, in order to urge the viewer to see in a more profound manner. As Heidegger highlights, any flow of motion in the action of perception is largely an unconscious act: “in a *disruption of reference*-in being unusable for...-the reference becomes explicit” (1996: 70).

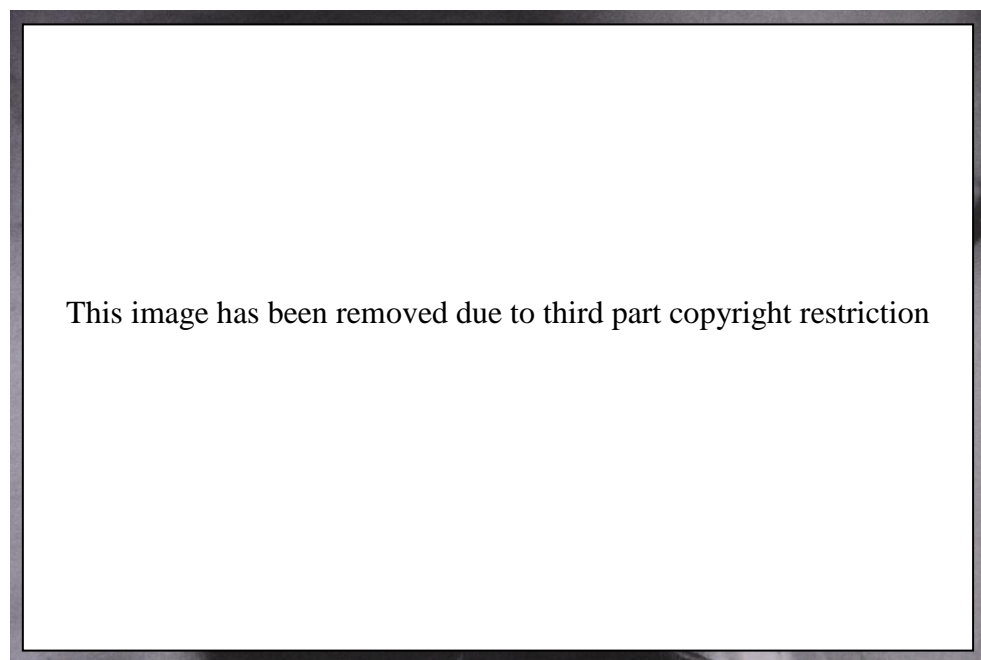
In relation to cinematic encounter and the flicker, Krauss contests that the afterimage in film experience is never actually disabled via this visual disruption. Instead the interstitial space provided acts as a kind of repository in a perceptual sense for the ongoing advance of the afterimage embodied in the imaginative and carnally lived experience of the viewer. She argues that with pulse, the body/s of the audience contribute to the temporal fabric of the filmic experience through the affect of the afterimage (Bois & Krauss, 1997).

With these ideas in mind, concerns emerge pertaining to a phenomenological perspective as a method that appears to favour consciousness in film experience. Is the affect of the afterimage merely an optical palpation, or does the action of pulse reinforce a profound relationship between the body/s of the audience and the film? Krauss suggests that the afterimage in embodied vision behaves as follows:

...What we “see” in those interstitial spaces is not the material surface of the “frame,” nor the abstract condition of the cinematic “field,” but the bodily production of our own nervous systems, the rhythmic beat of the neural network’s feedback, of its “retention” and “protention,” as the nerve tissue retains and releases its impressions. (Bois & Krauss,, 1997: 161)

So it would seem that the afterimage in film experience is a dimension of the ‘lived body’, it accommodates a free flowing *performed* act that criss-crosses the inter-subjective, sentient system of the viewer as Being-in-momentum. This is simultaneously connected with the body of the film and doubled within the body of the viewer as an-

other, in pulse. This thesis project argues for the act of seeing and knowing in relation to film encounter as a complimentary system of parallel processes that engage memory, consciousness, temporality, matter and space in *performing* the chiasm. And the degree or emphasis toward mind operation or sense operation is relative and contingent to the character of the encounter. As discussed in Chapter one Massumi insists that ‘affect’ in relation to embodied vision is a point of ‘emergence’ where seemingly opposing levels resonate and coexist. He uses the term ‘out of phase’ in relation to these complexities as, “implicit form cannot be understood as a shape or structure. It is more a bundle of potential functions localized, as a differentiated region, within a larger field of potential” (2002: 34).



James Coleman *Box* (*Ahfareturnabout*), 1977

### 3.2 James Coleman, *Box*, 1977

How might ‘pulse’ trigger affect *in* the body/s of the audience? (Bois & Krauss: 1997) reference the Irish video artist James Coleman and his work *Box*, 1977. Krauss asserts that Coleman also uses repetition and the shock rhythm of the beat in order to negotiate moving image practice in relation to the viewer.<sup>26</sup> She posits that the repetition in

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<sup>26</sup> This thesis project approached the studio method of ‘pulse’ in a similar way, where a disruption to the visual flow of motion on screen was applied through ‘pulse’ as a key studio method. This is considered in greater detail in Chapter four.



Coleman's work can be read as a form of violence, where the alternating visual stopping and starting correspond to notions of extinction and death. This rhythm of shock and extinction in repetition uses the element of surprise playing with notions of the unexpected.<sup>27</sup>

Coleman appropriates historic black and white footage sampled from the Gene Tunney-Jack Dempsey return boxing fight, 1927. He applies the method of pulse repeating two sequences of film alternated with a black interstitial gap. He also incorporates pulse in the soundtrack that is edited in order to heighten the overall sense of rhythm in the body/s of the audience. Krauss posits that the subject matter of the moving image is not the important factor here but that, "Coleman's film emphasises movement itself as a form of repetition, of beats that are separated by intervals of absolute extinction, even while the urgency of the rhythm promises the return of another and another" (Bois & Krauss, 1997: 162).

Krauss argues that the affect of pulse in *Box* on the viewer is the rhythmic formulation of two sets of beats, which connect the body/s of the audience with the body of the film. *Box* performs pulse, and this enactment encourages notions of embodiment and community enhanced through the act of pulse in film experience (Bois & Krauss: 1997). Ideas of connectivity and community emerge out of notions of pulse which subsequently become key to this thesis project which considers contact between viewer and film as paramount.

For Krauss the affect of pulse in *Box* also simultaneously works to somehow 'dis-place' the original meaning of reference from the subject matter of a boxing match (Bois & Krauss: 1997). In a comparable way this thesis project also focuses on similar ideas of 'dis-placement' as a strategic approach to video art, encounter and bodily experience. Through the application of methods that visually dis-place the audiences' own sense of bodily equilibrium, or Being-in-ones-own-body as key.

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<sup>27</sup> Krauss draws on the work of Sigmund Freud regarding notions of the shock rhythm in repetition. This is related to Freud's paradox of absence and presence, for Freud the paradox of absence and presence is invoked with the scenario of a traumatic event. When this event is witnessed by a person who is unprepared or taken by surprise, the individual concerned misses the conscious recognition of the trauma they have just witnessed, even though physically present they are somehow absent. The traumatic event passes into the subconscious and according to Freud, the subject will "relieve the anxiety of their own paradoxical absence": see (Bois & Krauss, 1997: 164).

Krauss suggests that pulse in high art since the Enlightenment has been traditionally viewed as more connected to the physical body through erotic arousal in theatre and film, and therefore considered base or even obscene. In her book, *The Optical Unconscious*, 1993, she discusses notions of embodied vision and spectatorship. She points out that the aim of visual art that incorporated a pulse or rhythm was to eroticise the optical eye of the body. Subsequently methods of pulse were aimed at making a profound temporal connection with the body/s of the audience both physically, and psychologically, she suggests that:

...the temporal is mapped onto the space of Precision Optics as the specific beat of desire...a desire that makes and loses its object in one and the same gesture, a gesture that is continually losing what it has found because it has only found what it has already lost. (1993: 216)

A rhythm that extinguishes its own existence in a perpetually performed act becomes a significant method for this thesis project. This rhythm again echoes notions of ‘dehiscence’ in a kind of questioning performed in a visual play between appearance and disappearance. Nietzsche (2000) posits that pulse performs the act of repetition, so that pulse, the world (life) is encountered as it is, even when confronted with the threat of annihilation. Therefore it would seem that pulse destabilizes notions of the spectacle<sup>28</sup> through affect. Pulse bonds<sup>29</sup> the audience and the work, becoming one body profoundly connected *in* movement and time, and this is an undetermined communal force that vacillates back and forth by way of affect, akin to the invisible libidinal force of desire<sup>30</sup> and sensory experience, in the multi-sensory action of the chiasm.

### Chapter 3: 4.0 Early Cinema, Methods of Haptic Visuality, Temporal Disjuncture

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<sup>28</sup> The spectacle is an idea stemming from the tradition of the Platonic scheme, the notion of theatre as a place where the ignorant go to witness pathos, which is deemed to be a disease caused by lack of knowledge. Therefore theatre is seen as a bad thing when it transmits disease through the optical illusion of the spectacle or performance: see (Ranciere, 2007: 272).

<sup>29</sup> A comparison can be drawn between methods of pulse in the attic tragedy of ancient Greek theatre where the Dithyrambic verse performed by the chorus contributed to creating a corporeal connection through sensate experience *in* the body/s of the audience. Discussing ancient Greek theatre German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche responds that: “In attic tragedy there was no separation between the public and the chorus, only a great sublime chorus of dancing and singing satyrs”: see (Nietzsche, 2000: 48).

<sup>30</sup> For the French philosopher Jean-François Lyotard, the ‘figural as event’ is desire in motion. It is a libidinal force see *The Lyotard Reader & Guide* (Crome, K. & Williams, J: 2006).

The previous chapter explores notions of memory, the afterimage, pulse and flicker that embody vision through both operations of the mind of the body, and operations of the sense systems of the body. This chapter progresses the exploration of methods that embody vision through methods of haptic cinema. A key point for this thesis project emerges with the decision to direct specific focus on a more embodied emphasis in cinematic encounter in studio practice. In relation to the allure of early film Marks (2000) raises the idea that a contributing factor to cinema's appeal was due to methods of haptic cinema. She suggests that this happened because audiences were beguiled by their own immediate corporeal responses to the action on screen.

Some specific methods that pertain to haptic visibility in early cinema, use a black and white format and soft focus which enhance a grainy texture overall. These methods encourage a kind of *seeing-in-between-knowing* that embodies vision through bypassing an intellectualisation in encounter. One could posit that this embodied response might have triggered a sense of wonderment in the viewer, like the fascination from the Enlightenment onward when notions of science and the wonders of the unknown internal workings of the body were something outside of everyday experience. Marks (2000) argues that it is the indeterminacy of images, the grainy and scratchy qualities produced in early cinema that had the affect of connecting the audience with the film in embodied vision. As the quality of film production became more sophisticated, a more distanced optical form of vision, by way of intellectualisation and narrative, superseded embodied vision.

As implied in the previous chapter there may be either an emphasis on the optic operations of the mind through memory, or haptic sensing through doing or *performing* in relation to kinaesthetics in cinematic encounter. And although these operations of Being bodies that see, may be identified as distinct ways of seeing, these methods are always at play within the seeing body in film. It is just a shift in emphasis that tips the scale from one to the other. More specifically Marks (2000) argues that the haptic in cinema incorporates methods that urge the viewer to register the screen as a whole, through the multi-sensory system of the body.<sup>31</sup>

In contrast, as discussed in Chapter one, von Sturmer's work *Tableaux Plastique*

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<sup>31</sup> Marks in response to methods employed in haptic cinema also notes that haptic cinema may or may not induce such an affect of embodied vision in every case. She asserts that embodied vision is dependent on the cultural memory of the individual viewer see (Marks: 2000).

(sequence 2), emphasises the optic in cinematic viewing urging the viewer to focus on specific detail, which places an emphasis on a more intellectualised response in the encounter. This thesis project interest lies in the performative potential of seeing and knowing hence, haptic methods in video practice take precedence.

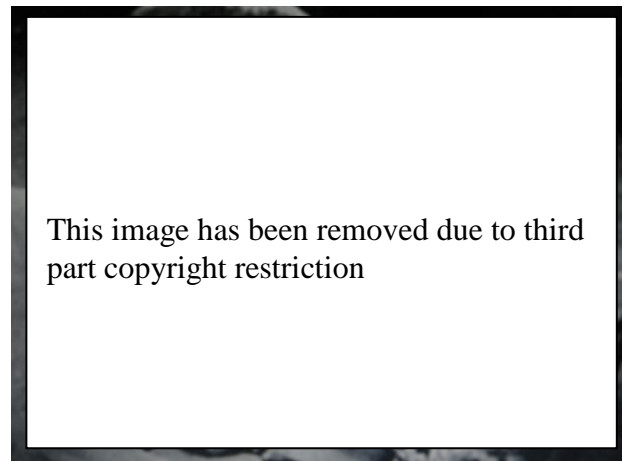
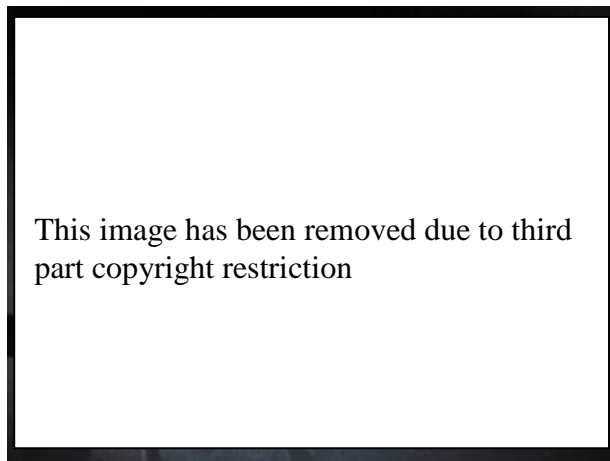
#### **4.1: Carl Theodore Dreyer, *Vampyr*, 1932**

Danish Film maker Carl Theodore Dreyer's *Vampyr*, 1932, could be regarded as a *tour de force* in early cinema. Film scholar Tony Rayns (2008) in his commentary of the motion picture suggests that the affect of *Vampyr* was like a barrage of attacks on the audience because it broke so many conventional rules of story telling. The audiences' initial response to the film was negative, and critics slammed Dreyer's techniques. In retrospect it would seem that the methods employed by Dreyer were positioned as a radical challenge to the narrative structure of his counterparts in Hollywood at that time. Subsequently *Vampyr* was more aligned with the Surrealist films of the early 1900's that looked upon film as an experimental rather than a didactic medium.

Essentially *Vampyr* is a Vampire tale that deals in the grand themes of life and death, reified through a sonorously spiritual and sensuous approach to the film making as a whole. This film was Dreyer's first talkie<sup>32</sup> but it holds a silent sensibility in that dialogue is cut to an absolute minimum. Dreyer creates a texture of film with his excentric construction of cuts and sequences. The soundtrack includes irrational off camera noise that enhances an overall sense of dislocation in the audience, and the camera moves through the three dimensional space of the film producing a sensually evocative and affecting piece of work.

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<sup>32</sup> A talkie is the term for a talking motion picture.



Carl Theodore Dreyer, *Vampyr*, 1932

Dreyer achieves this with his use of light and shadow, and with cross cutting and framing that disrupts space visually so that the audience is at times unable to get a clear sense of where they are within their own space and subsequent encounter with the film. There is a play between the real and the unreal, absence and presence, and a literal shadow world of characters that enhance the sense of some liminal realm of existence, which is both visually cinereous and grainy. The camera frames a world that explores the supernatural through poetic agency. *Vampyr* is 'genre cinema' in that it deals with supernatural themes characteristic of the horror film.<sup>33</sup>

Characters enter the frame from one side and then from another, and are positioned on a landing but are seen on a completely different level of the main building in the film without a clear sense of continuity. Dreyer uses the temporal fabric of the film as a dislocating force,<sup>34</sup> but at the same time this non-chronological temporality manages to set up a rhythm, a pulse that adds to the over all fabric of the film, and in a sense Rayns (2008) suggests that this is what holds the film together. So repetition is used like a pulse that diversifies.

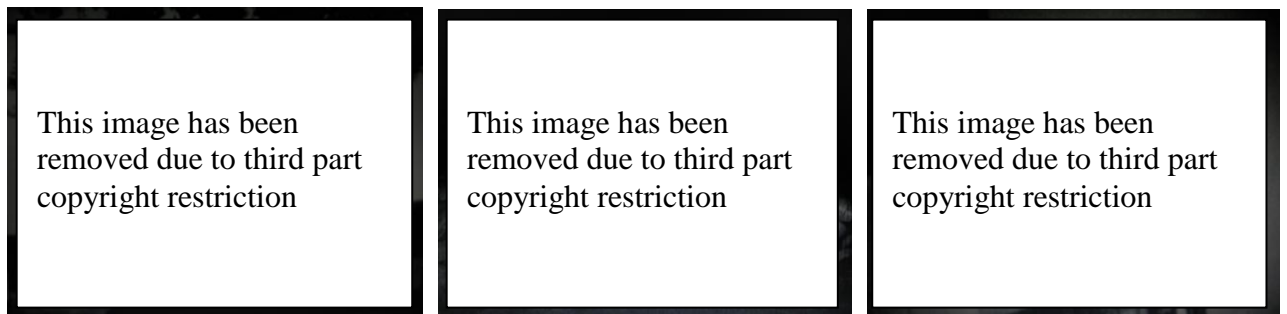
A key scene in *Vampyr* illustrates the power of the uncanny. Allan Gray, Dreyer's main protagonist bears witness to his own funeral. His dream body observes his worldly body

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<sup>33</sup> *Vampyr* (1932) was made around the time when the horror genre first became popular in the films coming out of Hollywood.

<sup>34</sup> Deleuze (1989) discusses temporal disjuncture as a method in film see *Cinema II: The Time Image*. This method became a key influence for filmmakers such as, Orson Wells *Citizen Kane*, 1941, and the overall body of work of David Lynch.

being carried out of a building in a coffin. There is a small window above his face. As the coffin passes carried horizontally on its way to the grave yard, the camera frame jumps from Allan Gray watching the coffin to Allan Gray looking up and out from inside the coffin. Dreyer uses some exquisitely unusual camera angles that play again on uprooting the body/s of the audience from themselves. One moment you watch the film; one moment you are in the film, one moment the film watches you.



Carl Theodore Dreyer, *Vampyr*, 1932

As with the central motivations in this thesis project the fabric of sensuous exchanges between the body/s of the audience and the body of the film is corporeally affecting. The subsequent montage of black and white imagery presented in ‘temporal disjuncture’, works to give a heightened sense of atmosphere where visual language extends far beyond an articulation in words. *Vampyr*’s visually ambiguous fabric as a whole possesses an enigmatic character, a texture that dislocates the viewer in his/her own space. Notions of an uncanny and unfamiliar *intensity* are triggered as an in/out of body experience that happens all at once in an affect that sees what it is to see the body/s of the audience embodied.

#### **Chapter 4: 5.0 Studio Methods and an Experimental Approach**

The previous chapter argues for haptic vision in cinematic experience. This is a way of seeing that urges the viewer to experience the film screen as an overall texture. Haptic visibility *affectively* bypasses an intellectualisation of the encounter, placing particular importance on embodied visibility that connects the body/s of the audience with the body of the film in an embodied exchange as Being-in-momentum. Accordingly this chapter deals with my own studio methods that are geared toward affect as pure sensation in-momentum, which is placed over effect. I examine how perceptual impressions may be held and given space to breathe in conjunction with a visual encounter.

Studio practice is driven by the performative needs of the camera in order to encourage a more haptic response in the body/s of the audience. Therefore a significant period of time is spent testing the simple action of doing, which manifests as moving the camera through space by constructing low-tech apparatus to support the camera for shooting.



Suzie Gorodi, *Standing rig 1 & 2*, 2009

These rudimentary rig devices are modified through experimentation becoming more complex contingent to the performative needs of the camera. All video work is filmed using the video function on an 8.0 mega pixel digital stills camera.

In Chapter one I explored notions of the uncanny and horizontality in relation to the

action of the chiasm, establishing that certain methods such as inverting the image and movement *performed* through space contribute to affects in encounter that vacillate in the body/s of the audience. My practice forwards the question: can the action of 'pulse' and rhythm emphasise the carnality of bodily productive processes in uncanny procedures?

In Chapter two the idea of a pulse and flicker in cinematic encounter, and how these methods create two sets of beats that of the viewer and the film. This thesis project applies pulse with an aim to create two sets of beats, effectively connecting viewer and viewed; a doubled act within the viewer her/himself and between viewer-screen and other members of the audience. The on screen action in these video works play between appearance and disappearance performing in a manner akin to a sort of visual 'dehiscence' that is tested and explored through 'doing'. And as the camera is manipulated to shoot in repetitive actions, this encourages a vacillation of light in the optical field of vision of the viewer, doubling as a kind of oscillating momentum, so repetition is used like a pulse that diversifies.

Chapter three discussed notions of creating a temporal fabric with film. Following on from this idea, I choose to manipulate the camera in repetitively performed actions in real time with a view to emphasising an experimental temporal texture rather than a strict linear narrative. In Chapter two it was established that the afterimage is a space of memory, which may be accessed in the building of a perceptive field. Although this action lends itself more toward the operations of the mind, it never the less contributes to the sentient experience of the lived body in a profound manner. Therefore the momentum of force in Being bodies that see may vacillate back and forth through the affect of the afterimage in pulse. As Merleau-Ponty (1968) implies, like being both sides of the same coin touching, the operations of the mind and the body are one in the action of dehiscence in the *chiasm*. Vasseleu discusses dehiscence and the chiasm:

The challenge of the chiasm for Merleau-Ponty is to gather, if incompletely, what comes of nothing, what comes out of the void. Chiasm is the name Merleau-Ponty gives to the motion of perpetual dehiscence, in which perception is understood as a being in momentum. (1998: 30)





Suzie Gorodi, *Pulse, Pulse, Somersault*, Test 10, March 2009

(Refer *Standing rig 1 & 2*, 31), somersault the camera but are unable to proceed along the ground. These systems are modified to perform a doubled action of movement along the ground simultaneously the device repetitively turns in a rhythmic manner.

Essentially, these actions visually test how uncanny encounters may be ‘bodied forth’ for the audience. Methods of disruption, horizontality and inverting the image, are applied with an overall pulse in the performed act of filming and framing with the camera. These repetitive actions are also visually enhanced in a rhythmic response to the natural lighting conditions that my video work is are filmed under. The lighting in my videos oscillates back and forth between light and dark exposure, this also appears to echo a kind of amorphous visual ‘flicker’.

The intention is to encourage by visual and temporal means an exchange between my audience and my practice. Experimentation involves clunky repetitive procedures intended to disrupt the visual flow of movement on screen, giving the viewer a bit of a visual jolt. These methods hold specifically cumbersome, jerky, and simplistic qualities, and as a consequence, appear to intensify more corporeal encounters for the viewer. Furthermore, an affect in embodied vision is enhanced as a result of this clunky action, which also appears to bypass an intellectualisation of the experience of encountering the movement on screen.

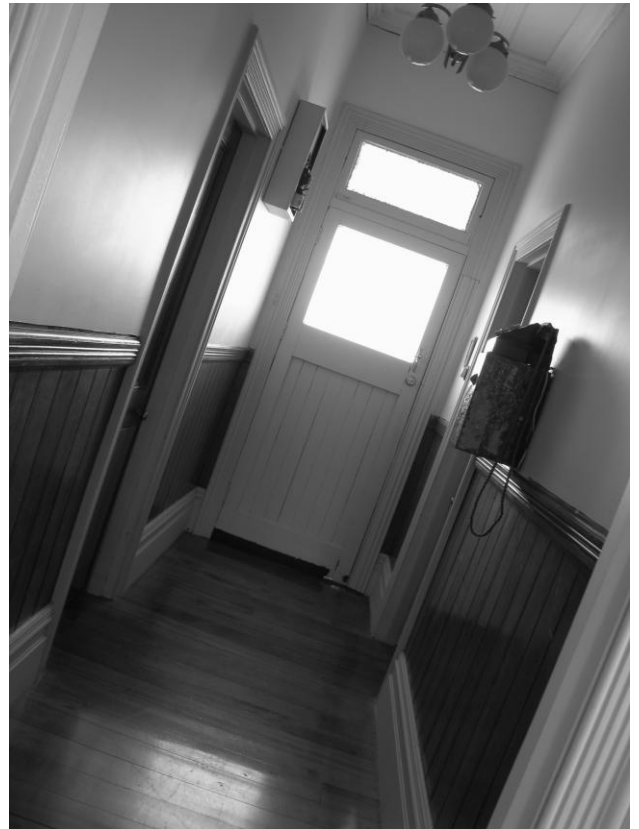


Suzie Gorodi, *Stationary rig 1, Vertical spin rig 4*, detail, 2009

I film in a black and white format to provide a cinematic context that pertains to early cinema. This frames my studio practice within a cinematic sensibility that may be easily recognised by an audience. Studio tests show that visual imagery that is easy to recognise has some power to bypass an intellectualisation of the encounter. Therefore, I seek locations for filming that have familiar cinematic qualities because of the nature of early cinema's popularity and readily recognisable visual style. I incorporate sets with a particular view toward vintage architecture, (refer *Pulse Pulse Somersault*, Test 10, 33), or look at areas that might have some historic association (refer *Vertical Spin*, Test 7, 39).

An effect that darkens the edge of the image (refer *Pulse Pulse Somersault*, Test 10, 33) is discarded in subsequent testing. The intension was to allude to early film with this effect. This strategy specifically appears to defy embodied vision in encounter,

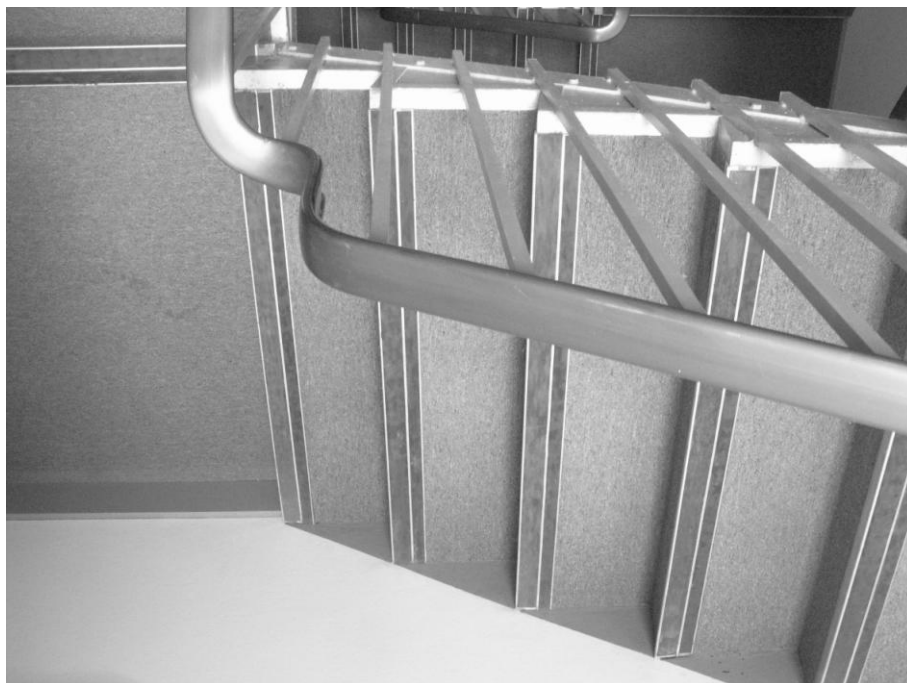
triggering more of an intellectualised response. Under examination any effects added in post-production need to be avoided in order to enhance more direct contact between the body/s of the audience and the body of the film, through an emphasis on pure sensation in the body of the viewer.



Suzie Gorodi, *Spin*, Test 8, still digital photographs taken from test film sequence, black and white digital movie, May 2009

An experimental methodology is *performed* with the framing of the camera and the movement of the eye of the camera. This performative action is a key method once removed from the direct visual experience of the filmmaker. It involves notions of chance, because the eye of the camera records movement through space independently from the eye of the filmmaker. Furthermore replaying the recorded video footage becomes a fresh experience for both filmmaker and audience. The notion of artist as auteur transcends notions of an artist/audience boundary with this experimental methodology. As discussed in Chapter one performing the chiasm in film experience is performed by both the body/s of the audience and the body of the film as a Being-in-

momentum. Accordingly the audience become auteur with their own specifically personal and embodied sensory experience, contributing to the completion of my experimental video practice in momentum.



Suzie Gorodi. *Swing*, Test 6, September, 2009

The aim is to encourage a multi-sensory encounter between my video work and my audience. I am seeking an aesthetic that emphasises an overall texture through temporal

and visual methods that flatten out light and shadow, and as discussed in Chapter three the haptic in cinematic encounter involves methods that urge the viewer to register the screen as a whole. Therefore, I choose not to interfere with the temporal flow of action on screen<sup>35</sup> engaging in a methodology of real time.<sup>36</sup> The real time aspect on screen becomes pivotal to this project through an approach that invests minimum intervention directed toward maximum intensity.

This thesis project aims for the viewer to encounter the visual movement on screen, as the eye of the camera has captured movement in filming. The affect generated out of the on screen action in my video practice is dependent on the interconnection between the body/s of the audience and the film. In support of ideas of contact and film experience Marks suggests that, "...it is most valuable to think of the skin of the film not as a screen, but as a membrane that brings its audience into contact with the material forms of memory" (2000: 243). Accordingly the relationship between the body of the film and the body of the viewer is crucial as the viewer is urged 'to palpate with their own eyes'. The movement of the camera is manipulated at a slow pace, the intent that the viewer registers the screen as a whole in a haptic encounter.



Suzie Gorodi. *Pulse, Pulse, Somersault*. Test site 1, April, 2009

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<sup>35</sup> Vasseleu discusses the temporal flow of action on screen. As video images are captured the rapid movement on screen appears to confuse the human eye, which picks up movement differently to the mechanical eye see stereopsis in (1998).

<sup>36</sup> Here I am using the term real time however, this term may appear to be somewhat inaccurate as a description of the temporal interests my project is looking at because the term real time could appear to be more in keeping with notions of a spatialization of time re Zeno's Paradox. Rather what is suggested here is an immanent sense of temporality as Being in-momentum.

The projection area is installed in line between the floor and ceiling level, which is also aimed at augmenting a more direct sensory encounter for my audience. The space of my video work is therefore by extension aligned with the viewer's own body in space within the gallery itself. The visual texture of graininess and soft focus is reinforced through scale as the video image is projected to a larger size. A larger scale projection also enhances the power of the encounter, effectively enveloping the viewer spatially, urging embodied contact with the material presence of the video work.



Suzie Gorodi, *Mobile Spin rig 5 & Spin rig 6*, 2009



Suzie Gorodi, *Vertical Spin*, Test 7, October, 2009

Key methods emerge that employ strategies that reveal the apparatus. In Chapter one von Sturmer's work *Tableaux Plastique (sequence 2)* applies methods that make the audience aware of how the work is made. His practice has more of an intellectual response in the viewer than Gladwell's and my own practice. However, his approach is of interest in that it reveals the illusion of what is before the eyes of the viewer in a critique of visual mastery. In a similar way my own methods also approach the role and place of the viewer on equal ground through transparent methods that reveal the



structures of production. The framing of the camera reveals part of the apparatus itself (refer *Vertical Spin*, Test 7, 39), and off camera sound<sup>37</sup> creaks as I operate my rig apparatus. This also documents the passage of time and lets the viewer know this movement is made in an unsophisticated manner. A residual splash of water (refer *Pulse Somersault*, Test 12, 40, 41) is left on the lens as the camera continues to record, making its own path through space.

In terms of ‘affect’, a visual sense of the uncanny, horizontality and pulse are generated in my video practice contributing to overall sensations of bodily exchange between viewer and film. So these methods of experimental doing test and explore the inter-subjective, inter-relations of viewer and viewed, in a *chiasmatic vibration* that questions what it is to see and encounter film as a Being-in-momentum, exploring the body/s that see-*in-between-knowing* in film encounter.



Suzie Gorodi. *Pulse, Pulse, Somersault*, Test 12, July 2009.

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<sup>37</sup> For the purposes of this exegesis I have kept an emphasis on the visual methods as more prominent contributing factors in my practice. I would like to note that while acknowledging the importance of sound and audio sensibility in video installation as a powerful tool in embodied vision, I include a nominal mention of sound.





Suzie Gorodi. *Pulse, Pulse, Somersault*, Test 12, July 2009.

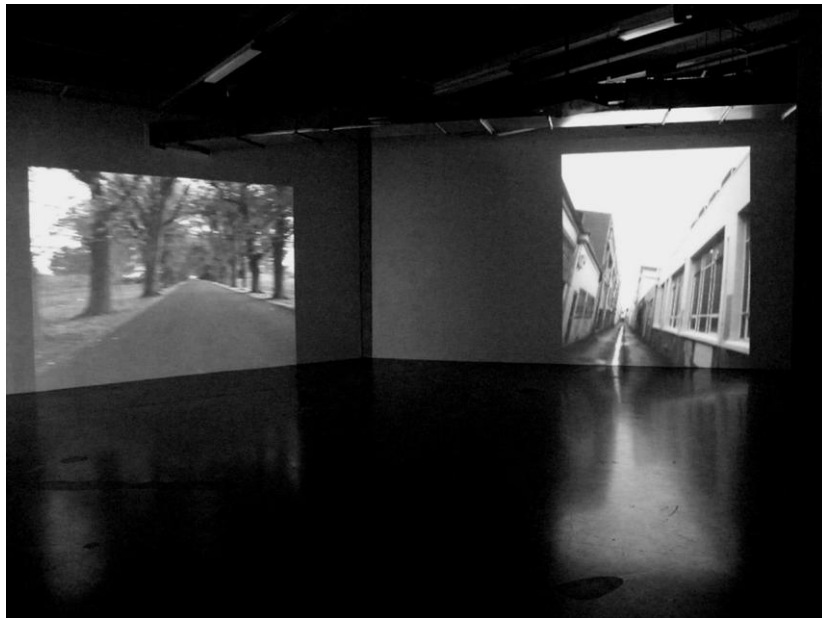
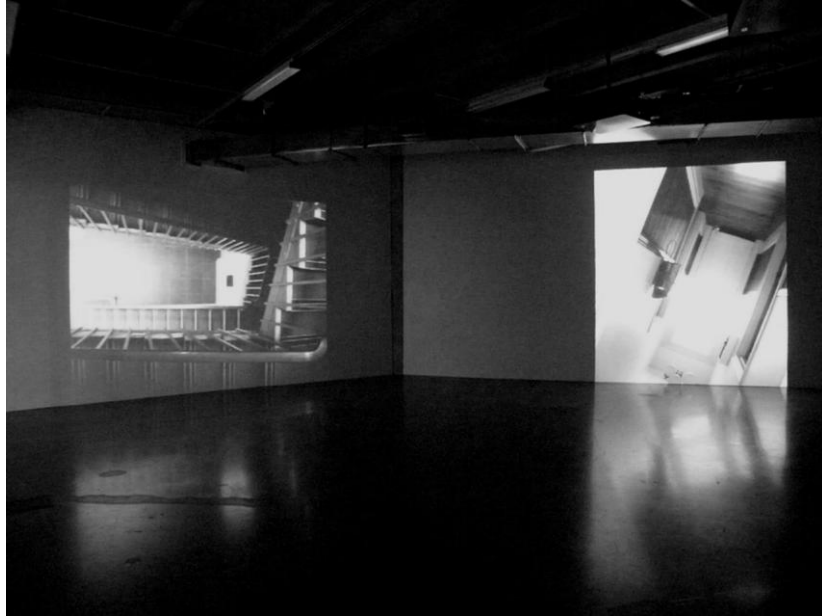
## 6.0: Conclusion

*Pulse, Pulse, Somersault* argues for the significance of embodied vision that encourages emergent possibilities in sensorial encounter and video practice. In bypassing an intellectualisation of the encounter through affect, embodied experience is afforded an opportunity to breathe and indwell. Employing notions of the uncanny, vacillation, pulse, the afterimage, memory and haptic visuality, my video practice seeks out an indeterminacy that hovers as a kind of *seeing-in-between-knowing* in a continual play between viewer and viewed. The field of human perception is accordingly liberated from the limitations of controlled approaches to seeing and knowing, and with these actions in mind, Marks comments on the potential power of embodied vision:

Tactile epistemology involves thinking with your skin, or giving as much significance to the physical presence of an other as to the mental operations of symbolization. This is not a call to willful regression but to recognizing the intelligence of the perceiving body. Haptic cinema, by appearing to us as an object with which we interact rather than an illusion into which we enter, calls upon this sort of embodied and mimetic intelligence...Hence the power of cinema to offer a way of speaking not about, but nearby, its object: a power of approaching its object with only the desire to caress it, not lay it bare. (2004: 190-191)

Through following methods that disrupt and critique visual mastery in video practice, Being bodies that see are encouraged to encounter a fascinating, wonderment of sensual immediacy in the *vacillating* action of performing the *chiasm*. This thesis project explores the arena of temporal duration in video work through affect in the sensate experience the viewer. The encounter is *performed* in the Body/s of the audience as a more profound sense of being-of-the-world-that-sees-and-is-of-me. It is established that in embodied vision an *entre-deux* connects the body/s of the audience with the body of the film as Being-in-momentum in the cinematic encounter. This reinforces that embodied vision driven by affect may indeed hold richer possibilities for seeing and knowing through visual language that 'resists an articulation in words'.

Emerging intrinsic contradictions make themselves present with regard to the point Marks proposes in relation to haptic cinema and its dependency on the cultural memory of the viewer. If notions of embodied vision are purely dependant on the cultural memory of the individual *per se*, is there not also as Merleau-Ponty's notion of chiasm suggests, some zone of 'commonality', of pre-cultural, more primal and collective, response evoked in sensory encounter that pertains to all human beings? A sense of connecting or communing with an-other in video encounter can enrich the potential field of human perception in a profound manner. How powerful might the silent language of an-other become if lived experience, and each encounter were appreciated in such a manner. This thesis project has no ultimate answers, but in its questioning has explored and developed a richly multi-layered perspective engaged with the practice of seeing and knowing, and continues to raise pertinent questions regarding notions of seeing as an embodied experience.



Suzie Gorodi. Installation detail documents 4 black and white digital movies, real time (length variable), looped on 2 data projectors. Title from left to right: *Swing* (included soundtrack), *Spin* (included soundtrack), *Vertical Spin*, *Pulse*, *Pulse*, *Somersault*,

Dimensions: projection landscape to a height 3 metres aspect ratio 4:3, projection portrait to a width 3 metres aspect ration 4:3.

*Aeffect: Across Passion and Response*, A.U.T Postgraduate Exhibition, Gallery 1, St Paul Street Gallery, installation detail, November 2009.

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