

Topographies of the self: a community of others

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Abstract

This multi-channel video project attempts to amplify questions about the psychological interplay between the subject depicted, the site of performance, and how the work unfolds in interaction with the viewer. By working in the space between the real and the imagined; the familiar and the unknown, an ambiguous other emerges. The work investigates a different type of rhythm - one that un-notices the seemingly normal everyday act, whilst drawing out the psychic dimensions that surround it. By amplifying this rhythm through a heightened filmic environment, the work aims for a moment of varying perspectives: a moment that continuously fails to arrive or cohere but is in an ongoing state of formation and exchange. This on-going tease or promise of unity and/or stability attempts to question the way the subject-viewer constructs a perspective of normalcy within the mundane.



Figure 1-1: *Ivy Blue* (2014) - Three-channel video, 4 min 53s (Play video in folder)

1 INTRODUCTION

Through a reorientation with our encounter with images of the mundane, this video project interrogates the boundaries of normalcy. By constructing a heightened domestic environment through the lens, the work attempts to tease out the formation of the self-other within real and imagined spaces. The work aims to reorientate, or even dislocate the subject-viewer from dominant narratives by disallowing a unitary perspective of our seemingly normal everyday through multiple channels. This exegesis is approached by raising open-ended questions about sensations and forms that may be experienced in the work itself. By attempting to situate the subject-viewer in an ongoing state of flux –through continuous shifts and changes –can it question a tendency to return to any singular, stable or coherent perspective within the mundane?

In the chapters *The Fragment* and *The Flesh*, I unpack a sense of psychological duality; a push-pull tension that builds and enfolds the subjects within their domestic surroundings. Through a fragmentation of the work, both within each scene and between multiple channels of video, I test whether the subject-viewer can enter a state of continuous exchange. Perhaps this state of flux produces a type of rhythm in the space as we negotiate between the familiar and the unknown? Similarly, through the repeated actions and gestures which aim to continuously attract and repel, the work opens up a larger field of conflicting binaries: desire-repulsion, pleasure-pain, assurance-anxiety, or reality-fantasy.

In the chapter *The Cinematic*, I discuss ways of drawing out the psychological dimensions of the domestic mundane through a cinematic approach. In particular, the way a cinematic quality can reorientate the normal and the familiar within these spaces. Through socio-cultural discourse and cinematic practices we have come to understand the complexity of the spaces we create and inhabit. Through the lens, the production of such spaces has been unpacked to reveal a web of meanings and associations, be they social, physical, psychological, symbolic and so on. A theatrical film space can often heighten the performativity of all bodies and spaces to question the way the subject-viewer may continuously negotiate their sense of reality-fantasy. The experience of this cinematic space, and installation practice, allows us to question the way we form and make distinctions between our reality and some 'other'.

2 THE FRAGMENT

By attempting to produce an ongoing reorientation with our quotidian perspective, the work aims to slowly unfold or fragment, in relation to the viewer. This sense of fragmentation seems to produce a continuous formation through the lens; a doubt that builds and simultaneously dissolves the certainty between fragments to question the notion of a coherent perspective within the mundane. It's this very continuum between states that the work aims to balance on; forever shifting from one to the other.

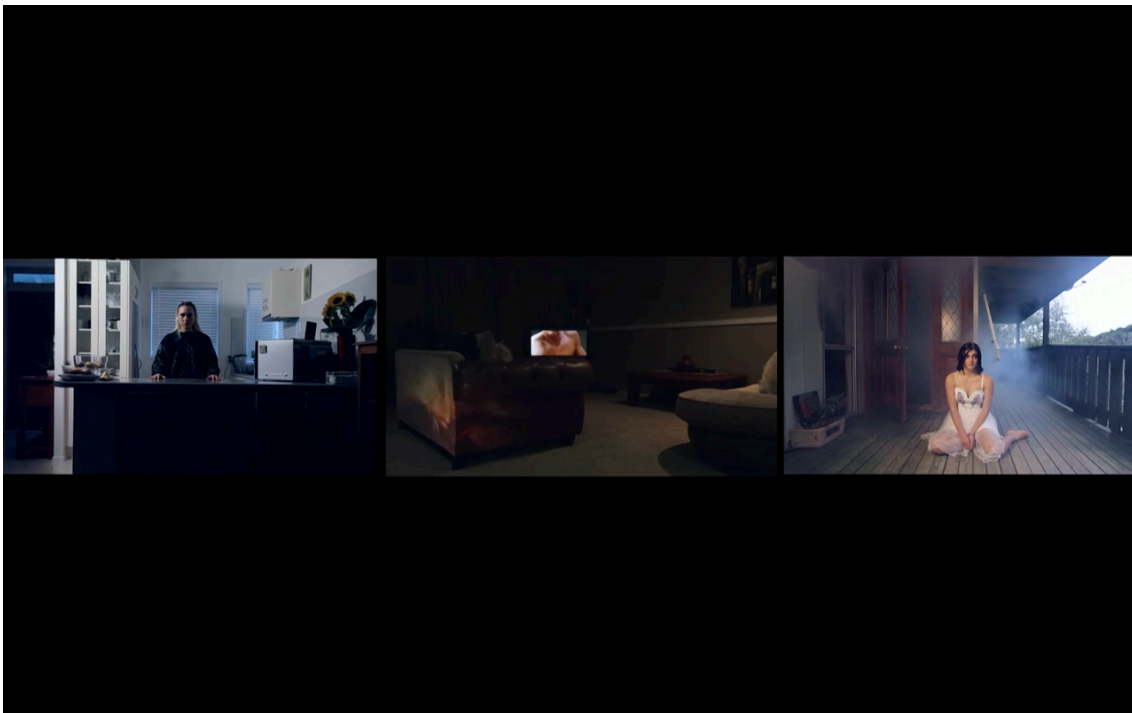


Figure 2-1: *Magnolia Place* (2014) - Three-channel video, 3 min 51s (Play video in folder)

On surface appearance, there is a physical fragmentation of each video work into multiple channels/perspectives. Within each channel there is a symbolic fragmentation through a play with such elements as colour, texture, sound etc. Perhaps what is really at play between these fragments, both within and between channels, is the fragmentation of experience and memory in relation to our encounter with these seemingly normal perspectives.

...The viscous is a state half-way between solid and liquid. It is like a cross-section in a process of change...its stickiness is a trap, it clings like a leech; it attacks the boundary between myself and it"(Jean-Paul Sartre, cited in Shonfield, 2000, p 55).

Within the screen the fragment exists as a psycho-symbolic presence in the work. In some way, I like to think of the fragment as a psychological artefact. That is, a symbolic piece of visual information that has been removed from its physical or metric existence. Be it a burst of deep red nail polish or a slow unfolding texture in the wallpaper, the fragment, unlike the artefactual object, has no defined physicality/structure but exists (through filmic reality) as a slice or piece of meaning/signification that bears within, a fleeting symbolic encounter. The fragment, however subtle or ambiguous it might be, may not have a definite plot but it thrives in affect.

It seems that the psycho-symbolic register they operate on, is not only liminal but is also continuously transforming. How can a slice of sound or a flicker of colour be dislocated through filmic reality? More importantly, through this dislocation can each fragment exist outside of its trace/original iconography or connotation in the world, whilst continuously reproducing its own sense of affect? In other words, these fragments attempt to shift their embodied signs to allow new meanings to emerge within the work. It seems then, this fragmentation is not at all interested in being representational, but rather in the sort of melodic encounter it produces. Does this ongoing interplay between fragments create a rhythmic tension in the space: a tension between the feeling and the idea of each image?

2.1 THE (UN) FAMILIAR

The Uncanny is something hidden which ought to have remained missed but which is brought to light. (Freud, 2003, p39).

I see a potential to offer both a sense of familiarity and an uncanny departure into an unknown through a melodic tension that builds up within and between dislocated fragments. The uncanny fragment has an ability to form some sort of attraction and then produce gradual awareness that this seduction might reveal some other, hidden psychological space. Perhaps, this other space, which the work is investigating or hopes to hinge on, is not only liminal but also a space of ambiguity, as it aims to continuously attract and abstract simultaneously.

Psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud writes in his essay *The Uncanny* (1919), “The German word ‘*unheimlich*’ is obviously the opposite of ‘*heimlich*’ [‘homely’], ‘*heimisch*’ [‘native’] the opposite of what is familiar; and we are tempted to conclude that what is ‘uncanny’ is frightening precisely because it is not known and familiar.” (Freud, 2003, p35). This space of ambiguity has the potential to shift or reposition modes of normalcy within the domestic mundane because it is precisely ‘un-

normal' or 'un-homely'. In other words, it may look and sound familiar but its affect is unknown. Through the ongoing formation of one narrative vignette in relation to another, transitions or movements emerge that may be dissonant, as they balance or tip between reality-fantasy, self-other and the homely and unhomely.

These fragments may act as anchor points – anchor points that position the viewer's conscious/subconscious senses momentarily, before the promise of a familiar colour, sound, texture, sensation etc. melts away and becomes something else. A long bright green hedge, a full jug of milk, a jet of water, a flickering television light, a sweet melodic hum over a distant radio; are these not anchor points for the viewer's own set of collected experiences to arrive and assemble? Moreover, how they might dislocate from this assemblage? Perhaps these anchor points or familiarities are then the entry points to the work. Once we have established a response to the work, how might we negotiate a slow and viscous shift away from these anchor points, allowing them to fade in visibility to allow new forms to emerge through the duration of the work? (Cresswell, Dixon, 2002).

The cinema has significantly developed the treatment of the familiar through the lens to expand visual narratives and modes of storytelling. Filmmakers such as Stanley Kubrick and Wes Anderson have both explored the fragmentation of colour, texture and perspective to reposition the mundane in the hopes of opening up different dialogues and dimensions, be they physical, symbolic or psychological. Films like, *The Shining*, Kubrick (1980); *Moonrise kingdom*, Anderson (2012) and *A single Man*, Tom Ford (2009) play with this sense of fragmentation in different ways to tease or question the way we embody the real by what we consider or perceive to be normal.

A single man, by Ford is a film that explores this sense of fragmentation through multiple registers: symbolic, physical, and psychological. The film that is told almost entirely through continuously transforming and unfolding fragments of activity that happen over the course of one day, feels more like one elongated moment. There are various slow motion scenes throughout the film that are pieced together or rather produced entirely through this sense of fragmentation.

Figure 2-2: *A single man*, Tom Ford (2009) movie still

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Figure 2-3: *A single man*, Tom Ford (2009) movie still

There is a montage sequence near the beginning of the film that shows George (the film's main protagonist) driving down his street and looking out the window at his neighbours. We see a young boy running with a toy gun and a young girl jumping from side to side in front of a perfectly constructed flowerbed. Her pink dress seems to stand out against the dull grey façade of the house behind her. As she reaches the peak of her jump, her blonde pony tail sways from side to side as her blue eyes seem to suddenly increase in luminance. This dilated moment in time reveals the fragments' fantastical elasticity: Its potential to sway or suspend the way we embody within the mundane – just as the characters slowly slip in and out embodiment within their own world. A longer montage sequence later in the film shows George sharing a cigarette with a young man outside a liquor store. Unlike the glacial, stylistic dance of the previous scene, this sequence reveals the fragments ability to continuously transform over a scene. From a sudden burst of luminosity in a close up of the man's face/lips as he breathes out smoke to the immense mural of a woman's blue face behind them, staring straight at us. Here, through the use of juxtaposing fragments a powerful psycho-symbolic tension is established, continuously swaying between liminal modes of signification.

In relation to my investigation of the uncanny/familiar the fragmentation of time itself: the play between slow motion and sped up sequences is a key motif. This play with motion and speed becomes a great vehicle to sway and manoeuvre these unfolding fragments outside the quotidian rhythm and reposition the subject-spectator.

A single man seems to produce an interesting sense of psychological suspension in relation to this play with time. Namely, the way we embody our everyday through the acceleration or deceleration of various transforming fragments: colour, texture and sound. By embodiment, I mean the way we arrive and make sense (consciously and subconsciously) of our present reality through our collected set of experiences and memories. Through the unstable suspension and fragmentation of these experiences/memories, can our embodiment within the familiar begin to quiver and expand? Perhaps suspension isn't the most accurate term here – as it suggests a frozen like state, elevated from its plane of existence. What I mean to describe however, is a state which may in fact be elevated but it is also in slow transition or transformation; a transition which may not only be liminal but also branch like, as it grows out of one mode and in to another simultaneously– never wholly in one or the other.

From this monochromatic palate to bursts of colour and light, an intense desirability is also produced through this play with motion and speed. Simultaneously however, this notion of desire seems to somehow fail or collapse.

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Figure 2-4: (detail) *Magnolia Place* (2014) - Three-channel video, 3 min 51s (Play video in folder)

In *Magnolia place*, In particular the middle channel, I wanted to produce a faster or unstable sense of fragmentation through the continuous and accelerated transformation of colour, sound and light. From a crackling fire to the flickering of a screen, or from the rapid close ups of tightening musculature in the television to the sound of heavy breathing, what kind of space is produced for the subject-viewer when these heightened fragments move rapidly and freely between different modes and levels of familiarity. Through this play, there is a significant focus on the fragments' behaviour in relation to the ordinary or familiar. My aim is to tease out this behaviour in relation to the way we might embody these spaces. Rather than creating new and specific contexts/meanings for these fragments I try and capture and edit moments where they might venture outside of themselves and converse with each other.

These pieces of collected images, symbols, memories and experiences we have with the world, are trying to dislocate the relationship they not only have with themselves but also with each other. By doing so, they question the way we similarly slip in and out of reality, perspective, desire with our seemingly normal everyday.

2.2 THE ENCOUNTER

As discussed, the space of the viewer is just as significant as the space of the subject and the negotiation of this space is vital to this psychological exchange through the lens. Moreover, does the screen itself not become an active site of mediation between subject and spectator? What's more, does the arrangement of this site not continuously negotiate the ongoing formation and collapse of the many notions the work hopes to balance on?

Through discussing the familiar in relation to the mundane it is clear that these fragments are less interested in being representational or convey a sense of linearity/narrative but are more interested in the psychological encounter they produce. Here, I want to open this notion up further and tease

out the encounter of the work as a whole through the fragmentation and installation of each channel/screen.

This encounter suggests a horizontal sense of transformation: a peripheral negotiation of space. Perhaps the spaces of the familiar and the unknown exist on a horizontal plane of existence – a sort of co-existence, where different forms shift in and out of visibility, focus and dominance throughout the work. This type of interplay should not assume any sense of linearity however and what is more, there is a direct dismissal against any sort of sudden transformation/change in the work. Do forms arrive and depart at random or do they simply fade in and out of visibility? (Garner, 1994).

One of the most significant ways I have teased out this interplay and exchange is through the negotiation of multiple screens and perspectives i.e. Channels in the work.



Figure 2-5: (installation view) *Ivy Blue* (2014) - Three-channel video, 4 min 53s

Through multi-channel video works and the independent installation of each channel, does this sense of fragmentation induce for the viewer, a chance to continuously reposition their perspective, as each channel pushes and pulls at different tensions in the work? This greater sense of fragmentation once again, suggests at how we may continuously slip in and out of different modes/perspectives in the way we embody the real or the normal.

The psychological dimensions/tensions the work invariably draws upon through this reorientation with the real or the normal slowly unfold through a fractured perspective. This type of interplay or relationship investigates a different type of rhythm - one that un-notices the everyday act, whilst drawing out the psychic dimensions that surround it.

Does un-noticing then become an interesting notion in relation to the works fractured sense of installation? By un-noticing, I mean to heighten our ability to look beyond any single perspective and through a filmic space attempt to broaden/expand this perspective to visualize the unnoticed social, psychological, symbolic dimensions of the everyday.

As previously discussed, the screen itself acts as perhaps the greatest site of mediation in the work. Through the installations, I test the reframing of the space through a dispersed encounter: a site of multiple transforming topographies. Each independent site/channel then operates on a different frequency but continuously forming and collapsing to the same tune/moment.

“The seduced spectator is constructed by, and constructs the film”(Fuery, 2000, p158). How do we as viewers tune in and out of different frequencies and shift in and out of different affects/modes/intensities? Ultimately, as an image-maker/filmmaker I attempt to convey meaning and affect through these kind of fractured psychological portraits that might undo the ‘normal’.

In the installation *Ivy Blue*, I wanted to play with this sense of dislocation outside the lens and create the illusion of a seamless reality or moment by installing the three channels side by side. How do these fragments connect to make an aggregated whole? Moreover does our desire for a whole or a single perspective ever diminish in this encounter as we become disturbingly aware that each scene is in fact dislocated? This relationship uncovers or suggests a significant tension alive in this space – that between idea and affect: the desire for a coherent world/whole and the feeling of dislocation.

The encounter of this malleable site – of these multiple transforming perspectives, may perhaps produce an aggregated whole or moment: an ongoing promise of some sort of resolution or release but a continuous fall in and out of embodiment.

3 THE FLESH

Another way of repositioning our perspective or encounter with the mundane is through the flesh. This notion concerns the body: a dislocation of form, gesture and movement. The flesh, much like the fragment, operates as an ambiguous and ambivalent notion in the work: continuously forming and filling the space it occupies. The word flesh inherently carries a dynamic trait or quality: the ability to simultaneously attract and repel; there is a seduction of the body but also a collapse or return back to a sense of abject. Consequently, it then becomes an interesting vehicle for which to unpack this dualistic tension in relation to the body and my practice.

Through form, gesture and movement there is an attempt to produce an unstable exchange through the lens, rather than a direct transgression of the flesh. In this relational space, the actions of the subjects, and the viewer, may slip in and out of different modes: pleasure - pain, attraction - repulsion, passivity - aggression.

3.1 ATTRACTION – AVERSION

One of the more significant characteristics of the flesh is its potential to offer a continuous binary play through the lens. A psycho-liminal play or exchange emerges through this interplay between the many dualistic tensions that form and dissolve i.e. attraction-repulsion. Perhaps one of the more significant tensions that is beginning to emerge from this play is that of desire. Through different forms and gestures, I want to question the relations of power between modes of desirability. In particular, how can desire be expressed within a single repeated gesture or movement? Moreover, how can it be probed and taunted to explore and reposition the relations of power between subject, spectator and artist-maker?

This exchange, which occurs at both conscious and subconscious levels of experience, is perhaps starting to produce a transitional space between subject and spectator. This space is a state of pure potentiality, because it offers the possibility of continuous exchange between a multiplicity of registers in the work: between bodies in a single channel, bodies across multiple screens/channels and ultimately between the subject and spectator (Lacan, 1998).

Over decades, this type of exchange has been well scrutinized through the moving image. Artists/filmmakers such as Pipilotti Rist and David Lynch have both teased and taunted the many binaries that form and collapse between the mind and the body through the lens. Rist's video works powerfully question modes of desirability and the gender relationships that emerge between objects and the body. For example in *Ever is over all* (1997), the female protagonist destroys car windows with red-hot poker flowers. Lynch's films operate on multiple registers but on psychological one alone, it is worth discussing in relation to the flesh.

Films such as *Blue velvet* (1986) and *Rabbits* (2002) by Lynch are both rich and complex with their attempts to visualize and reposition psychological dimensions in the everyday. Throughout these films the juxtapositioning between images of seduction and ones of abjectivity are powerfully used to reframe and focalize the way we fall in and out of desire within these real and imagined spaces. Although the play between reality – fantasy is exploited to maximum effect in most of his films, I

don't believe there is ever a separation of these two states. Rather it attempts to provide the perspective of normalcy through a reorientation. This reorientation makes an interesting enquiry about the potential of the flesh and how gestures, forms and movements can be dislocated to question the way we slip in and out of embodiment within our perceived realities.

(This image has been removed due to copyright reasons)

Figure 3-1: Rabbits, David Lynch (2002) movie still

Rabbits (2002) is a series of mini video films, which feature a family of three rabbits inside a domestic living room space. The rabbits are presented as humanoid beings, each engaging with their environments and each other in different ways – from reading to watching television, the rabbits continuously shift in and out of different modes and ways of being/occupying the space. The work heightens the subjects' gestures and movements by abstracting their humanity. Perhaps what is most interesting throughout these scenes are the subtle shifts of power that are produced through varying gestures and movements within the domestic space.

A passive aggressive tension is beginning to emerge across this dualistic investigation with the body. Perhaps once again it produces a sort of dissonant rhythm or tune that continuously builds and dissolves. I find this passive aggressive gesture or expression to be quite interesting in relation to the flesh and it seems to speak well to the larger notions across my practice: This continuous push-pull between the subject-spectator, reality-fantasy.



Figure 3-2: *Rover* (2013) - Three-channel video, 1 min 48s (Play video in folder)

In *Rover*, I was trying to play with a passive-aggressive rhythm to try and tease out some of the relations of power that continuously form and reassemble through the contraction and expansion of the subject's body. Through the melodic repetition of both passive and aggressive gestures and movements of the body, the work hopes to continuously form and collapse the many binaries the space occupies: hard-soft, pleasure-pain, attraction-repulsion.

Furthermore, the notion of compulsion and repetition in relation to this endless battle of dualisms are played out through the lens. Previously, the fragment was unpacked to describe a space of ambiguity and ambivalence by producing a continuous push-pull tension through the lens.

Here, it seems this tension is expanded upon to tease out the many dualisms that exist in this space and in particular, a push-pull dichotomy between other and self. I believe this sense of compulsion and repetition (of gestures and movements) becomes an ideal arena or even playground to tease and taunt this unstable relationship.

Psychoanalytic theorist Jacques Lacan writes, "The unconscious is the discourse of the other." (Lacan, 1998, p19). While trying to visualize this relationship through these other binaries, I realized that the other does not suddenly arrive, but emerges through a destabilization of our desires or ideas within our seemingly normal realities. This would suggest a significant relationship between the negotiation of desire through real and imagined spaces. Perhaps there is no separation between modes of desire

and fantasy. In a Lacanian sense, these two ideals are inextricably intertwined and will always work in tension with the real.

Through short repetitive loops, do the subjects ever appease their compulsions? Or can they only promise an ongoing sense of release or resolution? I'm interested then, in this promise – a promise that never delivers but is continuously averted. Invariably, this promise is tied up with the rise and fall of the work. I believe the 'other' resides or rather emerges in this space. As the video works operate outside a beginning or an end, so do the subjects. They aim to occupy and move across a plane: tuning in and out of different frequencies but inevitably existing on the same platform or moment (Lacan, 1998).

As the subject is continuously expanded and contracted through the lens, there is no real sense of transition or transformation; perhaps the other simply shifts in and out of visibility. This production of self introduces a continuous binary play: the self, trying to assume a role of dominance over the other. How does this power play exist outside the screen – is there an active-passive exchange between subject and spectator as well? Moreover, does this active-passive exchange between other/subject and self /spectator open up another battlefield of unstable binaries: assurance/anxiety, reality/phantasy?

There is a slippage between these compulsive gestures and movements – both within single frames and across different bodies/channels. Perhaps this slippage is only a fleeting moment, but through the ongoing loop/cycle of the work, what sort of affect does it produce? The slip may act as an opportunity to taunt the elasticity of other binaries. By using filmic fantasy/reality as a site for the construction of the self (both subject and spectator), can the body be probed and taunted with to explore how a spectator's perspective and desires are similarly formed and collapsed?

3.2 THE PSYCHOSEXUAL

Another element or exchange has emerged through this play with gesture, form and movement: a psychosexual one. By continuously repositioning bodily forms and gestures, can a space of psychological ambiguity exist for both the subject and the spectator? My aim is to continuously, seduce and repel the spectator through this exchange (Fuery, 2000).

Perhaps, one of the more significant questions that rose through this psychosexual gesture is that of gender. Furthermore, it should come at no surprise, that such questions around the production and re production of gendered bodies/spaces present a plethora of provocations through the lens. How

does the act produce the expression of a gendered norm within mundane? For example, how does the 'male' act constitute masculine expression? More pertinent still, how does it not?

"One can argue that gender constitutes a site of struggle, and is always in process and subject to change at conscious and subconscious levels of experience"(Yates, 2007, p9).



Figure 3-3: (Detail) *Ivy Blue* (2014) - Three-channel video, 4 min 53s (Play video in folder)

Ivy Blue, in particular the middle channel/scene, suggests a play with the perspective of normalcy through framing. It is interested in the way, cropping –in both a literal and a conceptual sense- can induce a sense of dislocation within the frame; a dislocation that might violate the very edges of the frame; pushing and pulling at these borders/boundaries to keep the image in flux. By slicing and allowing only a piece of this world to be visible, can the image taunt the viewer with an expectation of wholeness? By framing a limited perspective, does the image reveal just enough to convey a sense of instability, in relation to the flesh and the many binaries that continuously form over its surface?

It seems the mundane act or gesture can potentially reposition the norm without eradicating it. Moreover, through this sense of dislocation – of both subject and spectator, can we question the authenticity of a 'true' or 'original' form by interrogating the way in which this form is constructed and similarly how it is repudiated?

Post-structuralist Theorist Judith Butler 's ideas about gender, suggest that acts of masculinity/femininity are produced through a continuous imitation of their idealized forms. It is through their ongoing or compulsive elaboration in the everyday, that they become 'normal'. Butler writes, "Becoming a man...requires a repudiation of femininity...then where does the repudiation live except in an identification that his heterosexual career seeks to deny"(Butler, as cited in, Bedford, 2009, p50). Are sites of identity, such as masculinity shaped and constructed by what they're not as much as by what they are? Once again this sense of dichotomy or dualistic conflict, in relation to the body, produces a problematic relation between self and other – where the self is produced through the repudiations of the other.

These expressions are constructed through an ongoing suspicion that one is at times less than-different than-it hopes to be. Moreover, if this ideal is in constant need of affirmation, is the process purely an aspirational one? (Moss, 2012).

Butler argues, we are in a constant state of performance: the production of our gender identities-the very process of doing it, constitutes the reality or expression of it. It would seem this sense of performativity is essentially an aspirational process. In relation to the ongoing dislocation of form and gesture through the lens, can this sense of aspiration be teased and taunted with through the continuous mediated loop of each video work? (Butler, 1990).



Figure 3-4: *Home again* (2014) - Three-channel video, 5 min 47s (Play video in folder)

Home again, suggests a play with this sense of aspiration through characterisation. By blurring the boundaries between the subjects and their surroundings, the work envisions or negotiates a more malleable exchange between the two. The work attempts to create a heightened environment, where the subjects' actions might appear somewhat buoyant or ordinary on the surface but anxious and unnatural underneath. By slowing down the film and elongating each moment in time, perhaps the work is able to magnify or heighten the sense of duality in their performance; a glacial interplay between aspiration and a sense of anxiety.

"...My irrational need to create a perfect world meets up with some kind of failure to do so. This collision between failure and compulsion to make something perfect creates an anxiety that interests me"(Crewdson, as cited in, Richards, 2004, p280).

What I find most interesting through my investigation with these notions through the lens is a fantastically sly yet immense sense of failure. A sense of failure, that seems to lie alongside these constructs but remain ultimately ambivalent. It suggests a somewhat passive-aggressive form through the lens, presenting a melodic or seductive anxiety that is key in the work: hopeful yet forever suspicious of itself and its environment.

4 THE CINEMATIC EVERYDAY

The cinema has a long and complex relationship with the construction/deconstruction of our quotidian experiences. For decades this relationship has served to frame, focalize and in effect, normalize such experiences. Perhaps, in this normalization, lies a significant quality of cinema: the potential to draw and redraw these boundaries; be they social, symbolic, metaphoric or psychological, while still operating within the familiar. This very play between the familiar and the normal renders the cinematic mode able to shift and veer the self – other within real and imagined spaces.

Though the cinematic quality may be loaded with the elaborate conventions of filmic representation; producing a particular way of looking through the lens, avant-garde directors often subvert expectations of the cinematic gaze. For example, filmmakers such as Alfred Hitchcock and Roman Polanski scrutinized and expanded our encounter with the familiar and the unknown. Films such as *Psycho* (1960) and *Repulsion* (1965) draw out the psychological and tease the construction/deconstruction of the self-other through the cinematic. While films such as

Wachowski's *Bound* (1996) subverted the female gaze and in the art context works like Martha Rosler's *Semiotics of the Kitchen* (1975), reconfigured the domestic domain.

Similarly, how can we transit into the unknown, without eradicating the familiar? Or, how can we visualize or exist wholly in the transition or in an in between moment without ever really departing/arriving? By dissecting and subverting cinematic conventions can we move away from a representational outcome and into a psychological affect? (Mulvey, 1996).

4.1 A THEATRICAL FILM ENVIRONMENT

If I am to discuss a malleable cinematic installation: one that might bend to allow new ways of looking through the lens, it is imperative to discuss exactly which of the filmic qualities I am playing with. That is, how is the 'cinematic' even produced? Film theorist, John Belton writes, "Any notion of "pure" cinema – of a mode of expression that is unique to the cinema and that has evolved autonomously out of the singular nature of the medium's raw materials – must be qualified by the essential impurity of the cinema's quasi-theatrical, quasi-novelistic mode of narration (Belton, 1988, p1132). One of the more significant opportunities presented from this play between art, cinema and theatrical performance, is the potential to explore and expand notions of performativity and narrative through the lens. What can video installation draw from cinematic narrative devices, to expand modes of storytelling? In my work the narrative is primarily expressed through the mise-en-scene of the domestic environments, spaces and the actions that the characters are immersed in.

In the domestic spaces in my work lies an innate sense of performativity. The narratives contain attenuated performances that suggest their plasticity within the mundane. There is a sense of malleability within the slow performances that invites the lens, and the spectator to follow, into the many dimensions it crosses: psycho-sexual, psycho-spatial, psycho-symbolic. The performativity of environments, fragments and bodies navigates the subject-viewer through an open-ended narrative.

Seemingly everyday spaces; the kitchen, the garden, the dinning room, the backyard are constructed as sites of performance. What concerns me here is to use these interior spaces to suggest a psychological narrative. These domestic facades perform through interplay between camera positions and angles that are sometimes replicated in shot-reverse-shot structures. From the kitchen wallpaper to the garden tiles, these settings might house our own desires and fantasies. Once again, relations of power become key here as I try to visualize an often gendered exchange or repositioning through the lens.

The investigation of filmic space is primarily concerned with the relationship between the subjects depicted and the domestic spaces they seem to inhabit. The relationship between psyche, body and architecture is key in realizing this sort of space through the lens. The following phrase from architect and writer, Katherine Shonfield resonates with this; “In both, the transgression of the architectural edge - the wall, the floor - holds the threat of the violation of the edge of their bodies”(Shonfield, 2000, p55). We might call it an exchange – through the lens, how can we reposition or render malleable the boundaries between subject and space?



Figure 4-1: *Stucco* (2014) - single-channel video, 1 min 50s

What are possibilities of blurring any division that might exist in the space? Perhaps it would allow once again, an outcome that is continuously deferred – an in-between space that might intrinsically pulsate with the subject. It is here, at the very point of reciprocation that the work hopes to hinge. In this way, establishing such a relationship through the construction-deconstruction of both psyche and space presents rich possibilities in drawing out the psychological underbelly of domestic spaces.

One of the ways of engaging these spaces is through the notion of the stage. Performance space in the classical theatre, to borrow Boris Eikhenbaums's terms, 'is something to be filled in.' He states, "It is like vessel – ready for the many codes and conventions of storytelling to fill in and produce a narrative"(Belton, 1988, p1125). The cinema is a flat space yet provides a window. I am interested in how we may collapse the cinematic space to become stage-like to and produce a space that

continuously hovers between the real and the imaginary or between degrees of construction, mediation and transformation. Would this space then, not become an ideal stage set for these mundane dramas? (Belton, 1988).

Lens-based artists such as Gregory Crewdson and Cindy Sherman have both negotiated this sense of performativity through the cinematic to subvert our encounter with images of the mundane. Through a sort of psychological autopsy of 'herself', Sherman's *Untitled Film Stills* (1977-1980) suggest that the 'everyday' occurrence is far from simplistic or ordinary, but is in fact a space of ongoing rehearsal. Artist Gregory Crewdson's photographic practice plays with the way such notions are continuously formed through the lens. His uncanny construction of seemingly normal everyday landscapes ultimately reveals the cinematic quality's extraordinary malleability and mobility between real and imagined spaces.

(This image has been removed due to copyright reasons)

Figure 4-2: *Untitled, Beneath the Roses Series*, Gregory Crewdson (2005). Digital chromogenic print

(This image has been removed due to copyright reasons)

Figure 4-3: *Untitled, Beneath the Roses Series*, Gregory Crewdson (2005). Digital chromogenic print

Through large format photographic tableaux, Crewdson stages the everyday drama or occurrence within perfectly constructed domestic spaces. He depicts the everyday landscape as being an active site of exchange; be it symbolic, psychological or metaphoric and as an image-maker, seems to be interested in ways of drawing out these dimensions into visibility to question our perspective of reality-fantasy.

What I find most intriguing in relation to my own work is the potential to visualize the fantastical in the real by repositioning our perspective within theatrical film environments. No matter how estranged Crewdson's dramas are constructed to be, they never operate separately from the real. In relation to my work, a sense of the fantastical is not produced autonomously or as some sort of departure from the real but is in fact a reorientation of the real. The very process of reorientation allows for the real and the imaginary to occupy the same plane of existence: as our perception curves, they simply rise and fall in visibility.

Once again a dualistic tension seems to emerge between negotiating an exchange from the ordinary to the other, or vice versa. Could Crewdson's perfectly lit characters be communicating a continuous formation through the lens: strength and insecurity, the artificiality and the depth of their constructed spaces, the 'non reality' of their performance and the 'reality' of their performed identities?

Filmic reality becomes ideal in teasing out this sense of fantasy within the domestic mundane. Is this sense of performativity then, in all aspects, not a mere two-way projection? The screen itself then, becomes a great site of mediation between these conflicts (Shonfield, 2000).



Figure 4-4: (Detail) *Ivy Blue* (2014) - Three-channel video, 4 min 53s (Play video in folder)

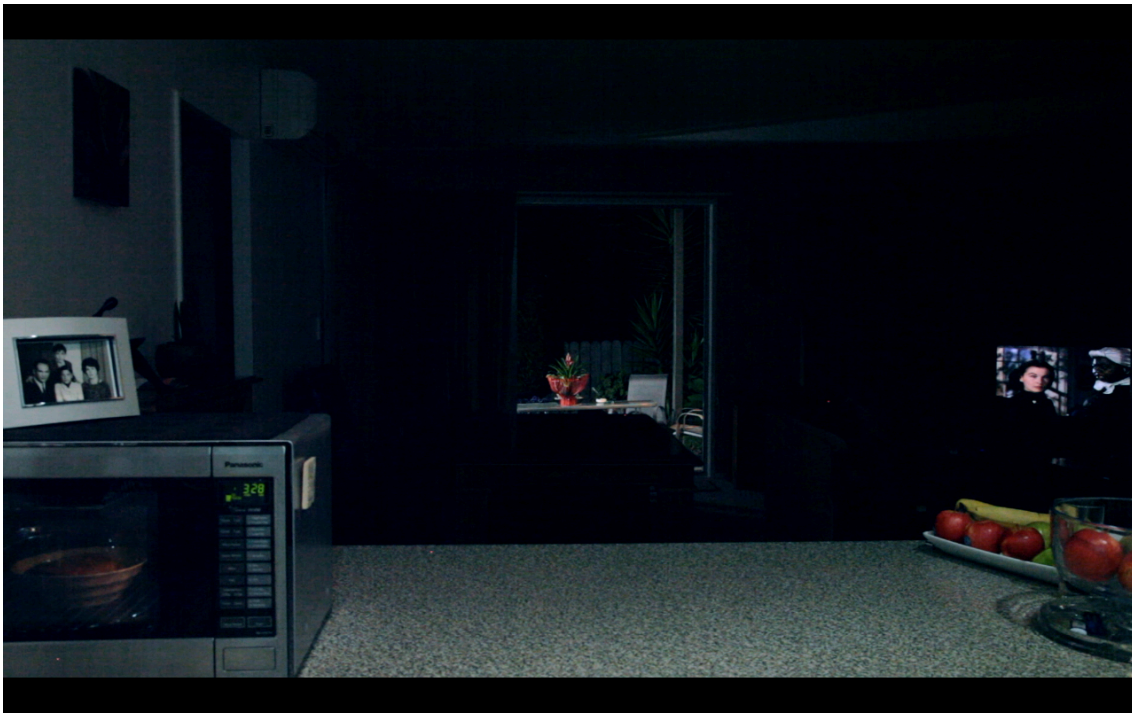


Figure 4-5: (Detail) *Ivy Blue* (2014) - Three-channel video, 4 min 53s (Play video in folder)

This body of work suggests a play with notions of performativity in relation to this exchange between reality-fantasy, through the negotiation of a theatrical film space. The work invites the viewer to be seduced by the notion of a single perspective or moment in time between the different channels. Through a play with depth of field, wide-angle perspectives and colour, I have proposed that the installations produce a dilated sense of space; where every detail is heightened and appears ready, under the spot lit domestic stage. Moreover, I have suggested that this sense of dilation can potentially reposition modes of normalcy as details and gestures are renegotiated.

Questions still remain to be answered within the experience of the work; how can the exchange between subject-spectator be teased further through the melodic encounter or rhythm that continuous to grow in the work? And where will the 'self' end up? Through attempting to produce multiple psychological dimensions/tensions across real and imagined spaces, a dynamic balance begins to emerge as these states form and un-form simultaneously. Can any shift in relations resonate beyond the screen and installation space? In some way, the multiple screens might act like a window of a familiar home space. The act of looking through might enable a psycho-liminal exchange to take place, as we continuously negotiate our perspective and sense of normalcy inside a house of others.

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7 APPENDIX



Havana Green (2014) - four-channel video installation, sound, colour, 2 min 29s



Havana Green (2014) - four-channel video installation, sound, colour, 2 min 29s



Havana Green (2014) - four-channel video installation, sound, colour, 2 min 29s



Havana Green (2014) - four-channel video installation, sound, colour, 2 min 29s