

Travelling Space: locating in-between

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Abstract:

This art project concerns itself with the notion of travelling space as a continuous state of experience perceived by a traveller, in contrast to something that has previously taken place. Travelling space takes into account the physical movement of a traveller and also that of the space travelled by a viewer – it reveals a dichotomy: that of travelling *within* a certain space; and the space *created through* the act of travelling.

Travelling space is to negotiate thresholds of seeing, experience, imagination and movement. The travel, made evident through video-trace, installed in spatial arrangements within a gallery context project the possibility of a third dimension to travelling space – that of a homeless state where viewers may abandon the space created by video sequences, to travel a virtual space of their own making.

Introduction

This exegesis is intended to elucidate the exploratory nature of the practical component of my thesis project. It raises and develops issues encountered within the research practice and is seen as text to provide another layer to the project.

The heart of this research lies in the desire to explore travel of the everyday as a practise traversing many spaces blending actual and virtual experiences. The intersection of these, as a space in-between, engages the present moment and its temporality, as distinct from building a history. My position is that this space is important as it gives rise to, moments of liberation erupting out of mundane routine; stories and myths of the imagination; the possibility of the creation of individual meaning. In short, this project is concerned with the individual and his or her relationship to space; in particular the gallery space, where through the installation and projection of video sequences the viewer/traveller is set in 'motion'.

It is intended that the structure of this exegesis is to staircase one chapter into the next, building on the ground laid by the previous, and follows this general description: Chapter 1 – thematic outline of the area of exploration situating notions of the everyday, place, space and travel; Chapter 2 – investigation of the significant modes of travel of the everyday, notably the walk and drive performances; Chapter 3 – the collection and installation of video sequences as traces of travel; Chapter 4 – the analysis of themes arising from the research, Chapter 5 – the space of homelessness and the in-between; Chapter 6 – documentation and commentary of developmental work and methodology.

Documentation and commentary of the final exhibition, to be held at the Nelson Marlborough Institute of Technology Fishbowl Gallery, will be added at the completion of the exhibition.

The thesis constitutes 80 percent practice-based work, accompanied by an exegesis of 20 percent.

Chapter 1: Travelling everyday

Today I walked to the corner dairy. I counted my steps as I walked the rhythm of my pace and the sound of my steps beating in time as a new space flickered in my mind. I wasn't really seeing but visually floated from sign to text to passer-by, then to grass verge, on to the edges of buildings displaying their decaying advertising. My steps joined with those of others. Noises penetrated and diverted the replaying of sequences in my mind, fracturing them into multiple possibilities. The stories were endless and rich, though always without conclusion, as the accumulation of moments and glances and sound continually built for me foreign cities. Remaining fragments, framed like miniature passageways, waited to be travelled.

Everyday travel

I remember as a child, buckled in the back seat of the family car as we travelled on summer vacation, or long weekend, or quick trip to see my Grandmother; the strange sense of evening falling, when the flashing of passing cars grew fainter and the drone of the engine coupled with the sound of the road being travelled at speed began to spin some mesmerising state. My eyes would close and my mind drift away to stories all my own until, as swiftly as the road raced by, I was left behind in a world of imagination – to be shattered only by our inevitable arrival.

Travel, a fundamental passage of time and space of necessity, need and simple pleasure, where the jaunt to the coffee-house, the hurried scramble through breakfast to the car and to work, the determined, the meandering, the casual and the planned, form an itinerary of possibilities beyond the horizon of prediction. Multiple opportunities present themselves, signs and advertising beg for attention, glances and nods propose diversions; all tell potentially liberating stories that direct everyday travellers as they walk or drive.

The everyday is a site of seemingly unimportant activity and unremarkable features based within the repetition and routine of taken-for-granted

experiences. Within this ordinariness the individuality of the traveller is given rise to contest the organising structures of the everyday in so far as, “[t]he navigation of everyday spaces... is the primary arena within which selfhood and personhood are forged. In the give and take of everyday life we learn the personal and social meanings of our agency” (Upton, 2002, p.718). The boundaries of routine experience and self-knowing, of what is ordinary and what is extraordinary mix, their relationships overlap to reveal “[e]veryday life [as] *both* a colonized setting of oppression, banality, routine, passivity, and unconsciousness *and* the locus of an ultimate reality and a source of potential liberation” (Upton, p. 712). This liberation suggests that within the routines of strategies can exist the freedom of an individual practice of the everyday. The focus of my research is to use travelling as a tactic to explore the potentiality of the mobile practitioner, and the everyday. The act of travel then, is a critical device to explore thresholds of place within the experience of the everyday. Thus travel becomes a spatialising practice through which I negotiate between the order of what is seen and encountered, and what is left to the chance of memory and imagination. Travel is revealed through its stories, narratives and circuits that direct its projection, in search of common grounds and polarities of difference.

Making place

My practice engages with the everyday travel of Nelson, a South Island city of New Zealand; historically rich, turned tourist destination that boasts more than 315,000 international visitors each year and tops the national statistics for the total annual hours of sunshine that regularly exceeds 2400 hours a year. I could allude to the travel histories of the local Iwi: Ngati Koata, Ngati Rarua, Ngati Tama, Te Atiawa, Ngati Kuia and Ngati Toa; or the voyages of the colonials: Wakefield, Cook and Tasman but – really – *this place could be any place*.

Marc Augé writes in *Non-places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity* that as the traveller experiences places it “causes a break or a discontinuity between the spectator-traveller and the space of the landscape he is contemplating or rushing through. This prevents him from perceiving it

as a place, from being fully present in it" (1995, p.84). According to Augé, the traveller is simultaneously confronted with their engagement of, and their detachment from, the place before them. An engagement is created by their physical experience mediated through the body in contact with the environment, and detachment, by the absence of the knowledge and contextualising histories of that place. The traveller is always of both; mixing actual experience *and* imagination as the products of engagement and detachment. The resulting construction of place is *their* place – any place. For Augé place is determined by three factors: it is connected with the historical, it is relational and it is concerned with identity (1995). Augé posits that, as a result of the current cultural phenomenon he calls *Supermodernity* (that is, the excess and overabundance of the tenets of modernity), society has created an entirely new description of place: non-place.

Augé's non-place as the inverse of place (non-relational, non-historical and not concerned with history), is located at specific *destinations* (supermarkets, airports, travel-lounges); their only relations being entirely contractual (the exchange of money, pleasantries) that are mediated by text ('turn left', 'buy now'). This description is important within my practice because the "traveller's space may thus be the archetype of non-place" (Augé, 1995, p.86). It is the traveller's space, "in which solitude is experienced as an overburdening or emptying of individuality" (Augé, p. 87), that my work encounters through travel as a spatialising practice.

The question arises whether the experience of non-place is not perhaps more reliant on a state of being, resulting from the mobility of the traveller, than physical location. In this vein, experiencing the world detached from historic influences, social relations and identity, is not dependent on a specific location for its depiction but rather on detachment. It is this sense of detachment inherent in travelling that my practice seeks to engage.

Making space

In contrast to Augé's place (that is historical, relational and concerned with identity), Michel de Certeau's description of place denotes the static, immobile

elements of order and stability of things that are where they should be; that they are in their 'proper' place.

A place (*lieu*) is the order (of whatever kind) in accord with which elements are distributed in relationships of coexistence. It thus excludes the possibility of two things being in the same location (place). The law of the "proper" rules in the place: the elements taken into consideration are *beside* one another, each situated in its own "proper" and distinct location, a location it defines. A place is thus an instantaneous configuration of positions. It implies an indication of stability. (de Certeau, 1984, p. 117)

This description of place differs from that of Augé's "anthropological place". While Augé incorporates within his definition the "possibility of the journeys made in it, the discourses uttered in it, and the languages characterizing it" (Augé, 1995, p. 81), de Certeau would consign this description to that of space. He writes, "space occurs as the effect produced by the operations that orient it, situate it, temporalize it, and make it function in a polyvalent unity of conflictual programs or contractual proximities... In short, *space is a practiced place*" (de Certeau, 1984, p. 117).

As a result, de Certeau's space is created by the mobile operations (walking, stories) that animate the pathways between, through and around 'places' as fixed points on the map of the everyday.

The resulting intersection and connection of these elements build a network of spatialising practices beyond the control of the power of the "proper"¹. They offer a range of possibilities to alight, change direction, detour, or go on.

Travelling on

The boundaries and characteristics that define place and space as outlined by Augé and de Certeau form an overlapping set of similarities and differences. It is the interconnectedness of place and non-place that the act of travel traverses as a practice – to travel is to make *space*. Travelling is to experience non-place – as an "excess of contemporary life" (Di Stefano, 2002,

¹ In de Certeau's terms, "[t]he 'proper' is a *triumph of place over time*. It allows one to capitalize acquired advantages, to prepare future expansions, and thus to give oneself a certain independence with respect to the variability of circumstances. It is a mastery of time through the foundation of an autonomous place" (1984, p. 36).

para. 6). Travelling crosses boundaries and negotiates thresholds – it weaves a liminal spatiality meandering on its own pathway and creates an individual reality.

Where tourism and travel-as-leisure conjure up a single minded pursuit of happiness (an alternative to the usual working week), the preoccupation of artists using travel within their practice is to cast light on a different way of seeing and understanding being in the world (their own movement, their environment, the velocity of contemporary life). In contrast to the abundance of advertising imagery and touristic desire, an artist may search for something within the common, the delicacy of undulating powerlines moving in tandem with a travelling car, or a simple repetitive walked circuit that encounters ever-new elements within each cycle, to attempt to reveal new perspectives from which to see the everyday.

Travel then, as a critical and metaphoric device, may be used by artists to comment on a range of concerns such as: the body's relationship with an environment and its effect; issues of virtuality and mobility; social and political concerns; time and space; the transitory; and the focus on the immediacy of the present.

My work incorporates travel as an approach to engage the everyday as a mode of understanding being in the world. Inherent in this, a mix of virtual and actual realities of imagination and experience are spatialised through its practice. Initial 'performed events' are conducted that range from the travel² of specific circuits, to intentional 'wanderings' and moments of chance. The 'performances' have specific intentions to generate imagery. They are not advertised, and, while often taking place in public, are not intended as public performance. Rather, they are a method of interaction with the everyday for the collection of moving imagery.

Video is used to record the act of travel, not merely as the documentation of the performed event, but for its ability to make evident the trace of the performance: both in image and sound. The trace becomes of greatest importance; the actual performance does not remain: "[t]he trace left behind is substituted for the practice... in doing so it causes a way of being in the world

² Within my research practice travel incorporates the specific modes of walking and driving, see Chapter 2: Travel Operations.

to be forgotten” (de Certeau, 1984, p. 97). It is the trace that remains and that is used, like a memory, to re-interpret, break, and shift the experience of the everyday when viewed in re-presentation. The trace is mobile.

Chapter 2: Travel Operations

I mused about how to negotiate these passageways and wondered what others had done before me. Had they had the same opportunities? Had they been here before? What vehicle was best for a situation like this? I kept walking; pushing deeper into the crevices of the city. Other figures milled about, one in a doorway, another climbing the steps to the North, then a flood of children cackling as they scrambled past falling over one another. I was pleased I was walking while the streets were so narrow.

The walk

They walk – an elementary form of this experience of the city; they are walkers, Wandersmänner, whose bodies follow the thicks and thins of an urban “text” they write without being able to read it. (de Certeau, 1984, p. 93)

The walk as an everyday practice negotiates the common and trivial, but also the unexpected; it is a defining conceptual, methodological and practical element within my project. Walking, as an intersection of time and space, creates links between places, everyday experiences, and memory; it forms trajectories of travel unique to an individual, de-stabilising to the “proper”, and transversal in nature. The “long poem of walking manipulates spatial organizations, no matter how panoptic they may be: it is neither foreign to them (it can take place only within them) nor in conformity with them (it does not receive its identity from them). It creates shadows and ambiguities within them” (de Certeau, 1984, p. 101). The practice of walking as an everyday tactic gives rise to stories that “shatter the panoptic perspective, not as a consequence of their unorganised motion or their remembrance of lost practices, but because of their ability to render space familiar and liveable” (Reynolds & Fitzpatrick, 1999, p. 63).

I am most interested in practices of walking within the field of art and design that can be used to explore relationships between an artist and his or her

experience of the everyday, as a point of criticality arising from their individual concern.

Richard Long's practice for the last forty years deals specifically with the practice of walking as an interaction with, and intervention into, nature. His many walks vary in simplicity³ and complexity⁴, but they are always highly considered and structured. Long does not conceive of the walk itself as the artwork, rather, it is the relationships "between the idea for a walk, the walk itself, and the physical evidence of the walk" (Moorhouse, 2005, p. 36) that brings about the existence of his arts 'structure'. Long uses the walk in his work specifically to forge connections, *A Ten Mile Walk* (1968), for example, though simple in its construction, establishes a connection between the start and finish of the ten-mile straight-line walk, and every other unnamed point encountered within. The criticality of this artist lies in his elaboration of the relationship between the "artist's body, his experiences, aspects of the landscape – and time" (Moorhouse, p.36). He comments on the temporality and impermanence of nature and human existence.

In contrast, Francis Alÿs uses the walk as an action (performed by either him or commissioned volunteers) to traverse city streets, parodying the nineteenth-century notion of the flâneur. His performances, recorded in photographs and film, become strange "takes" of the everyday where something may lead to nothing and nothing may lead to something. In *The Collector* (1991-92), Alÿs walked the streets of Mexico City pulling toy "dogs" on magnetic wheels, collecting in the process the city's detritus. For Alÿs, the simple act of walking engages with the locale of his adopted neighbourhood and, by use of wry humour and the mundane, "reveals the raw and inhumane aspects of life in the city" (Feeke, 2005, p. 5).

In my project, the walks are situated within the central business district of Nelson where the spatialising process of this mode of travel intertwines everyday experience, the normal and expected, with moments of chance and disruption. The walk in de Certeau's terms is "like a peddler, carrying

³ For example, *A Line Made By Walking* (1967), England. Here the artist walked, in a straight line, backwards and forwards on a grass field, inscribing, through this simple movement, a trodden line.

⁴ For example, *A Walk Across Ireland* (1998). In this work the artist walked a total of 221 miles in 7 days from the West coast to the east coast of Ireland.

something surprising, transverse, or attractive” (de Certeau, 1984, p. 101) – a process of interaction and de-stabilisation.

The drive

The interior of the car is a private space, within which conversations and opinions are aired and dreams are conceived as the outside world races by. The drone of the car engine, the clicking of the indicator and the ambient road noise, combined with continuous imagery played against the frame of the window, suggest a common experience of motion of this type of travel. For a suite of video works, I used the processes and technologies of the drive in combination with video camera technology to collect moving imagery and sound traces. While the walks engage a direct, street-level mobility, the sequences of drives (conducted in and around the main streets of Nelson city and their connecting outlying roads), replace the directness of the walk with the remote observation from the interior of a car. The drive, and the car, provides multiple and simultaneous perspectives to be explored from each ‘framed’ viewpoint of the passenger or driver. The nature of the imagery also changed where vast distances could be recorded in short amounts of time, and the velocity of ‘real time’ sequences created disturbing repetitive cycles. Charlemagne Palestine’s work *Island Song* (1976) captures a monologue inspired by the drone of an engine. In this work, Palestine drives a motorcycle around an island vocally harmonising with the sound of the engine, his voice breaking up as the motorcycle bumps across uneven ground. The repetitive nature of the circuit around the small island is heightened by his incessant chanting of “gotta get outta here...gotta get outta here” forming, in combination with the vibrations of the engine, a frenetic soundtrack. The seemingly mundane nature of *Island Song* has resonances with my work due to a familiar (or personal) moment being caught in an endless cycle of repetition. The familiar becomes unnervingly strange. Irish artist Willie Doherty has also used the notion of the drive in his work *The Only Good One is a Dead One* (1993). For this work, Doherty drove through the streets of Derry at night, presenting the (staged) plights of both a victim and an assassin. His work raises awareness of such situations, made familiar

through cinematic or tele-visual experiences, as a comment on common views of Northern Ireland and acts of terrorism. Doherty plays on this cinematic language and suspends the viewer between the roles of victim and aggressor, revealing the mutuality between these positions. I am interested in the materiality of Doherty's night drive video (that is made evident in its highly compressed, 'low-tech' sequence of grainy moving images) as a visual language that describes 'amateur video' found on self-publishing websites such as You-Tube. This aesthetic, comparable with the holiday 'handy-cam', creates an association to a familiar travel experience within the trope of space making.

Modes of travel

The spatialisation of travel depends on every ebb and flow of the particular vehicle that directs it. Whether by foot, by car or by aircraft, spatial stories arising from travel are defined by the operations structuring and producing their trajectories. Within my research practice, I have explored modes of travel specifically 'everyday'⁵ in nature and I have incorporated the use of scooters, bicycles, runs and escalators. These explorations are important as they probed the differences of various modes of travel to look for new potential for space making through their practice. It is the notion of *the walk* and *the drive* that remained foundational due to their very familiar use as everyday travel.

Travel (like walking) is a substitute for the legends that used to open up space for something different. What does travel ultimately produce if it is not, by a sort of reversal, "an exploration of the deserted places of my memory". (de Certeau, 1984, pp. 106-107)

⁵ This refers to the routine, standard, unimpressive modes of transport encountered within the mundane-ness of life where "people are born, live and die. They live well or ill; but they live in everyday life, where they make or fail to make a living either in the wider sense of surviving or not surviving, or just surviving, or living their lives to the full. It is in everyday life that they rejoice and suffer; here and now (Lefebvre, 1984, p. 21) – as distinct from other privileged modes of transport.

Chapter 3: Travel stories

I thought about how I could describe these streets. My notebook was with me; so too was my camera. But how could mere words and images contain all the effects of light and dark, and taste and texture, sound and temperature that proliferated around me? So I waited, soaking into my core every trace of every element of time, space, and memory until, thoroughly soaked, I walked on, leaving wet footprints behind – as signs to be interpreted in someone else's discovery.

Re-telling stories

Space, as frequentation of places rather than place, stems in effect from a double movement: the traveller's movement, of course, but also a parallel movement of the landscapes which he catches only in partial glimpses, a series of 'snapshots' piled hurriedly into his memory and, literally, recomposed in the account he gives of them, the sequencing of slides in the commentary he imposes on his entourage when he returns. (Augé, 1995, pp. 85-86)

The re-telling of travel stories is depicted in Italo Calvino's *Invisible Cities* where Marco Polo, a foreigner to the Levant, tries to communicate with the Great Kublai Khan. Common language fails them. Polo resorts to the display of objects and items pulled from his backpack and gestures, and howls to re-tell the mysteries of different cities encountered in his travels. But "what enhanced for Kublai every event or piece of news reported by his inarticulate informer was the space that remained around it, a void not filled with words" (Calvino, 1997, p. 38).

The re-told story connects with the imagination, memory and associations of its audience/reader; it changes shape according to who engages with it, each reader making it her or his own. The re-told story, as the re-presentation of imagery, straddles the threshold between the actual and the virtual, it encounters a "mixed reality" (Hansen, 2006) that merges actual experience with imagination, vision with memory and stories told with stories dreamed.

Projection and installation

The data-projection of video sequences (collected from walks and drives) into gallery and public spaces, can act as a re-telling of the travelled circuits.

Video installations can then create a new space, providing an opportunity for viewers to incorporate their own sense of movement and travel as they physically negotiate between and around projected/screen images *and* virtually negotiate the projected circuits through their own sense of “embodied perception” (Hansen, 2006, p. 5). This negotiation between viewer, the virtual, and physical constructions, functions in a meld of private, public and semi-public environments, where the inclusion of the viewer, as an interactive⁶ element, became increasingly central to my work.

In this, the work of video artists Doug Aitken and Isaac Julien, and their use of large multi-screen video installations, was particularly interesting to me.

Specifically, this type of installation offers multiple possibilities for the viewer to encounter, where a mix of virtual and physical experiences are blended.

Doug Aitken constructs multiple-screen video installations that immerse viewers within their architectural-type construction. Sometimes he creates closed spaces, such as *Interiors* (2003, where the viewer must decide whether to be in or out of its confinement). Sometimes, vast public events like *Sleepwalkers* (2007, where five sequences were projected onto different facades of The Museum of Modern Art, New York). Aitken fragments narratives by way of non-linear constructions. Viewers are left to piece together the fragments, realising in their recomposition their own perceived interpretation: “[p]erception is in itself a mobile and active undertaking, heightened and transformed by motion through space” (Douglas, 2005, p. 7). Isaac Julien also uses multiple-screen video installations. In *Baltimore* (2003) and *Fantome Afrique* (2005), concurrent perspectives of the same scene are projected simultaneously. The uneasiness the narrative creates, as figures and cars move across one screen, to be picked up within the next, and so on, fractures the possibility of any privileged perspective and mark the video with

⁶ The viewer is seen as a participant able to move freely around the physical structure of the projected sequences – but also, and importantly, the viewer participates in realising his own story as a result of the projected images, in a sense completing the work.

a particular motion reminiscent of cartoon storyboarding. This device (splitting projected imagery across multiple screens that separate and become independent again), is a particular installation strategy that I am interested in; attempting to bring together multiple and simultaneous video sequences to build a varied perspective of travelled space.

Rafael Lozano-Hemmer's work is also of interest here as it focuses on the use of projection to actively involve the audience. In his "Relational Architecture" series, Lozano-Hemmer transforms pieces of architecture by projecting through public spaces, causing the silhouettes of passers-by to be cast against their façade.

The installation and projection devices used by these artists are important for my project, as they highlight a strong connection between the viewer/participant and imaging technologies, and that of projection to transform three-dimensional spaces. I am intrigued by the way viewers can be included in video installations as a live interference via shadows and their physical presence. This unpredictable factor, deliberately exploited, is capable of forging unexpected connections, both physically and virtually, through a viewer's own series of associations, memories and imagination.

Chapter 4: Travel themes

I walked deeper into the city - into its inner parts. I hadn't noticed earlier, but realised only as my wandering formed some kind of order, that each street of this city was categorised, not by a street name, because none existed, but by a theme that was unique to that street alone. The shops, the bakeries, the street frontages, and even the style of the lampposts and rubbish bins, were all in keeping with the theme. One street was a celebration, another was mourning, while another still did not quite know where it was going, providing many alternatives to the would-be traveller – as a way to perhaps get out of 'here'.

Travelling fiction, travelling banality

... it is not surprising that it is among solitary 'travellers' of the last century – not professional travellers or scientists, but travellers on impulse or for unexpected reasons – that we are most likely to find prophetic evocations of spaces in which neither identity, nor relations, nor history really make any sense; spaces in which solitude is experienced as an overburdening or emptying of individuality, in which only the movement of the fleeting images enables the observer to hypothesize the existence of a past and glimpse the possibility of a future. (Augé, 1995, p. 87)

Video sequences in combination with their projection, create an adjusted sense of space; the space created by the *physical* movement of viewers in and around the arrangement of projected images; the space created by the *virtual* movement of viewers that transports them to “an artificial elsewhere” (Friedberg, 1993, p. 257). Just where this “artificial elsewhere” resides is a point of exploration within my research.

Multiple roles of the viewers are raised here. In one, he or she may rely on their visual register alone; in another, it is the viewers themselves that become the subject of the work. This may not happen by default, but as specific strategies (non-linear narrative, extended duration, repetition, fragmentation of imagery) employed by video artists, lead viewers into realising their own story that may reveal more about themselves than what

they are in fact seeing – the viewers assume what could take place next or what may have previously occurred.

I attempt to achieve this multi-levelled state through the extended duration of video sequences and specific repetitive circuits, suggesting the possibility for viewers to go beyond the materiality of the video sequences, the subject matter, sound and narrative to encounter a “virtual release from the confinements of everyday space and time” (Friedberg, 1993, p. 261).

In one sense the viewing of the work signals a point of departure where the ‘direction’ of the viewers’ travel is *virtual* and specific to their own set of experiences, memories and imagination. The release from everyday space and time, and by going beyond the materiality of the video, is a form of banality wherein the material content of the video is given over for an individual space to arise.

Peg Birmingham in *Holes of Oblivion: The Banality of Radical Evil*, writes that the term banal

... comes from the same root as abandon: bannum. Something was said to be banal when it was no longer under the jurisdiction of the lord, but instead abandoned, given over to the use of the entire community. Banality is the condition of humanity who has been forsaken, banished... (2003, p. 88)

For banality to arise then something must be abandoned – given over. I attempt through the use of video and installation, the abandonment of the moving image to give rise to the individual stories and possibilities carried in the mind of the viewers.

This notion is seen within the work of two contemporary video artists – David Claerbout and Susanne Bürner.

In *American Car* (2004), David Claerbout stages the interior scene of a parked car, “in which two men sit and gaze at something that is never revealed” (Green, 2005, p. 38). It seems a familiar scene, almost a cliché of the ‘stake out’ of Hollywood cinema, but this image culminates in no action or climax, “the two men will sit endlessly waiting and watching, and we as viewers will be obliged to do the same” (p. 38). The extended duration forces viewers to become part of the piece as they wait, with the two men. Longer durations as

a strategic device troubles the 'here and now' of video, through the imperceptible motion of videoing static or barely moving objects, and breaks viewers away from the content of the video, causing them to become aware of their own individual perception and imagination.

Similarly, Susanne Bürner incorporates in her early video work *Fading* (2001) locked-down⁷ shots, in which the camera moves only once, as it records the flight of a white plastic bag tracking across the snow. The point is not the event but, rather, the sense of anticipation. There is no arrival but an open field of potential, in which "the past becomes memory, attention and expectation the present and future" (Honoré, 2005, p. 36).

The sense of banality is increased in these works by strategies utilising the extreme duration of real-time video sequences, and their continual repetition. In this process, the video sequences offer no development of a narrative, no sense of conclusion – they are held in-between. Likewise the viewers are held in limbo between anticipation and realisation. Their engagement with the video sequences begin with the visual but must be abandoned for what it gives rise to – multiple narratives and possibilities of conclusions.

⁷ In contrast to a panning shot (the continuous movement of the camera from one side of a road to another for example) or a hand-held motion shot, the "locked-down" shot refers to the camera (usually mounted on a tripod) fixed to focus at a specific point/scene for a particular duration.

Chapter 5: Homelessness

As I walked, the streets and shops, the cafés and libraries of this foreign city became dull – they increasingly seemed the same to me. The more I lingered, the more they lost their fascination. Though what pulled me on and drew me further was the possibility that something else, some other sight, may be just around that next corner. And so I kept walking, longing for the possibility of the next, but never assured of its satisfaction. I walked on, not really remembering, perhaps never really knowing where I was travelling other than reaching the next space that was never the destination.

Homeless space

The in-between for Deleuze and Guattari is a productive space.

Between things does not designate a localizable relation going from one thing to the other and back again, but a perpendicular direction, a transversal movement that sweeps one and the other away, a stream without beginning or end that undermines its banks and picks up speed in the middle. (2004, p. 28)

The in-between is important as a space that “sets out roots and shoots that break and reform, reproduce and transform” (Rosenberg, n.d, para. 27). It is not dependent on boundaries that would define it, but “sweeps one and the other away”. The in-between is in constant motion.

According to Deleuzian terms viewers may be conceived as travellers, held in-between, continually on the move in and out of virtual and physical realities “travelling the here and now without going anywhere” (Aitken, 2006, p. 180).

The between-ness of the viewer/traveller “is continually improvised” (Di Stefano, 2002, para. 5): there is no return, no place to settle. It may be considered that to be in-between is to become homeless.

The state of homelessness, as a result of banality, is the space that my research practice seeks to engage. The video traces of travel events are

dislocated from their original context, re-constructed into repetitive cycles and projected into a gallery context to form spatial arrangements that attempt to set viewers to float across their contextual associations making their own way. The in-between-ness of the homeless image may offer no real destination or definition but the potential for multiple departures.

Chapter 6: Developmental work

Adaptation of Grounded Theory for an art and design project

I have drawn on and adapted the concept of grounded theory (GT), initially conceived by Glaser and Strauss in *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* (1967), as a framework to systematically examine and reflexively engage with the subject matter and processes of this project. GT provides a framework that treats all data as of equal status. This has been important for my project in that it allowed me not to give preference to one type of data over others. In the course of research, various data may potentially influence the direction of a project: an image can be compared with a theoretical text, which in turn can be compared with a video sequence.

GT takes the inevitable preconceptions of the researcher into account and tries to counteract prejudicial 'blind spots' by encouraging the researcher to use the data as whetstones, continually to be confronted in the questioning of concepts. GT is concerned with the development of emergent theories that arise from the data. In my context, it is not theories that arose but, rather, patterns, themes and concepts.

Collecting

The research began with the collection of data such as moving image footage from stairwells, staircases, architectural passages, and CBD streets in Nelson. This locale, typical of many New Zealand cities, was chosen for its sense of place (according to Augé) to explore the notion that it could be "any place". Initially, I focussed on stairwells as a subject (see fig. 1), which led me to conduct walked events in and around these spaces. The stairwells ranged from bare concrete structures to elaborate and ornate timber constructions, in a variety of public, institutional and private locations⁸. These locations were

⁸ The locations included: The Mission Fellowship building, Nelson Hospital, Bond and Bond building, the Nelson Clock tower, H&J Smith building, Rutherford Street Church of Christ, NMIT Library Learning Centre, NMIT A Block and Nelson City Church steps. These locations were used for multiple takes at various times of day and evening throughout 2006 and 2007.

chosen, from the limited number of high-rise buildings in Nelson, for their accessibility from a public, street level entry. Stairwells metaphorically link storeys (stories), and thus became, in the course of my explorations, spaces that functioned as thresholds between two givens. Also relevant at this stage was the collection of other types of data, such as: theoretical writing about architecture, space, place and travel; and contextual material of artists practising within areas of similar concern (video, projection, walking, driving). This was an active phase of the project, during which data were gathered, compared, confronted with each other, thereby generating a 'pool' of material to be analysed and revisited in the progression of the project.

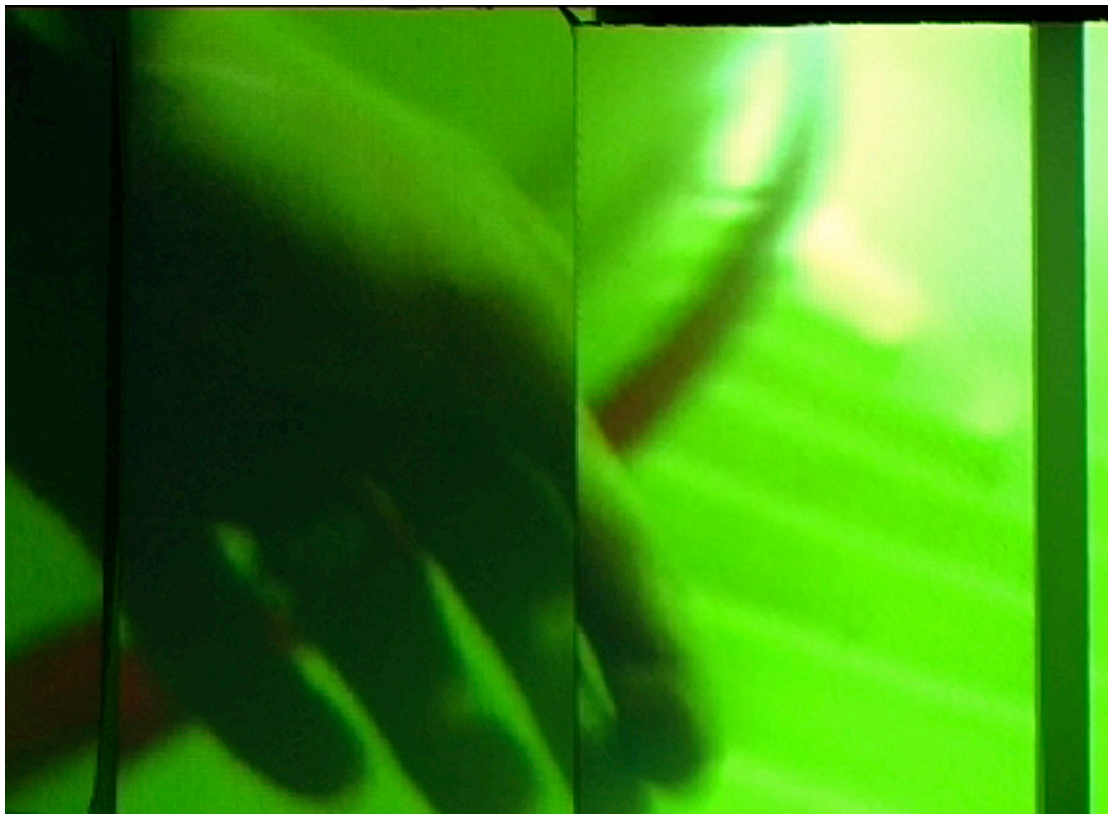


Fig. 1: David James, Clock tower walk, video still from Ascent 2, 02'55, 23/03/06

Extending the walked events, I undertook an exploration of multiple 'vehicles' of travel; this included scooters, escalators, cars, running, and further walking. The results of these video-performance tests varied in success and control. While helping to define the boundaries of the project, it was the drive, as a contemporary mode of travel that resonated with my concern of a familiar everyday practice (see Fig. 2). The series of drives I undertook ranged

between highly structured circuits around specific areas of the Nelson CBD, random excursions, repetitive loops, and real-time sequences. These items served to test the possibilities of the drive and were revisited, as the project progressed, to refine and re-shoot new material.



Fig. 2: David James, video still from Simultaneous Video Project, sequence 2, 10'20, 18/03/07

Collecting imagery from the walks and drives, I became extremely aware of the need to understand the camera as a context-framing tool and to be able to exploit the variety of contexts that it revealed. The camera is not an objective tool but, rather, purposefully controlled and directed to 'see' and record from a specified perspective. The perspective the performer chooses creates a context through which the world is viewed. This context privileges what is in the frame, and seen by the viewer, and decides what is excluded and considered irrelevant. This growing awareness was both useful and inhibiting within my project and necessitated a variety of methods to be tested. The initial methods to be explored were: carrying the camera on the body in a first-

person mode; mounting the camera on high poles to exploit perspectives from above; the reverse, low ankle-height shooting; a variety of other perspectives including multiple cameras slung around my body. Similarly with the drive performances a range of camera mount techniques were explored: multiple camera mounts within the car; passenger and driver perspectives; rear-view perspectives; and the use of multiple cameras shooting simultaneously.

Post-production

Following this initial phase, similarities were identified and 'coded' through the comparison of the data. *Coding*, in my project, means the editing of moving image footage into similar sequences and their compilation under specific themes. For textual information, coding included the identification and labelling of different themes (for example, architecture/body and space/place). There were considerable overlaps between textual and visual data, and common threads suggested further categories for analysis, such as *surveillance*, *thriller genre*, *the uncanny* and *transcendence*. This was a more reflective phase of the process, during which continual comparisons, observations, notes, and memos arising from the data were documented. It led to another level of understanding of the data.

Categories accumulated and were eventually saturated. Certain themes, such as the everyday, space and place increasingly seemed most obvious or recurring. These categorisations, as emerging themes, provided specific areas of focus and developed into patterns of filming, specific locations, conceptual themes, and recurrent motifs. Early on in the project, the most significant emerging category was the theme of the threshold.



Fig. 3: David James, video still from Threshold, 01'18, 12/11/05

The threshold (see Fig. 3), not only in architecture as in-between space, emerged as a recurring pattern from the video sequences of stairwells. While initially conceived of in a literal way, the development of this theme shifted my understanding to regard the threshold as a liminal space of awareness and memory. The threshold acts as both a gap and a link between actual experience and the possibility of the virtual. What emerged was an interest of the traveller in diverse thresholds: of architecture, as a literal representation, but also the more conceptual thresholds of the virtual, the actual and their subsequent different states of awareness. Accordingly, travel also became realised as a threshold or liminal space, between destinations – of not arriving. Travel then, manifest through walking and driving, assumed the position of core category.

Installing/Testing

Once the core categories were identified, my project moved into the phase of 'disconfirming evidence'. At this point, the existing categories were 'troubled'

through heuristic interventions of chance and discovery. In the context of my project, this intervention took place through the projection of the video sequences in a range of public and in-studio installations. Conceptual, material and aesthetic resonances of the video sequences were tested in the process of exhibition. Also, issues arose regarding the technologies of the install (screens, equipment, and sound), the materiality of the video sequences (narrative structures, colour and contrasts), as well as conceptual concerns (where is this leading me?). This stage was important to my project as it opened up new directions for further exploration and refining, and generated unforeseen categories, themes and concepts. As a result multiple 'shoots' developed as assimilations, contrasts and intersections of which a rhizomatic process began. This process, as an organic and unpredictable framework, allowed ideas and concepts to send out roots and shoots; to re-form, reproduce and transform provisional solutions. Thus, unexpected connections between data, categories and theories pointed in entirely new directions such as the fragmentation of imagery, real-time shooting and night drives. These, in turn, were compared, coded and categorised, in a cyclical process, to form the basis of 'emergent theory', or in this case, new themes, concepts or patterns⁹.

The following documentation presents the progression of public and in-studio tests.

⁹ For example the focus on an abstract mechanic repetition of the ascent of a stairwell that represented a departure from the thriller genre and then in contrast, using the same repetitive device to form an endless drive sequence.

Ascent 2006: End of year one exhibition



Fig. 4: David James, *Ascent*, 3 channel projection, 3.6m x 1.8m 'corridor', 10'03, 23/05/06

Ascent (see Fig. 4) was conducted as a semi-public exhibition at the Nelson Marlborough Institute of Technology as a culmination of my first-year practical work for the Master in Arts (Art and Design). While an early work in the overall progression of the research, *Ascent* was transformative in helping to crystallise my thinking around architectural video installation, immersive video sequences, and the movement through space of viewers in the context of spatial installation.

Ascent featured four two-minute (approx) loops of the ascent of different stairwells dual projected (from ground level) onto two double-screens that formed a narrowing corridor. A separate loop, descending a stairwell, was independently projected, at a smaller scale, onto the back of a screen at the end of the 'corridor'.

This exhibition explored the notion of a threshold blending recognisable, ambiguous and abstract forms from the walks of multiple local stairwells. The sound, also harvested from these stairwells, was distorted and re-recorded.

Participants, who in their viewing of the exhibition were able to walk into the architectural space created by the screens, had the opportunity to interact with the work by breaking the video projection and casting their own shadow against the screens (see Fig. 5).

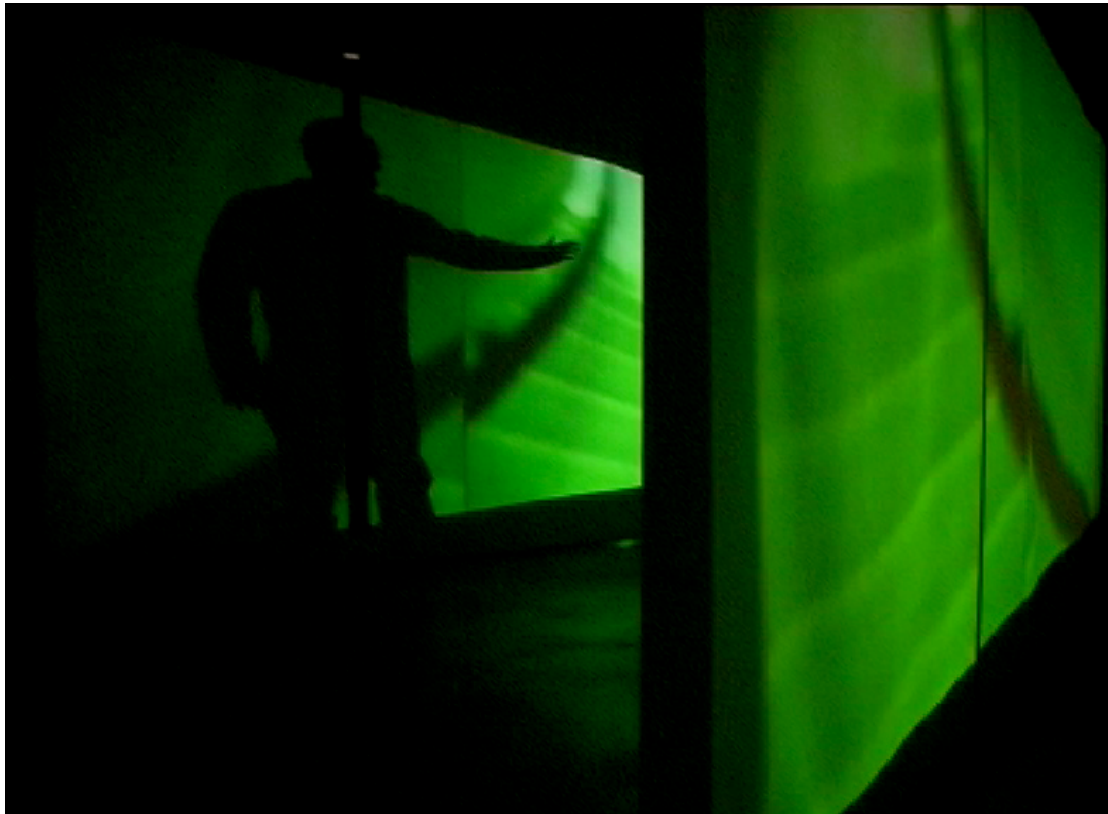


Fig. 5: David James, *Ascent* (including viewer/participant), 3 channel projection, 3.6m x 1.8m 'corridor', 10'03, 23/05/06

The inclusion of the viewer as a participant who contributes to a new, layered image in a mix of real-time and projected layers was a highpoint of this exhibition and was further tested in subsequent works. Areas that needed further attention were the specifics of the install: matching the colour temperature of the bulbs in data projectors – crucial to multi-channel installs as specific colour attenuations become important in the overall visual texture of the space; consideration of the entire gallery space; angle of screens/projectors; and the consideration of scale, contrasts, and tension in the combinations of imagery within the spatial configuration.

-Case 2006



Fig. 6: David James, -case (public view), dual projection, 6m window façade, 08'05, 27/10/06
Mission Fellowship building Trafalgar Street, Nelson

As an extension to *Ascent*, -case (see Fig. 6) was conducted as a public exhibition utilising two windows on the second floor of a three-storey building facing the main street of the Nelson CBD – Trafalgar Street. This exhibition/event was held over two consecutive evenings (9:00 – 10:00 p.m.) as a silent, dual projection of an ascent and descent of a local clock tower stairwell. Different from *Ascent*, this work tested the relationship of the public with the projection from a distance and the re-contextualising of a familiar experience. The response from the public was varied. Many wondered what to make of video installation in the main street, others stood to watch momentarily, while others still passed by: unimpressed. A downside was that the location limited viewer interaction since the projection could be seen only from one side of the street. Therefore, it was obvious that a projection at direct street level would encourage more engagement by the public, providing an interface between the viewer, the everyday, and walking.

Dark Screen Project 2007

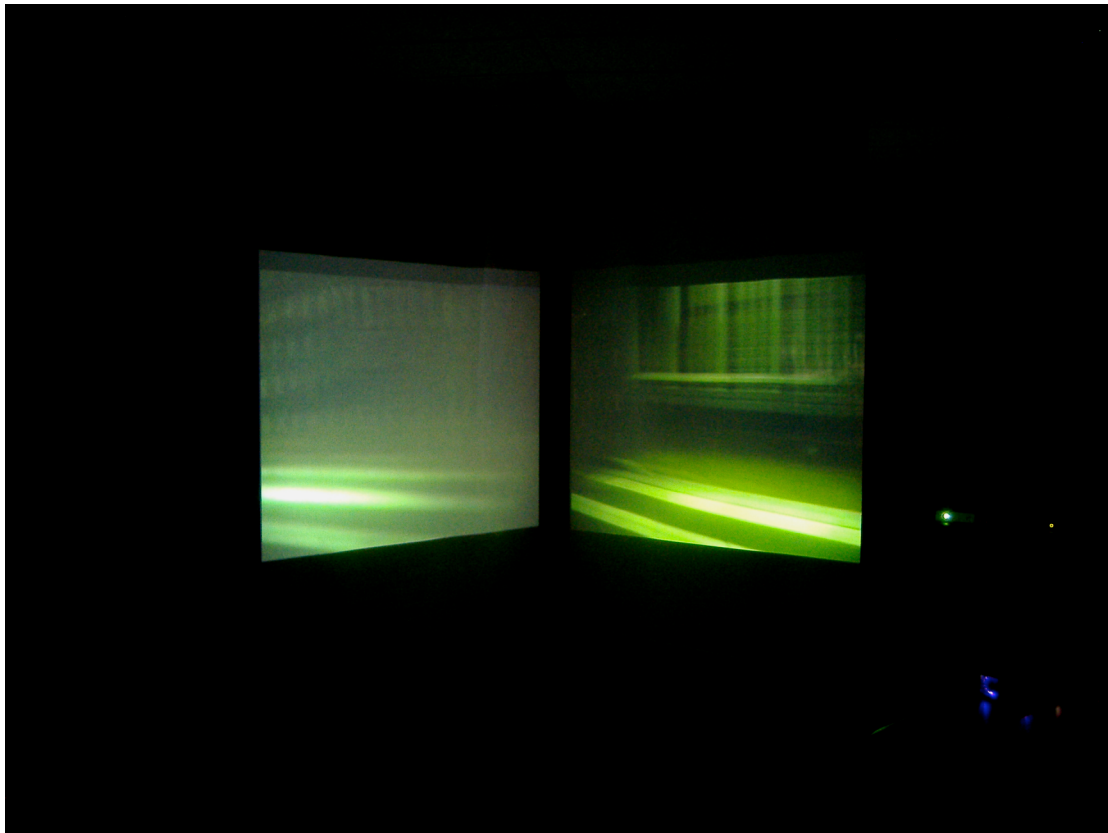


Fig. 7: David James, Dark Screen Project (studio test), dual projection, 2 x 1.8m suspended screens, multiple durations, 03/03/07

The *Dark Screen Project* (see Fig. 7) was a multiple series of projection tests featuring sequences ‘collected’ from a night drive around the Nelson CBD. The tests were conducted within my studio and a gallery context. While they were not open to the public, they nevertheless functioned as an important method to test a range of concerns in the development of my project. Each sequence, between one and two minutes in duration, was projected onto dual screens and tested the combination of imagery, sound, spatial effects, repetition, organisation of screens and scale of imagery. A major outcome of these tests was the focus on repetitive sequences, both individually and in simultaneous projection. The large-scale projection created a sense of disorientation, due to the repetitive movement of the image and the cyclical intervals of time.

This series of tests shifted my focus to explore the duration of a sequence, particularly the real-time recording of loops as a means of pushing the viewer past the content of the video sequence, and into a sense of homelessness.



Fig. 8: David James, Dark Screen Project (gallery test), single projection, 2 x 1.8m suspended screens, multiple durations, 03/03/07

Conversation: Art and Design Staff Exhibition, Fishbowl Gallery, NMIT, 2007

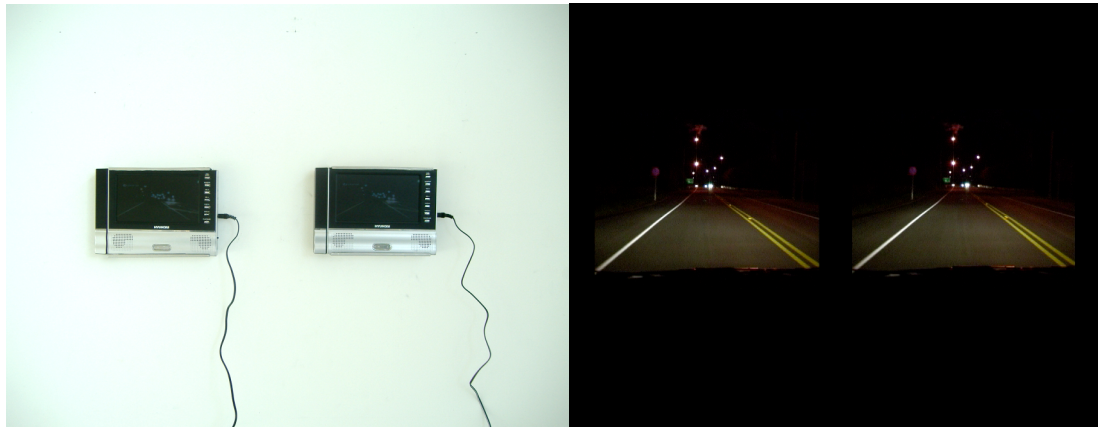


Fig. 9: David James, *Homeless Conversation*, 2 x 7 inch portable DVD players, 30'00, 08/05/07

As part of the Art and Design staff exhibition *Conversation* at the Nelson Marlborough Institute of Technology I included a dual video work of a drive performance presented on two seven-inch portable DVD players (see Fig. 9). The video sequences on each screen were of the same repetitive loop driving away from mid-city Nelson to the edge of the motorway and returning via the Nelson Haven. This circuit was travelled four times every half-hour. In response to the title of the exhibition it afforded me the opportunity to explore a spoken monologue within the work as a separate layer. Each DVD player had an individual meandering monologue (spoken by me) commenting on notion of place, the everyday and chance. Each monologue, at times audibly distinct from the other, would then be interrupted and overlapped – forming an intense ‘conversation’.

I was particularly interested by two aspects of this work: the first was during the performance of the drive where I noticed, as I travelled the same circuit repetitively, that I began to create a history – knowing when a certain pot-hole was approaching, or when to indicate. I found myself experiencing the threshold of this type of travel negotiating Augé’s place (as concerned with history, relations and identity) and then non-place when I found myself in a type of silent reverie contemplating imagined scenarios.

The second was, when viewing the sequences in the installation, I noticed how the monologues, in combination with one another, began to build a

different space from that of the video – a space that through chance joined fragments of the monologues together to form strange stories that may cause the viewer to alight on some trajectory of their own. Both these aspects have informed the development of my project by crystallising the specific conceptual concerns of the in-between and the state of homelessness.

CODEC: WOOM Gallery 2007

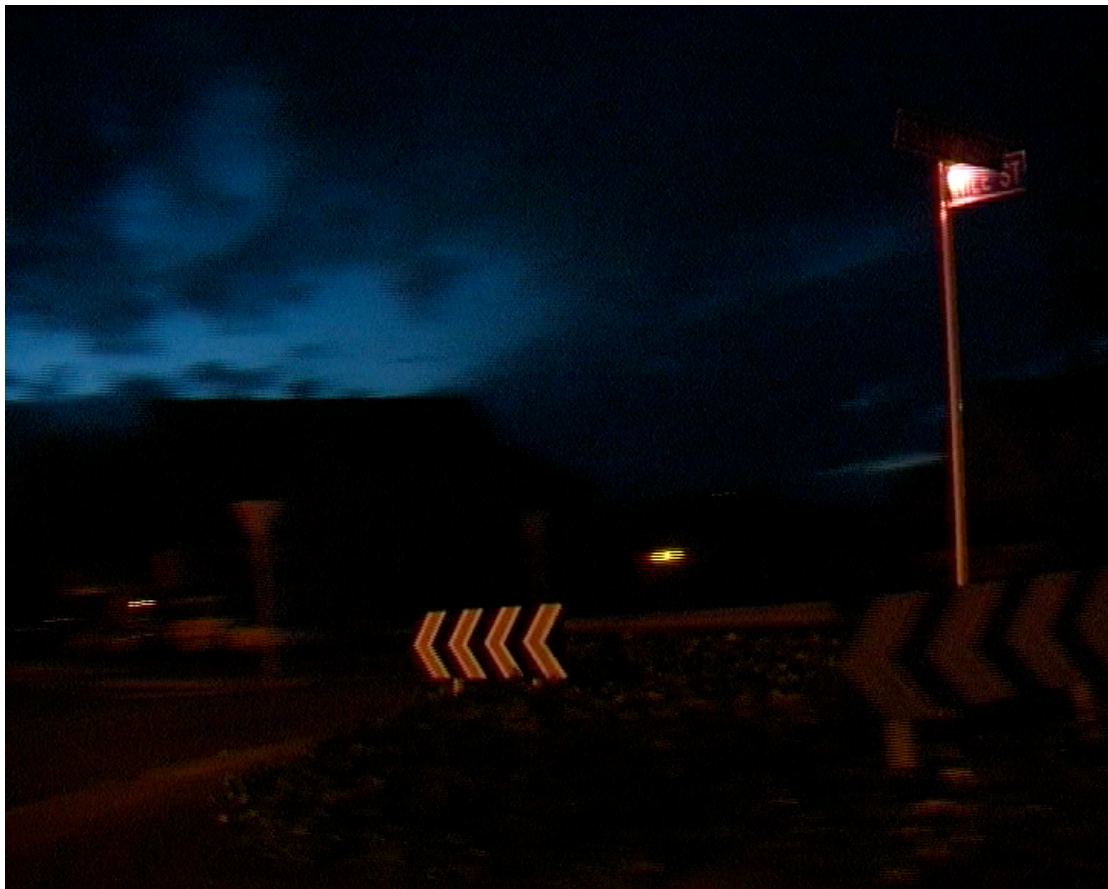


Fig. 10: David James, video still from Roundabouts, 15'00, 22/05/07

As a development of the repetitive cycle explored in *Homeless Conversation* I selected a particular drive that could be repeated in actual, real-time travel. My focus was to trouble the sense of 'here and now' by seeking to alter the viewers perception of the subsequent video loop, to be included in the exhibition CODEC at WOOM Gallery, Nelson 2007 (see Fig.10).

While driving, I stayed on the roundabout at the intersection of Collingwood and Nile Streets in Nelson City, for a number of revolutions, the sound of the

indicator endlessly clicking. The simple gesture of circling a roundabout, captured while shooting with three cameras simultaneously, records a transversal moment, and places viewers in a disorientating sense of motion where anticipation builds for what may happen next; something that never arrives.

Conceptually the combination of the real-time performed loop combined with the mechanical looping abilities of projection technologies became of interest as a device to hold viewers somewhere in-between departure and arrival. Held in this space the banality (abandonment) of the image is evident trading material content for individual imaginations – a viewer makes their own space.

Concluding Commentary

Travelling space, as an exploration within the everyday, results as an open-ended statement, a hanging question mark, the conjunctive “and... and... and...” (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004, p.27). It makes evident a state of being that, by travelling, reveals the capacity to create spaces: space that is made by the animation of places travelled, and space that is made by travelling (as non-place) the virtual associations of memory and experience.

What intrigues me, and is evident through this research, is the overlapping and intertwining of these spaces in which we continually blend. Our awareness of them is heightened only when we catch ourselves at some point forming elaborate imaginations while our bodies automatically play out the routines of the day.

This space is productive it is necessary, essential to create

... the body of legends that is currently lacking in one's own vicinity; it is a fiction, which moreover has the double characteristic, like dreams or pedestrian rhetoric, of being the effect of displacements and condensations. As a corollary, one can measure the importance of these signifying practices (to tell oneself legends) as practices that invent spaces. (de Certeau, 1984, p. 107)

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Appendix 1

The following series of DVD's are seen as reference material documenting the development of my research project.

DVD 1:

Ascent video sequences, 10'03, 23/05/06

Ascent video installation, 12'53, 23/05/06, NMIT

DVD 2:

-case (down) video sequence, 08'07, 26/10/06

-case (up) video sequence, 08'07, 26/10/06

-case street installation, 08'07, 27/10/06, The Mission Fellowship Building, Nn

DVD 3:

Roundabout video sequence, 20'00, 22/05/07

Homeless Conversation video maquette, 15'02, 08/05/07

DVD 4:

Dark Screen Project projection (in-studio tests), 25'58, 03/03/07

Street walking maquette (3 camera simultaneous shoot), 07'56, 05/04/07

Appendix 2

Documentation of Exhibition

Following Distance, 4, 5 and 6 July 2007, Fishbowl Gallery, LLC, NMIT

DVD 1:

Following Distance video sequences, 24'21, 26/09/07

Following Distance exhibition documentation, 08'31, 18/09/07, Fishbowl
Gallery, LLC, NMIT

