

The Performative Object

in | form

The Exploration of Body, Motion and Form

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Contents

Abstract	8
Chapter One Introduction	11
Chapter Two Conversation with Time	
Section 2.01 Vacant Space	17
Section 2.02 Measuring Movement	19
Section 2.03 Duration of Time	23
Chapter Three Performing the Object	
Section 3.01 The Performative Document	27
Section 3.02 The Art of Video	30
Section 3.03 Private Performance	32
Chapter Four The Time-Bound Body	
Section 4.01 Absence of Body	39
Section 4.02 Passing Time	42
Section 4.03 Body as Object	43
Chapter Five Conclusion	47
List of Works	50
Bibliography	55

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



Tiffany Rewa Newrick

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(for the summer of '05 to '08, fondly in my heart illimitably)

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I know I'm in my own little world, but it's okay. They know me here.

Abstract

Through the sculptural object, this thesis, *in|form: The Performative Object*, explores the relationships between body and object, viewer and artist, performance and the performative. By exploring the performativity of an object (and questioning how an object performs in relation to the body), the documented performances activate an inter-relational act between artist and object (I perform the object, the object performs me simultaneously). The work that unfolds from this investigation considers the placement of the viewer's

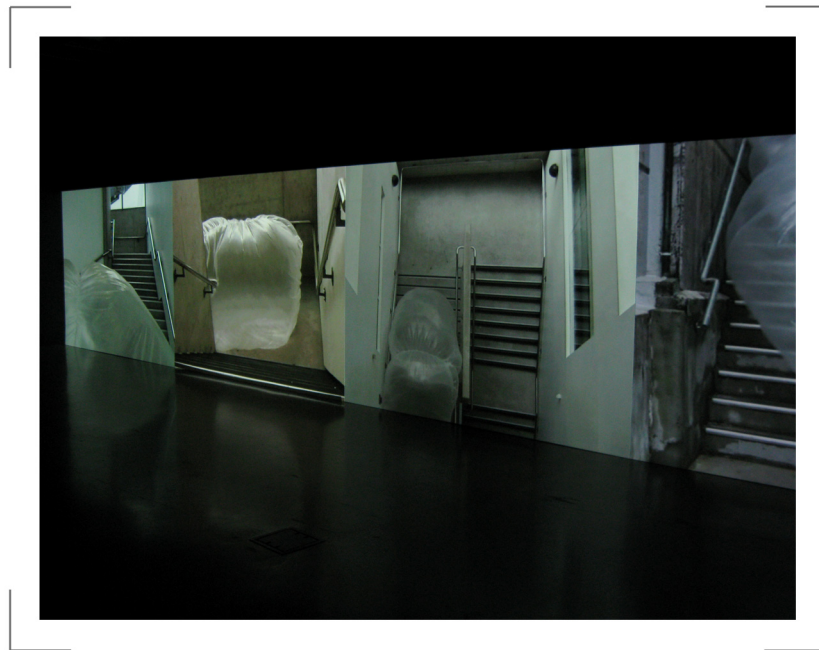


Fig.1 *Untitled (in|form)* [detail] (November, 2008)

body in relation to the artist's. A dialogue is formed between the three bodies: object, artist and viewer, creating a sense of embodiment within the work through this relationship. *in|form* explores this embodiment through the role of video documentation.

The performances are constructed to be viewed solely through the documentation, which creates a discussion between the 'live' moment and the documented event, and how the viewer then relates to this. The performances take place as solo acts, but are constructed with the viewer in mind. As the viewer watches the documented performance of the action between artist and object in space, the relational nature of the work creates a second performance which embodies the viewer.

This sole action, recorded and then viewed, considers the relational value of the body, specifically engaging with the abstraction of bodily formlessness

within the object to reveal a bodily nature. Using the object to trace the movement of the body creates a language that communicates to, and about, both viewer and artist: through the awareness of passing time, through the



Fig.2 *Untitled (exterior)* [still] (November, 2008)

large scale projection of the documentation, through the bodily nature of the object, and through the performativity of the object's responsive nature to the artist's body as the pair navigate through space.

in|form explores how the absence of the body (in a literal sense) considers the body as an object bound by time, at once physical yet transient. By tracing the motion of the body through object, the viewer experiences the body through sensibility. Ultimately, the function of the body negotiating as a time-bound object is imitated through the performativity of the object with artist, and the elusiveness of this action emphasized by its documentation.

“Sculpture, in stillness, can transmit what may not be seen.” - Antony Gormley, 1985

Chapter One | Introduction

in|form: The Performative Object considers the body as a time-bound object and explores the relationship it has to viewer, artist, motion and space through the transient quality of the performative object and its documentation.



Fig.3 *Untitled (in|form)* [installation view] (November, 2008)

Extending a dialogue of the body in relation to the performative object (as it traces the motion of the body), *in|form* explores notions of embodiment in three unfolding parts: within the performance, within the documentation, and further considered within the installation of the project, as a means of locating the viewer's body in relation to the artist's.

The culmination of this research created *Untitled (in|form)* (2008), an installation consisting of four large-scale projections (totalling approx. 12.75m long x 2.4m high) in a darkened space, where as the viewer entered the projections were situated on their right. These video 'documents' touched the floor on which the viewer stood, allowing the viewer to relate to the space in the video as one they can readily occupy; the large scale extending this further by visually connecting the viewer's own space to the document. The video documents were



Fig.4 *Untitled (in|form)* [in-situ detail, 4 stills] (November, 2008)

unsynchronized so that while objects appeared in some images, empty space was conveyed in another [Fig.4]. This created a heightened awareness of the

passing of time, along with anticipation of a performance to come within the empty space of the video.

The ambiguous, organic sculptural form used to create these performances can be regarded as a prosthetic extension of the artist's body, a 'bladder' that has an abstract bodily formlessness that imitates the transience of the physical body through motion. Through this prosthetic extension, *in|form* explores the measurability of time through movement to negate the idea of the body as an object bound by time, exploring the physical relationship between the transience of time and the body through the perimeters of motion. In this way, the bladder can be seen as a mode of vision to map the body. As Vivian Sobchack (2004) writes:

These images represented not the form and movements of my objective body as it is seen and lived from outside by others but rather the form and movements of my subjective body as it is lived from my side as me (p.196).

The bladder traces the body's physical space through movement, and by physically repeating the action, the body is subjected to the passing of real-time that, through the documentation, infers for the viewer a reflection on their own



Fig.5 *Untitled (in|form)* [detail] (November, 2008)

time in relation to the performance. In Willoughby Sharp's essay *Body Works: A Pre-critical, Non-definitive Survey of Very Recent Works Using the Human Body or*

Parts Thereof (1970) the use of the body within sculptural and performative art is described in these terms:

In real life we experience the world through our bodies and other people's bodies are viewed among material objects. In some of these works which use the body as a prop the artist has almost succeeded in transforming his own body into an object, albeit a human object, even for himself (p.232).

in|form goes one step further to consider the object-body through the transient quality of the performative object while the repetitive action subjects the body to the complexities of a time construct, engaging with it's transience as a solid mass.

The body can be considered as "both an objective *subject* and a subjective *object*" (Sobchack, 2004, p.2) where the contemporary body (self) undergoes a constant shift between these two positions. The experience of the body can be seen in three parts: as home (where our consciousness has free rein to express intentions and desires), as house (in phenomenological terms, the place in which we reside) and as prison (where the limitations of the body as material is problematic) (Sobchack, 2004). Considering this in relation to video performance, where the artist's body is documented performing within a space, explores the idea of understanding the body through the means of vision (where our visionary responses engage with a conscious understanding of the body).

...everybody lives always as an object as well as a subject in the world, and every body is as much a puzzle and obstacle to the consciousness that lives it as that body is also a transparent or pleasurable means by which consciousness can have, experience, and value a world at all... Among the modes by which our substantial bodies mediate and enable consciousness access to both itself and the world is our sense of *vision*. Vision instantiates our knowledge of existential objectivity in that its structure constitutes a necessary and critical distance between the seer and the seen (Sobchack, 2004, p.188).

This fundamental understanding of the body (that it is located as an outward expression of a body and as an inward manifestation of 'my' body) provides the grounds for which the viewer relates to the artist's body within the



Fig.6 *Untitled (descend)* [still] (September, 2008)



Fig.7 *Untitled (in-between)* [still] (September, 2008)

performance, and through this is also subjected to a *second* performance between the documentation and themselves.

By considering the presence of the body through its absence, *in|form* traces the artist's movements through the performativity of the object. This action is performed in solitude, and recorded to create a *performative document* (Auslander, 2006) that embodies the viewer, creating a relationship between artist (motion) and the viewer (body). The absence of the body in a physical sense incites the viewer to substitute their own body for that of the artist's, creating a dialogue that "causes the [viewer] to shuttle back and forth between that which is seen and that which has to be imagined – between the visible and the invisible" (O'Dell, 1997, p.215). Documenting these solo performances creates a tension within the work because the 'live' moment is executed intentionally without an audience. The documentation subsequently mediates the experience of the initial act. The nature of the object, performance and space embodies the viewer to create a second performance through the performative document. As the documentation depicts the object as it occurs within the space, operating within a real-time construct, it does raise the question whether the 'live' moment is in fact the re-enactment between artist and viewer. As the space for the performance is one where the body naturally exists, the performative document considers the relational value of the body to the viewer, the artist, the performance and the documentation.

in|form is concerned with the idea of the 'private performance' as the performing of an act in solitude, where it then only exists in its documented form. It is a process that is reminiscent of early performance art (c.1950s–1970s), where genres such as the Happenings, Fluxus and Performance Art relied on the latest technology at that time to create a record of the performance as it took place, and in some cases to critique the use of the video camera as an art medium, as in Vito Acconci's video work *Centres* (1971) where he films himself for twenty minutes consecutively pointing his finger at the centre of a television monitor, commenting on the reflexivity of the camera through this action (that Acconci is at once pointing at the viewer and at himself), using this reflexive gaze to embody the viewer within this action and critiquing the position of the video camera as an art tool. In terms of *in|form*, the significance of the private performance in this sense, as discussed earlier, is to use the video document as a tool to mediate the experience between artist and viewer within the gallery context. The video works then operate as documentation of a sculptural event, with no formal beginning or end.

The bodily formlessness of the object (where the suggestion of the body

is found in the ambiguously organic nature of the sculptural bladder and its responsive performativity to the artist's body) coupled with the performance within bodily spaces (that which is relatable to the viewer as a space that can be readily occupied by their own body) creates a dialogue both between and about viewer and artist (where the language created through the tracing of motion forms an understanding between the artist and the viewer). Constructing the documentation through a fixed-camera perspective explores the use of the reflexive quality of video, where the documented performance acts as a means for locating the viewer within it: as not acting apart from but inclusively between artist and viewer, object and space. As discussed by Sobchack (1992):

As a coterminous perception and expression of a mutually lived world, the film serves as a conduit for perception – its enabling technology also the technology able to bridge the spatial and temporal separation of filmmaker and spectator so that their perception and expression might still encounter each other's activity, dialectically addressing each other's vision (or "world view") in visual *dialogue* (p.173).

Through this position the reflexive quality emphasizes the passing of real-time between viewer and documentation, together with the viewing of empty space between performances.

Chapter Two | Conversation with Time

Section 2.01 | Vacant Space

In my video *Untitled (conduction)* (April, 2008) the viewer experiences a documented performance between artist and object [Fig.8]. Walking up and down a stairwell whilst wearing a large, inflated bladder, the performance depicts the inter-relational act between artist and object: I perform the object,



Fig.8 *Untitled (conduction)* [still] (April, 2008)

the object performs me. The motion is unhurried and creates an anticipation for the viewer through the filling and emptying of the space. The viewer's time is taken up by my time, and when the space on the video is emptied, viewers project themselves into that vacant space, creating an indirect relationship between the artist and the

viewer. By the viewer 'filling' the vacant space the question is raised, what is time without an object or a means of measurability? As the performance is conducted in an isolated space, with no audience, it can be seen somewhat as an intervention (by artist and object) in that space through the object's performative response to the artist's body, and the responsive reaction the object has to the space itself, as body and object navigate through it. The vacancy of space (made more acute once the object has passed through as a place that contains a motion) creates an awareness of the passing of time, and so an anticipation of more to come. This anticipation is one that Ulrich Wilmes discusses in relation to Andy Warhol's video piece, *Empire* (June, 1964) that engages with the idea "that 'the meaning' of a thing disappears 'the more often one...sees exactly the same thing'"¹ (Wilmes, 1999, p.126). *Empire* is a video piece where, over the period of more than eight hours, Warhol films New York's Empire State building. He then

¹ Wilmes is quoting Andy Warhol & Pat Hackett, *Popism: The Warhol 60's*. New York 1980, p.50

plays this footage at sixteen frames per second (instead of twenty-eight). In this manner, the resulting image makes the viewer painfully aware of the building in a new way: “Thanks to the repetition and latent slowing down, a distancing from the perceived object is created and the observer is made responsible for its meaning” (Wilmes, 1999, p.126).

In a similar way, the artist James Coleman created a slide projection work titled *La Tache Aveugle* (1978), consisting of a series of thirteen individual frames. These frames were sourced from the film, *The Invisible Man*² where Coleman had extracted from the film the very moment where the main character’s invisible body becomes visible. Coleman extends the duration of this scene (originally half a second long) to almost eight hours.

Due to this reproduction in extreme slow motion, the change of frame is practically imperceptible. Nothing happens; the image of the invisible man does not materialise, and the syntactic function of the individual frames within the overall narrative structure assumes the task of bestowing meaning (Wilmes, 1999, p.57).

in|form explores the measurability of time within the performative object, particularly an awareness of the passing of time, in order to heighten the anticipation within the event.

The artist Dennis Oppenheim considers the measurability of time to explore the “exchange between body and site” (Kaye, 2000, p.152), particularly in his sound-work, *Sound Enclosed Land Area* (1969). Oppenheim recorded the sound of his footsteps walking around a selected area in the city, and played this recorded document back into the gallery. The viewer was confronted with an awareness of space (both the gallery, and the unknown site of the footsteps) and the passing of time through the tracing of the body in motion. As the performance was played out through the recorded document, the viewer experienced the body’s duration of time through its action within a space. As Nick Kaye states:

For Oppenheim this process...positioned the body at the centre of a process of documentation. Played in the gallery, this record of Oppenheim’s physical activity is positioned as a map and memory of a particular place, and the trace of one site is mediated into another (2000, p.153).

² James Whale, director, 1933

So too, *in|form* uses the measurability of time (between object and space) to create an anticipation within the work that acts as the means to locate the viewer's body in line with the artist's, in this way creating a dialogue between artist and viewer, motion and body.

Section 2.02 | Measuring Movement

To consider the body as a time-bound object, *in|form* explores the measurability of time through movement. The perimeters of motion allow exploration into the physical relationship between the transience of time and the body. Wilmes discusses motion and speed as functions of time, more specifically, how reduced speed gives us a heightened awareness of time. "The phenomena of time and space are fundamental conditions of our being in the world. We experience our existence in an awareness of its finiteness" (Wilmes, 1999, p.119). It is in Wilmes opinion that the awareness of time and the development of technology go hand in hand, and that naturally, this technical progress is adopted by the art world to symbolise the concept of speed. Wilmes discusses this in relation to the painting, *Rain, Steam and Speed* by William Turner, painted on the threshold of the Industrial Age (1844). This painting depicts the most advanced technology at that time: the latest steam-train ('Firefly Class') crossing the bridge at Maidenhead, which was regarded then as the "most outstanding example of contemporary engineering" (Wilmes, 1999, p.120). By Turner choosing to represent this steam-train, Wilmes reasons it is the introduction of the use of technological advancement within the realm of art, and that this emergence into the art-world develops parallel to the invention of the photograph, "whose function as a copy of reality was expressed more and more as the capacity to master the moment" (Wilmes, 1999, p.121).

My own work explores the relationship between technology and objects through the performative document to facilitate a second performance for the viewer. The pace of the video document is slowed which creates a heightened awareness of the passing of real-time between viewer and document (discussed in further detail in Section 3.01 | The Performative Document). In this manner, the body can be explored as a time-bound object. Execution of my works is often through video and photograph, therefore, "our oppressive sense of the transience of everything is more acute since cameras gave us the means to "fix" the fleeting moment" (Sontag, 1977, p.179). By recording the artist's movements in a space, and through the 'slowness' of this action, the viewer relates the body as one interacting with the passing of time. Wilmes explains:



Fig.9 *Untitled (form 1)* [still] (April, 2008)



Fig.10 *Untitled (overhead)* [still] (October, 2008)



Fig.11 *Untitled (night test)* [still] (October, 2008)

Time is irreversibly successive and cannot really be experienced, but only perceived indirectly through a sequence of changes, that is, movement in space. Time cannot be read from an immobile object in space. However, it is also in the nature of movement to be fleeting and avoid being fixed by the eye (1999, p.122).

in|form explores this theory through amorphous objects (bladders) constructed from a thin polyethylene membrane, which is then filled with air. This initial state is timeless, until given motion through the actions of my body, and the embodiment of the viewer within the documented event channels motion through the viewer's body.

The French philosopher Henri Bergson explores his theories on time in relation to Albert Einstein's theory of relativity (1905–1915). What is particularly poignant in relation to *in|form* is Bergson's theory on motion having a relational value between viewer and performer, in the sense that movement has a language the viewer can relate to because of the movement they experience through their own bodies:

...the measurement of time through movement is possible because we ourselves are in a position to carry out movements, and these movements then have a dual aspect: as muscle sensation they are part of the course of our conscious life, they have duration; as a visual perception they

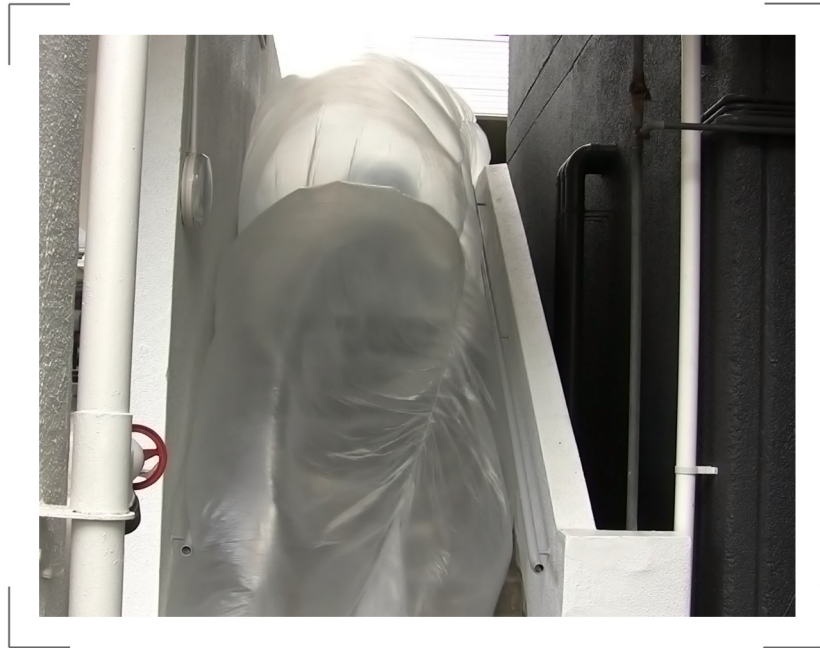


Fig.12 *Untitled (making tracks)* [still] (September, 2008)



Fig.13 *Untitled (external access)* [still] (October, 2008)



Fig.14 *Untitled (exterior)* [still] (November, 2008)

describe a path, create space for themselves³ (Wilmes, 1999, p.121).

in|form explores this relationship between motion (artist) and the body (viewer) through the mediation of this experience of time. I document my solo performance with the object and display these performative documents. The slowness, and repetition, of these performances emphasizes a heightened awareness of the passing of time, allowing the body to engage as a time-bound object. This too creates an awareness of the movement of the object in relation to myself and its reaction to the space. Because I am wearing the object, and the object is performing as a reaction to my movements, does then the object become an outward expression of my 'time', of my existence within this specific duration of time and space? This so, with the introduction of the viewer, the measurement of time is duplicated through the viewer's time becoming occupied by the performative document.

Section 2.03 | Duration of Time

Where the previous sections discussed the measurability of time through movement, this section expands on the formless aspect of tracing motion in relation to the artist Francis Alÿs, who uses duration and time to depict a sense of the transient, in particular highlighting the notion of making art out

³Wilmes is quoting Henri Bergson, *Durée et simultanéité*, in *Mélange*, Paris 1972, p.104

of ‘nothing’. In the video work, *Sometimes Making Something Leads to Nothing* (1997), Alÿs pushes around town a large block of ice, tracing it through the city (and documenting on video) as it slowly disintegrates, the last frame showing a small puddle given scale against the artist’s hand. The act of recording this slow disintegration creates an awareness of the duration of an object that is bound



Fig.15 *Untitled (caged)* (March, 2008)

by time, the video document acting as the tracing of a residual action. The performance with the ice presents the measurability of time within an object, the disintegration of the object emphasizing the duration of time, and the



Fig.16 *Untitled (creep)* (March, 2008)

object disappearing from the video document entirely suggesting the ephemeral quality that leads to only memory of the event lasting.

This process exemplifies what Yve-Alain Bois (1997) describes as ‘formless’, where the work “not only...map[s] certain trajectories, or slippages, but in some small way... “perform[s]” them” (Bois, 1997, p.18, 21). The notion of formlessness as an operation (Bois, 1997) suggests a language of transience as the nature of the object articulates a process or moment in time that informed its creation, so the object (formless) acts as the residue left behind from the tracing of an event.

Comparing this to Alÿs' block of ice documentary, the recording of the event becomes the formless document as the process illustrates the language of time within the performative act that informed its making.

in|form follows a comparable construct in the process of the performance between artist and object: the physical repetition of the performance in the space creating an awareness of real-time for the viewer, the object filling and emptying space suggesting tracing time through movement, and the original performance only available through the performative document creating an intangibility to its existence. *Asphalt Rundown* (1969), a work by Robert Smithson, is a pertinent example of exploring the duration of time as an influence on the finished work. Smithson unloaded a large quantity of asphalt into a quarry, creating a molten landscape that, when cooled, became the solidifying of an action in flux. It successfully exemplifies formless as operation (in that the pour of the asphalt operates within certain boundaries, such as gravity and velocity) and the elicited documentation of the finished work has a sense of intrigue due to the un-witnessed event that took place and the 'frozen motion' of the finished work.

Time, motion and duration all have an intermediate link to the ephemeral, because the language deals with a non-physical presence, so too *in|form* takes on a sense of the ephemeral through its transient dialogue.



Fig.17 *Untitled (still)* (March, 2008)

The materials used to make the work respond well to air, giving the ambiguous sculptural form a liquidity value that creates motion. In *Untitled (still)* (March,

2008), I projected a still image from an installation where I filled a stairwell with a large, three-pronged bladder [Fig.17]. The bladder, made of thin polyethylene, was filled with air and gradually deflated over time. The still was chosen from the beginning of the installation, the organic form was bulbous and cocoon-like in its 'fresh' state, which created for the viewer the potential of something happening. Throughout the projection, the viewer watched, waiting for movement. In this manner, paused time was used to intensify the experience.

Chapter Three | Performing the Object

Section 3.01 | The Performative Document

Philip Auslander (2006) believes the purpose of documentation in performative art falls in either one of two categories, *documentary*, where the performance is carried out in front of an audience and this event is documented, or *theatrical*, where the performance is staged solely to be filmed, with “no meaningful prior existence as autonomous events presented to audiences” (Auslander, 2006, p.2). This project, *in | form: The Performative Object*, explores the intentional use of the performative document to mediate the viewers experience with the original event, thus my documented performance can be seen with *theatrical* intent. Whether a still image, object or video, the viewer is intentionally removed from the original event, offered instead a performative document constructed to embody the viewer as a part of that experience. This creates an interesting tension between the live performance and the viewing of this solo action through its documentation. Usually a performance is produced to be witnessed, whereas in this case, the viewer is required to engage with the performance after the fact. It is through the engagement with this constructed document that the viewer is somewhat exploited, in the sense that the viewer becomes aware of themselves as, even feels the need to be, part of the performance, creating a relationship between artist (motion) and the viewer (body). As the only form of experiencing this initial performance between artist and object, the constructed performative document can be seen as a second performance through the embodiment of the viewer. As Auslander explains: “Documentation does not simply generate image/statements that describe an autonomous performance and state that it occurred: it produces an event as a performance” (2006, p.5).

in | form explores the possibility of the performative document to pose how an object performs: in space, in time, in relation to the body. Through determining how documentation is situated within this project, an enquiry into the performativity of an object, and how an object performs in relation to the body, can be explored. The performance of the body is abstracted through the object that creates a bodily formlessness within the documentation. “Abstraction is thus a function of a specific process” (Krauss, 1985, p.124), in this case, tracing the movements of the artist’s body to create a performance reciprocated by the viewer’s body. Through large-scale projection of the performative document in a darkened space, *in | form* explores embodiment (the bodily nature of the object



Fig.18 *Untitled (footbridge1)* [still] (September, 2008)



Fig.19 *Untitled (alley1)* [still] (September, 2008)



Fig.20 *Untitled (footbridge1)* [still] (September, 2008)



Fig.21 *Untitled (corridor)* [still] (October, 2008)

imitating the processes of the body and the scale that engages the viewer's own body) as a means for the viewer to reconstruct the initial performance and act out the "crucial relationship [a]s not the one between the document and the performance but the one between the document and its audience" (Auslander, 2006, p.9).

French artist Yves Klein and his documentary photograph, *Le saut dans le vide* (*Leap into the void*) (1960), depicts an image of Klein in mid-flight, leaping out of a second-story window where only paved road is beneath him. His expression is one of total exhilaration. Though this photograph has been manipulated, the tension within the documented image questions the role of the performative document as not one of recording the event as evidence, but rather the image itself as a performance. This is a focus that *in|form* explores, with particular consideration to how the viewer experiences the performance through the documentation. Though the documentation of *in|form* is not fabricated as it is with Klein's photograph, showing the object as it occurs within the space, it is constructed with the intent to engage the viewer in a secondary performance, using the document to facilitate this.

Section 3.02 | The Art of Video

In my work *Untitled (residual air)* (May, 2008), I experimented with projecting a recorded performance back into the space it was originally performed, and the projection, in turn, filmed as a work [Fig.22], creating a layered 'generational' piece through its reworking within the space and its re-recordings, reasoning this approach may transcend the performative document to a prolific level between artist and viewer. The result was a heightened sense of the ephemeral, but interestingly the physicality of the performance itself was lost. The reading of the work was dependant on the viewer having experienced the original performative document before it was re-projected into the space, ultimately creating an exclusion from this reworked performance. The diminished material, object-based aspect of the work conflicted with the notion of the sculptural performance: the physicality of the body established in the performance of the object which renders "an emphatic questioning of the experience of living" (Schimmel, 1998, p.17). The loss of this physicality within *Untitled (residual air)* strengthened the importance to view the body and the performative object as a tool within the documentation.

Rosalind Krauss' (1976) essay *Video: The Aesthetics of Narcissism* discusses the relationship between technology and performance, particularly in terms of



Fig.22 *Untitled (residual air)* [still] (May, 2008)

narcissism, Krauss' idea being that the body (of the viewer and of the artist) is caught between two parenthesis – the video camera and the monitor. This illustrates the reflexive quality the video has as a sculptural medium, where a fixed camera position has the means to turn the focus onto the viewer, which in turn extends the relationship between viewer and artist. As Krauss explains:

...most of the work produced over the very short span of video art's existence has used the human body as its central instrument. In the case of work on tape, this has most often been the body of the artist-practitioner. In the case of video installations, it has usually been the body of the responding viewer. And no matter whose body has been selected for the occasion, there is a further condition which is always present. Unlike the other visual arts, video is capable of recording and transmitting at the same time – producing instant feedback. The body is therefore as it were centred between two machines that are the opening and closing of a parenthesis. The first of these is the camera; the second is the monitor, which re-projects the performer's image with the immediacy of a mirror (1976, p.52).

Considering this in terms of Bruce Nauman's video work *Revolving Upside Down* (1968), where Nauman rotates a camera to situate the floor at the top of the frame, and proceeds to record himself moving slowly from the back of his studio towards the camera, turning on one foot as he goes, repeating the action

until the tape runs out, the viewer engages with the body in a perpetuating motion, the reflexive quality extending the relationship between artist and viewer. The repetition of movement, as opposed to looping a single action, creates a heightened awareness of the passing of time. The repetitive nature of his actions, the duration of time and the anticipation this creates within this document construct a sense of the transient within the performative (albeit within the absurd). Paul Schimmel explains:

For Nauman, the repetition of such simple actions had the potential to force the viewer into his loop. Eschewing narrative, he opted for a type of repetition that could ruthlessly wear down the viewer, for an engaging tension that would never be resolved (1998, p.91).

In terms of *in|form*, the video documents also depict a physical repetition of action within a space and through this repetition one understands there is no beginning nor end to the performance.

Considering the role of the video from a phenomenological perspective, a video work initiates the “act of viewing as experienced from within” (Sobchack, 1992, p.136) through its ability to communicate to (and therefore embody) the viewer through a common position (being experience). As Sobchack explains:

...intentional form shapes, or in-forms, the living of the body in its being-in-the-world, the body in its finite, situated, and sensate materiality objectively expresses intentionality in the world as a subjective *inscription* of time and *description* of space...The condition of being conscious of the world is being a consciousness *in* it and sharing the materiality that provides consciousness with its objects as well as the grounds for its own subjective being (1992, p.58–59).

Therefore, looking particularly at *in|form*, the video documentation has the ability of embodying the viewer through this experience or consciousness. The viewer relates to the documentation through the awareness of themselves as body, the artist creating the movement for the body through performance.

Section 3.03 | Private Performance

This section explores the idea of the private performance as a solo action existing only in documented form in relation to Swiss sculptor Roman

Signer, who uses the performative document to create “events-as-sculptures” (Volk, 2001, para.5). Signer’s work is transitory by nature and exists only in documentary form (though at times he does carry out a performative event in the gallery). By displaying either photographic stills, or video documentation, the recording of Signer’s private performances creates a sense of intangibility at not being able to witness the actual event itself. The theatrical documentation in this sense portrays itself as somehow not presenting the full picture of the original act, enticing because the viewer is left with a desire for the original act, emphasized by the impossibility of this happening due to the ephemeral nature of the work itself, the documentation presents an action in flux where its physicality is found in its intangibility. One work in particular, *Bucket* (2002), uses the documentation of the performance to capture the intensity of the moment. Signer positions himself beneath a row of buckets arranged in a square and suspended from the ceiling. They are filled with water, and when Signer pulls the trigger, they fall from the ceiling to the floor, surrounding Signer with a water trajectory on impact. The whole event is documented and presented as a photographic sequence; the viewer engages with an active moment (or moment in action). Signer is best described in the words of Gregory Volk as “a sculptor whose works embody pure transformation. Using a variety of means, he constantly seeks out the exact volatile moment when one body or form abruptly changes into another” (2001, para.5). Signer’s intention of carefully constructing the documented moment of his performative sculptures allows the viewer to engage with a heightened awareness of the transitional moment. This too has a way of mediating the experience of the original event for the viewer.

Similarly, *in|form* explores both public and domestic space as the site for the original performances, to use space that is relatable to the viewer as a place where their body can exist, focusing on passageways as the performances then mark the coming-and-going of time within a space and introduces dualities within the work: public/private space; empty/full space. The domestic environment heavily influences the dynamic of the performance where the context of the object competes against the action [Fig.26]. This creates a limitation on the viewer’s ability to engage with the embodiment of the performance, whereas I found the de-personalised public passageways have the opposite effect, the openness of the minimalist space allows the viewer to become more receptive to the body, action and the navigation of space. The performance of the body in and out of space is physically repeated, and then looped so any narrative becomes recurring. The awareness of this



Fig.23 *Untitled (internal navigation)* [still] (August, 2008)



Fig.24 *Untitled (passage)* [still] (August, 2008)



Fig.25 *Untitled (internal navigation)* [still] (August, 2008)



Fig.26 *Untitled (interior)* [still] (August, 2008)

repetitive and deliberate act engages the viewer with the real-time, which creates a reflexive response for the viewer where they become aware of their own occupied space in terms of the performance. An example of this is the video work, *The Bordeaux Piece* (2004), by artist David Claerbout, where a scene between father, son and young woman plays out in a modern house situated in an idyllic hillside location. At the beginning and end of the scene, shots of this landscape are shown. The scene is seemingly looped as the characters repeat their performance, it is only through awareness of the subtle changes in light as the sun sets that the viewer becomes aware of the juxtaposition between the physical repetition of the performance and the passing of the day in real-time. The entire length of the video is thirteen hours. Similarly, the works of *in|form* draw on the perimeters of real-time repetition to extend on the relationship between viewer and artist, as the viewer's time is taken up by my time. The labour involved in physically performing the work translates into the physicality of viewing it. This, coupled with the large scale projection of the documentation itself, embodies the viewer within the work through the performance, the performativity of the object and the scale.

It was important to explore the possibility of the placement of the video camera on the body during the performance, so as to locate the viewer within the bladder object. This is a technique used by early video artists, such as Acconci and Dan Graham, to apply the camera as an extension of the body. As Graham (1973) explains:

You are dealing with two exterior surfaces to begin with – the exterior surface of the body in that space and the exterior surface of the environment. The fact that the camera was hand-held was very interesting to me because I found that in the movement of the camera you've really got a kinaesthetic sensation that, in fact, defined the body. Something inside the body almost evokes the person who holds the camera, which suggested to me the idea of putting the camera on the eye and making the film both an expression of the outside environment and the inside of the person who was filming at the same time (Gale, 2004, p.264).

These explorative works created a visual document from the point of view of the artist that, if considered in the terms of Sobchack (2004), offered an experience from "my side", the interior view [Fig.27]. This was not as effective as the documentation created from a fixed camera perspective because the

viewer is limited by the (little) information given from the interior experience, whereas approaching the documentation from the view of “your side” (Sobchack, 2004), being the exterior view (as seen from the other), embodies the



Fig.27 *Untitled (body-walk)* [3 stills] (April, 2008)

viewer in a total spatial experience that includes object and body. The reflexive quality of a fixed camera position engages the viewer with the performative, in the sense that the viewer is aware of themselves as “the human conduit exist[ing] in a particular relation to the message, which is one of temporal concurrence” (Kraus, 1976, p.52). As discussed above, the element of real-time passing between the viewer and the documentation is pertinent and the reflexivity of the fixed-camera position augments this experience for the viewer.

...through the respective mediation of camera and projector (mechanisms that intervene in acts of perception and expression, both duplicating and reversing them), the filmmaker and spectator are brought into indirect perceptual engagement with each other, and into direct engagement with a world that is their *mutual intentional object*. They are brought also into perceptual engagement with each other’s perceptive and expressive acts. Two embodied acts of perception and expression – each enabled by instruments – meet in a coterminous perception of a world that is also the coterminous expression of that world by the perceptive consciousnesses that engage it (Sobchack, 1992, p.173).

With this in mind, the documenting of the private performance from a fixed position discusses the body as an artist’s tool, looking at documentation as an exploration of the body interacting with space and environment. Cindy Nemser explains this dynamic of the artist’s body in performance in the essay, *Subject – Object: Body Art*, as the:

transaction between himself and his environment... man is no passive receiver of environmental signs and signals: on the contrary, he is an active agent involved in a never-ending dialogue between himself and the world around him (1971, p.233).



Fig.28 *Untitled (internal access)* [still] (August, 2008)



Fig.29 *Untitled (emerge)* [still] (August, 2008)

Chapter Four | The Time-Bound Body

Section 4.01 | Absence of Body

Exploring the body as a time-bound object introduced to *in|form: The Performative Object* the challenge of navigating through how to represent the body without becoming caught in a literal dialogue. Through this I have found the suggestion of the body is much more powerful, and carries more

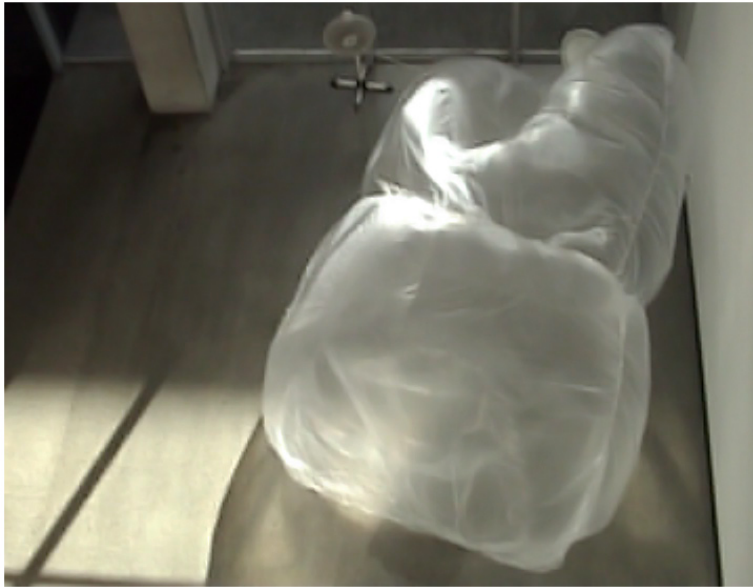


Fig.30 *Untitled (wind 3)* [still] (April, 2008)

significantly the nature of being bound by time than having its physical presence within the work and has revealed the significance of how the viewer's body sits within this idea of performing the object. Exploring the artist/viewer relationship through the suggestion of the body (particularly through the organic sculptural form and

its performativity with the artist's body), the largely absent physical body from the documentation incites the viewer to impose their own body within the work. An earlier series of works considered removing the artist's body entirely by using exterior means to create motion within the object. In *Untitled (wind 3)* (April, 2008), the movement of the object was created in reaction to external devices, specifically a series of fans [Fig.30]. A large inflated bladder, made of a thin polyethylene membrane, was suspended in a space surrounded by fans and subjected to this force of air on all sides. The bladder moved around the space as it was pushed by the air. The force from the fans was much stronger than the responsive motion created through the body, so the organic nature of the object was somewhat lost in the performance. The subtleties of the bladder's reactionary responses to my body, rather than a mechanically-driven motion where the object is moving for the sake of moving, proved to be significant to this project, and it was the loss of these subtleties that changed the overall



Fig.31 *Untitled (exertion)* [still] (September, 2008)



Fig.32 *Untitled (flight)* [still] (September, 2008)



Fig.33 *Untitled (cross over)* [still] (September, 2008)

dynamic of the work. From this the importance of the presence (even in absence) of the body was determined.

To further explore the presence of the absent body, the photographic series *Push-Ups* (1969) of Acconci presents to the viewer a series of ten photographs depicting the marks his body made while performing one hundred push ups in the sand of Far Rockaway, New York, to “corroborate the “presence” of Acconci as an active subject in the world” (Jones, 1998, p.117). It was Acconci’s intent to assume totality of the space the performance took place in through the documentation of the body’s presence by means of recording the marks the body left on the site (through his movement). This documentation of the body, without the body physically present, allows the viewer to recreate the performance in their mind, substituting Acconci’s body with their own. As Acconci (1982) describes:

A piece is meant to submerge the agent into environment; the agent is lost, no ‘thing’ exists; a piece functions as a private activity – that private activity, however, exists only so that it can be made public later, like a news event, through reportage or rumour (Taylor, 2005, p.57).

So too, *in|form* explores how tracing the body through it’s action (or motion), creates an interesting outcome where the body is present through its absence. This can be seen in Richard Long’s works, particularly his walking series.

In *A Line Made By Walking* (1967), Long walked continually back and forth in a straight line through a field, wearing down a path by compressing the grass underfoot over time. The mark of the body traces the performance, and the indentation left has a transient quality owing to the time taken to produce the mark, and the absence of the physical action itself. The viewer is confronted with “a solitary activity...performed in a natural environment coupled with photographic documentation of the artist’s ephemeral intervention into the landscape” (Warr, 2000, p.166). Because the marks made have the language of the body in motion (where the action has the obvious trait of tracing the body), the viewer relates their own body to the performance.

Section 4.02 | Passing Time

in|form considers the materiality of the body, exploring its complex nature (in that it is at once physical yet transient) to record the passing of time. Time acts as an agent of temporality, and by creating a physicality for movement through the performative object, has revealed the dualities between the passing of real-time for the viewer (as discussed earlier in Section 3.03 | Private Performance) and the body as a time-bound object. By viewing the body as the “essential *premises* of our being in the world” (Sobchack, 2004, p.182), *in|form* treats the body as the basis of communication between artist and viewer, performance and performative, exploring the use of video and performative object to position the body as a time-bound object.

By considering the passing of time as a form of measurability, *in|form* reflects on understanding the body’s relationship with time as an object. Klaus Rinke’s photo collage, *Deplazierung* (*Changing location according to points in time*) (1972) explores this relationship between body and time. Using a camera in a fixed position, Rinke photographs himself in fifty metre increments, walking through a space away from the camera. Rinke then collages these stills together to create a visual mapping of his body existing within a certain time frame in space. The resultant image creates for the viewer a document of temporal movement. “His sculptural actions [are] intended to invoke existential questions of man’s position in the world...and understanding our relationship with time” (Warr, 2000, p.123). *in|form* uses moving image to maintain this dialogue of passing time. As moving image has a momentum of temporal movement, the viewer engages with the documentation as existing within the present moment, between artist and viewer. As Sobchack explains:

Each film (as each spectator) exists as simultaneously presentational and representational, as viewing subject and visible object, as an embodied “presence” informed by the transcendent activity of retention and protention that grounds a reflection of time as past, present, and future. Each film (as each spectator) exists as a continuous “be-coming” that continually synthesizes the temporal and spatial heterogeneity of transcendent and immanent existence as the dialectical coherence of embodied and conscious experience. Informed by the heterogeneity of time, the space of each film (and each spectator) is both discontinuous and contiguous, lived from within and without (1992, p.299).

The language of video (particularly the performative document) has a temporal motion that reflects on the passing of time as something that occurs between viewer and moving image: the viewer is embodied within the experience of passing time.

Section 4.03 | Body as Object

Within Rebecca Horn’s earlier performance work, she explores the physiology of the body, creating objects that become an extension of the body or act as a second skin. Through these performances, Horn investigates how to communicate through the body, exploring ritual, personal and bodily space, as well as intimacy. Horn explains:

Looking back at my first pieces you always see a kind of cocoon, which I used to protect myself. Like the fans where I can lock myself in, enclose myself, then open and integrate another person into an intimate ritual. This intimacy of feeling and communication was a central part of the performances (Celant, 1994, p.16).

Often performing her work in solitude, the viewer engages with the body as object through this mediated performance, in turn, becoming the performer themselves, through their participation and reaction to Horn and her bodily gestures. Because the use of the body can also suggest the language of intimacy, *in|form* plays on this to extend the relationship between artist and viewer, whereby the viewer is also encouraged to substitute the artist’s body for their own. By exploring the use of the body as an object acknowledges the immediate



Fig.34 *Untitled (riser)* [still] (October, 2008)



Fig.35 *Untitled (two by two)* [still] (September, 2008)

relational value it has between artist and viewer. As Tracey Warr explains:

Artists making performative work have sought to demonstrate that the represented body has a language and that this language of the body, like other semantic systems, is unstable...The body as a language is at once inflexible and too flexible. Much can be expressed, whether deliberately or not, through the body's behaviour (2000, p.13).

Gleichzeitig die Wände berühren (Scratching Both Walls at Once) (1974–75) appears in Horn's video *Berlin Exercises* (1974–75) and is an interesting example of exploring bodily space. The performance depicts Horn wearing a prosthetic contraption strapped to her hands – large wooden 'fingers' that extend from her body so when she stands in the centre of the room, Horn can touch both walls with these extensions. The entire space is 'filled' by Horn's body, and as she walks from one end of the room to the other, these extensions leave gestural marks on the walls, tracing the action of her body in motion. This simple act could be seen as a means to measure or record the body as it exists in this space: a body in motion.

Comparing this to *in|form*, the performance between inflated bladder and artist can be viewed as the physical tracing of the lived body, where the object acts as a prosthetic extension of the artist's body and representative of the viewer's body in space.

In *Mefßkasten (Measure Box)* (1970), Horn stands within a metal cubicle, long rods running from top to bottom push against her body from all four sides. Horn removes herself from the intricate surrounds, leaving two rows of rods as they were – ultimately tracing the outline of her body. Perhaps a little more literal than her latter works (which may be due to the two dimensional plane this trace outline then belongs to), it manages to capture the vulnerability of the body, heightened by the disconcerting contraption it is forced to be present within. Tracing the contours of her body shows a deliberate investigation with the occupying space of her body as an object, as it exists in that time. The manoeuvrability of the cubicle and its rods emphasize the performativity of this piece, in that it can be seen as a device to measure any body, not specifically limited to the artist's.

In relation to *in|form*, the performativity of the object traces the motion of the body, investigating the space the body occupies. The vulnerability of the body can be sensed through the transient dialogue of the object and the constant use of motion (as the body and object move through space). So too, the object can

be seen as a device to measure the body, specifically through tracing motion, and in this sense, proves the body's fragility (or at least creates a heightened awareness of its transient physicality).

In the essay, *Between Water and Stone – Fluxus Performance: A Metaphysics of Acts*, Kristine Stiles (1993) discusses the dialogue of the body as a performative object, specifically in terms of the Fluxus art movement:

...objects in Fluxus performances assume a distinctly performative character, and the body, in addition to its role as subject, is itself presented as an object. Together subject and object create a changing and interrelated perceptual field for the investigation of the interchange between actions, language, objects and sound. Fluxus performances require both performers and viewers to consider the function of thought in the ways in which the body interacts with things (Stiles, 1993, p.211).

In comparison, *in|form* looks at the performativity of the body and the relationship this creates between artist and viewer, using the sculptural object to trace the body in motion. The body is considered as object, and is asked to navigate through spaces where the body naturally occupies, such as passageways or domestic space. The performance of the body within this context demonstrates the “action-structure of things and events as defined both by and through language and the body” (Stiles, 1993, p.213).

Chapter Five | Conclusion

The overall premise of this thesis lies in the transience of time and motion and the relationship this has to the physicality of the body that subsequently exists as a time-bound object, at once corporal yet transient. Documenting the sculptural performance between object and body explores the physicality of performance and the performative, and consequently the relationship between the artist's body and the viewer's. The use of the camera (particularly from a fixed-position) translates the space between artist, viewer and performance and reveals a complex discussion concerning the phenomenology behind its reflexivity. *in|form: The Performative Object* explores the performative document in terms of this reflexivity to activate a performance between viewer and artist, using the body as a device to measure movement.

To extend this relationship between the three bodies (artist, viewer, object), *in|form* intentionally performs the artist's body and the performative object in a space with no audience, resulting in a video documentation that reflects the very nature of the performative object itself: that the physicality of a performance is found in the intangible nature of the moment. Using object to trace the body's physical space and motion, the performance between artist and object investigates the intangibility of the body as a time-bound object.

in|form subjects the viewer's body to a transient dialogue between artist and object, performance and space, through the performative document. This document's role is a significant one to the project in that it mediates the experience of the performative object between artist and viewer. It is constructed evidence of a private performance between artist and object purposed to engage the viewer by means of embodiment. Through the reflexive quality of the video documentation, the viewer engages with moving image as existing in present time (therefore, the viewer's real-time), and the documentation's slow pace and large scale emphasizes this embodiment to create a bodily experience for the viewer within the motion of the artist's performance. Therefore, the performative document (being of the artist's private performance) creates a second performance between document and viewer within their present time, which poses the question, who is the performer: the artist or the viewer?

Lived finitely and perspectively, the very temporal and spatial limitations of embodied consciousness inaugurate a *need for movement* in the world – fulfilled by the *power of movement* made possible through



Fig.36 *Untitled (entrance)* [still] (August, 2008)



Fig.37 *Untitled (exit)* [still] (August, 2008)

the agency of the material and enworlded lived-body. Thus, in existence, the body's finitude and situation and its power of movement transform the abstractions of time and space, informing them with the weight of choice and the thickness of movement, with *value* and *dimension* (Sobchack, 1992, p.59).

in|form considers the viewer's relationship to artist and object as one of haptic embodiment through sculptural performance, using the inter-relational performance between artist and prosthetic extension (performative bladder) to experience the body through sensibility.

List of Works

- Fig.1 *Untitled (in|form)* [detail] (November, 2008)
approx. 12.75m long x 2.4m high
projector (4 of), DVD player (4 of), video (4 of: duration
1:45:58 mins, 1:12:09 mins, 1:38:22 mins & 59:24 mins); installation
- Fig.2 *Untitled (exterior)* [still] (November, 2008)
dimensions variable
video; duration 59:24 mins
- Fig.3 *Untitled (in|form)* [installation view] (November, 2008)
approx. 12.75m long x 2.4m high
projector (4 of), DVD player (4 of), video (4 of: duration
1:45:58 mins, 1:12:09 mins, 1:38:22 mins & 59:24 mins); installation
- Fig.4 *Untitled (in|form)* [in-situ detail, 4 stills] (November, 2008)
approx. 12.75m long x 2.4m high
projector (4 of), DVD player (4 of), video (4 of: *Untitled*
(*conduction2*) duration 1:45:58 mins, *Untitled (riser)* duration
1:12:09 mins, *Untitled (overhead2)* duration 1:38:22 mins & *Untitled*
(*exterior*) duration 59:24 mins); installation
- Fig.5 *Untitled (in|form)* [detail] (November, 2008)
approx. 12.75m long x 2.4m high
projector (4 of), DVD player (4 of), video (4 of: duration
1:45:58 mins, 1:12:09 mins, 1:38:22 mins & 59:24 mins); installation
- Fig.6 *Untitled (descend)* [still] (September, 2008)
dimensions variable
video; duration 12:28 mins
- Fig.7 *Untitled (in-between)* [still] (September, 2008)
dimensions variable
video; duration 13:10 mins

- Fig.8 *Untitled (conduction)* [still] (April, 2008)
dimensions variable
video; duration 35:20 mins
- Fig.9 *Untitled (form 1)* [still] (April, 2008)
dimensions variable
video; duration 3:37 mins
- Fig.10 *Untitled (overhead)* [still] (October, 2008)
dimensions variable
video; duration 12:36 mins
- Fig.11 *Untitled (night test)* [still] (October, 2008)
dimensions variable
video; duration 0:36 mins
- Fig.12 *Untitled (making tracks)* [still] (September, 2008)
dimensions variable
video; duration 5:03 mins
- Fig.13 *Untitled (external access)* [still] (October, 2008)
dimensions variable
video; duration 8:36 mins
- Fig.14 *Untitled (exterior)* [still] (November, 2008)
dimensions variable
video; duration 59:24 mins
- Fig.15 *Untitled (caged)* (March, 2008)
dimensions variable
digital image
- Fig.16 *Untitled (creep)* (March, 2008)
dimensions variable
digital image

- Fig.17 *Untitled (still)* (March, 2008)
dimensions variable
digital image
- Fig.18 *Untitled (footbridge1)* [still] (September, 2008)
dimensions variable
video; duration 7:04 mins
- Fig.19 *Untitled (alley1)* [still] (September, 2008)
dimensions variable
video; duration 16:26 mins
- Fig.20 *Untitled (footbridge1)* [still] (September, 2008)
dimensions variable
video; duration 7:04 mins
- Fig.21 *Untitled (corridor)* [still] (October, 2008)
dimensions variable
video; duration 3:46 mins
- Fig.22 *Untitled (residual air)* [still] (May, 2008)
dimensions variable
video; duration 16:14 mins
- Fig.23 *Untitled (internal navigation)* [still] (August, 2008)
dimensions variable
video; duration 9:21 mins
- Fig.24 *Untitled (passage)* [still] (August, 2008)
dimensions variable
video; duration 7:37 mins
- Fig.25 *Untitled (internal navigation)* [still] (August, 2008)
dimensions variable
video; duration 9:21 mins

- Fig.26 *Untitled (interior)* [still] (August, 2008)
dimensions variable
video; duration 5:24 mins
- Fig.27 *Untitled (body-walk)* [3 stills] (April, 2008)
dimensions variable
video; duration 3:39 mins
- Fig.28 *Untitled (internal access)* [still] (August, 2008)
dimensions variable
video; duration 4:45 mins
- Fig.29 *Untitled (emerge)* [still] (August, 2008)
dimensions variable
video; duration 2:54 mins
- Fig.30 *Untitled (wind 3)* [still] (April, 2008)
dimensions variable
video; duration 10:18 mins
- Fig.31 *Untitled (exertion)* [still] (September, 2008)
dimensions variable
video; duration 2:30 mins
- Fig.32 *Untitled (flight)* [still] (September, 2008)
dimensions variable
video; duration 4:27 mins
- Fig.33 *Untitled (cross over)* [still] (September, 2008)
dimensions variable
video; duration 4:03 mins
- Fig.34 *Untitled (riser)* [still] (October, 2008)
dimensions variable
video; duration 1:12:09 mins

- Fig.35 *Untitled (two by two)* [still] (September, 2008)
dimensions variable
video; duration 7:12 mins
- Fig.36 *Untitled (entrance)* [still] (August, 2008)
dimensions variable
video; duration 3:23 mins
- Fig.37 *Untitled (exit)* [still] (August, 2008)
dimensions variable
video; duration 1:38 mins

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