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**Testing the Curatorial in Artists' Film and Video Installation**

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# **Testing the Curatorial in Artists' Film and Video Installation**

By Jean-Michel Mazière

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the  
University of Westminster for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy by  
Published Work

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## Abstract

This PhD by published work critically examines ten years of curatorial practice in the field of artists' film and video by the author. The aim of the thesis and publications is to question and challenge the contemporary integration of artists' film and video installation into the language of the visual arts, the context of the white cube and the privileged definitions of curatorial practice. This PhD also places these questions in a historical context, taking into account the early and often overlooked developments of artists' film and video exhibition.

This research was carried out through individual curatorial projects in the field by scrutinising specific constituent parts of artists' film and video installation such as the screen, time, space, image, projection, site and audience. The curated exhibitions (the Projects) all took place at Ambika P3, a large post-industrial venue converted into a project space for this purpose in 2007. Each project manipulated these constituent elements and built on them in order to provide new artists' commissions under the rigour of an experimental and research-led approach.

Through this commissioning process, this research developed new collaborative models of curatorial practice, examined and identified key critical areas of curatorial and artistic practice which have been overlooked by critics, writers, curators and the public and proposed new forms of artists' film and video exhibition. This testing of the boundaries of artist's film and video installation demonstrated that both the history and context of the practice is engaged with a broad range of paradigms inherited from cinema, sculpture and site specific practice. Furthermore it established that curation is a collective practice engaging numerous participants according to the needs and requirements of each project.

The projects revealed that a self reflexive and historically aware approach to curating artists' film and video can deliver innovative and immersive works outside of the white cube, through an attention to materials, site and form. Through the publications and the commentary it is shown that a critical,

collective and process based curatorial practice, attentive to context and its origins expands both the language and the power of the exhibited work.

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## List of Accompanying Material

A USB stick is attached with documentations on each publication.

Eight individual folders are on the USB stick:

- 1\_Project One\_*Rink*
- 2\_Project Two\_*From Floor To Sky*
- 3\_Project Three\_*Vertical Works*
- 4\_Project Four\_*End Piece...*
- 5\_Project Five\_*The Happiest Man*
- 6\_Project Six\_*A Sense of Place*
- 7\_Project Seven\_*UNDER*
- 8\_Project Eight\_*NOW*

Notes:

Each of the eight project folders has 3 individual folders and include within each is an itemised PDF list of its contents:

- A\_ Research folder: artists notes, plans, tests, diagrams, sketches.
- B\_ Images folder: photographs and video of the exhibition.
- C\_ Documentation folder: publicity, press, comments book.

## Acknowledgements

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In terms of practice and as regards the projects themselves, I would like to thank all the artists for their inspiring and generous contributions. I would also like to express recognition to the collaborators in these projects, in particular, Peter Kardia and Roderick Coyne (Royal College of Art), Hester Wesley and Stuart Comer (Tate Modern), Andrew Silewicz (Sprüth Magers, London), Adam Lockhart and Stephen Partridge (The University of Dundee), Maggie Ellis and Pinky Ghundale (Film London), Niccolo Sprovieri (Sprovieri Gallery), my research colleague David Company, Joanna Hogg and Adam Roberts (A Nos Amours), Andrew Leslie Heyward and Carole Billy (Marian Goodman Gallery, Paris) and Claire Atherton, Chantal Akerman's film editor whose help was invaluable at a very difficult time. Thank you also to our dedicated team of production managers, technicians and builders, including Christian Newton, Jonathan Samuels, Mohammed Ali, Pascal Willekens (VIDI SQUARE) and Sam Collins. The invaluable support of Heather Blair in Ambika P3 is also to be noted.

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Author's Declaration

I declare that all the material contained in this thesis is my own work.

Jean-Michel Mazière

January 2017

## 1 Introduction

“However we achieve it, the work has to be problematic.” David Hall.<sup>1</sup>

This PhD grows out of my work as a curator of both cinemas and galleries over the last 30 years but focuses on specific research between 2007 and 2015 through the development and curation of exhibitions at Ambika P3. This curation interrogates artists’ film and video as a specific historical and international practice and its relationship with narrative cinema, television and traditional fine art practices.

Sarah Cook,<sup>2</sup> has usefully noted that curatorial practice operates to “contextualise, and legitimate art or objects within the cultural sphere”; paraphrasing Vesna, she proposes that the role of the curator is both to “create content ... and create context”.<sup>3</sup> The role of the curator can then be summarised as that of a strategist, interpreter and producer. Similarly, in this thesis I discuss how research sought to support and extend understandings of artists’ film and video by determining how experimental processes and sites can produce new art and new disciplinary approaches through exhibition.

Between 2007 and 2015 I commissioned a series of exhibitions that aimed to bring the distinctive elements of film and video installation to Ambika P3’s project space in order to explore the form, theme and processes inherent to artists’ film and video as a defined field of practice. As David Curtis affirms, Artists’ Film and Video is a practice of artists’ working with film and video. It is a gathering of the previous concepts of avant-garde film, experimental film, video art, expanded cinema and installation art. Unlike the looser term ‘Moving Image’ it is rooted in artists’ practice and is framed historically both in terms of context and critical discourse.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> David Hall in conversation with Michael Mazière quoted in Cate Elwes (2012) ‘Phases, Ruptures and Continuities’, *Moving Image Review & Art Journal*, Vol.1, No.2.

<sup>2</sup> Cook, S. (2004) *The Search for a Third Way of Curating New Media Art: Balancing Context and Content in and out of the Institution*. PhD thesis, University of Sunderland, p.19.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. p.28.

<sup>4</sup> Curtis, D. (2006) *A History Of Artists’ Film And Video In Britain 1897-2004*. London: BFI, p.3; and Mazière M.(2003), *Institutional Support for Artists’ Film and Video in England 1966-2003*, pp. 1–3. Available from: <http://www.studycollection.co.uk/maziere/paper.html#1> [Accessed 8 May 2016].



**FIGURE 1** Ambika P3, University of Westminster, high space



**FIGURE 2** Ambika P3, University of Westminster, low space

In this research, the employment of Ambika P3 as a space is central to research, conceived to be neither a gallery nor a cinema but an experimental project space, a laboratory in which both the practice of curation and the resultant conclusions could be tested and manifested. In physical terms, the constituent parts of artists' film and video installation are the screen, time, space, image, projection and audience which added to the elements of the space such as walls, height, light, scale and floor, provide the basic building blocks of these projects. Each project manipulated these elements and built on them in order to produce new artists' commissions under the rigour of an experimental and research-led approach. It is to this field of practice that this research contributes, via a commissioning process that tests the boundary conditions of artist's film and video, and which sought to identify appropriate curatorial approaches, methods and roles specific to the issues raised in exhibiting such work.

## **2 Rationale and Research Questions**

Foucault was speaking one day about the elementary task of description and I think for installation (film and video) we have really to do this type of work, you understand, where it begins and where it ends and how it could connect but it's very difficult.<sup>5</sup>

Film and video screens have been in the art gallery from the late 50s in the form of happenings, performance, expanded cinema and video art. Through this practice-based curatorial research my aim was to locate, activate and identify the key elements and processes of artists' film and video when displayed as installation. One of the challenges in understanding the grammar of the exhibition is the difficulty in making visible the distinct spatial and temporal elements at work. Specifically, research tested curatorial approaches to the exhibition and curation of screen-based works that hybridised or fused sculptural and filmic languages. In particular this research has explored how post-industrial spaces can be re-employed to this end, and how these environments operate as

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<sup>5</sup> Bellour, R. (2002) *Moving Images talk*, Tate Modern, May 2002. *Moving Images* is a collaboration between Tate Modern and Research at Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design, bringing to London major figures working in or on film and video to explore contemporary issues around these media. Available from <http://www.tate.org.uk/context-comment/video/moving-images-raymond-bellour> [Accessed 8 May 2016].

incubator environments in which the curator and artist work together to 'co-create' and 'co-curate' a body of work. Specific questions posed by this research include:

1. How can the use of experimental sites of exhibition like Ambika P3 inform strategies for the exhibition making of artists' film and video installation?
2. Can the commissioning of projects in such spaces produce distinctive forms or content beyond normative modes of artists' film and video?
3. In curatorial practice what are the boundaries between the materials and ideas of the artist and the work of the curator?

The project in its manifestation as curated exhibitions involved either commissioning new site-specific work for the space or adapting and developing existing artists' film and video work. Eight projects are discussed here out of a possible eighteen that were produced during the period of research at Ambika P3. These eight projects were selected because they each present connected development processes in which skills, knowledge and techniques are researched and applied, providing together a new body of curatorial work.

In separate exhibitions by Ward (2009), and McCall (2011) the cinematic apparatus of projection is scrutinised through its displacement to a specific experimental site. Site is also explored through the sculptural aspects of installation in Hall's *End Piece* (2012), toward an understanding of art and the social site of broadcast. The curation of film and video alongside other art practices is examined in *From Floor to Sky* (2010), questioning both its specificity and its ability to be curated alongside other media. Burgin's *A Sense of Place* (2013) enabled an examination of the relations between curating photography and video, while Amati's *UNDER* (2014) provided curatorial strategies on how to develop and transform a single screen work through the architecture of installation. The final project *NOW* by Chantal Akerman (2015) focused on how curation can be used to configure the spatial manifestation of personal and political identity.

These works together represent a sustained curatorial engagement with the raw elements of film, video and installation (screen, projection, audience, light,

object), a fact which has determined their selection for this commentary as an aggregate of projects through which to explore research questions.

### **3 Contextual Review**

Curation is a broad field, and in the contemporary context has become a catch-all phrase to encompass almost any aspect of life that involves some form of considered organisation. This review primarily encompasses histories and theories of artists' film and video, taking occasional forays into associated fields such as new and interdisciplinary media curation in order to flesh out a relevant background. The structure of the review begins with an overview of key discussions of curating in general, before going on to a more detailed engagement with Artists' Film and Video as a distinct area of curatorial practice in its own right.

#### 3.1 Evolution and Critique of Curatorial Practice

The projects in this research also aimed to identify the shifting territory between the research of the curator and the ideas, materials and work of the artist. The term 'curator' itself emphasises those issues as it a contested concept that requires clear articulation of its modes of practice and methods – its etymology is well summarised by Hans Ulrich Obrist.

It's worth thinking about the etymology of curating. It comes from the Latin word *curare*, meaning to take care. In Roman times, it meant to take care of the bath houses. In medieval times, it designated the priest who cared for souls. Later, in the 18th century, it meant looking after collections of art and artifacts.<sup>6</sup>

An outline of the genealogy and relevant key models of practice in the field of curation reveals the plurality of methods employed. For Knox, classical curation of a collection in an institution involves: "selection, preservation, maintenance, collection and archiving of artist's works".<sup>7</sup> Evolving from the field of museology, curation was characteristically seen as either a scholarly activity and/or an administrative concern. In this context the object of study is individual artworks

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<sup>6</sup> Obrist, H.U.(2014). 'The art of curation', *The Guardian* 23 March 2014.

<sup>7</sup> A good example of this collection-based curating is articulated by Tim Knox, Director of the Fitzwilliams Museum (2014). Available from <http://www.artandscienceofcuration.org.uk/a-curators-progress/> [Accessed 8 May 2016].

and their relationship to museums, also including historical connoisseurship and emphasis on the biographical details of the artist. The literature on museology is vast, but key monographs detailing the historical development of art curation within this context would include Schubert's *The Curator's Egg: The Evolution of the Museum Concept from the French Revolution to the Present Day*<sup>8</sup> and the series of publications and textbooks emanating from the University of Leicester Press about museum administration and museum management (e.g. Hooper-Greenhill<sup>9</sup>) which provide a 'how to' or curatorial toolkit for the aspiring curator. More contemporary forms of museology have sought to shift the conversation away from the grand narratives framed by large-scale institutions towards more localised forms of museum curatorship as explored in Candlin's recent *Micromuseology: An Analysis of Small Independent Museums*.<sup>10</sup>

With the development of experimental forms of art, in the post-war period, we see a shift away from museology towards the development of more specialist forms of curatorial practice evolving to account for new forms of art such as performance, public art and media-specific practice. As noted by Cook,<sup>11</sup> these curatorial objects are less concerned with objects, but rather developed process-based attempts to capture, promote and explain emerging dematerialised and technological art forms. Large-scale anthologies such as *Thinking About Exhibitions*,<sup>12</sup> sought to capture the new audience and institutional arrangements that such work demanded, with a focus on work outside of mainstream institutional contexts and discussion of 'how to' stage the more performative and temporary artistic forms that were beginning to predominate in culture. In parallel with this literature and of relevance to this research in respect of the focus on immaterial art practices inclusive of the new materials of electronic media such as video, *Les Immateriaux*<sup>13</sup> sought a break from the tradition of museology through a focus on poststructuralist concerns with the function of language and

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<sup>8</sup> Schubert, K. (2000) *The Curator's Egg: The Evolution of the Museum Concept from the French Revolution to the Present Day*. London: Christies, One-Off Press.

<sup>9</sup> Hooper-Greenhill, E. (ed.) (2005) *Museum: Media: Message*. London: Routledge, 2005.

<sup>10</sup> Candlin, F. (2015) *Micromuseology: An Analysis of Small Independent Museums*. London: Bloomsbury.

<sup>11</sup> Cook, *The Search for a Third Way of Curating New Media Art*, p.19.

<sup>12</sup> Greenberg, Reesa, Bruce W, Ferguson, Sandy Nairne (eds) (1996) *Thinking about exhibitions*. London: Routledge.

<sup>13</sup> *Les Immatériaux* (1985), curated by French philosopher Jean-Francois Lyotard and Thierry Chaput at the Centre Pompidou in Paris.

an institutional critique that went beyond museology's concern with history. This curatorial turn moved towards the philosophical, whereby art practice was curatorially framed as an intersecting component of wider discursive and critical issues. This interrogation of the role of museum and by extension curator in an era of postmodern realignment was further scrutinised in Crimp's seminal *On the Museum's Ruins*,<sup>14</sup> which through its social and political concerns contributed significantly to the theoretical turn in art and curatorial practice of that era.

As noted by Alex Farquharson, a particular form of curation developed from this era that uses artists' works to make a significant statement – to identify artistic movement or to illustrate a political, sociological or historical perspective. The role of the curator is then central to the selection of both subject and works.

Often with group exhibitions curated along performative lines the artist-curator hierarchy is maintained, if not extended. When curators seize the conceptual ground usually occupied by artists, this places artists – often in vast numbers – in the subservient role of interpreting and delivering the curator's a priori, overarching premise.<sup>15</sup>

This approach to curation might be said to position the curator as auteur, as noted by Jonathan Watkins' article "The Curator as Artist" which made a case that curating was in itself a form of artistic practice "through the manipulation of the environment, other works and objects".<sup>16</sup>

Since the early 1990s when curatorial practice became less object orientated through its engagement with new independent spaces and practices such as performance, installation and film and video the curator has sometimes taken a substantial creative role not only in the selection of material but in its presentation, context and production. This controversial move which shifts power from the artist to the curator is still very much a contemporary problematic. As opposed to the previous period of the 1960s and 70s where artists actively resisted forms of institutional power the rise of the curator as artist concentrates authorial authority into the curator as a 'manager' and 'arbitrator' of artists' work. Paul O'Neill examines this dysfunctional relationship between curators, artists and institutions.

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<sup>14</sup> Crimp, D. (1983) 'On the Museum's Ruins', in Hal Foster (ed.), *The Anti-Aesthetic*. Port Townsend, WA: Bay Press.

<sup>15</sup> Farquharson, A. (2003) 'Curator and Artist', *Art Monthly*, vol. 270.

<sup>16</sup> Watkins, J. (1987) 'The Curator as Artist', *Art Monthly*, vol. 111.

The curatorial voice is too often perceived as separate from that of the artist; artists are deemed to speak on their own behalf, the curator on behalf of some abstract notion of culture.<sup>17</sup>

This shift of power away from the artist echoes the shift of power from artist to critic in the earlier part of the 20th century and manifests itself in two distinct ways – firstly through the increase in curated group exhibitions and secondly through the more ephemeral nature of modern media.

Other contemporary attempts to describe the curatorial condition have sought to develop institutional and economic critiques of the discipline, which post the 2007 economic crash have explored it as an artefact of/contributor to globalisation as evident in the work of Andrea Phillips who firmly places artistic and curatorial production in the milieu of contemporary economics and politics.<sup>18</sup> Bishop<sup>19</sup> similarly acknowledges that aspects of the curatorial role represent one more aspect of the culture industry, acidly noting a propensity for certain independent curators to seek “semi-celebrity”. Globalisation in art is perhaps most vividly expressed in the form of the large-scale international Biennale itself derived from the great exhibitions of the 19th century – Crystal Palace, Paris and others. These massive, international multi-layered events involve numerous curators at different levels led by a ‘head curator’ who organises the centrepiece and has star billing. Since the 1990s the growth of the art market, and the move of artists’ film and video into the gallery and museum have resulted in a large increase of both the Biennale format and the dominant participation of artists’ film and video.

In the contemporary context, this development has not gone unchallenged, with David Batty’s criticism of the 2013 Istanbul Biennial<sup>20</sup> in particular raising issues of appropriateness and utility brought to the fore in an era of economic and social upheaval. Conceived originally as a new thematic model of ‘social biennial’ the original concept attempted to place exhibits and artists in some of the city’s most

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<sup>17</sup> O’Neill, P. (2005) ‘The Co-dependent Curator’, *Art Monthly*, vol. 291.

<sup>18</sup> Phillips, A. (2010) ‘Art building, architecture building, curating politics’, in *Florence: Curating the City*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh College of Art.

<sup>19</sup> Bishop, C. (2007) ‘What is a Curator?’ *IDEA arts+society*, No.26. Available from: <http://idea.ro/revista/?q=en/node/41&articol=468> [Accessed 1 September 2016].

<sup>20</sup> Batty, D. (2013) ‘Istanbul Biennial under fire for tactical withdrawal from contested sites’, in *The Guardian*, September 14, 2013. London. Available at: [www.theguardian.com/world/2013/sep/14/istanbul-biennial-art-protest-under-fire](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/sep/14/istanbul-biennial-art-protest-under-fire), accessed May 8, 2016.

contested areas. Following the protests that centred on Taksim Square, the organisers withdrew the events, exhibitions and talks, with Phillips, co-curator of the biennial, noting:

We need to decide whether we're going to carry on playing at politics or understand the need to position ourselves differently. If you simply recognise your position in this rarefied world of art, you're not going to make change. We need to think about programming work that might create real long-term change for local people.<sup>21</sup>

While the limitations of curatorial interventions in the social might have been said to be exposed in Istanbul, Boris Groys<sup>22</sup> in contrast examines how the emergence of an international art scene has given birth to new curatorial profiles which increasingly operate collaboratively with artists to enable more democratised, decentralised forms of art-making to emerge, thereby complicating traditional distinctions between curator and artist as distinct producers of culture. The new aesthetics described by Groys is articulated more formally by Maria Lind,<sup>23</sup> who in her description of her work on the 2008 Sao Paulo Biennale argues that curating be seen as “the fruit of the labour of a network of agents ... the curatorial involves not just representing but presenting and testing”; this ‘network of agents’ can be read here as inclusive of not only individual artists, curators, funders etc. but also sites, spaces and materials. The kinds of re-thinking of curation argued by Lind here posit the curator as a purveyor of a relational practice and find resonance in the practice-based projects discussed in this thesis, whereby space, site, material and collaboration operated as a matrix within which new modalities of artists’ film and video were explored and tested.

The participatory and autodidactic curatorial forms developed in the examples above find resonance in the later practices of new media artists concerned with networks and other electronically mediate forms of culture. Artists since at least

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<sup>21</sup> Phillips, A. (2013) quoted in *The Observer* Sunday 15 September 2013

<sup>22</sup> Groys, B. (2009) ‘*Politics of Installation*’, in *e-flux journal* no.2, Jan. 2009. Available from: <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/02/68504/politics-of-installation/> [Accessed 8 May 2016]; and Groys, B., ‘Multiple Authorship’, in Barbara Vanderlinden and Elena Filipovic (eds), *The Manifesta Decade: Debates on Contemporary Exhibitions and Biennials*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, pp. 93-99.

<sup>23</sup> Lind, M. (2009) ‘On the Curatorial’, in *Art Forum*, October 2009, pp. 15-16. Available from: <http://www.fondazioneratti.org/mat/mostre/XV.%20Curating%20the%20Most%20Beautiful%20Kunsthalle%20in%20the%20World/Information%20Sheet%20Maria%20Lind.pdf> [Accessed 8 May 2016].

the mid-1990s have explored the implications of digital networks such as the Internet to produce and distribute their work (Tom Corby<sup>24</sup>). Unsurprisingly curatorial practice has not been slow to respond to this, seeking to examine the implications of these technological developments to both the creation of artwork, but also the practice of curating. For Beryl Graham,<sup>25</sup> this ‘new media art’ defined by interactivity, networks, and computation characteristically foregrounds the art experience as a process rather than an object, placing demands on institutions in regard documentation and archiving, but also forcing the development of different curatorial modalities and roles. Cook<sup>26</sup> has written extensively on this topic and argues for a ‘third way’ curatorial practice that balances traditional roles of ‘content creation’ and ‘context provision’ and which reflects and can account for the computational, variable, interactive, collaborative and distributed characteristics of new media art before coming to the conclusion that the highly variable conditions of such art (in terms of material, site, authorship etc.) demand a pragmatic case by case approach, that is adjustable to the demands of situation. The role of the curator in this sense varies according to context, is essentially multifaceted and is characterised by a developmental flux that reflects the evolution of the technologies that new media artists employ.

This image of a curator as ‘multifaceted’ practitioner, responding to the individual specifics of site, artist, institutional context and crucially media, is not dissimilar to that of the early curators of artists’ film and video. As shown throughout this thesis, the established languages of this form of art practice are operative as constraints and opportunities within any given curatorial project. Another key similarity between the curation of new media art and artists’ film and video is that both operate at varying degrees of distance from the periphery of main stream art practice and institutions, being as Cook puts it “essentially different”<sup>27</sup> and thereby requiring specialised historical and practical expertise. In the following section this is discussed further as curatorial histories and approaches to artists’ film and video are explored in detail.

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<sup>24</sup> Corby, T. (2005) *Network Art Practices and Positions*. London: Routledge.

<sup>25</sup> Graham, B. (2011) ‘Museums, New Media Art’, in Jonathon P. Bowen, Stuart Dunn and Kia Ng (eds) *EVA London 2011: Electronic Visualisation and the Arts*. London: BCS, pp.209-210.

<sup>26</sup> Cook, *The Search for a Third Way of Curating New Media Art*.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*, p.18

### 3.2 Artists' Film & Video and Curatorial Practice

These emerging forms of curation are prefigured by the historical development of artist-led curatorial initiatives, particularly in developing practices such as film and video, photography, new/digital media and prior to the professionalisation of curation as a pro-active independent practice. For example, in the field of artists' film and video during the 1970s there was both a resistance for the art institutions to recognise the practice as art while simultaneously a suspicion and disinterest in the gallery and museum institutions by practitioners, as Al Rees states: "It was anti-object and anti-gallery, seeking an art of system and process rather than commodity and product."<sup>28</sup>

And as noted by Catherine Elwes the formation of independent grass roots organisations who controlled their own exhibitions, such as London Video Arts (LVA) and The London Film-Makers' Co-operative (LFMC), provided forms of democratic ownership of the work to these artists.

In both North America and in Europe, artist-run video centres were founded. Electronic Arts Intermix in New York, Montevideo in Holland, Vtape in Toronto, London Video Arts and Fantasy Factory in the UK are examples of collectives that offered cheap equipment hire and post production facilities. Most also undertook distribution in film and video festivals, alternative, artist-run spaces and art schools.<sup>29</sup>

While the politics of selection and promotion which often lie at the heart of curation were scorned there were nevertheless many artist curated exhibitions – mainly driven by individual artists whose aim was to exhibit their work and those of their peers in an interventionist and often anti-curated way. Exhibitions such as *The Video Show*<sup>30</sup> at the Serpentine in 1975 and the regular *Summer Shows* at the LFMC<sup>31</sup> in the early 1980s were open to many, and either very inclusive or non selective.

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<sup>28</sup> Rees, A.L. (2015) 'Britain, 1966-98', in Rees, A.L. (ed.) *A History of Experimental Film and Video*. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, pp92, 93.

<sup>29</sup> Elwes, C. (2005) 'Video Art on Television', *Video Art, A Guided Tour*. London: I.B.Tauris, p. 117.

<sup>30</sup> 'The Video Show is Europe's most comprehensive survey of independent video. The show includes daily changing programmes of videotapes from Britain and thirteen other countries and a series of closed circuit installations and performances.' *Video Times: The Video Show; Festival of Independence Video; Serpentine Gallery 1.- 26.5.1975*. London: Serpentine Gallery, 1975.

<sup>31</sup> The LFMC's *Summer Show* which took place yearly from 1980 to 1985 where a non selective continual screening of experimental films ran continually over a week.

As Elwes points out, in the last two decades, artists' film and video has moved from being a marginal project on the fringes of art and cinema to taking centre stage in both the public and commercial visual arts.

It is not altogether clear why commercial galleries suddenly embraced what it had generally steered clear of – video being ephemeral in form, indefinitely reproducible and effectively uncollectable.<sup>32</sup>

Rees clearly outlines the beginning of this transformation in the mid 1990s calling it “a media explosion impelling artist of all kinds to use installation and video projection, much of which drew – albeit often unawares – on avant garde predecessors dating back to the Bauhaus”.<sup>33</sup> This change coincides but is not strictly driven by the rise of the YBAs (Young British Artists) and as Elwes states, “everything changed when the ‘YBA’ phenomenon hit the UK art world”.<sup>34</sup> Today, there is not one survey, prize, biennale or major exhibition of contemporary art that does not include a substantial number of film and video works. This sudden transformation of the specific, marginal and non commercial video art practice into a global phenomenon is still difficult to explain. A number of factors came into play in this development – the rise of a generation of artists happy to embrace the commercial gallery market; the development through the National Lottery of new art centres across the UK; the development of video projection technology; and the creation of Tate Modern.<sup>35</sup>

This integration of artists' film and video in fine art was rapid and paid little attention to its history and exhibition practice in 20th-century experimental film and video art. As Nicky Hamlyn demonstrates in his book *Film Art Phenomena*,<sup>36</sup> the appropriation of early expanded cinema from the 1960s and 70s took place by post-90s gallery artists such as Sam Taylor Wood, Stan Douglas and Tacita Dean. His position is that the latter appropriates techniques of expanded cinema towards a “narrative conceit” and “negate their original

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<sup>32</sup> Elwes, 'Video Art on Television'.

<sup>33</sup> Rees, 'Britain 1966-98', p.128.

<sup>34</sup> Elwes, C. (2005) 'The 1990's and the New Millennium', *Video Art, A Guided Tour*. London: I.B. Tauris, p. 59.

<sup>35</sup> Mazière, M. (1996), 'Passing through the image', in J. Knight (ed.) *Diverse Practices*, Arts Council of England, which flagged up the self promoting and do it yourself culture of the YBAs as well as the technological changes as contributing factors to this development.

<sup>36</sup> Hamlyn, N. (2003) 'Installation and its audience', *Film Art Phenomena*. London: BFI Publishing, p. 44.

purpose” and that this “betrays the ignorance of many critics in their consideration of contemporary video work”.<sup>37</sup> This historical and materialist approach to film and video art history again emphasises the importance of the early pioneers of artists’ film and video – some of which are at the centre of this curatorial research.

Curatorial practices have been central to the development of artists’ film and video installation and can elucidate the operation of context and apparatus. These curatorial practices were developed from previous fine art practices – linked to the language and architecture of the 19th-century gallery space and later 20th-century cinema. Maxa Zoller foregrounds the importance of what she calls “the spatial conditions of the context of representation”,<sup>38</sup> one of the key elements of artists’ film and video exhibition and a guiding factor in my research and the creation of the Ambika P3 space. In her Introduction to *Screen/Space: The projected image in contemporary art*, Tamara Trodd also asks whether “it is possible to achieve a rigorous critical theory of the projected image as a category in contemporary art, which is materially attentive and formally specific?”<sup>39</sup> Trodd goes on to detail the inadequacies of modernist critical framework of the moving image exhibition space, the viewer, projection and spectacle – issues which are addressed through the curatorial practice in my research as exemplified in the projects submitted.

The lacunae in post-90s film and video history have created a gulf in the curatorial world between those who are informed of the full history of artists’ film and video and those who still believe it appeared in the gallery in the early 90s. It is ironic that the majority of the work purchased or exhibited from the early years of artists’ film and video is still mostly in non-UK institutions – from across Europe to Japan and the USA. For example, the Georges Pompidou National Centre for Art and Culture has been collecting artists’ film and video since its opening in 1977, with currently 1,312 artists’ films and 2,102 artists’ video and new media works. This lacuna further reinforced the need for a curatorial project which would research the key UK artists and pioneers in artists’ film and video

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Zoller M. (2011) “Festival’ and ‘Museum’ in modernist film histories’, in Tamara Trodd (ed.), *Screen/Space: The Projected Image In Contemporary Art*. Manchester University Press.

<sup>39</sup> Trodd, T. (ed). (2011) *Screen/Space: The Projected Image In Contemporary Art*. Manchester University Press.

and both produce new interventionist forms of curatorial practice and re-interpret early works within contemporary paradigms of curatorial discourse.<sup>40</sup>

### 3.3 Key Exhibitions of Artists' Film and Video

Major exhibitions which address both the challenges of early artists' film and video and its curation are significant in order to understand the development of the practice in the UK and worldwide. A notable exhibition which addressed these subjects was Whitney curator Chrissie Isles' *Into the Light: The Projected Image in American Art 1964-77* in 2001 which surveyed the development of artists' film and video from Nam June Paik to Gary Hill. The exhibition's main curatorial thesis was that artists had broken away from the single screen comforts and limitations of cinema and created a new multi-dimensional space: "This prizing of the viewers gaze from the single screen into the surrounding space mimics the inherent mobility of the camera itself."<sup>41</sup> The curator selected works which rather than addressing cinematic elements deconstructed them and proposed a more sculptural and open approach to the use and viewing of film and video. The exhibition succeeded in "pulling off the seemingly impossible by allowing illusion to retain its power while simultaneously revealing its source".<sup>42</sup> Isles made her reputation as a curator of Oxford's MOMA by exhibiting work by established film and video artists from the USA in the 1980s, such as Bill Viola, Donald Judd, Gary Hill, Sol LeWitt and Yoko Ono.<sup>43</sup> Her latest project to open in New York at the Whitney Museum of Modern Art is connected to the works in my project but is more interdisciplinary as it will also include drawing, 3-D environments, sculpture, performance, painting, and online space:

*Dreamlands: Immersive Cinema and Art, 1905–2016* focuses on the ways in which artists have dismantled and reassembled the conventions of cinema—screen, projection, darkness—to create new experiences of the moving image. The exhibition will fill the Museum's 18,000-square-

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<sup>40</sup> Following the Ambika P3 exhibitions of David Hall, Victor Burgin and Chantal Akerman, interest in the work has increased and sales to major institutions such as the Tate have increased. Some commercial galleries such as Richard Saltoun Galleries have even signed artists immediately after their Ambika P3 exhibitions and sold major works.

<sup>41</sup> Isles, C. (2001), *Into the Light: The Projected Image in American Art, 1964-1977*. New York: Whitney Museum of American Art Books, p.33.

<sup>42</sup> Wilson, M. (2002), in *Frieze*, Issue 65, 4 March 2002, London.

<sup>43</sup> Chrissie Isles also curated two large film and video installation exhibitions: *Scream and Scream Again: Film in Art*, with Lisa Roberts, Douglas Gordon, Tony Oursler, Isaac Julien, Marijke Van Warmerdam, Sadie Benning, and *Signs of the Times: Film, Video and Slide Installations in Britain in the 1980s*, which included 20 British artists.

foot fifth-floor galleries, and will include a film series in the third-floor theatre.<sup>44</sup>

Significantly, there are also other international film and video exhibitions which provide further context for this research: existing work in screen-based curatorial practices has sought to explore the relationship between art and cinema by examining the relationships between film, video and photography. *Passage de l'Image*<sup>45</sup> examined notions of reproduction through the strategy of hybridisation between these different media, based on Raymond Bellour's collection of essays between 1981 and 1989 and published in 1990 as *L'Entres-images: Photo, Cinema, Video*.<sup>46</sup> In this exhibition the curatorial focus was not on highlighting cinematic or televisual elements but rather on the spaces between the different media – the still frame of photography, the way that cinema is played out through other media – directed solely on the connections and divisions between cinema, photography, video and digital media. Through this exhibition, the curatorial created productive collisions of media and successfully examined the 'image' bringing to the fore its transformation through various technologies.

Subsequently an exhibition colliding the work of visual artists and film directors through a series of new commissions, *Spellbound*,<sup>47</sup> took place in London in May 1996. Partly in response to the growing use of mainstream film as references and material by a new generation of artists and also to celebrate the centenary of cinema, it resulted in an arbitrary and uneven exhibition that presented work by a disconnected range of artists and filmmakers.<sup>48</sup> Unlike

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<sup>44</sup> Press Release for *Dreamlands: Immersive Cinema And Art, 1905–2016* Oct 28, 2016–Feb 5, 2017.

<sup>45</sup> *Passage de l'Image*, Beaubourg, Paris, 1991 curated by Catherine van Assche, Catherine David and Raymond Bellour.

<sup>46</sup> Bellour, R. (2011) *Between-the-Images*. Ed. Lionel Bovier. Zurich: Documents (JRP Ringier).

<sup>47</sup> *Spellbound: Art and Film*, Hayward Gallery, London - curated by ICA Director Phillip Dodd and BFI Head of Distribution Ian Christie.

<sup>48</sup> 'The lack of coherence was felt most strongly in the works that indulged directors to do little more than deconstruct their films in the gallery, exemplified by Ridley Scott's videos of the artwork for *Alien* and *Bladerunner* which added little to what was already known about these popular films. Whilst Terry Gilliam's interactive homage to *Twelve Monkeys* was more ambitious in terms of installation, neither Scott nor Gilliam's strategies compared with the conceptual elegance of Fiona Banner's rendering of classic Vietnam war films as text works. Other key works included Peter Greenaway's ever changing *In The Dark*, in which as yet unmade films were broken down to their component parts of lights, props and actors, and Edward Paolozzi's imaginary movie prop store *The Jesus Works and Store*. The show presented the London debut of Douglas Gordon's *24 hour Psycho*, not a new commission but an important work that speaks

previous attempts at bringing together film and art the exhibition lacked a thesis except that of celebrating well known and successful British artists and film directors. As such it added little to curatorial practice in either art and cinema or their potential relationship.<sup>49</sup>

In a different vein *Pandaemonium* brought together the post modern video art of the YBAs alongside the modernist experimental work of the LFMC and LVA.<sup>50</sup> As noted by Rees “At the same time other younger film and video artists were seen *en masse* at the Pandaemonium’ ICA Festival curated by Michael Mazière.”<sup>51</sup>

Pandaemonium’ encompassed a broad survey of work ranging from film and video into more recent forms of electronic imaging including CD-ROM - London hasn't seen an international festival of this kind since the 70s.<sup>52</sup>

The curatorial intention of the Pandaemonium festival was to gather the different forms of moving image work, analogue and digital, into a multi-venue event and present a survey of the different strands of contemporary practice. With events at the ICA, the Cyberia Cafe, the Blue Note and the Royal Festival Hall, the Pandaemonium festival remained fragmented and the different communities which populated it – artists from the LFMC, LVA, the Lux Gallery and the rising number of commercial gallery based YBAs – did not enter into dialogue, preferring to remain in what was their social and artistic enclaves. The event highlighted both the strength and diversity of the British and International artists’

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as much about video's ability to warp time and space as cinema itself. Also of note was Steve McQueen's *Stage*, a 16mm film of tension and longing played out in black and white starring the artist. Damien Hirst's directorial debut, the 16mm *Hanging Around* was notable for being a curiosity and resembled a TV promo with its use of linear narrative, star names and pop sound track.’ McQuay, M. (2004) *Spellbound: Art Into Film, Film Into Art* Exhibition Hayward Gallery, LUXONLINE. Available from: <http://www.luxonline.org.uk/histories/1990-1999/spellbound.html> [Accessed September 1 2016].

<sup>49</sup> ‘*Spellbound* succeeds in being accessible, affecting and entertaining—and these are considerable virtues. Yet here they have been bought at the expense of critical content. Because the show is mere celebration, the selected works often seem to fit together strangely, and raise questions left entirely unanswered.’ J. Stallabrass (1996), ‘London, *Spellbound*’ [review of the Hayward Gallery exhibition], *The Burlington Magazine*, vol. cxxxviii, no. 1118, May 1996, pp. 342-3.

<sup>50</sup> *Pandaemonium Festival of Moving Image*, ICA, London, 7 March–21 April, 1996.

<sup>51</sup> Rees, ‘Britain, 1966-98’, p. 129.

<sup>52</sup> Raban, W. (1996), ‘Pandaemonium’, in *Frieze*, Issue 28. Available from: <https://frieze.com/article/pandaemonium> [Accessed 8 May 2016].

film and video work but also the great divide of its grass roots constituencies.<sup>53</sup>

All these events in the 1990s signalled both the rise of artists' film and video in the gallery and the fragmentation of previous notions of engaged and communal experimental curatorial practices as represented by the LFMC and LVA. The commercial galleries took on the younger generation of artists working with film and video, sidestepping the existing organisations which had now relocated to the Lux Centre with a dedicated gallery and cinema for artists' film and video.<sup>54</sup> The four years of the Lux's existence (1997 – 2001), until it moved out of Hoxton Square, saw exhibitions and screenings linking the Black Box of the Cinema and the White Cube of the Gallery. It gave curatorial and historical context to artists' film and video through its cinema and gallery activities. The cross-fertilisation which was at the heart of the project resulted in the merger of the LFMC and LVA. As artists' film and video entered the mainstream, the Lux Centre had effectively completed its purpose of championing the development of the sector and, priced out of Shoreditch in 2001, it moved to smaller premises and remains the key resource and distributor for artists' film and video in Europe.<sup>55</sup>

Shortly thereafter an attempt at curating a complete survey of artists' film and video took place in Tate Britain curated by David Curtis and supported by Tate Members, Central St Martins College of Art and Design, the AHRB Centre for British Film & Television Studies, the LUX and the British Film Institute.<sup>56</sup> This screening of 170 works by 130 artists aimed to exhibit the full range, variety and originality of artists' films in Britain from the 1890s to 2000.<sup>57</sup> This year-long display was presented in four day-long thematic curated programmes, each one

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<sup>53</sup> However, the concluding ICA talk 'Blink' – 'a two day symposium exploring artists' increasing fascination with the moving Image' – brought together key curators and theorists such as Chrissie Isles, Andrea Philipps, Chris Darke, John Hanhard, Gregor Muir, Raymond Bellour and artists such as Malcolm Le Grice, Tacita Dean, Jaki Irvine, Keith Tyson and Sam Taylor Wood. This symposium was a significant event which crossed generational and partisan lines to engage critically with contemporary curatorial and artistic practices in artists' film and video. It signalled what was to be eventually developed in the next 20 years – the recognition of a hybrid film and video practice, with different histories and constituencies and specific curatorial problematics.

<sup>54</sup> See Turner, S. (1997), 'Regeneration? Part II: The Lux Centre: Eastward Ho!', *Vertigo* Vol.1, Iss.7. Available from: [https://www.closeupfilmcentre.com/vertigo\\_magazine/volume-1-issue-7-autumn-1997/regeneration-part-ii-the-lux-centre-eastward-ho/](https://www.closeupfilmcentre.com/vertigo_magazine/volume-1-issue-7-autumn-1997/regeneration-part-ii-the-lux-centre-eastward-ho/) [Accessed 8 May 2016]

<sup>55</sup> For a thorough chronology of the Lux Centre see: Knight, J. and Thomas, P. (2011) *Reaching Audiences: Distribution and Promotion of Alternative Moving Image*. London: Intellect, pp. 243-245.

<sup>56</sup> *A Century of Artists' Film in Britain* (2003), Exhibition, Tate Britain: 19 May 2003–18 April 2004. Available from: <http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-britain/exhibition/century-artists-film-britain> [Accessed 8 May 2016]

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

repeated daily for a period of three months in a dedicated screening room of Tate Britain. Thematically and historically programmed, the exhibit's strength was also its weakness – the vast amount of material meant that curatorial context had to be sacrificed to content and many of the works' original media, expanded forms, scale and unique material qualities were lost in the continual stream of single screen digitised shorts. Many of the works had not been seen before in a museum context, and some had not been seen publicly since their first screenings. But the exhibition context of this project, defined by Tate Modern, exposed the art establishment's perception of artists' film and video outside the gallery as the bastard child of cinema and television and not as 'genuine' art. Nevertheless, this extensive and thorough survey led to Curtis' *A History of Artists' Film and Video in Britain, 1897-2004*<sup>58</sup> which remains one of the most extensively researched and rigorously documented histories of British experimental film in print.

The common perception that the video installation is an invention of the 1990s born miraculously free of any evolutionary history - is understandable. Certainly dealers in the 1990s succeeded in marketing the film and video installation as a limited edition commodity where their 1970s predecessors had failed, but the modern form of the installation in all its diversity was the product of long periods of experiment shared by the post Caro generation conceptualist with their commercial shows and by members of the LFMC and future LVA groups, exhibiting mostly in artist run and public sector spaces.<sup>59</sup>

While there have been exhibitions in Europe (*Changing Channels* 1963–87, Museum of Modern Art, Vienna, 2010) charting the historical evolution of artists' film and video, many contemporary curators in the UK have appeared to either forget or choose to ignore the early work of home grown film and video artists.

Revealing this history and exposing its operational component was one of the major aims of this curatorial research as will be seen in these PhD projects. An example of this lack of historical knowledge can be seen in *Time Zones*, 2004, which was the first major exhibition at Tate Modern devoted exclusively to the moving image exhibiting a selection of international works made in the new millennium. It made no reference to the work of earlier generations nor did it differentiate between film and video. Focusing on different representations of

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<sup>58</sup> Curtis, *A history of artists' film and video*, p. 37.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

time across the world, its attempt at a global survey was undermined by its lack of attention to medium, context and process.

I like the work in *Time Zones* a lot, I keep thinking this isn't quite the video and film show we need right now. What is needed is more depth, with more than one or two works by each artist.<sup>60</sup>

*Time Zones* was symptomatic of the new flyover curators who operate as international ambassadors, cherry picking work to suit a particular curatorial perspective as opposed to responding or commissioning artists in a critical manner.

### 3.4 Education, Resources and Research

During the 1990s, curating artists' film and video was professionalised in the UK through a number of different strategies. Firstly, through new university courses in curating led by the MA Curating Contemporary Art at the Royal College of Art; secondly, through the growth of commercial galleries dealing in contemporary art; and thirdly, through the development of large Lottery funded projects with major galleries and cinemas at their heart. These developments, combined with the vast improvements in projection technology affected both the production and exhibition of artists' film and video. They also created spaces for the new curators that came out of these new courses. Courses in curation quickly developed at Goldsmith's (a two-year MSA), and Kingston University and the Design Museum set up an MA in curating contemporary design. There is a big difference between today's curators and those art historians of the past, as Teresa Gleadowe who set up the RCA Curating course argued: "Curators are now required to engage with new art as it emerges and find a critical context for the reception of that work."<sup>61</sup> This innovative RCA course was initially called "Visual Arts Administration: Curating and Commissioning Contemporary Art" and was initiated by the Arts Council and the RCA.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Searle, A. (2004) 'A very brief history of time', *The Guardian*, Thursday 7 October.

<sup>61</sup> Ratnam, M. (2003) 'Hang it all', *The Observer*, Sunday 9 March.

<sup>62</sup> It is no coincidence that the first exhibition which came out of the RCA course was on video-art from Europe and the USA: *Acting Out - The Body in Video: Then and Now*, 1994. The course had links with numerous organisations such as the MMK in Frankfurt, the Jeu de Paume in Paris, the Centre Georges Pompidou, The Tate Gallery, LVA, and MOMA, Oxford at a time when Chrissie Isles was installing the major Gary Hill exhibition and conference there. It also received support from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and the Paul Hamlyn Foundation. What was created through this process was a tightly knit web of connections which joined together artist, commercial galleries, public galleries, commissioning agencies, arts funders – with the curators at the centre – selecting and producing exhibitions of contemporary art.

In recent times a substantial amount of published work has appeared in books, online, and in the academic field on the subject of curating artists' film and video. Fuelled by a rise in practice in the last two decades and intent on both filling the historical void and analysing contemporary practice, these publications are a very useful resource for research.<sup>63</sup> Of particular relevance to curatorial practice in artists' film and video is the first international peer-reviewed scholarly publication devoted to artists' film and video, and its contexts: *The Moving Image Review & Art Journal* (MIRAJ).<sup>64</sup>

Books which engage with the history of artists' film and video and curation can be divided into two broad categories – those which focus specifically on the history of artists' film and video since its inception and those which examine the curatorial operations of screen-based practices. Subjects may overlap but the intentions differ, with the former providing much needed historical trajectories in the development of new media, as Sean Cubitt and Stephen Partridge state<sup>65</sup> in relation to video art, while the latter delve more succinctly on how projection, light and screen operate in the cinema or gallery environment.<sup>66</sup>

In *REWIND | British Artists' Video in the 1970s & 1980s*<sup>67</sup> a series of extensively researched articles produce the founding texts of the history of British video-art. One piece in particular examines the curatorial, critical and political history of video art – Malcolm Dickson's "Vide Verso: Video's Critical Corpus". The chapter explores in detail the development of video art and examines the new wave of publications dedicated to uncovering the history of video art.

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<sup>63</sup> See attached bibliography.

<sup>64</sup> The *Moving Image Review & Art Journal* (MIRAJ) is the first international peer-reviewed scholarly publication devoted to artists' film and video and its contexts. It offers a forum for debates surrounding all forms of artists' moving image and media artworks: films, video installations, expanded cinema, video performance, experimental documentaries, animations, and other screen-based works made by artists. MIRAJ aims to consolidate artists' moving image as a distinct area of study that bridges a number of disciplines, not limited to, but including art, film, and media.

<sup>65</sup> Cubitt, S. and Partridge, S. (eds) (2012) *REWIND | British Artists' Video in the 1970s & 1980s*. New Barnet, Herts.: John Libbey Publishing: "It is not often that we have the chance to observe in detail the emergence of a new medium. Video art of the 1970s and 80s allows us just such an opportunity."

<sup>66</sup> See Connolly, M. (2009) *The Place of Artists' Cinema: Space, Site and Screen*. Bristol and Chicago: Intellect and University of Chicago Press, pp.170–91; and *Fluid Screens, Expanded Cinema*, Edited by Janine Marchessault and Susan Lord, University of Toronto Press, p. 361.

<sup>67</sup> Cubitt and Partridge, *REWIND | British Artists' Video in the 1970s & 1980s*.

However, in Taschen's intro survey book 'Video Art' only three artists from the countries of Britain are included - Douglas Gordon, Gillian Wearing, and Smith/Stewart, with two of three based or emanating from Glasgow and the third from London. What is presented by this welcome spate of publications that cover gaps in historical knowledge, is a challenge to attempts to rewrite or ignore the importance of the early part of this period by current curators and writers.<sup>68</sup>

These publications along with others<sup>69</sup> provide a strong contextual background for this project on both the work of curators and artists in the field of artists' film and video.

Alongside education and publication there exist today a number of well-informed research projects dedicated to artists' film and video which are contributing substantial knowledge, resources, context and understanding to the curatorial field. While these projects are not primarily concerned with curation per se, they might be said to be attempts at curating a history or legacy for artists' film in the broader sense, thereby extending our conception of the role of the curator of artists' film beyond the exhibition space. The three main projects which share these common agendas are: The LUX,<sup>70</sup> the *REWIND* project,<sup>71</sup> and the British Artists' Film & Video Study Collection.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Dickson, M. (2012) 'Vide Verso: Video's Critical Corpus', in Cubitt, S. and Partridge, S. *REWIND | British Artists' Video in the 1970s & 1980s*, pp.123-160.

<sup>69</sup> Other publications of relevance here in covering the origins of artists' film and video and the pioneering work of artist-led projects are Mazière, M and Danino, N. (eds) (2002) *The Undercut Reader, Critical Writings on Artists' Film and Video*; and Rees, A.L., White, D., Ball, S. and Curtis, D. (eds) (2011) *Expanded Cinema: Art, Performance, Film*. Tate Publishing.

<sup>70</sup> 'The LUX, is an international arts agency for the support and promotion of artists' moving image practice and the ideas that surround it. LUX exists to provide access to, and develop audiences for, artists' moving image work; to provide professional development support for artists working with the moving image; and to contribute to and develop discourse around practice, LUX emerged in 2002 from its predecessor organisations (The LFMC, LVA and The Lux Centre). LUX is the largest distributor of artists' film and video in Europe (representing 4500 works by approximately 1500 artists from 1920s to the present day)'. <http://lux.org.uk>

<sup>71</sup> 'The *REWIND* project aimed to address the gap in historical knowledge of the evolution of electronic media arts in the UK, by investigating specifically the first two decades of artists' works in video of the 1970s and 80s. There was a danger that many of these works might disappear because of their ephemeral nature and poor technical condition. The project aims to conserve and preserve them, to enable further scholarly activity. *REWIND* has re-mastered and archived both single screen and installation work on Digital Betacam: the collection currently includes 400 works. These new masters are deposited at the University of Dundee and the Scottish Screen Archive. DVD viewing copies form the basis of the *REWIND | Artists' Video Collection*, these are located at the University of Dundee's Visual Research Centre at Dundee Contemporary Arts and, in late 2012, the British Artists' Film and Video Study Collection Central Saint Martins in central London'. Available from: <http://www.rewind.ac.uk/> [Accessed 1 September 2016].

<sup>72</sup> 'The British Artists' Film & Video Study Collection is dedicated to the work of moving image artists. The collection exists to support research by students based at Central Saint Martins as well as individual researchers from outside the college. The collection comprises files of moving

The sudden interest and expansion of artists' film and video in the mid-90s is to be welcomed. Yet aside from a few well-informed curators, its origins, history and practice still remain little known and underexposed within the mainstream of the arts. In my curatorial research the intention was to carve out a distinct space for the problematics of that practice involving history, process and knowledge through the commissioning of new works in a collaborative relationship with artists away from a top-down managerial approach to curating.

#### **4 Methodologies**

This way, an art institution open to new working methods, becomes a multifunctional forum: besides its showroom function, it is also a site for education, research, and it even works as a community centre.<sup>73</sup>

Curation was conceived as exploratory and experimental and carried out through primary practice-based investigation at Ambika P3. This involved me carrying out my research, whilst simultaneously observing its results, describing a situation where I was both internal and external to research whilst it unfolded reflecting on developments and responding with new formulations in approach and idea. As described, this is not dissimilar to the characteristic description of the 'artist researcher' employing practice-based methodologies but here formulated through curatorial rather than artistic research. As noted by Gray and Malins amongst others, these approaches prioritise the experimental, reflective and collaborative, being open to ad-hoc solutions and the iterative development of ideas.

Research also engaged with and was open to other voices, in particular those of the participating artists and other stakeholders. For example, embedded in all the projects and exhibition was a form of critical practice that extended the curatorial into other educational and public platforms such as conferences, talks, and symposiums which through art touches on social, political and historical

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images, publications, paper documents and still images. BAFVSC was founded in 2000 by David Curtis and Malcolm Le Grice. The Collection is part of a wider research network within Central Saint Martins and the University of the Arts London dedicated to furthering serious research into the artists' moving-image'. Available from <http://www.studycollection.org.uk> [Accessed 1 September 2016].

<sup>73</sup> Lázár, E. 'Discursivity' *Curatorial Dictionnaire*, Tranzit.org. Available from: <http://tranzit.org/curatorialdictionary/index.php/dictionary/discursivity/> [Accessed 8 May 2016].

issues. This not only helped bring fresh perspectives to research, but developed my role of curator as one amongst many practitioners engaged in a process of exhibition-making as a collaborative critical practice. Furthermore it emphasised a form of process-led curation as opposed to conceptual curation – the exhibitions are developed according to the demands of the artists, the space, the technology and the material themselves. It should also be noted here that my personal history as an artist-filmmaker in my own right may have brought a different set of methodological perspectives and expertise to research, particularly in relation to being open to what in other contexts might have been considered risky or ad-hoc creative solutions and being aware of technical and conceptual possibilities.

Ambika P3 was developed in 2007 specifically as an experimental project space. Unlike venues such as museums, galleries and cinemas the multidisciplinary and industrial nature of the site enabled the research to operate at arms length from both the physical boundaries of the white cube and the black box and their ideological constraints. Its form can be seen as descendent of the concept of the unorthodox and temporary artists' spaces of the 1960s and 70s<sup>74</sup>, it is buffered from external economic forces<sup>75</sup> and just as the space was a testing ground for concrete at its inception,<sup>76</sup> it is now a testing space for art. This historical genealogy of experimental artistic spaces also operates to frame the curatorial methods chosen during research and helped define my multifaceted role as curator.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Curtis, C. 'Probably more in common with developments in mainland Europe, a continuing strength of the British scene has been the role of artist-led organisations, exhibition spaces and magazines; pragmatic, do-it-yourself utopianism being the recipe for success.' BFI. Available from:

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20080805074902/http://bfi.org.uk/filmtvinfo/researchers/tales/curtis.html> [Accessed 7 January 2016]

<sup>75</sup> The Ambika P3 programme has three strands – the curated, the commercial and the academic. Income from the commercial rentals funds its operation costs so that fund-raising focuses solely on exhibitions.

<sup>76</sup> The new building at Marylebone Road opened in September 1970, shortly after the Regent's Street Polytechnic had become one of the 30 new degree-granting tertiary institutions, and was renamed the Polytechnic of Central London. The basement was very deep in order to accommodate the construction hall which would be used by the engineers to test materials, and a road led around the site at basement level to allow vehicles to enter the loading bays and the underground car park.' Regan, P. (2008). Interview with Professor Paul Regan, *Ambika P3 Catalogue*, London.

<sup>77</sup> In November 2014 a conference entitled 'Material Memory' (Material Memory - The Post Industrial Landscape as Site for Creative Practice. A one-day conference organised by Fine Art,

This role of curator was to locate, facilitate and collaborate with the artist and technical support teams. This mode of curation provided new opportunities and strategies which were not bound by a hierarchical structure or architectural boundaries but developed in response to site, space, and artists. The curator's role is then in an open process of constant redefinition, adapting to opportunity, process and at the centre of a network of relationships.

In summary, the architecture and conceptualisation of the space was conducive to the experimental and collaborative diktats of the research, and benefitted the serendipity of the curatorial process, enabling me to respond in a flexible manner to changes and new manifestations which appeared during the exhibition-making moment.

#### 4.1 Methods in Practice

Methods specific to the development of each project are outlined in the discussion of specific projects, as each demanded different approaches but an overarching summary of common methods is outlined here.

Art curation, as already discussed, encompasses many roles including commissioner of new works, interpreter for audiences and other stakeholders, and producer, which often involves substantial organisation, PR and fundraising for exhibitions. This more expanded notion of the curatorial is located between the idea of the curator as artist, the curator as an enabler, and as interpreter and incubator of public understanding which follows a more normative or scholarly

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School of Arts and Cultures, Newcastle University) examined the Post Industrial Landscape as a site for creative practice. My paper (Mazière, M. (2016), 'Curating In The Post Industrial Landscape - Case Study: Ambika P3', in G. Heeney (ed.) *Material Memory: The Post Industrial Landscape as Site for Creative Practice*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Autumn 2016, Chapter 6) on Ambika P3 as a site of experimentation was based on the notion that in the last 20 years, contemporary art has witnessed an exponential increase in its exhibition spaces, audience numbers and its market value. I argued that the new Millennium and its Lottery funds have brought a large network of white cube based art centres across the UK and that the anarchy of the studio and artist-run spaces of the 60s and 70s has been transformed into managed sites of culture, art agencies and global gallery brands. The management of the 'creative industries' by experts in curating, marketing, and fund-raising combined with the close relationship between large government funded and private galleries has created a growing need for different spaces in which artists can experiment, nurture and develop new and risky work. The remains of our industrial age have left much material and many locations for the work of production and exhibition in the creative field. These 'post industrial' and often site-specific spaces provide curatorial opportunities for critical intervention into process, context and meaning in art.

role common in museology. Each of these demands its own particular approaches or methods. For example, the commissioning of work can involve design and 3D mapping of 2D images into a three-dimensional architecture, then testing individual elements such as projection and sound. Many works were built and tested directly in the space and in some cases produced in situ.

This iterative testing and developmental process was underpinned by the input of multiple voices, expertise and experience of the curator, artist, technicians and other stakeholders. Realisation of projects depended on this collaborative or joint endeavour without which the projects as displayed could not have been realised.

Other forms of collaboration also fed research, informed by groups representative of film and video art practice, including the REWIND project, University of Dundee<sup>78</sup>; LUX, London<sup>79</sup>; EAI (Electronic Arts Intermix), New York<sup>80</sup>; The British Artists' Film & Video Study Collection<sup>81</sup>; VideoBrasil, Sao Paulo<sup>82</sup> and Tate Modern, London amongst others. Throughout all the work described, significant consultation took place with these parties to assess the best way to address research issues, to track previous and existing historical artists' film and video projects and to deliver up-to-date exhibition strategies.

#### 4.2 Summary

Curating is not so much the product of curators as it is the fruit of the labour of a network of agents. The outcome is a stirring of smooth surfaces, a specific, multi-layered way of agitating environments both inside and outside the white cube. The curatorial involves not just representing but presenting and testing; it performs something here and now instead of merely mapping something from there and then.<sup>83</sup>

The realisation of the projects discussed in the thesis drew upon multiple methods. Curatorial engagement with the artists in the search for an appropriate form and scale for the artists' work involved innovative explorations of site,

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<sup>78</sup> See footnote 70.

<sup>79</sup> See footnote 69.

<sup>80</sup> Available from: <http://www.eai.org/index.htm> [Accessed 1 September 2016]

<sup>81</sup> See footnote 71.

<sup>82</sup> Available from: <http://site.videobrasil.org.br/en/quem-somos> [Accessed 1 September 2016]

<sup>83</sup> Lind, 'On the Curatorial'.

experimentation, testing and prototyping. Underpinning this, was a collaborative approach to production and conceptual development that drew upon multiple stakeholders: artists, the curator, technical experts and academics. As suggested by Lind, in the quote above, curatorial practice is not simply a method of mapping an exhibition idea into a space, but a process of testing that takes into account the exigencies of practice in both a reflective conversation with itself, but also with others. In the following section I discuss the individual projects, describe their development and reflect on what was learnt.

## **5. Publications**

### **5.1 Project One**

#### ***Rink (2009), David Ward***

Digital projection of video and animations of photograms, drawings and photographs.

Exhibition Dates: (November 4–22, 2009)

#### **Overview**

Ambika P3 commissioned the artist David Ward for this new work which transformed the floor of P3 into a huge light drawing. Linear drawings from sources including ice-skating are digitally projected from the high ceiling of Ambika P3 onto the floor. Viewers could see the constantly changing work unfolding from the mezzanines in the space and can also take to the floor, walking amongst the lines, arcs and spirals which move and layer over the surface like the paths of skaters or stars.

#### **Aims**

- Research sought to explore how the architectural components of the site could operate as alternative forms of screen in artists' film and video (contribution of new forms, languages).
- The project also sought to test how Ambika P3 could function simultaneously both as a site of iterative development or as an artists' studio and exhibition space (experimentation with notions of site in artists' film and video).
- Additionally, research aimed to develop a range of interdisciplinary curatorial approaches to realising the commission, which included the input of specialist software engineers, animators, installation designers and academics (contribution to method, concepts and approaches in curation of artists' film and video)

## **Methods**

Specific methods toward realisation of the project included: collaboration with both artists and technicians; planning and CAD technical drawing; software and hardware design using Doremi Labs digital playback; engineering using 3 x vertical hanging brackets and chain motors rigging linked to Barco SLM R12 projectors.

*Rink* was made by working closely on the production design and animation with designer Sam Collins, who developed a synchronised exhibition system using three projectors which could fill the entire space. Although the initial idea was to film an ice skater from above and project his outline onto the floor of Ambika P3, early tests quickly confirmed that in order to transform the floor of Ambika P3 into a fluid surface it would be better to beam pure light onto the concrete floor. The aim was not representation, but the translation of the free movement of the skater, the choreography of lines and twirls. Software programs such as After Effects, Premiere and Photoshop were then used to animate light patterns, photograms, drawings and photographs and project them seamlessly across three synchronised projectors. The space was turned into a studio for a period of three weeks while the artist, curator and producer tested new material to see whether it would work as intended. This transformed the floor of the high space into a living screen, to be either walked on or viewed from above, engaging the audience physically and optically with light.

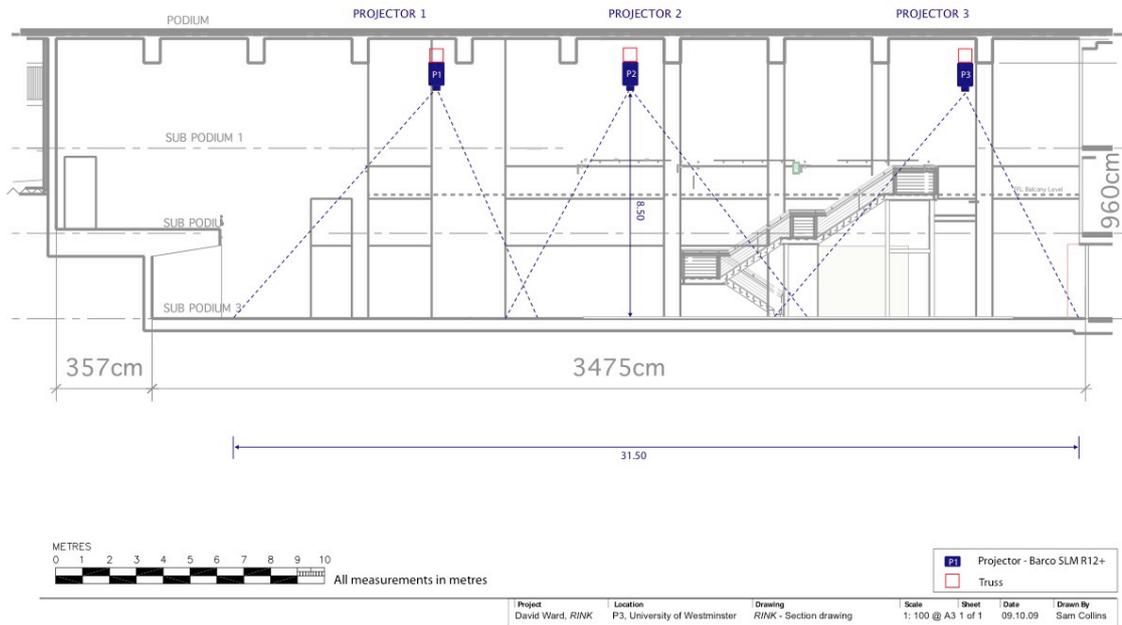


FIGURE 3 Ward, D. (2009) *Rink*, vertical plan of projection layout

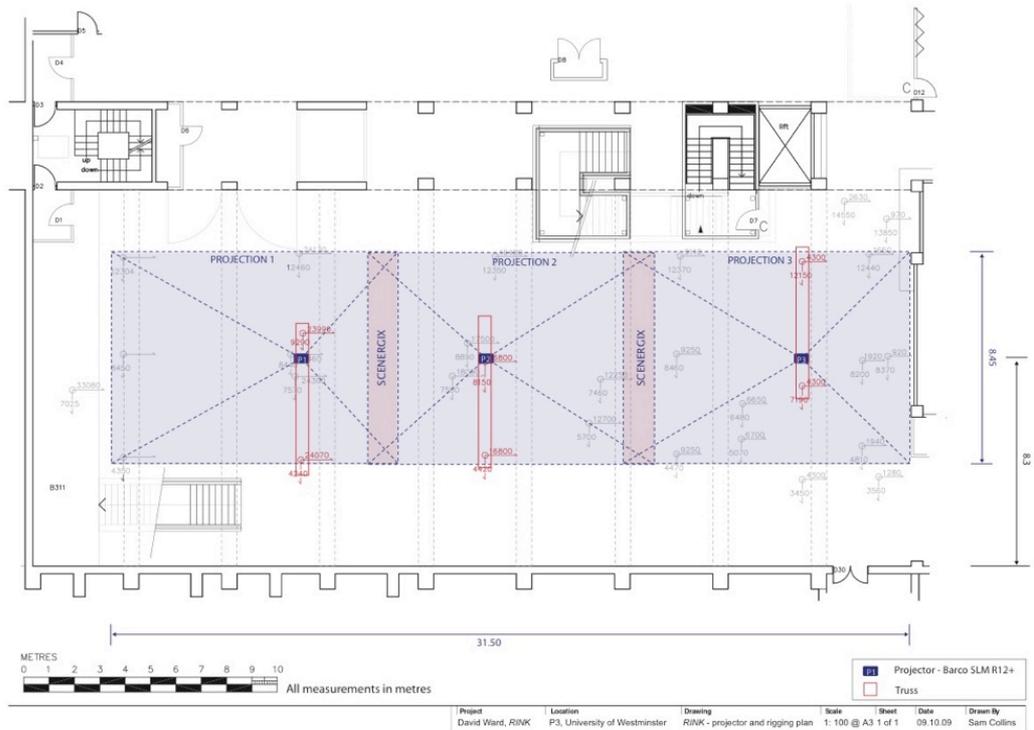


FIGURE 4 Ward, D. (2009) *Rink*, overhead plan of projection layout

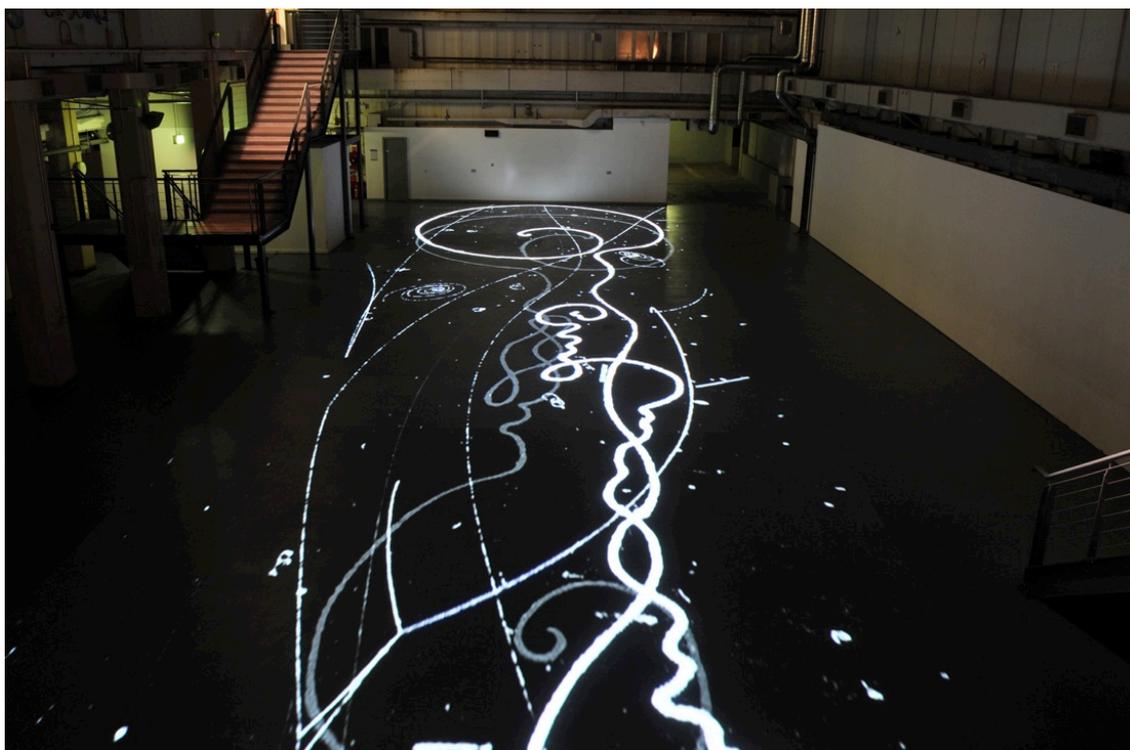
## **Conclusions**

Although previous mixed media exhibitions had been curated by myself in Ambika P3, this was the first full film and video curated commission to take place in the space and make full use of the high 30-foot space and develop the work in situ.

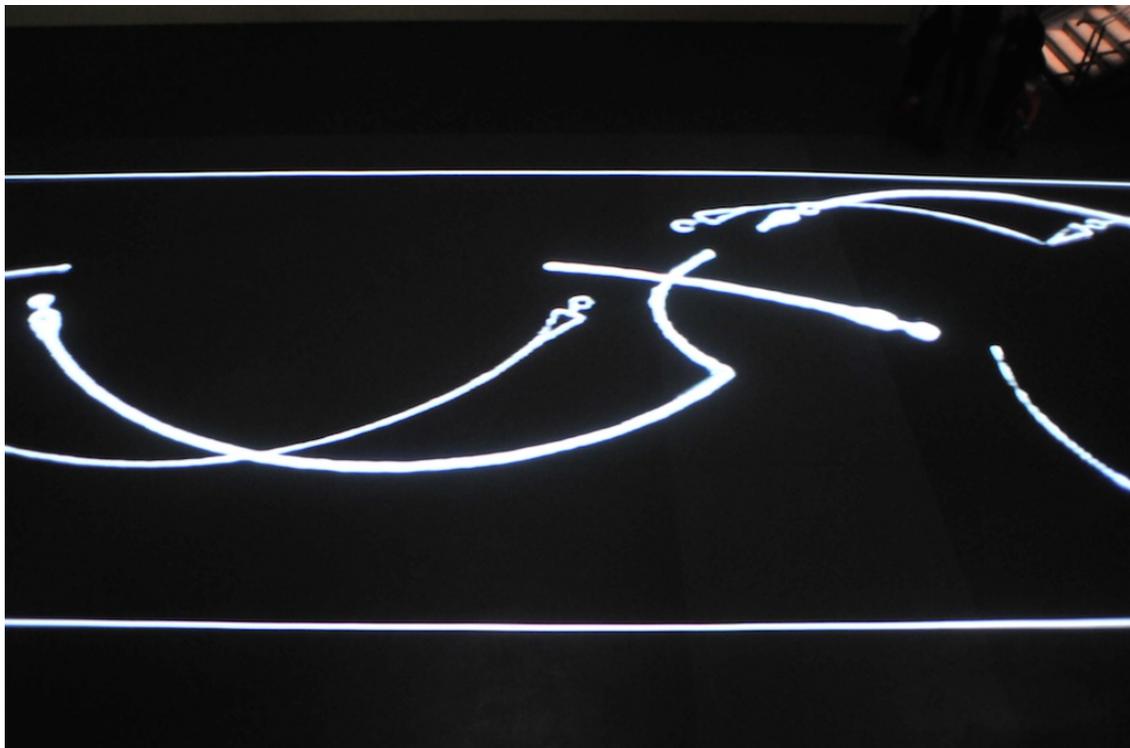
In its use of 3D modelling, engineering, software design and engineering, curation and creative practice, the project involves an integration and synthesis across disciplines and practices. In such terms the project produces an interdisciplinary model of curatorial practice that emphasises collaboration, and shows that the role of the curator is active 'within the process' of realisation as a co-producer and designer of works.

The manner in which *Rink* displaced the geometry of the cinematic apparatus by using the floor as a screen, demonstrates how a curator working with an artist in an experimental space could explore the visibility of the screen. By subverting the traditional architecture of the cinema, it made visible the operation of the screen as a cinematic apparatus and opened both a conceptual and physical immersive space within which audiences could experience the work. This developed a sense of the critical issues at play, namely the construct of perspective, the illusion of identification and the poetic possibilities of a non-linear abstract set of compositions.

Finally, through the development of work in situ, much was learnt about how the space could function to break down the boundaries between the studio and the gallery. This particular model of experimentation and on-site development created new parameters in my curatorial practice and was replicated and taken forward into other projects as research progressed.



**FIGURE 5** Ward, D. (2009) *Rink*, general view of projection floor, Ambika P3



**FIGURE 6** Ward, D. (2009) *Rink*, detail view of projection floor, Ambika P3

## 5.2 Project Two

### ***From Floor To Sky (2010), Nina Danino, Paul Etienne Lincoln, Jean Mathee and Katharine Meynell***

Film and video works in the exhibition:

- Nina Danino: *First Memory* (1981), *Communion* (2010)
- Paul Etienne Lincoln: *Velocity of Thought* (1976–2006), *Undine's Curse* (2008)
- Jean Mathee: *Life in the Folds* (1975/2010), *Exercises in Worsening* (1975/2010), *An excess of inclusion over belonging* (2009), *Pivot* (1975/2010)
- Katharine Meynell: *Diary* (1983), *Iceberg, tunny & bread* (2010)

Group interdisciplinary exhibition of 28 artists.<sup>84</sup>

Exhibition dates: (5 March – 4 April 2010)

### **Overview**

An interdisciplinary exhibition which brought together early and recent work by key British artists of our time to examine the influential teacher Peter Kardia, who is recognised for his work as a radical teacher at both Saint Martins and the Royal College of Art during the 60s, 70s and 80s.<sup>85</sup> While his work addressed broad concerns of sculpture and painting during his first period at Saint Martins School of Art<sup>86</sup> his later teachings in Environmental Media at the Royal College became very focused on working with film and video with students, including key exponents of video art and experimental film.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Full list of artists: Alison Wilding, Bill Woodrow, Boyd Webb, Richard Deacon, Richard Wentworth, Roger Ackling, Nigel Slight, Roderick Coyne, John Panting, Carolyne Kardia, Carl Plackman, Ismail Saray, Jean Mathee, Terry New, Martin Ive, Hamish Fulton, Gillian Cook, Brian Catling, Guy Martin, Peter Venn, Nina Danino, Paul Etienne Lincoln, Katharine Meynell, Roger Ackling, John Hilliard, Ian Kirkwood, Keith Brown and Frances Earnshore.

<sup>85</sup> Kardia's impact on students and staff at Saint Martins – and later, from 1973–86, in Environmental Media at the RCA – was considerable. In 2010, this was documented for the first time in the survey exhibition *From Floor to Sky* at Ambika P3, in London, which showcased works by past students of Kardia, including Roger Ackling, Nina Danino, Richard Deacon, John Hilliard, Richard Long, Jean Mathee, Katharine Meynell and Bill Woodrow. Malcolm Le Grice (2011) 'History Lessons', *Frieze*, Issue 142, October.

<sup>86</sup> It is worth noting that among Kardia's co-tutors was David Hall at Saint Martins.

<sup>87</sup> Including Catherine Elwes, Stephen Partridge, Patrick Keiller, Judith Goddard, Tina Keane and staff including Rose Finn-Kelcey, Stuart Marshall, Peter Gidal, Malcolm Le Grice and Liz Rhodes.

The artists' film and video work within the exhibition had to be curated in a way which would give it the specificity it needed but also had to be integrated into the general concept of the project and negotiated with each artist individually. Each film and video work was very different in terms of both content, technology and intention. Nina Danino restaged a tape slide *First Memory* (1981) in great detail using the original technology and produced a completely new 35mm black and white film *Communion* (2010), consisting of a single take of her daughter taking communion. Paul Etienne Lincoln's works consisted of videos which documented two projects, *Velocity of Thought*, (1976–2006) and *Undine's Curse* (2008). Jean Matthee's *Life in the Folds* (1975/2010) was a 3-part project<sup>88</sup> which provided a chronological overview of her working process by exhibiting graphs, miniature videos, film reels and other celluloid material, using projection, vitrines and miniature projections. Katherine Meynell exhibited an early single screen *Diary* (1983) and a new installation *Iceberg, Tunny and Bread* (2010) which we combined into a two-sided box structure incorporating both works.

## **Aims**

This exhibition differs from the rest of the projects submitted, in that it includes other media aside from film and video. It addressed the following questions

- How do artists' film and video installations operate within an interdisciplinary exhibition ?
- How can different levels and qualities of curatorial input be productively included ?
- Are there common strategies between educational and curatorial practices ?

In this context, *From Floor to Sky* examines curatorial boundaries within a highly collaborative project where artists, educationalist and curator shared the decision making and production responsibilities while also testing the

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<sup>88</sup> *Exercises in Worsening* (1975/2010), *An Excess of Over Belonging* (2009) and *Pivot* (1975/2010).

relationship of artists' film and video within the remit of a broader interdisciplinary project exploring the legacy of an educationalist.

## **Methods**

As curator of Ambika P3, I designed the overall programme and curated the majority of exhibitions, but as part of Ambika P3's research, I also invited outside curators to collaborate on research projects that investigate the process of curation. In this case, the project was brought to my attention by the artist Roderick Coyne and the curation was a collective effort. This project was the most collaborative of all the submitted exhibitions and tested the limits of collective participation in the curatorial process. The spatial and material boundaries were fixed according to a rule-based system described below but the curation was open to a form of collective process involving Kardia, myself as the Ambika P3 curator and the participating artists. The selection of artists – the first curatorial act – was based on the notion of diversity and defined by Kardia:

Students in all the courses that I had been concerned with were always encouraged to tune in to and follow their own creative needs even when the outcome was perplexing and demanding. Diversity is the key feature and I want the exhibition to reflect this.<sup>89</sup>

Within these confines we devised a rule-based system made up of restraints within which the artists could contribute and create:

- Each artist was to select two works – the first a student work and a second, a new or specially commissioned work.
- Each artist would be allocated the same amount of space.
- Artists would take part in the design of the exhibition in a series of regular workshops and meetings which were held weekly for a period of three months.

In his work as an educationalist, “Kardia did not start from notions of artistic style but from much more fundamental questions about the creative process,

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<sup>89</sup> Peter Kardia (notes on the selection process) email to Michael Mazière.

exploring its meanings and uncertainties.”<sup>90</sup> These questions were at the heart of the curatorial process in *From Floor to Sky* and manifested in the requirement for each artist to make or show new work, which could take any form (2D or 3D object, film and video, installation, documentation or performance) and would be exhibited whether considered finished or not. In this way the curatorial had a direct relationship with the production process by translating the creative strategies develop by Kardia.

The process of producing such an exhibition is usually divided into clear schedules of commissioning, production, delivery, installation and exhibition. In this case barriers broke down, categories collapsed and many of these activities ran in parallel and overlapped in a way which challenged the hegemony of curatorial practice. The boundaries between studio and gallery broke down as artists started producing and experimenting with works in situ. Whereas other projects in this PhD relied on a looser process-based dialogue between artist and curator, in this project it was the initial fixed limitations of process and their rigour which made the more collective process of curation possible.

The work was contextualised through a series of talks and associated events which extended the research dimensions of the project, introduced the work to new audiences and enabled different voices to input into what was learnt. Published material included a comprehensive catalogue.<sup>91</sup>

## **Conclusions**

The exhibition research process and resulting curatorial strategy integrated artists’ film and video within the wider field of visual arts and produced a rare exposé of a distinct period in its development by proposing an open and inclusive form of curatorial practice based on collective collaboration. The

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<sup>90</sup> Le Grice, ‘History Lessons’.

<sup>91</sup> Events stemming from the project included a gallery talk with Michael Mazière and Peter Kardia on March 4, 2010 at Ambika P3; a seminar at Tate Britain convened by Michael Mazière in collaboration with Tate Britain’s education department, ‘Contemporary Teaching and Research Practice in the Visual Arts’, March 10, 2010, Tate Britain. Speakers included Richard Deacon, Peter Kardia, Malcolm Le Grice, Jean Matthee and Richard Wentworth and a two-day forum took place at Central Saint Martins on the subject of Peter Kardia’s teaching methods, ‘The ‘A’ Course: An Inquiry’, March 26 and 27, 2010, featuring three of the four teachers who set up the ‘A’ Course at the sculpture department of Central Saint Martins, in 1970: Peter Kardia, Garth Evans and Gareth Jones.

curatorial responsibilities were shared across the artist, the curator and, to some extent, the participating audience, who had to navigate an exhibition that offered, not a fixed history, but a series of possibilities and new links between practices, influence, history and creativity.

The exhibition contributed a new frame-work and rule-based system devised by the curators within which the artists operated. A central tenet of the show was to recreate the open environment of the studio, alongside commissioning and producing work on site. Thus the exhibition involved the staging of historical and new work specifically for the space, but also Kardia's methodological processes as a form of living case study that re-established relationships between him and his former students and replicated some of the dynamics of the original pedagogic relationships.

The curation of this project brought new understandings of the practices and connections between the artists that Kardia taught while simultaneously placing artists' film and video into a wider context of visual arts. This emphasis on ideas over media brought a new understanding of how film and video was part of an ecology of materials all equally valid to artists. Bringing together the ex-students within the same environment for the first time enabled a link between artists and practices, who might initially appear unrelated through a curatorial model quite different from other projects in this PhD. The Ward, McCall, Hall, Burgin, Amati and Kabakov projects deal with curating different kinds of narrative and immersive spaces, creating new ways for audiences to experience artists' film and video. The curating of artists' film and video work<sup>92</sup> here concentrated on devising strategies and contexts which would elucidate a dialogue with other practices, revealed through the open and inclusive curatorial approach mediated by myself.

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<sup>92</sup> Nina Danino's feminine video *écriture*, Jean Mathee's *Freudian deconstruction* of her working process and history, Meynell's merging of past and present and Paul Etienne Lincoln's video documentation also provided differing strategies of artists' film and video production.

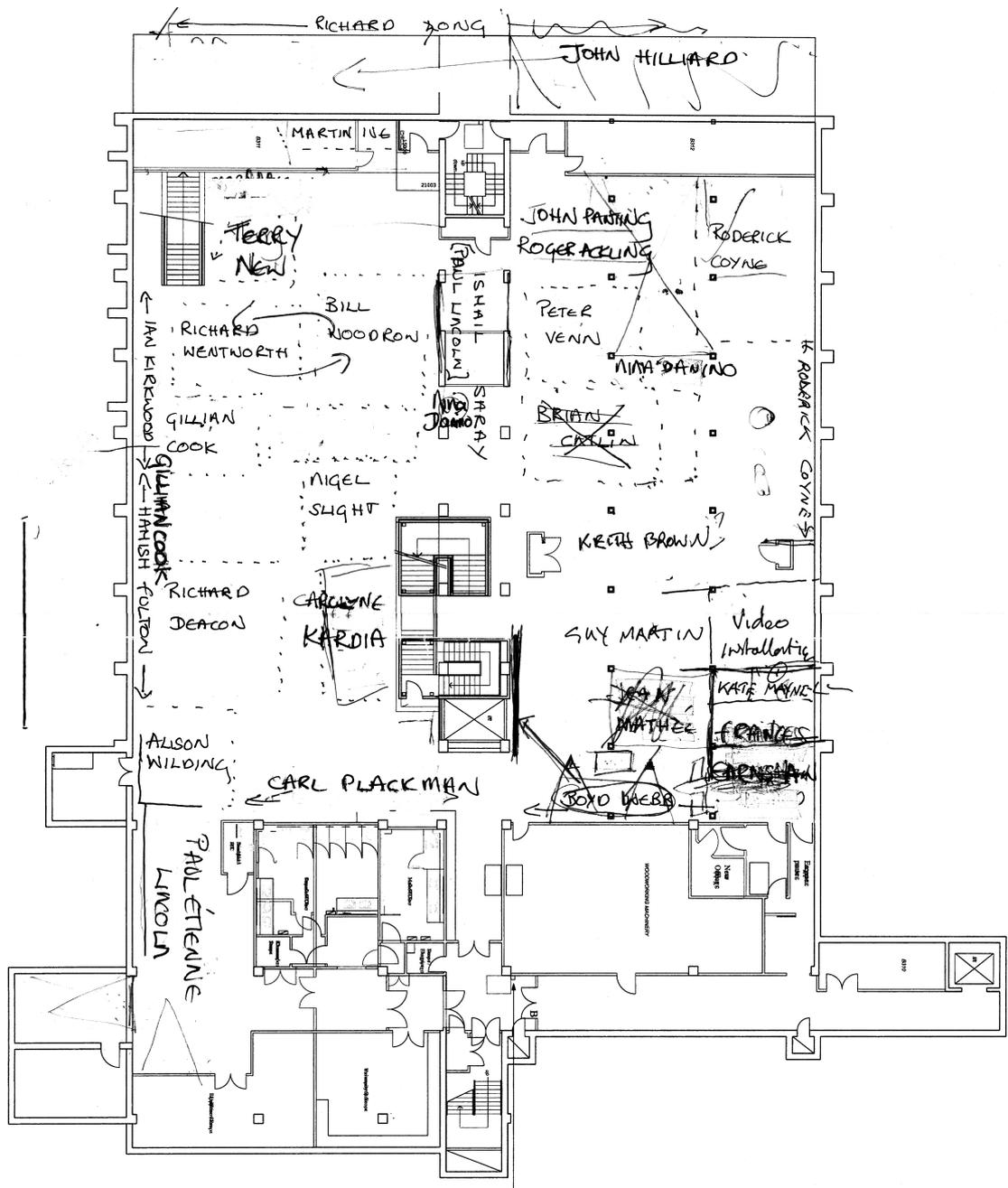
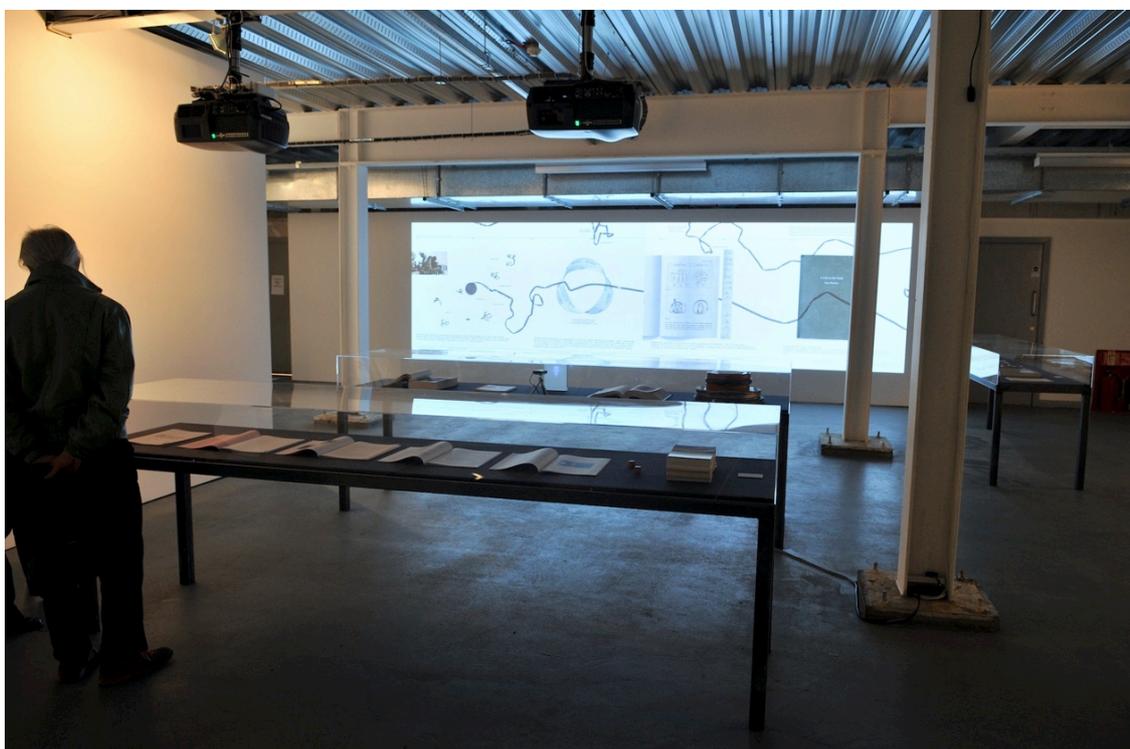


FIGURE 7 Working layout of the *From Floor To Sky* exhibition





**FIGURE 9** Danino, N. (2010) *Communion*, projection in the lower space, Ambika P3



**FIGURE 10** Matthee J: *Life in the Folds* (1975/2010), *Exercises in Worsening* (1975/2010), *An Excess of Inclusion over Belonging* (2009), *Pivot* (1975/2010), Ambika P3

### 5.3 Project Three

#### ***Vertical Works* (2011), Anthony McCall**

Works in the exhibition: *Vertical Works* (*Breath*, 2004; *Breath III*, 2005; *Meeting You Halfway*, 2009; and *You*, 2010): four video projectors, computer, QuickTime Movie file, four haze machines, two audio speakers.

Exhibition dates: (March 1–27, 2011)

#### **Overview**

McCall explored solid-light works that are oriented vertically projecting downwards from the ceiling onto the floor, forming 10-metre tall, conical ‘tents’ of light, with a base of about 4 metres. Here, the projected line-drawing on the floor is, quite literally, the footprint of the work, with the three-dimensional ‘body’ rising up from the floor and finally narrowing to a point at the lens of the projector, well above one’s head. As with other exhibitions in this research project McCall was selected because of his ability and potential to address the scale and architecture of the space as well as his previous work with immersive installation and moving image. This project involved collaboration with a commercial gallery in order to access the artist and to raise the necessary funding and share the production expertise. As with many of the projects this involved collaborations between myself, the commercial gallery director as well as technicians, designers and builders.

#### **Aims**

*Vertical Works* took forward issues examined and explored in Ward’s *Rink*, aiming to:

- Develop a cinematic process and mechanism of projection outside of the context of the theatre by removing narrative and content.
- Curate an environment of total darkness that formulated an immersive experience for the audience and devise new ways for audiences to experience artists’ film and video.
- Further test the potential of the site as a locus of experimentation and production.



**FIGURE 11** McCall, A: *Vertical Works* (*Breath*, 2004; *Breath III*, 2005; *Meeting You Halfway*, 2009; and *You*, 2010), Ambika P3

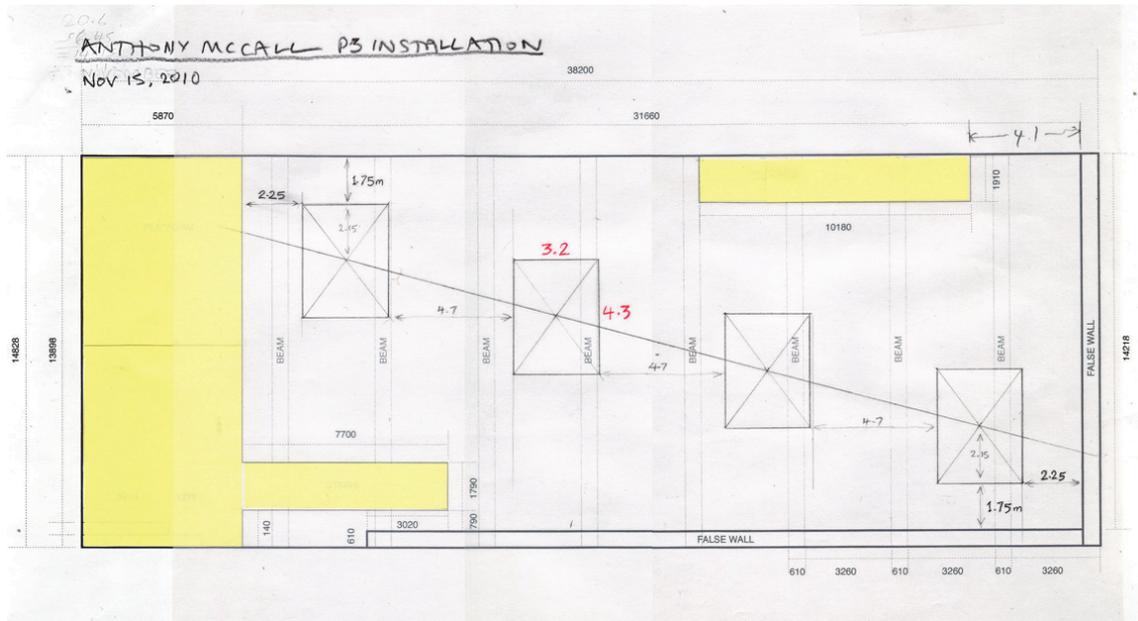


FIGURE 12 McCall, A: *Vertical Works*, overhead plan for projector location

Anthony McCall - P3 Cabling schematic. SC 11/01/2011

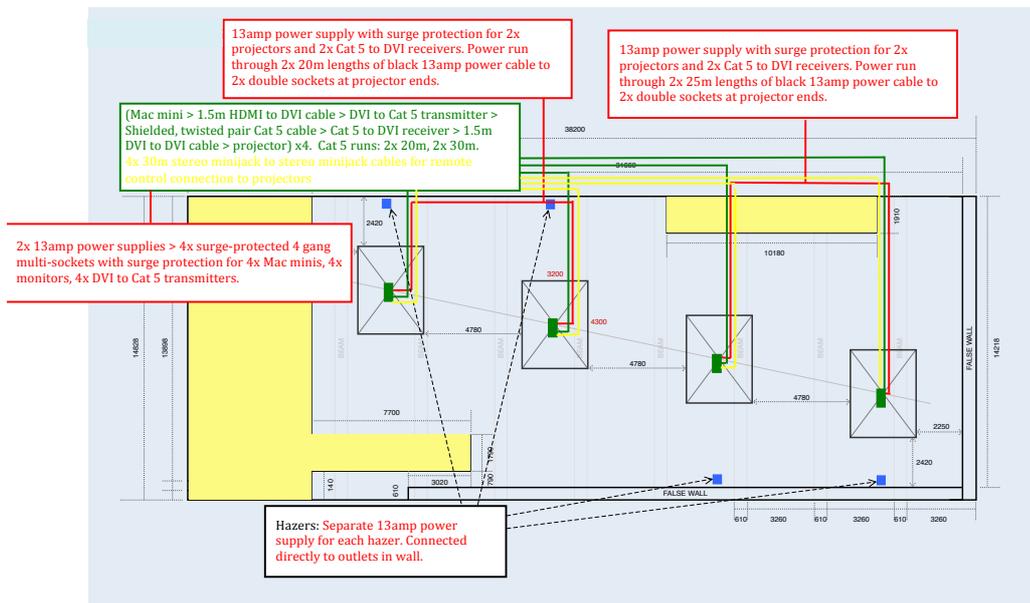


FIGURE 13 McCall, A: *Vertical Works*, technical and cabling detail

## Methods

This collaboration involved merging methods developed in preceding projects: in house laboratory testing, and production of technical and engineering diagrams and models. My curatorial input was based both on knowledge of McCall's work and previous expertise gleaned from my experience of projection with David Ward's *Rink* and my experience as an artist and curator of film and video.

### Collaboration

This curatorial project was developed through collaboration with the commercial gallery Sprüth Magers London, working closely with its Director Andrew Silewicz and technical team. I had a good knowledge of the artist's work at the LFMC such as *Line Describing a Cone* and was interested to explore how McCall's work could be expanded into the Ambika P3 site.

### Planning and technical drawing

After a series of technical meetings we decided that the work should occupy only the high space and be in near total darkness. I also decided that we would only use the high space of Ambika P3 and that the low space could be used to present contextual information and future projects. This division of the space into two different ways of addressing the public was repeated in other projects at Ambika P3 – such as *Out Of Ice* by Elizabeth Ogilvie and *UNDER* by Martina Amati.

### Projection testing

The works were built and tested in the space. The key element that makes these projections work is haze in the atmosphere – while McCall's early horizontal pieces involved cigarette smoke from the audience, his contemporary works involve the use of a number of haze machines, which 'solidify' the light. I organised a number of tests to see if the space could sustain haze for long enough and special instructions had to be given in order to switch the smoke detectors off.

## Engineering and soundproofing

During the testing it became evident to me that we would need to isolate the high space completely in order to create a totally immersive space. We used thick and extremely long drapes all around the high space and constructed a box room flush with the blacked out entrance to the space for the audience to be ushered in. A black carpet was also laid to absorb the sound and provide a dark surface on which the audience could walk around or lie down. The projectors had to be located in new frames on the 30 foot ceiling of the space in a diagonal arrangement to provide full coverage of the floor space.

The work was contextualised through an artist's talk and associated event which extended the research dimensions of the project and provided further context for the understanding of his artistic practice. A separate exhibition of McCall's drawings took place simultaneously at Sprüth Magers London.<sup>93</sup>

## Conclusions

Anthony McCall's work had previously dealt with the horizontal light beam of cinema projection<sup>94</sup> but here the aim was to create solid vertical light cones. The poetic elements of these projections, which transforms the projectors into 'suns' and so enables audiences to bathe in light, was central to the work. Thus, one of the key findings of this project is that experimental spaces such as Ambika P3 can be curated to propose new ways for audiences to experience artist film and video.

In *Vertical Works*, the only space defined is that of the projection beam, luring the viewer to engage with the work as pure material light. The works create a world where the sculptural and the cinematic meet to create a poetic world out of light photons and transform the industrial space into a site of contemplation. This is the purest form of cinematic projection, each respecting the cinematic screen

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<sup>93</sup> As part of the project McCall made two presentations, one at Tate Modern, March 1, 2011, in which McCall talked about new projects, including *Vertical Works* and tying these new projects back to earlier work. McCall also introduced the new digital re-make of *Line Describing a Cone*, which was shown in a special presentation later that evening. Anthony McCall presented *Column* at Ambika P3, on 22 March 2011, a model of his future work for the Cultural Olympiad) consisting of a column of cloud in Birkenhead that would be visible up to 100km away.

<sup>94</sup> See his work *Light Describing a Cone* and his earlier Serpentine exhibition, Anthony McCall, November 30, 2007–February 3, 2008).

ratio of 4.3 in the dark unlit carpeted space of Ambika P3 like four suns. *Vertical Works* was cohesive and effective because it was curated to be both a hypnotic immersive installation but also a statement on the ephemeral qualities of the projection process in film and video. Engaging with the work was experiential; it did not necessitate historical or contextual knowledge but was enhanced by it and as with many of these projects, provided a variety of different ways of access for the audience – from visual pleasure to an understanding of projection and its effect.

In this project the curatorial strategies I have been developing were further tested and deployed, in particular the ability to isolate the space from the outside world and engage the audience in an interactive and full body immersive experience with the work. While the space was given over to the artist's project it is the translation of the work through the experimental and collaborative curatorial practice and methods described above that the work was able to operate. The exhibition provided further evidence of the potential of curatorial and artistic experimentation in the space, through formal and technical strategies and a curatorial attention to audience engagement, access and experience. These suggested forms of immersive and intuitive engagement with light and projection were also later developed in future projects presented in this PhD and added to the curatorial armoury needed to work in a large site such as Ambika P3.

## 5.4 Project Four

### ***End Piece...(2012), David Hall***

Works in the exhibition: *1001 TV Sets (End Piece)*, 1972–2012; *Progressive Recession*, 1974, and *TV Interruptions (7 TV Pieces): the Installation*, 1971/2006: 1001 CRT analogue televisions, steel scaffold, cabling, netting, and 16 CRT monitors, 9 cameras.

Exhibition Dates: (16 March–22 April 2012)

### **Overview**

Curating David Hall's *End Piece...* aimed to raise questions about history, context, audience and technology. This exhibition examined a number of distinct elements: the analogue monitor cube as a sculptural building block in video art, the social context of the gallery space and the manipulation of the broadcast signal as a strategy of social intervention. Ball defines Hall's work thus:

While video art may well be the commonly used, generic name for this practice historically, its scope is both too narrow and too general to describe Hall's *oeuvre*: his work is concerned mostly with video situated in social, participatory contexts, not only as an art proposition, but also as a means of exploring art's role and status in society.<sup>95</sup>

### **Aims**

By reinterpreting and restaging three seminal video art works from the 1970s, in a collaborative way between artist and curator the contemporary relevance of David Hall's work would be made visible. The curatorial research process in this project involved a combination of a number of different strategies. The selection and reinterpretation of the central work was an original proposition by myself and the other two works restaged through consultation with the artist, specialists in the field, academics and researchers from the University of Dundee.

The research asked these questions:

1. Where are the collaborative boundaries between curator and artist when reworking a historical work?
2. How can curatorial practice be transformational without being prescriptive and managerial?

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<sup>95</sup> Ball, S. (2013) 'The end of television: David Hall's *1001 TV Sets (End Piece)*', *Moving Image Review & Art Journal*, Vol. 2, No.1.

3. Can this curatorial collaboration bring historical works into the contemporary to reveal the relationships between early video art, broadcast and contemporary visual art practices?
4. What curatorial strategies of production and reinterpretation could locate the original site of video art's contribution – as a social intervention and in the field of contemporary visual art practice?

David Hall's exhibition consisted of a new commission, *1001 TV Sets (End Piece)* (1972–2012), as well as a restaging of his two early works *Progressive Recession* (1974) and *TV Interruptions (7 TV Pieces): the Installation* (1971–2006). The commission was a contemporary reworking of Hall's early work *101 TV sets* and formed the centrepiece of the exhibition featuring 1001 cathode ray tube TV sets of all ages and conditions. The TVs were tuned to the different analogue stations playing randomly, gradually reducing from 5 to 3 to none between 4 April and 18 April, as the final analogue signals were broadcast from London's Crystal Palace. The project located the site of Hall's work as not exclusively the artworld but the wider participatory context of broadcast television as a social phenomenon.

### **Methods**

I worked with the artist, acting as a catalyst, producer and enabler in the reinterpretation and exhibition of this seminal work, in order to test it in the contemporary context, 40 years after its first airing. I decided to commission David Hall to remake his original 1974 work *101 TV Sets* at the moment of the cut-off of the analogue signal. This was of significant importance since the primary site of Hall's work is the context of broadcast television.

The project involved collaboration as a method between myself, the artist and groups representative of video art practice, including the REWIND project, University of Dundee and LUX, London. Collaboration was necessitated because of the inclusive nature of the curatorial approach and the need to be fully informed of all previous work by the artist as well as to instill complete trust between the artist and myself. This was a very risky exhibition at a late stage in the artists' life on a large scale. I had to gather as much support from institutions

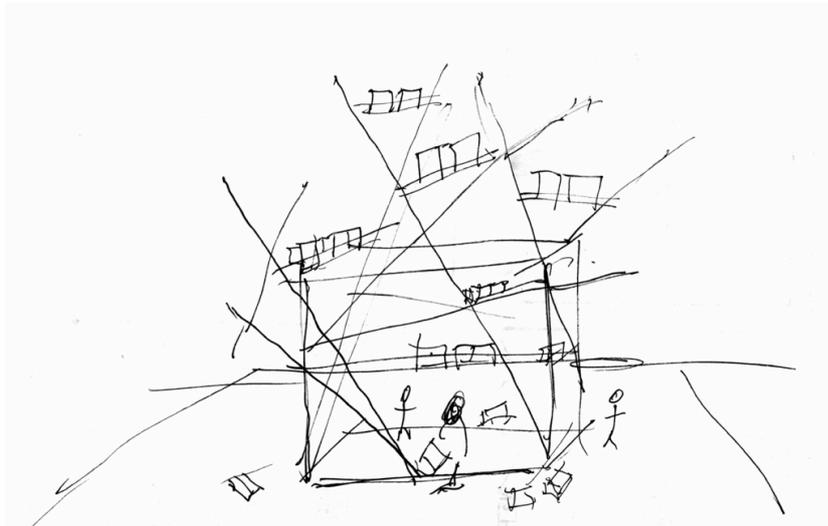
and individuals in order to give confidence to the artist. The field of video-art, particularly of the early pioneering artists such as Hall, revolved around a small world of specialists whose relationships had developed over decades and included professional as well as social elements. I had worked with Hall previously and had been Director of London Video Arts, and Hall had been one of the founders of this organisation, both of which facilitated the production.

Throughout the project significant consultation took place with these parties to assess the best way to address the research issues, to track curated historical video art projects and to deliver up-to-date exhibition strategies. This took place alongside the main research activity – the curatorial work with the artist and the search for an appropriate form and scale for the transformation of the 1974 *101 TV Sets* staged at the Serpentine Gallery into the work to be staged in Ambika P3 for the analogue cut-off in April 2012. From this dual-track approach – working with the artist and consulting with his peers and other researchers – a possible exhibit began to take shape in the form of a heavily upscaled (from 101 to 1,001 TVs) version within a massive scaffold-based structure filling all 10,000 square feet of Ambika P3.

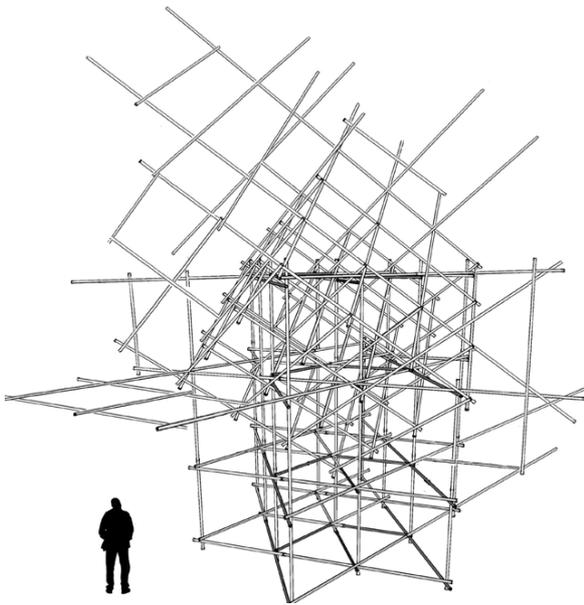
The project methods involved iterative experimentation whereby visual and conceptual ideas were developed, reflected upon, discussed and tested against project aims through experimentation by firstly producing drawings, sketches, 2D and 3D designs.

The agreed parameters for the transformation of the original *101 TV Sets* between the artist and the curator were as follows:

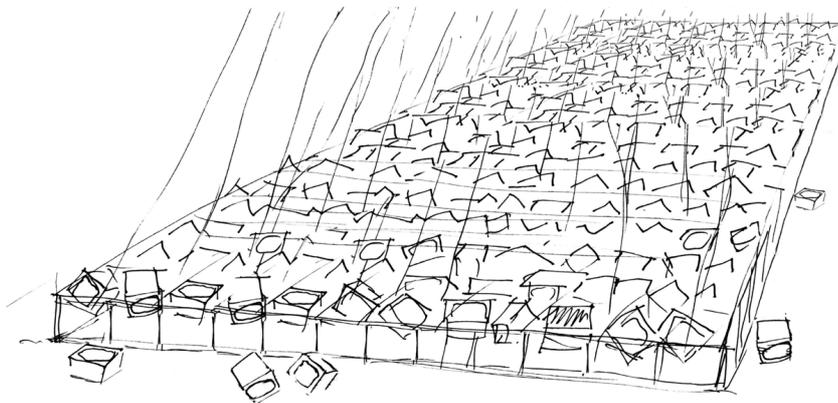
- The aim would be to get up to 1,001 CRT televisions to fill the space;
- The sets should be concentrated together and accessible and visible to the audience;
- They should be mounted on multi-tiered builders' scaffold as they were in the 1974 version;
- They should be broadcasting live television signals;
- Audio should be loud.



**FIGURE 14** Hall, D. *End Piece...*, drawing 1



**FIGURE 15** Hall, D. *End Piece...*, computer sketch 1



**FIGURE 16** Hall, D. *End Piece...*, drawing 2

Hall's first drawing of *1,001 TVs* (Fig.14) at our initial meeting was a vertical structure made of scaffolding placed at the centre of the Ambika P3 space. I presented the computer sketch of this first draft of *1,001 TVs* (Fig. 15) to the technical team. This structure was proved impossible to realise as it would not be strong or rigid enough to contain 1,001 TV sets. Following a series of correspondences and a second meeting in the space, Hall and I discussed a number of options and conceptualised a second draft of the *1,001 TVs* from which Hall created a diagram (Fig.16).

Once this second realisable model was attained, experimentation was used as the main curatorial method in order to test the viability and effect of the model. This use of the curatorial as a method of practice, allowing for flexibility and dialogue, permitted both the artist and myself to engage in a common problematic. This provides the possibility of a critical curatorial practice, disruptive and transformational, as O'Neil articulates:

The curatorial is always dialogical, with the resultant exhibition form being a condensed moment of presentation exposing to varying degrees the processes of cooperation, exchange, and agonistic coproduction that have made it possible. At the heart of this project is a call for a rethink of the concept of the aesthetic autonomy apparent in artistic praxis of recent years, one that moves away from autonomous material production as a notion of separation and/or subjective exceptionality and towards an understanding of autonomy as a sensibility towards a continual production of exchanges, commonalities, and collective transformations, beyond any prefixed idea of profession, field of specialisation, or skill set.<sup>96</sup>

This second version was much more realisable although many more details had to be worked out, including:

- How to get the televisions to sit in the frames in a variety of positions to give the impression of a loose arrangement;
- How to bring down the analogue signal to feed 1,001 televisions;
- How and where to acquire the 1,000 CRTs on what was effectively a small budget;

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<sup>96</sup> O'Neill, P. (2012) 'Curating as a Medium of Artistic Practice', *The Culture of Curating and the Curating of Cultures*. Cambridge, MA; London: MIT Press, p. 95.

- How to raise sponsorship and funding for such a large project in the strict time frame required.

Most of the project was initially drawn on paper and subsequently on computer and then tested with actual hardware. It was crucial for the artist and myself to work closely on each item and not simply farm off the project to a technical specialist. Both the artist and I worked on the basis of the principle that as Victor Burgin says, “the dialectic between what you think you want to do and what the medium will let you do is an aspect that keeps things alive.”<sup>97</sup>

Based on the originality of the idea, I was able to raise all the necessary sponsorship and funding to produce the work. The most challenging part of this process was not the technical side, but the delicate relationship with the artist. While my role was to nurture and guide the project so that it reached its goal, there was a constant process of interpretation and dialogue involved. The experience and skill of the artist had to mesh with the my intimate knowledge of how the Ambika P3 project space reacted to objects, light, space, scale and sound. The project would either appear as an incoherent jumble of TV sets that had simply been thrown together or as a controlled comment on the chaotic invasion of media in the televisual age.

The final layout was agreed and it was applied to a 3D computer design – the curatorial work was to ensure that none of what had been intended at each stage of the production was lost. Given that Hall was unwell and only able to travel infrequently, I had to engage in constant dialogue and report back on developments. Once sponsorship had been found for the scaffolding and a source of recycled televisions located, the project took shape relatively quickly. Once the lights were switched off the piece took on a life of its own and began raising the questions about broadcast, television, art and audience that had been intended.

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<sup>97</sup> Burgin, V. (2013) *Other Criteria*, Interview in *Frieze*, 17 May 2013, by David Campany.

The gathering of other researchers and audience took place during the conference *Exhibiting Video*, which I convened, March 23–25, 2012,<sup>98</sup> and which addressed research questions central to the display of video art. The four half-day themes were curating, space, analogue, and media and context. The international presentations and interventions firmly placed Hall's work at the critical centre of debates in video art – the constituent elements of Hall's work – and sculpture, technology and broadcast became the centre of a conference highlighting the constant need for a problematic and context-aware approach to art making.<sup>99</sup>

### **Conclusions**

The curatorial work involved in the reinterpreting of this intervention in linear analogue broadcast produced new curatorial methods, approaches and thematic foci for the restaging of historic video art. It showed how the role of the curator could function as a catalyst to relate historic themes in video art to contemporary issues of media, context and audience. As in the McCall and Rink projects, it also developed novel ways for the audience to experience artists' film and video as sculpture and immersive installation.

This curatorial work provided the space, the opportunity, the funding and the intellectual engagement with the artists to take the work further – both in terms of scale and in terms of social engagement. In fact the project was a signal of the end of linear curated television, as we had known it since its inception. This part of the project expanded the breadth of the artist's work by locating it in a contemporary setting at a crucial and unique time for UK broadcasting.

The curatorial partnership with the artist was able to provide opportunity, location, and technical support through a continual challenging conceptual dialogue to make this project both an exhibition and an event. It revealed how the role of the curator can function as a catalyst to relate historic themes, can

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<sup>98</sup> <https://www.westminster.ac.uk/news-and-events/events/exhibiting-video-conference>

<sup>99</sup> The exhibition was also widely covered by both peer reviewed research journals and the mainstream press. Tate Modern has purchased David Hall works from the exhibition for their collection and the artist was taken up by Richard Saltoun Gallery following this project in 2012.

amplify the artist's original intentions, and in this instance do so in terms of scale and in terms of social engagement.



**FIGURE 17** Hall, D. (1972–2012) 1,001 TV Sets (*End Piece*), final exhibition layout



**FIGURE 18** Hall, D. (1974), *101 TV Sets*, Serpentine Gallery



**FIGURE 19** Hall, D. (1972–2012), *1,001 TV Sets (End Piece)*, Ambika P3

## 5.5 Project Five

### ***The Happiest Man (2013), Ilya and Emilia Kabakov***

One video projector, audio speakers, 150 cinema chairs, wooden room and screen.

Exhibition dates: (27 March – 21 April 2013)

#### **Overview**

Ilya and Emilia Kabakov have collaborated over many years to make immersive installations – whole environments that fuse elements of the everyday with those of the imagination. *The Happiest Man* forms part of this series of ‘total installations’.<sup>100</sup>

#### **Aims**

The installation by international Russian artists Ilya and Emilia Kabakov, *The Happiest Man*, featured a room within a specially created cinema showing clips from Russian propaganda films of the 40s and 50s. The visitor could escape to the room and become ‘The Happiest Man’ or enjoy the films in the classic cinema setting.

Specific research questions were posed by the work:

- At a time when the consumption of moving images is possible in a multitude of ways how does the traditional cinema auditorium operate?
- How does the collective (auditorium) and individual (the room) viewing of film and video work differ for the viewer?
- How is the curation of artists’ film and video affected by the physical context of its encounter?

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<sup>100</sup> ‘You were talking about making objects, something real. No, in the Soviet Union they didn’t create anything real at all. It was a dream about a dream; everything they created was not about reality, but about the dream. So the final product was actually a fantasy too. We made a piece, “the happiest man in the world.” The man had escaped into a movie theatre. He built himself a little apartment and he is living there. He is watching a movie. The discussion was, should we use an American Hollywood dream which everyone is familiar with or do we use Russian Soviet movies. And you know what? As we started looking, the Soviet movies were better, the dream was bigger! Because in American movies, there are somehow tones of reality. Perhaps there is a character which is not a material girl, but she may become a material girl. It is possible that she may get her dream in this life. What you see in Soviet movies is a hundred percent dream! It never could happen. You would see beautiful fields...’ Ilya and Emilia Kabakov, Interviewed by Delia Bajo and Brainard Carey, *The Brooklynn Rail*, 31 Jan 2013.



## Methods

This project was a collaboration with the Sprovieri Gallery and the curatorial collaboration reflected that. While Niccolo Sprovieri concentrated on gathering the materials for the installation I worked on the design and adaptation of the work in the space. Similar in methodology to the McCall installation, this was a project which involved curatorial and technical collaboration. The installation previously shown at the Jeux De Paume in Paris in 2000 had to be rescaled and adapted for Ambika P3.

Ilya Kabakov's hand-drawings formed the basis of the *Happiest Man* installation and although they conveyed the proportions of the work, I made many changes to the projection, and location of the house and projector during the installation. The method of curation here was not limited to the selection of artists, but included roles of commissioner, interpreter and producer. While the construction of a screen and projection set-up was straightforward, the creation of a 150-seat classic cinema with the addition of a domestic room involved much testing and interaction between the curator and artists. The lining up of the projector and the room was crucial so that the view from the inside of the room was exactly aligned with the window.

## Conclusions

This project focused on the auditorium – as a physical, cultural and historical space operating as a mediating agent between artwork and audience. This project was born of the complications of private and public as framed by the artists' experience of the soviet era but applies equally to our engagement with the collective experience of cinema screenings. The cinema seating became an artefact because of the room – the choice of viewing experience foregrounded the artifice of the auditorium. Roland Barthes in his essay "Leaving the Movie Theater" is the closest to have defined the 'situation' of the cinema viewer and the auditorium. In this essay he proposes a strategy for the viewer to disentangle him or herself from the lure of the image which operates in a similar way to the workings of *The Happiest Man*:

But there is another way of going to the movies (besides being armed by the discourse of counter-ideology); by letting oneself be fascinated twice

over, by the image and by its surroundings - as if I had two bodies at the same time: a narcissistic body which gazes, lost, into the engulfing mirror, and a perverse body, ready to fetishize not the image but precisely what exceeds it: the texture of the sound, the hall, the darkness, the obscure mass of the other bodies, the rays of light, entering the theater, leaving the hall; in short, in order to distance, in order to "take off," I complicate a "relation" by a "situation".<sup>101</sup>

This work highlighted elements of the cinematic spectacle through play and a poetic sensitivity. Curating involved presenting the site of a dialectic between the auditorium and the built room from which the films could be viewed. The cinema seating became an artefact and the choice of viewing experience foregrounded the artifice of the auditorium. By placing these physical viewing conditions side by side it brought to the fore how context is a defining element in the curating and reading of art and the difference between the personal and collective experience of an audience.

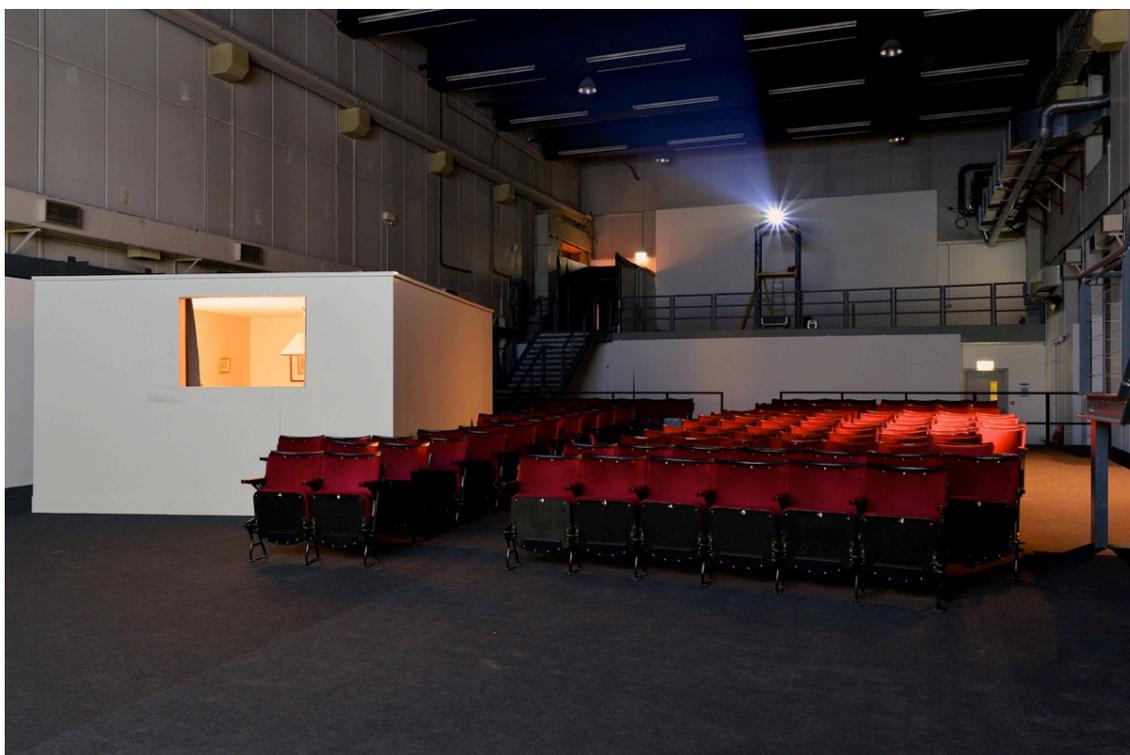
As with the other projects this work examined the operation of the elements of cinema within the context of an art installation. In this sense it presented the dislocated elements of the cinematic in an immersive yet critical environment reinforcing the main curatorial project of this PhD which examines how site can be curated to expose the processes of engagement with image. In this piece however the curatorial offered both a public/immersive and a private/non immersive option. Upon entering Ambika P3 one is immediately aware of the material construct yet the work still produces illusion and poetry. One is at the juncture of distancing and illusion. This presents a new perspective on the understanding of cinema which does not require 'a suspension of disbelief' but offers a variety of ways to engage – architecturally, sculpturally, physically and cinematically.

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<sup>101</sup> Roland Barthes (1989) 'Leaving the Movie Theater', in *The Rustle of Language*, trans. Richard Howard. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, p. 348.



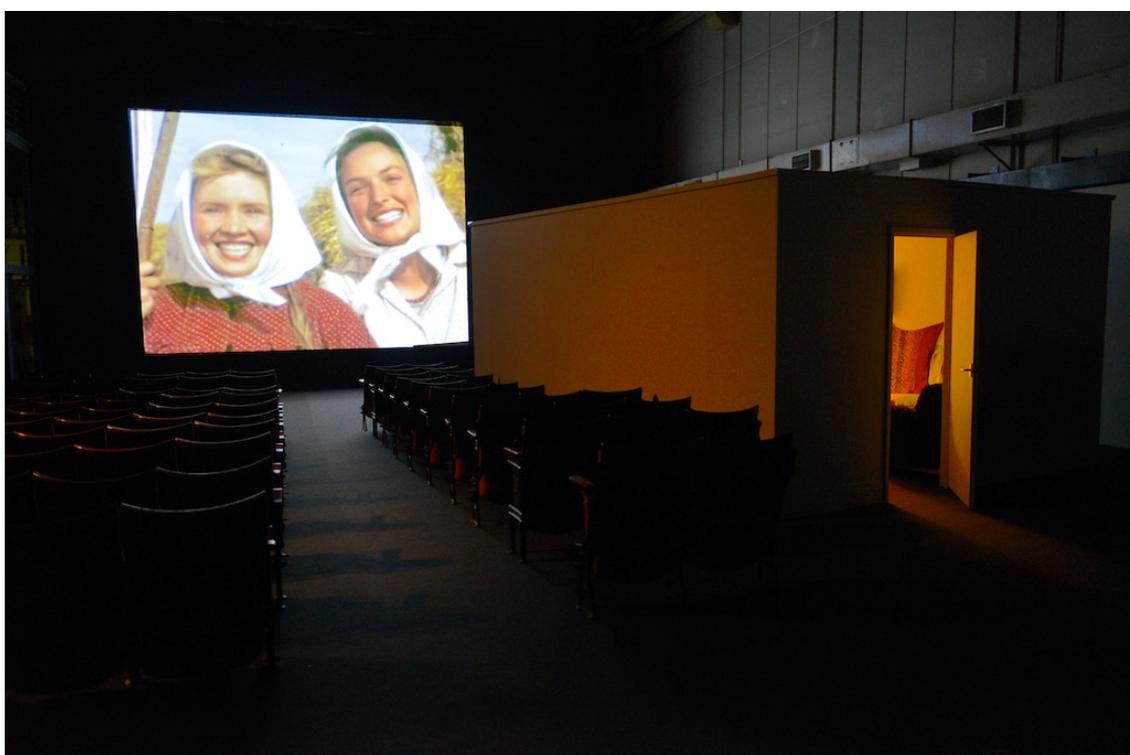
**FIGURE 22** Kabakov, I & E (2013) *The Happiest Man*, rear view, Ambika P3



**FIGURE 23** Kabakov, I & E (2013) *The Happiest Man*, front view, Ambika P3



**FIGURE 24** Kabakov, I & E (2013) *The Happiest Man*, room view, Ambika P3



**FIGURE 25** Kabakov, I & E (2013) *The Happiest Man*, auditorium view, Ambika P3

## 5.6 Project Six

### **A Sense of Place (2013), Victor Burgin**

Videoworks in the exhibition: *Voyage to Italy - (Basilica I & II)* (2006); *Olympia* (1982); *Solito Posto* (2008); *The Little House* (2005); *Mirror Lake* (2013); *A Place to Read* (2010). Photoworks in the exhibition: *UK76* (1976); *Zoo78* (1978); *Portia* (1984); *In Grenoble* (1982); *Hotel Latone* (1983); *Gradiva* (1982).

Exhibition dates: (1 November–1 December, 2013)

### **Overview**

*“Here there is another site of abrasion: where photography touches cinema.”*

Victor Burgin.<sup>102</sup>

*A Sense of Place*, Victor Burgin<sup>103</sup> presented five recent digital projection pieces complemented by earlier photo-text works exploring relations between place, memory and image. The central concern of his work is how reality is mediated through memory and fantasy. In his book *The Remembered Film* he considers a new relationship between individual and collective memory as well as the notion of image-sequences which sit between still and moving images.

The more a film is distanced in memory, the more the binding effects of the narrative is loosened. The sequence breaks apart. The fragments go adrift into new combinations, more or less transitory, in the eddies of memory: memories of other films, and memories of real events.<sup>104</sup>

To this end he explores relationships between words, still and moving images – which he sees not as separate entities but rather as a hybrid form producing a new ‘virtual’, psychological, image. The exhibition *A Sense of Place* was an attempt at re-enacting that process through a display of images, image-texts, sound, films and videos.

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<sup>102</sup> Burgin, V. (2004) ‘Barthe’s Discretion’, in *The Remembered Film*. London: Reaktion, p. 38.

<sup>103</sup> ‘Victor Burgin first came to prominence in the late 1960s as an originator of Conceptual Art, when his work appeared in such key exhibitions as *When Attitudes Become Form* (1969) and *Information* (1970). Victor Burgin taught at the Polytechnic of Central London (now the University of Westminster) from 1973 to 1988. Burgin’s earlier work engaged in the Minimalism he inherited from artists such as Robert Morris and Donald Judd. He then came to engage issues of class, gender and sexuality. He is equally influential both as a practitioner and as a theorist and his practice encompasses still and moving image works, writings and theory.’ Company, D, (2013) Press release of Victor Burgin, *A Sense of Place*.

<sup>104</sup> Burgin, V. (2004), ‘The Remembered Film’, in *The Remembered Film*. London: Reaktion, p.68.

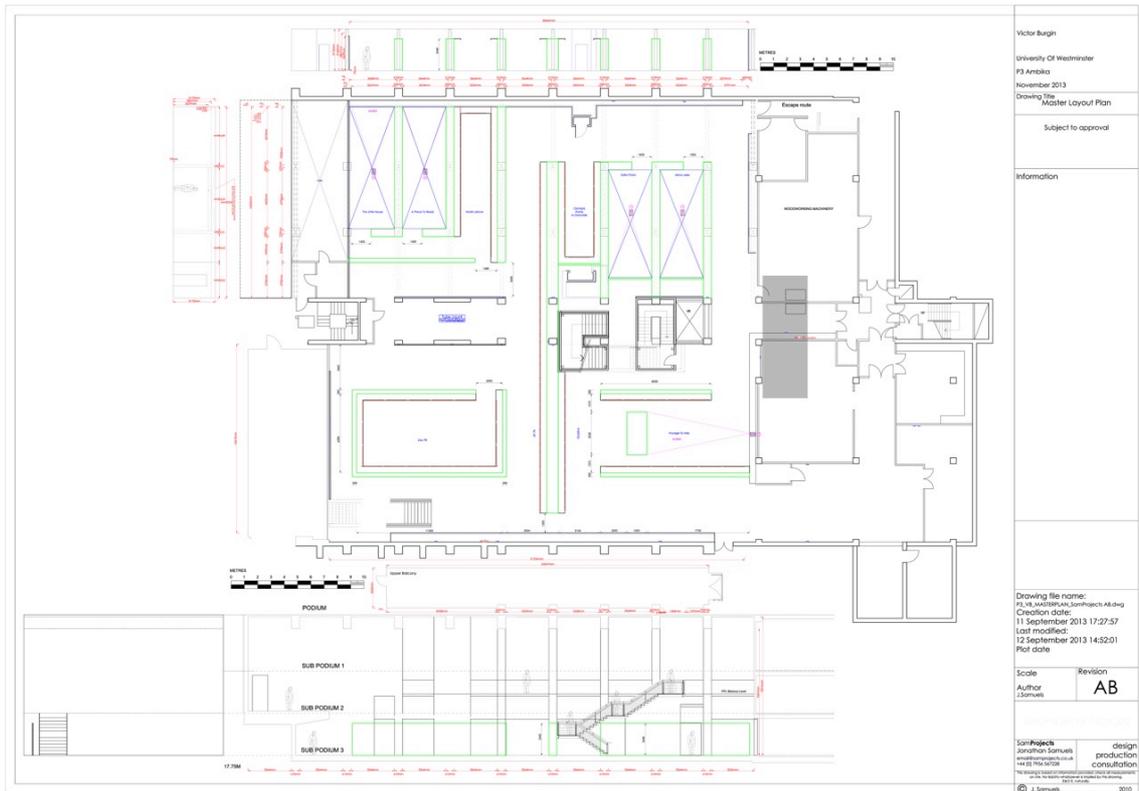


FIGURE 26 Burgin, V. *A Sense of Place*, Masterplan



FIGURE 27 Burgin, V. (2006) *Voyage to Italy - (Basilica I & II)*, Ambika P3

## **Aims**

- How can one curate a physically coherent narrative trajectory which reflects and engages with the intellectual project of an artist's work ?
- How can the relationship between photography and film and video be made complementary and yet remain in dialogue?
- How can space and lighting be adapted or designed to affect the exhibition of difficult, complex works of two related medias ?

## **Methods**

The decision to present an exhibition around an artist's complete works meant that we had to build a very large made-to-measure construction to museum standard. We built nine separate galleries in the industrial space of Ambika P3 and a long exhibition wall which acted as a causeway between the 2 sides of Ambika P3 and provided the ability to exhibit the totality of *UK76* (1976) – a rarely seen work consisting of eleven 40 x 60 ins panels. As described below, four of these spaces were video projection spaces with customised black ceilings and layout. We worked closely with the artist and lighting designer to create a new LCD lighting system to provide even lighting in the exhibition walls as opposed to spot lighting, thus providing a much smoother and reflection-free experience for the viewer. Victor Burgin's new work for this exhibition, *Mirror Lake*, is a response to the Seth Peterson Cottage, designed by Frank Lloyd Wright and built in 1958 in what is now Mirror Lake State Park, Wisconsin.

The exhibition was curated by David Company and myself with much input from Victor Burgin, the build was managed by Christian Newton and lighting by Sam Projects. The exhibition was planned and designed in 3D CAD from a design by the artist and curators. The curatorial process was delicate, as it involved the retrospective of an artist with a large body of work, rarely able to travel to London. The artist and the curators working on the project had to share knowledge and communicate regularly in order to produce a coherent selection of work and a design of the space which would facilitate the engagement of the audience in what is quite dense artwork.

It was a challenge to create a lighting system which would not focus on individual images but on series of images – that is an even spread of light

across groups of two to ten photographs at a time. Burgin's work is usually made as series or image-sequences and attention should not be focused on individual images. In order to do so I decided to take advice from Jonathan Samuels, a lighting specialist who has worked with Ambika P3 on many projects. The developed idea used LCD tubes reflecting off a lip at the top of each wall panel. Tests were conducted as seen in Figure 4 (above) varying distance, intensity, size of the wooden lip and distance to the image. Placing these LCD tubes next to each other under the wooden lip would provide a continuous non reflective lighting system entirely appropriate for the photographic series.

Once the wall system had been put in place for the photographs the video spaces had to be designed in the lower space. The lower space contains two challenges which had to be overcome – firstly the lower space is held up by pillars every five metres and the surface of the ceiling is silver corrugated iron. This limits both the size of the video galleries to be built and the ceiling reflects elements of the image – which for the purpose of Burgin's video was unacceptable and distracting. So the video galleries had to be soundproofed and the new non reflective ceilings made to accommodate the subtlety of the work and the quietness of the sound.

In order to contextualise this difficult work a number of talks and events were organised.<sup>105</sup>

## Conclusions

The built environment—as a theatre of wishes and fears about past, present and future—is at the forefront of these works, which move through promenades and panoramas. The image-text pieces progress along the gallery wall, or wrap around an entire space, while later projection pieces exploit tracking and pan movements familiar from film. These later works answer our frenetic media environment with a contemplative conception of the hybrid virtual image—moving in

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<sup>105</sup> In Conversation between Burgin and the co-curator both at the University and at the ICA, a series of curator-led gallery talks, and two other linked exhibitions: *Victor Burgin: Works on Paper* 31 October–6 December 2013 at Richard Saltoun Gallery and *Power and Pleasure: 5* November 2013–5 January 2014 examining the work of Burgin's students at London Gallery West.

permanently closed loops, but generating perpetually open spirals of time and memory.<sup>106</sup>

The exhibition of Victor Burgin brought together this wide body of his work and connected his early photographic conceptual work, his political work and his more recent concerns with space and architecture made on video and 3D digital animation.

The exhibition also explored the development of an artist's body of work by presenting it as a journey through space and media and bringing together the photographic and videoworks in a dialogue within a structured spatial itinerary.

In exhibition projects which involve one artist the basic curatorial principle which I apply is to adapt the space to the work not vice versa – that is why no permanent structures have ever been fitted to the space and the footprint remains as it was when it was converted in 2007. This was particularly prescient in the case of Burgin where the chronology of the work and the manner of its encounter was crucial. Although Victor Burgin's work presents a clear intellectual development he has used a variety of materials and techniques which required an attentive strategy in order to curate it coherently. As with all the projects in this commentary, collaboration was central between the artist, curators and the production team. Burgin's work is complex, exacting and precise and has to be read in very specific ways. The nine separate galleries with connected corridors produced a curatorial rationality through a cogent journey of the selected work.

The exhibition at Ambika P3 is constructed with a more architectural ethos, which is of course apropos given Burgin's recent work. Ambika P3 is not as elegant or ruined as the modernist buildings and sites that feature in Burgin's work, but the gallery's dividing walls force us to circumnavigate the space in a manner akin to the kind of spatial movements Burgin explores in some of his photographic series and his digital projections, the latter being dominated by circular panning motions which ex-centrally double back on themselves, for example *Journey to Italy*, 2006, which takes its inspiration from an archival photograph of Pompeii by Carlo Fracchi.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Company, D. (2013) Press release of Victor Burgin, *A Sense of Place*.

<sup>107</sup> Maria Walsh (2013) *Art Monthly*, Dec-Jan, Iss. 372, pp. 26-27.

For each exhibition a space is designed from the raw industrial site and each project is approached in an experimental way. This incremental development of the curatorial project as a whole reaps its benefits at each exhibition, project or performance in the space.

## 5.7 Project Seven

### ***UNDER (2015), Martina Amati,***

One single channel floating video projection with environmental sound, one single channel video projection, one single channel video projection with headphones, two benches.

Exhibition dates: (26th September - 11th October 2015)

### **Overview**

This project was a continuation of approaches developed through the work of David Ward, Anthony McCall and the Kabakovs experimenting with projection, site and audience. Added to this was the role of co-commissioner in which I oversaw the transition of a single screen film into an installation work.

As the curator of Ambika P3 I was approached by Amati and her producer Pinky Ghundale who wanted to translate a single screen work into a film installation on the art of freediving. The film was funded but had yet to be shot. The subject of the work was freediving and was practised by the artist. Martina Amati is a British-Italian BAFTA winning filmmaker. This was her first time working in an installation setting, as all her previous work was single screen film made for the cinema.

### **Aims**

The aim of the exhibition was to translate the work of single screen film-maker into an installation setting using multiple screens in a variety of settings in order to create distinct contexts for each film. The following questions were addressed:

- How to curate an exhibition which translates the experience of freediving as an installation?
- How can gravity-free weightlessness be experienced by an audience?
- What are the boundaries of the immersive in film and video installation?
- How can different film forms (art, autobiography, documentary) be presented in the same site?

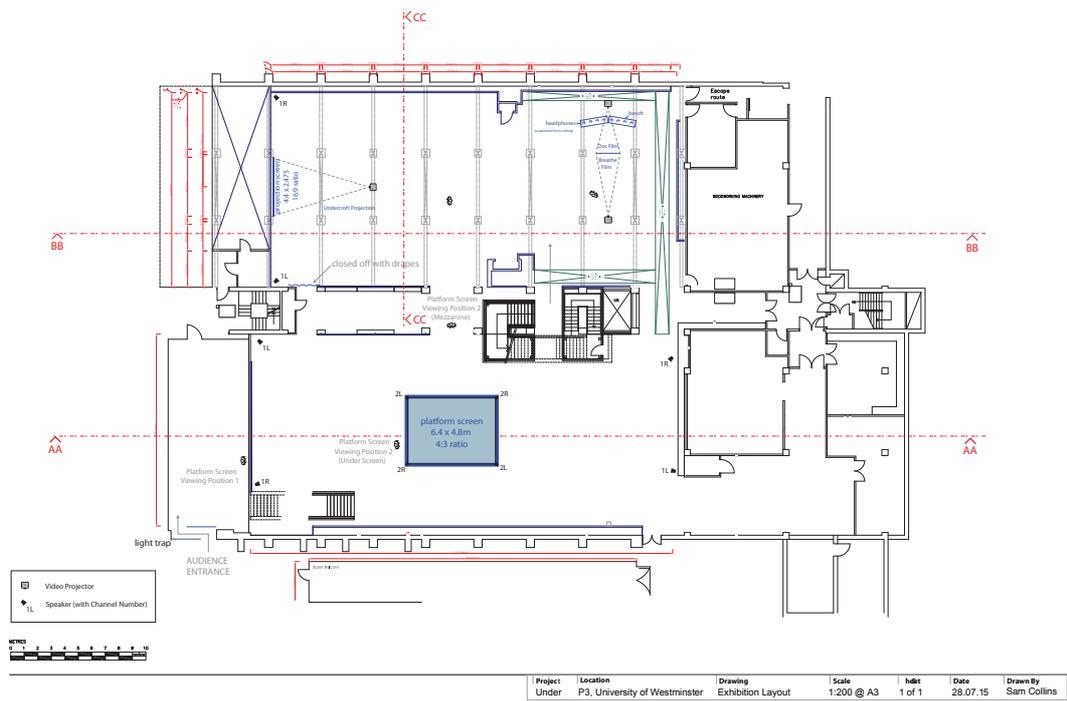
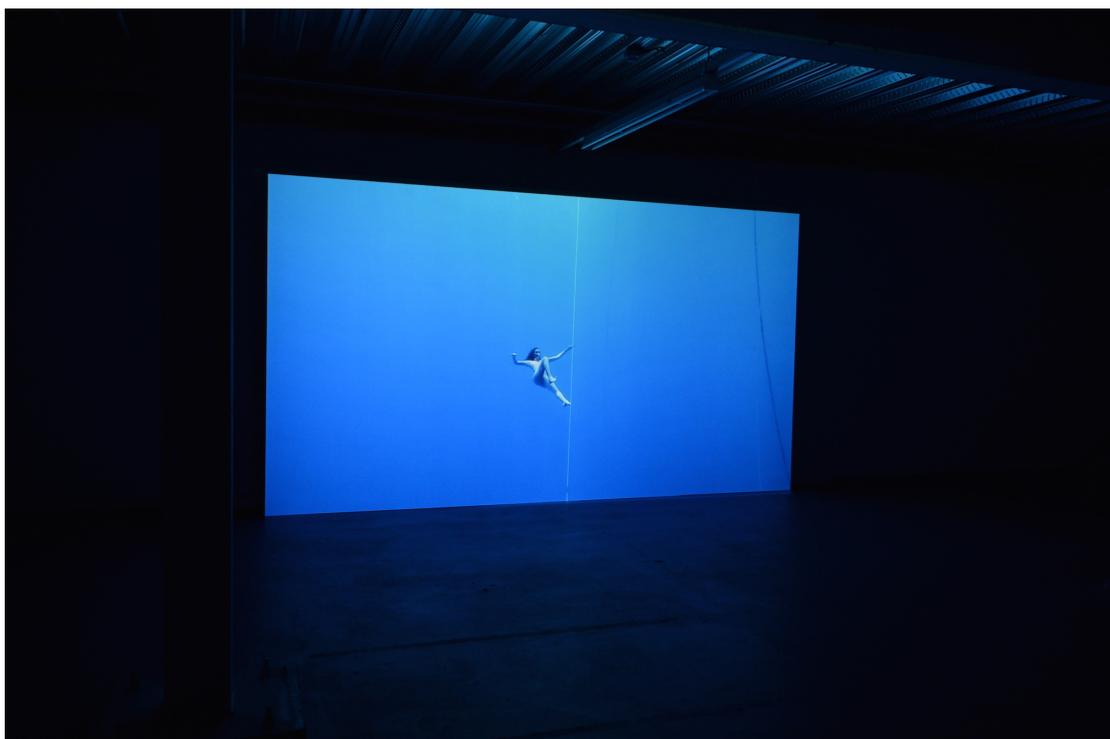


FIGURE 28 Amati, M. *UNDER*, (2015), exhibition layout



FIGURE 29 Amati, M. *UNDER*, (2015), platform screen, Ambika P3



**FIGURE 30** Amati, M. *UNDER*, (2015), vertical screen, Ambika P3



**FIGURE 31** Amati, M. *UNDER*, (2015), double sided screen, Ambika P3

## Methods

The project involved translating the experience of freediving by artist, film-maker and freediver Martina Amati through a multi-screen film and video installation.

The artist and her producer were keen to exhibit a variety of material – an immersive film which would follow Amati on her 30 metres freedive, footage of the diving tests and attempts at reaching her goal and a documentary on freediving made specifically for the exhibition. This produced a set number of contextual problems which each required a different solution.

I proposed two significant strategies – firstly, that Amati be the performer in the film as she was a freediver – so that she could have more control over the work and engagement with translating the experience. Secondly, that she considers using the whole of the high space dedicated to the artwork itself and the low space to exhibit research and testing material and the documentary she wished to make and exhibit as part of this installation. In this scenario there would be three different sites of projection spread across both Ambika spaces, each with a different intention and effect.

At this point I brought into the collaboration Sam Collins, who had worked on David Ward's *Rink* and we decided that the main piece would be projected from above in the high space with a floating screen positioned about 6 metres up so that the audience would be able to view from underneath by lying down. The documentation of the film shoot would be projected in the low space against a traditional screen and the documentary would be projected in the corner of the low room with headphones. In this way three different visual and material contexts were created:

Screen One: (Fig. 28) The centerpiece of the exhibition was a large sculptural screen hovering above viewers' heads. This 6.4 x 4.8 metre screen hung from the ceiling, suspended in mid-air. The audience was able to view the screen from above and below, enabling them to experience the film in an immersive way from a variety of perspectives and have a sense of being underwater.

Screen Two: (Fig. 29) A second large-scale vertical screen spanning floor to ceiling showed underwater footage in the adjacent space. Amati and other freedivers were shown rehearsing and performing playfully, beneath the water's surface.

Screen Three: (Fig. 30) The documentary tracking Amati's freediving journey, including interviews with international pioneers of freediving, as well as scientists conducting ground-breaking research into the physiological effects of freediving, would be projected onto a double-sided screen with headphones.

### **Conclusions**

As can be seen in the layout above (Fig. 28), the three distinct parts of the project were isolated from each other in order to be effective. From the outset my curatorial strategies, gleaned from previous projects at Ambika P3, were used to produce and design the work. In the final installation work the context shifted with each screen and the audience had to adjust their expectations as they moved between each one. This project revealed the role of context and environment by presenting different forms of address within the same exhibition. The high side of the Ambika P3 with the floating screen was the most effective in terms of translating the act of freediving while the other two screens in the low space provided both information and notations on the work. This project manifested the role of context in relation to both space and screen. The project also highlighted the different ways to address audiences through film and video projection – moving between the screens involved a shift in perception and reading.

## 5.8 Project Eight

### **NOW (2015), Chantal Akerman**

Works in the Exhibition:

*In the Mirror* (1971/2007)

Single channel video projection with sound (16mm transferred to video).

*A Voice in the Desert* (2002)

Single channel video projection with sound.

*Maniac Summer* (2009)

Four channel video projection, with sound.

*Maniac Shadows* (2013)

Four channel video projection, two soundtracks, 96 images.

*Tombée de nuit sur Shanghai* (2007) (Nightfall in Shanghai)

Single channel video projection with sound and two Chinese lanterns.

*D'est: au bord de la fiction* (1995) (From the East: Bordering on Fiction)

Twenty-four monitors and one single monitor, with sound.

*NOW* (2015)

Seven channel video projection with surround sound.

Exhibition dates: (30 October–6 December 2015)

### **Overview**

The plan was to mount and publicise a major exhibition of the installation work of Chantal Akerman at Ambika P3, co-curated with A Nos Amours,<sup>108</sup> in London.

Chantal Akerman was a Brussels-born and Paris-based artist and filmmaker and one of the first to move from independent film-making to engage with the gallery space in the mid 1990s expanding her audience and addressing issues of installation and visual art. Akerman's work was in pursuit of a critical investigation into geography and identity, space and time, sexuality and religion.

This was the first exhibition of this artist's body of installation work in the UK including a new commission as its centrepiece.<sup>109</sup> Following and complementary

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<sup>108</sup> A Nos Amours founded by Joanna Hogg and Adam Roberts is a curatorial artist-led initiative, launched in 2011 to promote and explore film, the condition of film and spectatorship, at a critical time of change for audiences and the screening and experience of moving images. <http://www.anosamours.co.uk>

<sup>109</sup> In 1995 Akerman began experimenting with video installations and exhibiting her work in museums and galleries. These had been exhibited internationally at the Venice Art Biennale

to the major retrospective of her single screen works<sup>110</sup> curated by A Nos Amours, the aim of this exhibition was to take the audience through an itinerary of her installation work in a bespoke design including the premiere of a new commission by Ambika P3, A Nos Amours and Marian Goodman Gallery, titled *NOW*, a multi projection piece shot in the Mediterranean and Middle East.

## **Aims**

The curatorial remit I agreed with my collaborators was multiple yet formed of specific parts:

- How to curate Akerman's work in a way that was accessible but also discursive and complex that challenged our accepted forms of exhibiting the moving image.
- How could the exhibition shed new light on the history of the artist's film and video which is still fragmented and undocumented?
- How to curate an exhibition which would engage the audience in a nomadic and open trajectory yet retain the specificity of each film and video work?

## **Methods**

The stages of implementing this project were lengthy and involved securing a substantial number of collaborators while still remaining in control of the curatorial aims of the exhibition. Chronologically I led the following developments:

- Secured partnership between Ambika P3 and A Nos Amours
- Secured the artist's commitment to the exhibition after a visit to Ambika P3

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2001; Kassel Documenta 2002; MOCA Los Angeles 2007; 29th Bienal de Sao Paulo, Brazil, 2010; Le Palais de Tokyo, Paris 2012; and The Kitchen, New York 2013.

<sup>110</sup> Akerman had made over 40 works – from 35mm features, video essays to experimental documentaries, including *Jeanne Dielman, 23 Quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles; Je, tu, il, elle*. Recently, through A Nos Amours' retrospective of her single screen work at the ICA, Akerman's work had been rediscovered by a younger generation exploring the projected image and its relation to narrative, gender, sexuality and aesthetics.

- Secured collaboration and both staff and financial support from Senior Director of the Marion Goodman Gallery, Andrew Leslie Heyward.
- Had numerous all-day meetings with the artist to consider list of works and design.
- Worked with designer to agree remit for detailed 3D drawings of exhibition.
- Identified full list of technical requirements.
- Secured funding from Arts Council England and Marian Goodman Gallery for both the new commission and the exhibition at Ambika P3.
- Secured venue for artist's talk and screening at the new Regent Street Cinema.

As with many of my curatorial projects this exhibition was collaborative, physically and logistically challenging as well as risky. The frail condition of the artist at the time became an increasing case for concern and resulted in the tragic fact that she took her own life only three weeks before the opening of the exhibition which made an already challenging project very testing and upsetting.

Chantal Akerman had been central to the development of the exhibition, working closely with the curatorial team for a period of two years prior to the exhibition as well as with designers and the Ambika P3 production team to develop this new exhibition. In particular the Ambika P3 and Marian Goodman Gallery commission of a new work *Now* (2015) for this exhibition proved to be both a turning point in the artist's practice and a complex commission to put together, intended to be a seven-screen installation shot in the Middle East and the Mediterranean and the centrepiece of the exhibition.

The project's original idea was to show all the installation works of Akerman in Ambika P3 including the new commission which was to be premiered at the Venice Biennale. This would have consisted of 9 large installations. Akerman wanted a very specific order in the installation so that the audience would be presented with works corresponding to her subjective experience. As her work deals with borders, itineraries, identity and states of mind it was crucial that we should be able to match her thinking. Logistically and after much consideration

we realised that this would not be physically possible in the available space even though we were going to use even the mezzanine and the balcony (Fig. 32).

At this point the curatorial decision was to exclude works which had previously been shown in the UK, the logic being that this exhibition would consist of only unseen works – Akerman had had an exhibition at Camden Art Centre (11 July–14 September 2008) where she had shown *To Walk Next to One's Shoelaces in an Empty Fridge* (2004) and *Women from Antwerp in November* (2007).

Removing these two works allowed for a reconfiguration of the layout. Also to be noted was that audio bleed would have been uncontrollable in the original configuration.

There followed a period of fund-raising on the part of Ambika P3 while Akerman worked on testing and making the new commissioned piece in Paris which was subsequently opened at the Venice Biennale in spring 2015. The work *NOW* (2015) turned out to be very different to the original concept. Instead of a circular set of 5 projected screens with 2 overhead projections it was contained in a large black soundproof box and consisted of 7 screens of footage of the desert shot from a car in the Middle East with a layered and extremely loud soundtrack.

There is no sign of human presence in Akerman's final gallery work, first shown at the current Venice Biennale. It occupies a big black box. The sound thunders out. You can hear it everywhere. Multiple suspended screens step back into the darkness; on each one a different desert rushes past, seen from a moving vehicle. Horizons rush across the screens, grey deserts sweep away and nearer bluffs of red rock and crumbling stone walls rush from left to right, sometimes faster, sometimes slowing to a halt. Visually relentless, Akerman's *Now* is also a furious aural cacophony, filled with the sound of skylarks, gunfire, ululations, calls and cries, the whinny of frightened horses, the sound of helicopter blades, thuds, engine noise and armoury. We hear all this but the deserts are empty. They could be anywhere: the Negev, Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, places between places, regions whose names we hear constantly on news reports, places with no names at all. Everything rushes, slows and rushes again.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Searle, A. (2015) 'The last picture show: how Chantal Akerman's suicide alters her final artwork', *The Guardian*, 4 Nov. Available from: <http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2015/nov/04/chantal-akerman-death-now-ambika-p3-film-installation> [Accessed 8 May 2016].

After the Venice opening we had to go back and start designing the exhibition from scratch – Akerman was not well enough to attend and she had dismissed her designer. The second big phase of this project began. New curatorial decisions had to be made to include the new structure of *NOW* and to project an understanding of Akerman's intentions into a new layout until she was well enough to return to London.

Working with our designer and in collaboration with Carole Billy from Marian Goodman Gallery Paris who had overseen the installation of *NOW* in Venice, we came up with a new design incorporating seven works. This dedicated the main space to the new work *NOW* which had become the centrepiece of the exhibition and would be accessed last by the audience as Akerman wished. In the lower side of the space we fitted 5 works and on the mezzanine was her earliest work *In the Mirror* (1971/2007), a portrait of a woman looking at herself naked in the mirror and commenting critically on her body. This design had the advantage of allowing the audience to have a beginning and end point and in the lower space a more open territory they could navigate between. This open territory provided the appropriate nomadic itinerary amongst a borderless grouping of works which could be navigated in a non hierarchical way. The form of the exhibition was then suited to its function - and offered the audience a way into Akerman's life experience and art strategies.

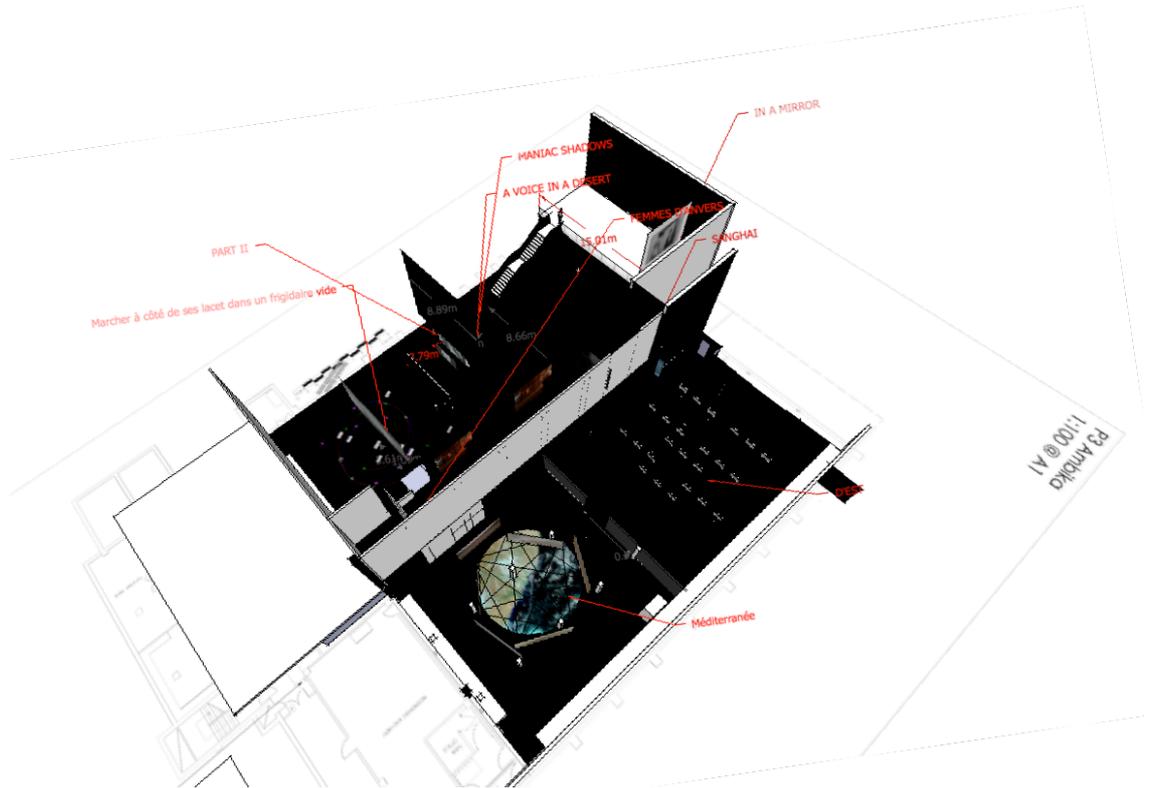


FIGURE 32 Akerman, C. NOW, (2015), first 3D modelling, Ambika P3

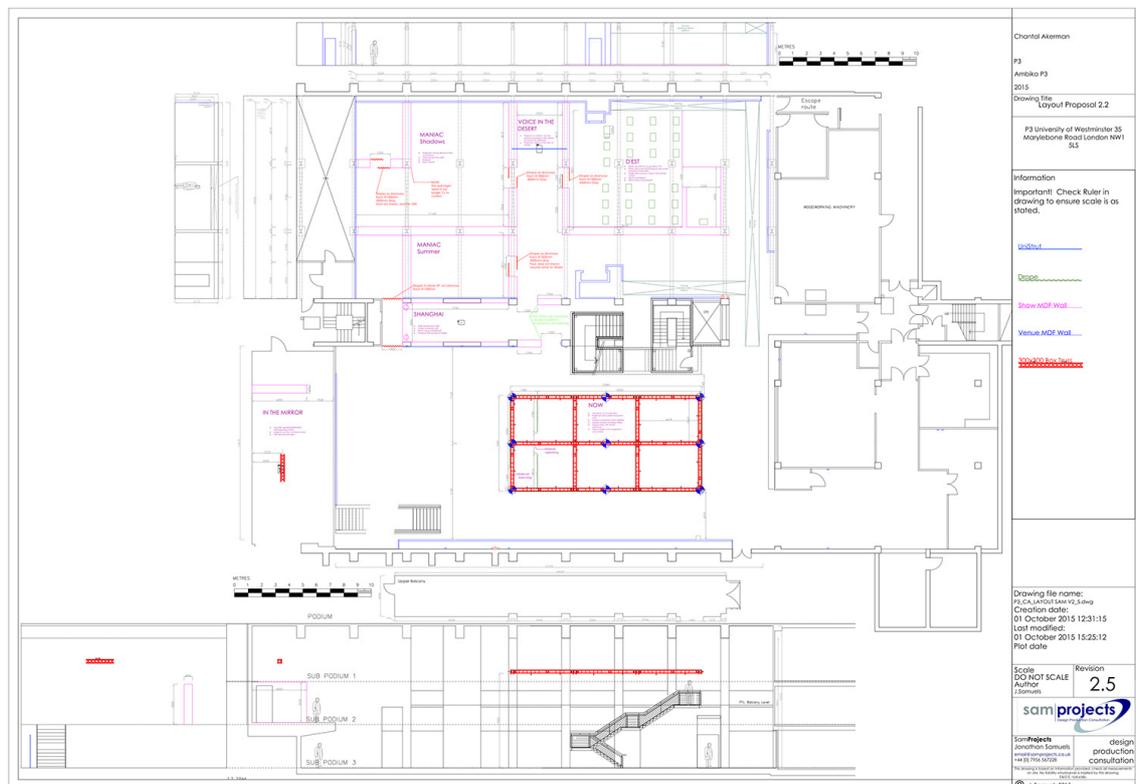


FIGURE 33 Akerman, C. NOW, (2015), final exhibition layout, Ambika P3

The build of *NOW* involved some difficult decisions – while it was to be self standing it also had to be able to carry struts and seven high-end laser DLP video projectors. *NOW* had to look as if it had just appeared in the space and was self contained. Curatorially it was the last piece in the viewing sequence. It was made larger than its original scale in Venice and the floor was made light grey so that the overhead projections could be seen on it. In Venice the use of black carpet had made these overhead projections invisible. In our construction all the projections were visible and the double-skinned walls also dampened the sound in the immediate area.

### **Conclusions**

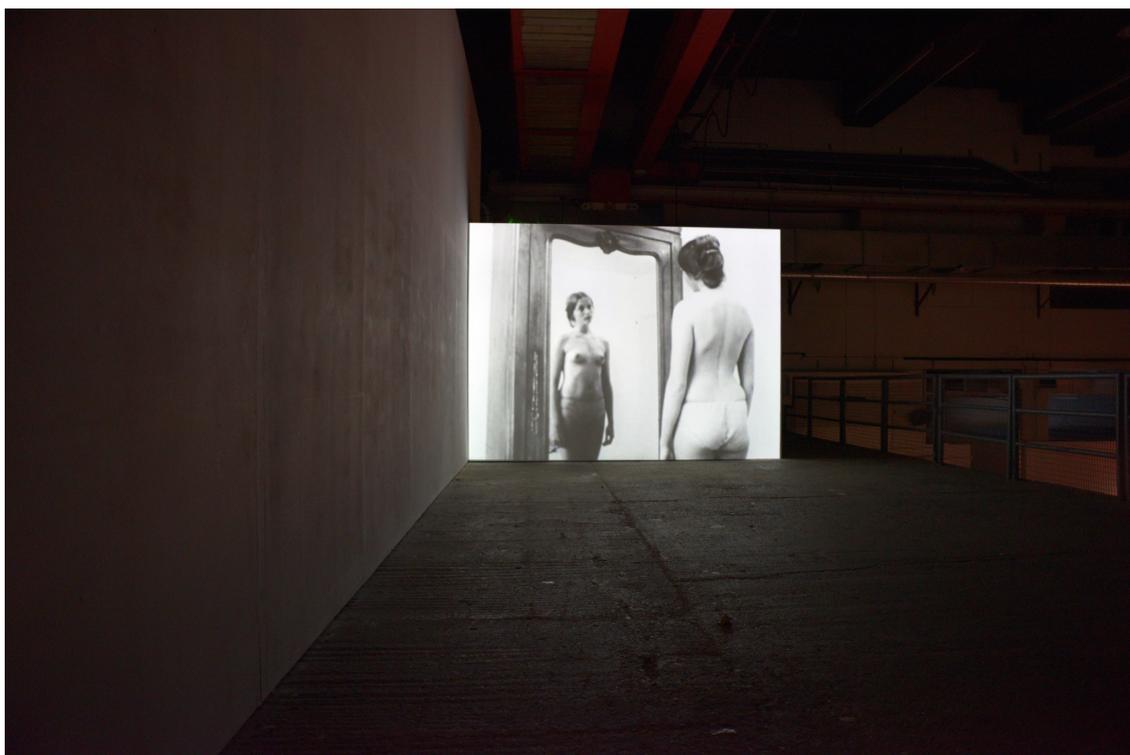
This project was constructed on a series of tensions – that of curatorial practice against technical possibilities, of artist's desire against physical limitations and finally the ultimate and traumatic event – that of the death of the artist a few weeks before the opening of the exhibition.<sup>112</sup>

This exhibition was the most challenging exhibition to conceive and deliver as it was the most collaborative, international and conceptually difficult. Akerman's work is very subjective while at the same time consistently in flux, formally and conceptually. The curatorial practice utilised here was the result of the years of experimentation both in and outside Ambika P3. While the co-curators had extensive knowledge of Akerman's single screen work and film programming, the bulk of the on-site curation had to be mediated and delivered by myself. The project was developed in a manner which suited Akerman's way of working, that is, not fully conceptualised from the outset as with Burgin but in fits and spurts where the concept is secondary to an open form of process-led production. The final layout has no resemblance in any way to the first (Fig. 32). That form of flexibility can only be possible if the curation is approached as it was, as a development and dialogue with the artist. It took time – two years from start to finish.

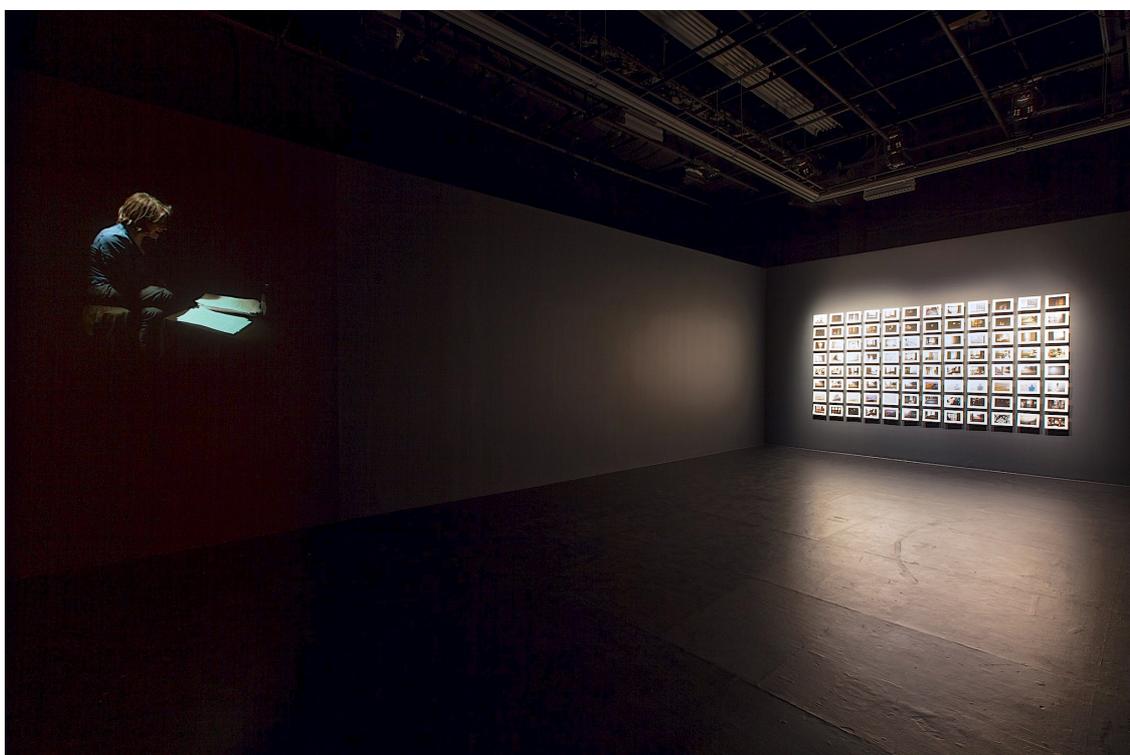
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<sup>112</sup> Chantal Akerman committed suicide on June 6, 2015. See Mazière, M. (2015) 'Au Revoir, Chantal', *Moving Image Review & Art Journal*, 4 (1&2), pp. 287-292.

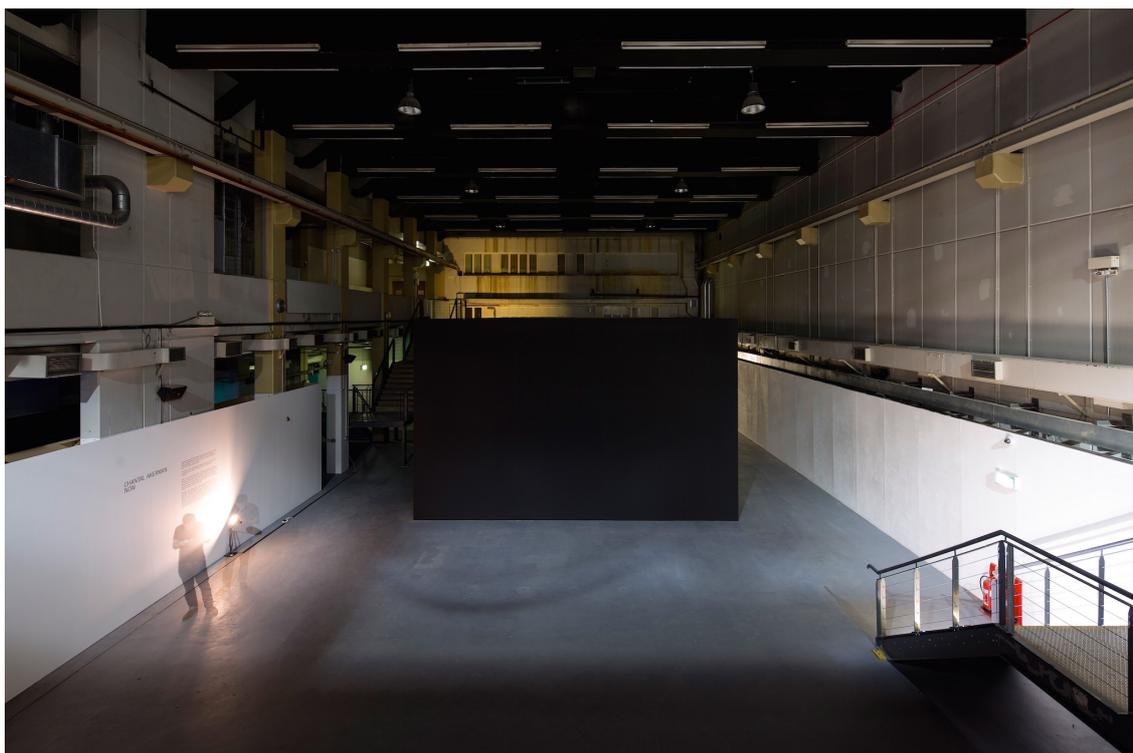
The project has become a fitting testament to the strength of the work of the artist. Its formal and aesthetic presentation were the result of a flexible and experimental strategy. It was also due to the qualities offered by the Ambika P3 space, the openness and flexibility of the structure, the ability to exploits its industrial equipment and spaces. All these elements working together through testing and experimenting from the outset are the new knowledge and practice this curatorial approach brought.



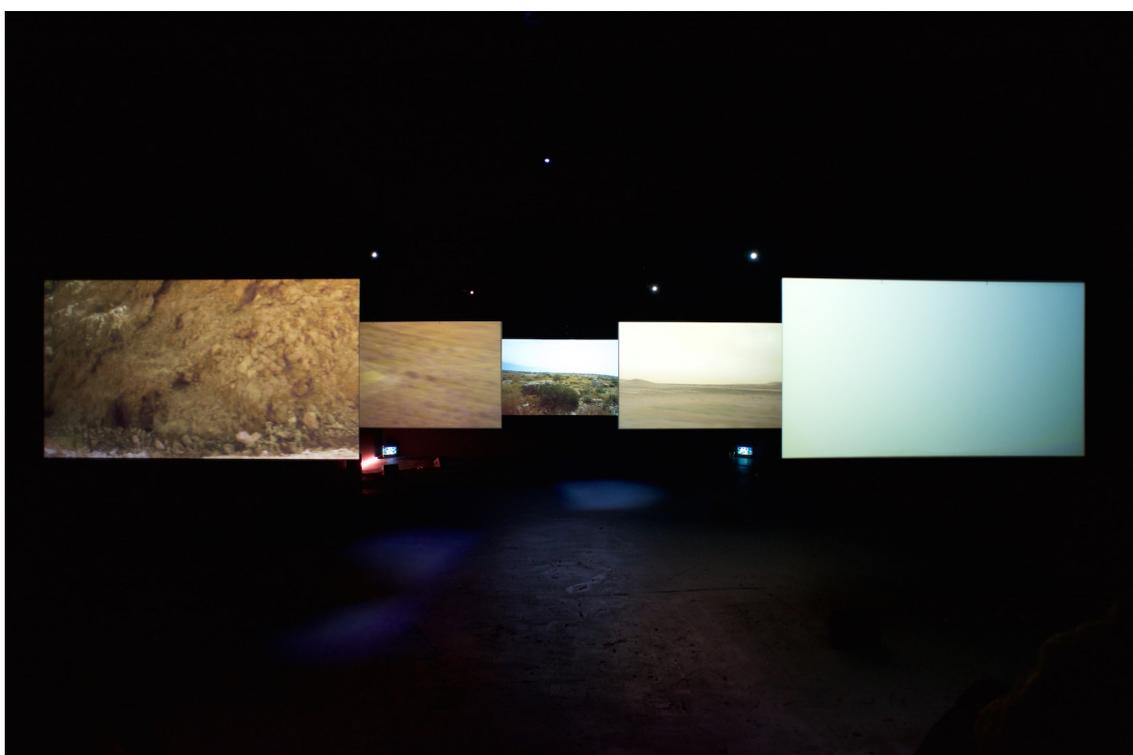
**FIGURE 34** Akerman, C. *NOW*, (2015), *In the Mirror* (1971/2007), Ambika P3



**FIGURE 35** Akerman, C. *NOW*, (2015), *Maniac Shadows* (2013), Ambika P3



**FIGURE 36** Akerman, C. *NOW*, (2015), exterior of *NOW*, Ambika P3



**FIGURE 37** Akerman, C. *NOW*, (2015), interior of *NOW*, Ambika P3

## 6 Conclusions

I would maintain that art spaces have a duty to be demonstrably different from the kinds of public spaces dedicated to consumption that have invaded the centres of our cities. There, the displays take on some of the aspects of visual art in their seductive, tempting and luscious attraction. However, as presentations dedicated to a single end – individual purchase – there is a limit to their possible effect on our imagination and thinking. They are aesthetic devices at the service of a predetermined motivation and therefore at odds with any idea of artistic freedom, however compromised that now may be.<sup>113</sup>

While the Contextual Review and Methodology chapters of this commentary provide the context and background to curatorial practices relevant to this research, the projects provide the evidence. Each of the individual projects focuses on a specific element of film and video exhibition, i.e., the analogue monitor, the digital screen and its surface, the throw of projection, the studio set, the auditorium, the architecture of galleries, the distinct materiality of media, the trajectory of an audience. The variety of film and video elements at play in these projects are synthesised through a rigorous attention to the production and curatorial process and the site specificity of Ambika P3. This form of process-based experimental curation brings together the freedom of artist-run spaces and creates an open rapport between the curator, the artist, the space and the ideas which circulate between them and are made manifest in the exhibitions.

In this summary it will be useful to re-visit the research questions before going on to detail what was learnt in response to these and summarise the contributions research makes to the field.

1. How can the use of experimental sites like Ambika P3 inform strategies for the curation of artists' film and video installation?
2. Can the commissioning of projects in such spaces produce distinctive forms or content beyond normative modes of artists' film and video?

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<sup>113</sup> Esche, C. (2004) 'What's the point of art centres anyway?' *Possibility, Art and Democratic Deviance*. Available from: [http://www.republicart.net/disc/institution/esche01\\_en.htm](http://www.republicart.net/disc/institution/esche01_en.htm) [Accessed 8 May 2016]

3. What are the boundaries between the materials and ideas of the artist and the work of the curator?

In regard to Question 1, the curated exhibitions involved either commissioning new site-specific work for the space or adapting and developing existing artists' film and video work. None of the exhibitions simply moved works from the cinema or the gallery into the space – each exhibition engaged with the architecture, the artists, the works and the audience in distinct and unique ways. As Erika Balsom writes:

Accordingly, the exhibition space must not be seen as a mere container, but as a meta-medium to be investigated. It is the means by which art is made visible and knowable to those who consume it. It transmits individual works of art, but also much more: it activates relations between works and endows them with cultural value, it conveys institutional discourses, and it produces a viewing subject. The gallery does not simply serve as a neutral, protective container for the moving image, but produces a new cinematic dispositif through its particular discursive and institutional framing and the various practices associated with it.<sup>114</sup>

It is this 'cinematic apparatus'<sup>115</sup> which is the key of this curatorial research, and involves the individual problematics of space, projection, screen, image, sound to propose new relations generated by the curation of the work, and novel curatorial approaches to its realisation. Of particular importance is the exhibition space itself, Ambika P3, which lies at the intersection of the black box of the cinema and the white cube of the gallery, both architecturally and institutionally.<sup>116</sup>

Ambika P3 as the site of curation operated as a fundamental parameter within which the commissions were developed, created and displayed. Research shows that sites of this nature encourage a curatorial ethos that can produce a positive and open rapport between the curator, the artist, the space, and the

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<sup>114</sup> Balsom, E. (2003) 'Black Box/White Cube', *Exhibiting Cinema in Contemporary Art*, Film Culture in Transition, Amsterdam University Press, p. 40.

<sup>115</sup> The term 'Cinematic Apparatus' was first defined by Baudry in 1975: Jean-Louis Baudry (1975) 'Ideological effects of the basic cinematographic apparatus', *Film Quarterly*, Vol. 28, no. 2, pp. 39-47.

<sup>116</sup> 'One person who walked in, actually said to me once, he had a vision of the future for this place. Yes.' Regan, P. (2008). Interview with Professor Paul Regan, *Ambika P3 Catalogue*, London.

ideas which circulate between them and which are made manifest in the exhibitions. Research then proposes that the experimental ethos of the site was productive and rich in opportunities for the development of new forms of content creation for artists' film and video. This ethos is underpinned and evidenced by the multiple roles assigned to the space, e.g., as a hybrid studio/production space/exhibition environment, form of architectural screen, immersive environment, space of narrative encounters, site of discourse and site of pedagogy. This approach formulates such spaces not as a gallery or cinema but a project space allowing the development of new plastic and installation languages specific for each project. Characteristically this enables a less object-centred form of curation in favour of a process-focused approach tailored to a specific artist and proposes interpretative itineraries for the work's reception.

Question 2 asked whether such sites can produce distinctive forms of film and video beyond normative traditions. As suggested above, Ambika P3 was productive of experimental, co-created artworks that developed novel methods of display and new forms of artists' film and video content, for example, the deconstruction of cinematic viewing in *The Happiest Man*, the formal and poetic arrangements of space/screen/architecture in Ward's *Rink*, McCall's *Vertical Works* and Amati's *Under*, the social and critical intervention in the broadcast signal of Hall's *1001 TV Sets (End Piece)*, the mnemonic spatio/temporal strategies of encounter in Burgin's *Sense of Place* and the intimate, subjective and autobiographical itinerary of Akerman's *NOW*. It is harder to gauge or argue and make definitive claims that this curatorial work produced forms of 'new content or language' that supersedes the current state of the art. But that is because artists' film and video is a discipline which is fundamentally experimental, and from its beginnings has sought to develop innovative formal and conceptual solutions. However, the individual projects, in their own right, and on their own terms, did develop a range of highly novel interventions of a plastic, critical and thematic form that contribute a diversity of approaches to the field and will be of interest and benefit to curators, practitioners, theorists and historians of the genre. In particular the sculptural and immersive experiments enabled by Ambika P3 curated distinctive models of how artists' film and video could be experienced beyond normative screen-based approaches. In this

respect we were able to curate novel or uncommon contexts, sites, moving images and environments for audiences to experience and understand the genre.

In response to Question 3, which set out to explore the role of the curator, research showed that each project brought a different set of demands, approaches and solutions, therefore research proposes that within the particular experimental contexts provided by sites such as Ambika P3, the role of the curator is multi-faceted, and dependent on the specifics of each project as it unfolds. To put this another way, research proposes no overarching conceptual framework that can neatly define the curator's role in such contexts, other than describing it as being contingent, mutable, multifaceted and changeable in relation to the unique demands of the specific task to hand. It was also noted that research demanded the curator take on many roles (curator, commissioner, historian, researcher, producer etc.) whereby curatorial, organisational and artistic roles become blurred in joint collaborative effort to realise projects. *Floor to Sky* presents a strong example of the difficulty of defining exactly what form of curatorial practice is suitable in a complex multidisciplinary, educational and group exhibition. It also allowed for the positive collision of artists' film and video with other media. In contrast then to a conception of 'the curator as auteur' as discussed in the contextual review, the experimental approach pursued by this research formulated a different kind of 'curator-practitioner' who, following Lind, does not simply represent and symbolically lead any given exhibition processes, but in a fundamental sense pursues a relational practice, by investing in testing and experimental processes in a manner which is collaborative and social.

Additionally the commissioning and production of exhibitions was often interdisciplinary in focus. In this form of curation and production of moving image there is a new integration and synthesis across disciplines and practices, for example in its use of 3D modelling, engineering, software design and engineering, curation and creative practice, the researcher has brokered innovative methods for curators working in this way. It was also noted that the forms of interdisciplinary collaboration were not just confined to the commissioning of artworks and production but were extended by its placement

within an academic institution, around which it was possible to develop further networks of collaboration and discourse through conferences, symposia, publications and other public events. Research then proposes that spaces like Ambika P3 which have affiliations to academic institutions provide opportunities for the curation of new contexts for the dissemination and explanation of artists' film and video which other independent or commercial spaces might not be able to.

Looking ahead, work will build on and further seek to develop these interdisciplinary and collaborative aspects in research that seeks to help establish the changing boundary conditions of curation of artists' film and video. Definitions of curatorial practice and the role of the curator are in a state of critical flux, as there is an increasing demand from both artists and curators themselves for debates around what is seen as an imploded concept. Increasingly the sites of art are being questioned and transformed as context becomes a revived area of enquiry. Lastly, the changes in technology are fragmenting our notions and definitions of what individual media histories and practices are. While one can consign analogue practices such as experimental film and video art to the past or simply ignore the materials which constitute image making by embracing a utopian digital world, it is nevertheless clear that notions of site, projection, immersion, movement, subject, identification and context are here to stay and remain the operatives which define our relationship with the artwork and require to be explored further through practice and research.

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