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**Scenes of provincial life: an online video sequence and
commentary**

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SCENES OF PROVINCIAL LIFE

an online video sequence and commentary

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Abstract

I present here a sequence of short videos, *Scenes of Provincial Life*, forming a unified, ongoing online work. In my written commentary I discuss the work's context, genesis and facture and presentation and thereby demonstrate its claim to originality as art work. I go on to suggest one possible interpretive framework for it.

I then discuss the nature of art works as candidates for the generation of new knowledge and conclude that art works in general fulfil this function, in a very carefully defined way, as a necessary condition of being art works.

I further connect the success of any work as art work with the richness of its knowledge generating capacity, inseparably allied to its aesthetic force. I conclude that if *Scenes of Provincial Life* is seen to have value as artwork it will therefore by definition be a creator of new knowledge.

Contents

1. Preface and Methodological Note.....	1
2. Some biography, formation.....	6
3. The problem of the appropriation of form	16
4. Zuihitsu	21
5. Art and Online Video	26
6. A Provisional and Unfinished Gazetteer for ‘Scenes of Provincial Life’	35
7. Epistemology of art/conclusion	69
Bibliography.....	94
Appendix - Offline Gallery showings/Screenings of work from “Scenes of Provincial Life”, 2005- 15	102
SD card, containing (1) offline version of “Scenes of Provincial Life” & (2) hyperlinked version of Chapter 6.....	inside back cover

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure	Page
1. Installation image of “some fragments”, 2005 (20-21 Arts Centre, Scunthorpe).....	47

1. Preface and Methodological Note

Any commentary on one's own artistic work written after the production of that work is going to be thoroughly contaminated with that most un-academic word "I". There is no way around this. To eschew it would involve the most profound dishonesty—the pretence of some kind of objectivity to the messy, fancy and chance driven process of conceiving and making art work. In the long term, one imagines that a higher degree by publication of artwork might be better served by the 10,000+ word commentary of someone *other* than the artist. But we are stuck with the way things are, so "I" and my feelings, whims and intentions will appear quite a few times with no apology.

More generally, it should be said that this document, rather than an academic Exocet, sleek and focussed firmly on its target, with a clear job to do, is much more a miscellany (in that sense it mirrors the work itself under discussion) of different colour, shape and size drones

hovering now near, now further away—approaches to thinking about the ‘Scenes of Provincial Life’ (Szpakowski, n.d.c) which seem to me suggestive. Suggestive in that in some sense the work represents an original (well, as original as any work of art, sitting always as it does in a tradition and a context, can be) contribution both to art and (in a specific sense which I will talk about at some length) knowledge. What follows is a set of contextualising attempts—it is my hope that the evidentiary and argumentative weight thereby marshalled will be as convincing (if not more so) as a piece fuelled by the deployment of a single tightly knit argument.

There is a further problem with the pronoun “I” in that, personally, I don’t believe for a moment that the artist is privileged with some exclusive insight into her/his work. Of course, it would be utter nonsense to deny that one’s individuality, one’s intentions, play a role and that knowledge of these might be helpful to someone’s investigation of the work. However, I have argued consistently in a number of places (Szpakowski, 2012a; Cake et al., 2010) that a work of art is a *thing*, an object, not an encapsulation of meaning or message (which is not to say, of course, that the features of such an object might not be brought *in evidence* to support an argument for a meaning or message). But (Szpakowski, 2012b) the work, once made, is out there and subject to history, speculation, interpretation, criticism, jokes, indifference, remixing and other practices as yet unimagined.

A second problem in bending a format created for ‘research’ towards art is what kind of knowledge we might hope to gain from an art work.

Of course, there are all sorts of ways in which an artwork can provide us with knowledge as commonly understood —as true propositions about the world and its objects (Dancy, 1986

p23). For example, it is possible to make some very informed guesses about costume, social behaviour, etc., from representational artworks (and with the triangulation provided by other forms of evidence one might even begin to talk of the discovery of facts). There is also a kind of technical knowledge about the process of art making and its reception to be gained from a close study of artworks. Svetlana Alpers' magisterial *The Vexations of Art*, of which the first sentence is: "*By looking at paintings made both in and of the studio in and after the seventeenth century my aim will be to offer a reasoned account of some studio realities*" (Alpers, 2005, p9) offers a superb example. In a much more modest way I have tried to show how the existence of the internet and the mechanisms allowing the showing of moving image upon it (and the limitations involved during the "heroic" period of the internet, 1990–2003) have had implications for the way we now view *all* short form video (Szpakowski, 2012b).

Both approaches uncontroversially yield knowledge. They have a perfectly proper place in both the history of art and history *tout court*, but leave us with the problem that either they are *all* we can gain knowledge-wise from works of art, and that therefore the notion of 'research' in the context of one's own *creative* production is a nonsense or a superfluity, or that there is some kind of knowledge over and above them which necessarily involves the artistic process.

In a work I made a few years ago (not part of the "Scenes of Provincial Life" but a companion piece in the form of an animated GIF) called "Epistemology", I vandalised the Wikipedia page devoted to this topic and replaced it simply with the continuously repeated words "*Art is a kind of knowledge of the world*" (Szpakowski, 2009). I think I would still want to hold that this is the case, but that it is a very particular and peculiar kind of knowledge—experiential, affective, even ethical, rather than anything approaching the scientific.

The final section of this piece of writing will discuss some of the attempts to construct or deduce an epistemology of art and will try and flesh out the intuition of the last paragraph in a more rigorous way.

Prior to this I will think about the sequence of work as an artistic construct—my “object” of several paragraphs back—what influenced it, what techniques does it employ, what does it resemble? Part of the antidote I will propose to the numbers of “I”s here will involve quite a complex balancing act. I want to step back from the work made to date to view it as far as possible as if it were made by another and to suggest one framework for it that is justified by other artistic practices, old and new and across cultures.

The particular framework I will use is a borrowing from Japanese literary culture, a form called “Zuihitsu”. I will assert that not only is it possible to borrow and re-vivify earlier forms but that it is meaningful to speak of doing so across disciplines, the borrowing here being from the literary to the visual and in particular to the moving image.

The unsteady and perilous balance I will find myself in will arise from the fact that this will create a kind of feedback vortex as a number of the distinguishing features of the framework I am proposing (formal—the gathering of short and disparate components into an over-arching container; aesthetic—an interest in the overlooked, marginal and fragmentary; even, to an extent, *choices of topic*—an obsession with various phases of the blossoming of the cherry tree) were quite consciously present in my original making. I just didn’t realise then how much of a new kind of unity they could form—the appeal to Zuihitsu is largely retrospective. To put it more bluntly—I believe I was from the beginning making a species of Zuihitsu,

unconsciously adapting structure, aesthetic and topics from the form. Only towards the very end did I realise that this was what I was doing.

One might speculate that this unconsciousness supports the idea of the authenticity of the procedure—that in some way the circumstances under which I lived and worked through this project called forth the form in a way parallel to how it originated. I will touch on this throughout.

A related (and necessary) question is the propriety of the borrowing of this framing form. I need to show that the kind of creative re-use of forms and methods from the past is not just something conjured from my fevered imagination but something with precedent. I will devote some little time to doing this.

A parallel interest of mine has been the redemption of a belle-lettres tradition of writing on art, quite consciously counterposed to a more recent tradition which draws on something called theory and which seems to have found a comfortable niche in the academy. This piece of writing therefore will, to some extent, attempt not only to comment upon and contextualise its subject matter but also to echo it formally. It will have at least in parts a flavour of the literary essay and one also reminiscent of the days when philosophers such as Ryle or Wittgenstein could write substantial contributions completely innocent of footnote or reference. (Though, since this is not a kamikaze attempt, mine will have both, judiciously.)

Before I do any of this, I will describe the background to, the making of and the current state of the work.

2. Some biography; formation

“Everything is connected.” —attributed to V.I. Lenin

For much of my working life, up to about the turn of the millennium, I was primarily a musician and composer in theatre or arts outreach (often site-specific) contexts. I was a relatively early adopter of the digital technologies of sampling and sequencing (I used them for live theatre performances in the late eighties). The realisation in 2000 that related technologies could be used to manipulate *all* digitisable material—image, still and moving, sound/music and text (and additionally that both interaction and generativity could be programmed in) and the simultaneous awareness of the burgeoning internet as a channel for distribution and discussion of net resident artworks was hugely significant for me and prompted a major change of direction (or rather expansion of my focus, for I continued to employ sound and music as an integral part of much of my work).

My first “discovery” (from a reference in Peter Lunenfeld’s (2001) early book on net-art *Snap to Grid*) and major port of call was the net art site and mailing list Rhizome.org. This put me in touch with people around the world who were exploring the potential of the net for both the creation of work and its subsequent distribution or broadcast. It was a time that was both hugely exciting and confusing at the same time. Prodigious amounts of words were expended discussing issues such as the perceived opposition between the net as *qualitative* break with art’s past or as simply a hugely efficient new type of conduit (this seems quaint now in the era of Web 2.0), the question of what kind of work might be viewed as properly idiomatic to the net and the kinds of software that were suitable to the making of this work. (There was a huge and passionate—sometimes intemperate—discussion in the early days around Eryk Salvaggio’s [2002] provocation “Six Rules for Internet Art” which, Dogme 95-like [Roberts, 1999], argued, amongst other things, for the eschewal of the then hegemonic Macromedia Flash).

It was always the question of moving image which really fired me. At this time the majority of people were still using dial-up connections and 5 seconds of QuickTime video in a tiny window required a ridiculously long time to load. Nonetheless, the combination of the kind of moving image manipulation that was possible with digital video (and it is important to stress that this was from the beginning much closer to film editing practices than to the editing of analogue video—it marked a discontinuous *leap* over a whole phase of moving image work, at least initially. There were direct parallels with the heroic period of avant-garde artist film making from the nineteen fifties to nineties) and the possibility of posting such work as soon as it was finished, of finding a small but significant audience for it and getting feedback within hours was irresistible. This was not, in those days, a fashionable thing to do. Although

Lev Manovich had blazed a trail from 1994–1997 with his “Little Movies”, 6 tiny QuickTime movies (Manovich, 2001) which very consciously summoned the spirit of the earliest days of movie making, what seemed to validate these in the eyes of the net art pioneers was their conceptual aspect rather than their status as moving-image-pieces-to-be-watched.

The first wave of net artists and commentators displayed a curious blindness to the links with the deep and rich (particularly post WW2 US) avant-garde film tradition—Brakhage, Snow, Frampton, Mekas, Deren and many others. Three searches conducted on the Rhizome.org site show no significant activity around Stan Brakhage, Hollis Frampton or Michael Snow until 2009.

Lunenfeld (op. cit.) is an honourable exception, with his extended and imaginative treatment of Frampton, but it is interesting that no-one took up or developed this link until almost a decade later and that Lunenfeld’s engagement with net art largely ended here .

One explanation for this might be a general focus on conceptualist underpinnings and a concomitant suspicion of the “retinal” inherited from the nineties art world at large but I think there is a further and material explanation in that analogue video rather than film had been hegemonic within that art world since prices had dropped enough for it to be relatively easily accessible, and that although linear editing did not in principle exclude the kind of complex edits which typified much previous avant-garde film their complexity and difficulty militated against them. In addition linear editing equipment remained expensive in comparison with the cameras themselves. This is an educated guess and would obviously need more thorough research, but the performative and single-take nature (Biesenbach et al., 2002) of much early video art would appear to support it. Perhaps because of my visual orientation and to some

extent my position, coming as I did from music and theatre, slightly outside the mainstream (if one might call the tiny groupuscule making net art then a “mainstream”) meant that the connection between works like Brakhage’s *Mothlight*, with its ‘animation-of-things-one-might-not-have-thought-to-be-animatable’ or the extraordinary ‘found-continuities-as-topic’ of Deren’s *A Study In Choreography For Camera* with the possibilities of the combination of mini DV footage, primitive motion graphics and non-linear editing was immediately apparent and nourishing to me. Likewise the kind of formalism that formed part of the filmic language and procedures of “structural” filmmakers such as Snow, Frampton and George Landau formed a neat fit with the generative possibilities of scripting languages like Flash and Lingo when applied to data sets of images or moving image fragments; techniques, the exercise of which had preceded for me and influenced the movie sequence proper (as well as making the occasional return in the shape of movies involving the scripting of QuickTime using Live Stage Pro (see page 47)).

I only came across Jonas Mekas, and his diaristic sequence *Walden* in particular, at Tate Modern, several years into the production of what would become *Scenes of Provincial Life* but it served as an important (and thrilling) confirmation for me that what I was doing had some sort of deep precedent within moving image, although I think my interest in the exploration of a range of both form and technique marks my work as having a somewhat wider focus (and one deeply influenced by the avant-garde film tradition in general, which Michael O’Pray (2003, p 58) refers to as “...the aesthetics of the frame” specifically with regard to the decade of the fifties, though it equally appositely sums up the period mid forties to eighties) than Mekas’s work, though diaristic elements are certainly common to both .

My first submission to the Rhizome Artbase in 2001, “Linked Verses Remix”, (Szpakowski, 2001) (a moving image piece where I felt I had rather cleverly by-passed file size limitations by re-animating some digital video footage of dancers through another program which was more file size forgiving and then presenting it as a quasi multi-screen installation online) was rejected by Rhizome staffer Alex Galloway on the grounds that it was not ‘net specific’ (Galloway, A (2001), *Re: ArtBase Update--Linked Verses - WWW Remix* [email], Sent to Michael Szpakowski, 4 March). What ‘net specific’ seemed to be then was the use of hyperlinks to create interactivity and generativity as well as a certain strain of conceptualism—it seemed to be important that the work referenced the peculiarities of the net itself—the, what has been described as, “one-liner” nature of some recent conceptual work seemed to come into play here. So, for example, in the case of Manovich and “Little Movies” the consensus seemed to be that movies had been “done”, it was the doing of them that ticked the box and further net resident moving image work would be redundant.

I have a contrarian strain in me and all this made me want to make more work where the visual was central (of course only in the most childish of universes does this then exclude the “conceptual”). I observed that, outside of those who identified themselves as artists, various what can only be described as geek-type sites, had no such inhibitions about the visual. In those days there were places where one could post work which was of interest to others and also show one’s editing and compression chops. One such was tensecondfilms.com, now long gone (but fitfully archived on the Internet Archive’s Wayback Machine [Candide Media Works, Inc, 2003]) and the first site I came across which validated the notion that one could create interesting movies for the net and could not only deal smartly and idiomatically with

the problems associated with this—file and window size—but actually incorporate these problems and solutions expressively into one’s own artistic language.

An additional element of my formation was one connected with the currently unfashionable idea of class. I am the child of a post-war Polish immigrant who had spent most of my childhood working double shifts in a heavy rolling mill in Sheffield’s Attercliffe district. The English side of my family were puritanical but loving Wesleyan Reformists whose ecstatic belief in an afterlife was a solution to the difficulties of this one. Both my mother and father drew a, possibly naïve but unshakable, joy from nature—this sense of natural aesthetics suffused my upbringing (Szpakowski, 2005).

As an active musician and would-be composer from my early teens, a model for me was the music of Charles Ives, the semi “outsider” American composer whose work was influenced by a combination of nature-worship and a passionate transcendentalism (Budiansky, 2014; Cowell and Cowell, 1969) curiously close to aspects of the lower middle and working class Methodism of South Yorkshire and Derbyshire. Ives made music which both honoured his upbringing and experiences but which resonated on a world stage in terms of its bold experimentation and has maintained, if anything intensified, its stature to the present time.

As soon as I was grown up, both sides of my experience led me into a very conscious political activism on the Trotskyist revolutionary left. For a good deal of my adult life I worked in the theatre as a composer, actor and musician and was thoroughly caught up in the tail of the seventies/early eighties revival of agit-prop theatre.

I have not changed my political views one iota but I think my account of art and culture is a little more nuanced now—ironically something I came to by a careful examination of Trotsky’s (1971) writing on art and that of co-thinkers such as Voronskiĭ (1998).

To expound and attempt to justify this would take most of this document. Suffice to sum it up as a defence of what might be called “high” art as a human good which should be available to all and the making of which arises not first and foremost from economic considerations but as a human need: *“Milton produced Paradise Lost in the way that a silkworm produces silk, as the expression of his own nature. Later on he sold the product for £5 ...”* (Marx and Engels, 1994, p484) and that this thing involves in a very broad sense making objects which are somehow truthful about the world and which enable us to think and feel more effectively about it, to understand it better and to engage with it better, beautifully expressed by Chris Harman here:

The difference between a great piece of classical music or jazz and a trite pop song is not that one provides an explicit political stance and one does not. It is that one extends our own sensitivity to the range of human feelings, whether of torment, exhilaration or simply contentedness, in a world torn apart by contradiction. By contrast, the other anaesthetises our sensibilities. To that extent, one is true to the world around us, the other false.

(1999, p154), combined with the notion that in a decently ordered world humans would be able to *“...hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticise after dinner, just as I have a mind, without ever becoming hunter, fisherman, herdsman or critic.* (Marx et al., 1975, p47) and to make art in the same spirit too.

This side of a society organized for human need, however, this kind of work will inevitably remain the prerogative of the few, with the time and resources for thought and making. What this does not of course mean is that the instinct, if one might put it that way, towards making art does not burn to some extent in everyone, however dimly, and that one must be sensitive to the fact that there is also a constant interchange of methods, topics and means between areas of “high” and popular arts and that furthermore this is an arena in which snobbery is paralysing not only morally but also practically. Fetishisation of a golden past leads only to a barren stasis.

The practical political consequence of all this is not that one gives up making art in favour of a society which is fit for it but that one engages with it with a knowledge of all the complexities and difficulties that surround it; one where one accepts one’s good fortune to be able to perform this specialized and in many ways privileged role but also works constantly for the day when it is the sphere of all and there is neither economic gain nor hindrance associated with it.

An important consequence for me was that although I am utterly uninterested in creating tendentious work I do have an interest in the “redemption” of, or at least the incorporation of, some of the cultural forms and attitudes of my upbringing which would be regarded now as quaintly old fashioned and then as sentimental, marginal and kitsch. I learnt harmony by playing obsessively from the Methodist Hymn Book (and I remember being deeply moved as in similar account by Ives [Budiansky, 2014, p49] by the rendition of *God be with you till we meet again* with its repeated and insistent refrain, sung at the end of the meetings of my Grandfather’s Darby and Joan club by those whose voices in any formal terms had long seen better days). I was fascinated by the arrangements of ornaments my mother placed on

mantelpieces and especially constructed shelves, by her indoor cottage garden approach to the houseplants which thrived gaudily under her care. I loved going out with my Grandfather to meet his fellow cactus aficionados. I felt, embryonically then, and clearly now, and I repeat it again and again: nothing —topic or technique—is intrinsically beyond “art”. Cultural expression, at the same time as it is crucial to defend a notion of high art in the face of marketisation, still forms a continuum. Everything is connected.

I also retain a deeply romantic—but I believe well-founded (for a suggestive account see [Schachtel, 2014]) —view of childhood and its depth of feeling and need to play as being both an indication of universal human potential (and I have done a great deal of work in educational and outreach projects in parallel with my more “pure” work) but also as a formative element of a ‘wide-openness’ of vision that creative artists in all fields manage miraculously to retain.

A practical consequence of this deeply etched background is that I deliberately opt to deal with topics that might be regarded as being on the edge of sentiment or kitsch and further to actively reject the kind of grand theoretical justification for work in terms of political and social aims that continues to be fashionable and indeed obligatory in many contexts.

The small, the intimate, the personal, the overlooked, the awkwardly performative, the klutzy, the dangerously near to embarrassing, the childish, the scenic—even the picture postcard scenic—all attract and fire me. At the same time a kind of archaeology of the memory, not only of the visual, but of affect—how it *felt then*—leads to the task of making something arising out of those interests which does not attempt some naive quasi telepathic transmission of feeling or meaning, but creates *things*, that through the maker’s and viewer’s

mutual embodiment, shared reference and, not least, delight in formal and aesthetic qualities, allow a commonality of feeling and cognition.

3. The problem of the appropriation of form

I want to start by acknowledging that the notion of appropriating a form from not only another culture and time but across art-forms is by no means unproblematic. There is a powerful tradition within aesthetics particularly associated with Hegel (1998) that views form and content as inseparable and mutually conditioning.

My approach to this will not be rigorously philosophical but will consist of a couple of preliminary observations followed by a list of faits accomplis in the field from areas of work where such a mix and match, off the historic/cultural peg approach has clearly occurred, where the results are near universally accepted as art and anyone taking exception to this would be in a tiny minority.

A theoretical response to the Hegelian tradition would be to acknowledge that at the level of fine detail this symbiosis undoubtedly obtains but that precisely because we must initially abstract sections of a process in order to understand it (this is true of both science and art), it is not meaningless to talk about similarities or even in some cases identities at some higher ‘formal’ level and, of course, once one can conceive of this, then the notion of borrowing is viable. To put it another way, although the Hegelian view rejects the notion of form as a kind of “container”, nonetheless the kind of abstraction from fine detail that is necessary to begin to compile a taxonomy of form both allows and indeed calls for a pragmatic temporary separation out of forms.

My second point is that if one argues that forms (and I would certainly want to do this) are generated or at least encouraged by the material conditions of the society they are born in, (and I broadly follow Marx in this (Ryazanskaya, 1970)) that this is not a one to one correspondence, particularly at the level of abstraction where form is generally discussed— notions of repetition, echo, variation, how a work is divided or falls into sections and how these are related. Even between radically different “base” situations there might well be similarities which make particular borrowings apposite. So, for example, the kind of cultural (usually textual) game-playing within a very small group of people in a geographically narrow area such as the court in Heian Japan can, *in purely formal terms* (i.e. at this high level of abstraction), have similarities with the kind of visual remix culture that takes place between self-selecting but geographically dispersed groups of participants on the internet and give rise to practices which are not dissimilar despite the huge temporal and cultural gaps separating the two groups. In addition, it is important to point out that an acceptance of Marx’s base/superstructure notion does absolutely not deny the possibility of interplay between superstructural elements (Harman, 1986; Williams, 1973).

Thirdly—human being beings are enthusiastic conservers of energy and hence re-users and re-contextualisers of readymade useful stuff (Brilliant, 2011). Therefore it is entirely unsurprising that one might seek to re-use a form which has, for good material reasons, at least a surface suitability and use it to embrace content that would have been inconceivable to the originators of the original work. In so doing, of course, one would expect content and the borrowed form to subsequently interact to create something new (and an analogy here might be the linguistic process of creolisation arising out of pidgins, where the first generation of a contact language stemming from the needs of trade or employment has a limited vocabulary

and impoverished syntax, but once it is learned by a new generation it is transformed into a fully fledged richly featured language (Bickerton, 1990). I am not asserting there is a precise analogy but neither do I think this is purely an analogy—at some level I suspect at least some similar mechanisms are at work).

In addition to examples of rediscovery and re-purposing there are also examples of extraordinarily long-lived forms which, were the form/content link indivisible, should surely have long vanished. An example is the sonnet, which has maintained a recognisable structure from its genesis in Italian, through Shakespeare and the English tradition, to Baudelaire, spawning a rich offshoot in at least 10 languages of the Indian subcontinent (Lal, 1992) and showing its continuing potency in the extraordinary sequence by the most demotic of American poets John Berryman, whose sonnet #13 of his 115 poem sequence begins

I lift - lift you five States away your glass,

Wide of this bar you never graced, where none

Ever I know came, where what work is done

Even by these men I know not, where a brass

Police-car sign peers in, wet strange cars pass,

Soiled hangs the rag of day out over this town,

A juke-box brains air where I drink alone,

The spruce barkeep sports a toupee alas-

(Berryman, 2014, no pagination)

One might conjecture that the reason for the durability and portability of the form is precisely because it can be articulated in a relatively simple set of structural rules none of which have a direct bearing on what is thereby expressed. Nonetheless both David K. Weiser and April Bernard (Weiser, 1983; Berryman, op. cit.) point out the commonalities in content or at least technique over and above basic structure between the kind of disruption of syntax that characterizes Berryman's work and that of the 16th century English poet Thomas Wyatt.

There are many possible similar examples one could point to. Some—the classical world and its art—loom large over work from Dante to Joyce, Picasso, Brecht and the Coen Brothers both in term of sources and structure and have been absorbed into our critical and art historical vocabulary in the very terms classical and neo-classical.

In music the 'return to Bach' (Smither and Smither, 2000; Mercer-Taylor, 1997; Mintz, 1954) of the 19th Century and the influence of both Bach and Handel on Mendelsohn's oratorios gives us a more precise and finely focused example, but my favourite (and one which carries some resonances here) is the adoption by the Japanese aesthetes who were developing *chanoyu* (the tea ceremony) of Buncheong ceramics, a kind of pottery from the Korean tradition which in Korea itself was being superseded in sophisticated taste by porcelain and which carried rustic connotations in both countries (Lee and Chōn, 2011). The crucial difference being that in Japan this simplicity gelled with the complex aesthetic congeries known as *wabi*—which Haga Koshiro glosses in an extensive commentary under the three headings: "Simple unpretentious beauty", "Imperfect, irregular beauty" and "Austere, stark, beauty" (Varley et al., 1989).

Lee observes that:

The physical transfer of the object altered its function—and hence its cultural meaning—from tributary product and tableware for state banquets to objet d’art in an esteemed shogunal collection, employed as a tea bowl in the very particular context of chanoyu.

(Lee and Chōn, 2011, p101).

4. Zuihitsu

A formal model I want to propose as a possible context for the sequence is the Japanese literary form Zuihitsu.

The word Zuihitsu is derived from the two Kanji (the Chinese characters which form part of the system of written Japanese) which mean “brush” (in the sense of an ink brush for calligraphy) and “follow” and hence implies a meandering form led by the writer’s passing interest or personal mental paths or connections. It is a form which first took shape in Heian Japan 794-1185 CE (Rudd, 2011) and has continued as a central and highly esteemed literary practice to this day (DiNitto, 2004).

The two most famous examples, certainly in the West, are the tenth century *Pillow Book* of Sei Shōnagon (Shōnagon, 1970) , an aristocratic woman close to the Heian court, and the twelfth century *Essays in Idleness* of the Buddhist Monk Yoshida Kenkō (1967).

Keene offers a more utilitarian, “testable” definition of Zuihitsu with “brief essays on random topics” in which the “observations and reflections of the writer are presented with stylistic grace” (Keene, 2006, p9). This is useful and conjures the form to an extent but does not quite do justice to its strangeness, diversity and lack, from a western point of view, of the sort of unity we might expect in the high arts. One might venture that the only real unity apparent in these works is the being of the author, his or her personality traits or quirks; her/his learning. One of the strangest characteristics on first acquaintance is the often abrupt change of tone from meditative and poetic conjuring of beauty, either in nature or in other literature, to the clumsy, banal, mean spirited or even ugly. So, in the *Tsurezuregusa*, we have an extraordinarily beautiful passage which is famous in its own right as a classic statement of a Zen Buddhism drenched, particularly Japanese aesthetic of impermanence:

Are we to look at cherry blossoms only in full bloom, the moon only when it is cloudless? To long for the moon while looking on the rain, to lower the blinds and be unaware of the passing of the spring - these are even more deeply moving. Branches about to blossom or gardens strewn with faded flowers are worthier of our admiration. Are poems written on such themes as ‘Going to view the cherry blossoms only to find they had scattered’ or ‘On being prevented from visiting the blossoms’ inferior to those on ‘Seeing the blossoms’? People commonly regret that the cherry blossoms scatter or that the moon sinks in the sky and this is natural; but only an exceptionally insensitive man would say ‘This branch and that branch have lost their blossoms. There is nothing worth seeing now.’

(Kenkō et al., op. cit. p155)

Towards the beginning of the sequence we find, as a complete section in its own right: “*The Priest known as the Burglar Bishop lived near Yanagihara. His frequent encounters with burglars gave him the name, I understand*” (ibid. p41). What emerges from and what unifies, if anything does, the sequence is a portrait of the author, waspish, grumpy, poetic, pious, learned, curious and nostalgic in his engagement with his world—both the most trivial and profound aspects of it. But it is the way the diversity and richness of the world filtered through that sensibility creates this most rickety and beautiful—what one can hardly call—“form”, that is of such interest.

The *Pillow Book* brings a similar sense of a very particular personality speaking to us over the years. Many of the sections are diaristic accounts of Shōnagon’s everyday existence—an extraordinarily privileged one in which ritual, play and a concomitantly aestheticised approach to life are central (and one has to say that it is easy to fall completely and uncritically for its charm and then find oneself pulled up short by Shōnagon’s deeply unpleasant snobbishness and hostility to ordinary people, whom she regards as barely human. It is salutary when entranced by it to recall Benjamin’s “*There is no document of culture which is not at the same time a document of barbarism.*” [Benjamin et al., 1996, p392]) Court gossip, both personal and political, recounted with a tough and waspish knowingness form the substance of many of these more narrative sections. Others involve exchanges of poetry between individuals with a competitive edge and featuring highly complex wordplay (Miner, 1968).

In addition to the more conventionally written sections, a large proportion of the book consists simply of lists which, even in translation, have both a highly poetic quality and give us an extraordinarily familiar and intense impression of Shōnagon’s inner life:

Elegant Things

A white-coat worn over a violet waistcoat.

Duck eggs.

Shaved ice mixed with liana syrup and put in a new silver bowl.

A rosary of rock crystal.

Wisteria blossoms. Plum blossoms covered with snow.

A pretty child eating strawberries.

(Shōnagon, op. cit. 1970)

The survival of the form over the three centuries between Shōnagon and Kenkō, writers with very different positions in society, and the existence of Zuihitsu as a reference point in Japanese literature with two quite distinct “revivals” in the early 19th and 20th centuries (DiNitto, op. cit.) suggests something robust about the form. Nonetheless, it would be perfectly reasonable to question whether it is a form robust enough to remain meaningful in the transition not only from one culture (where, for example, the continuity of Buddhism could be adduced as one of the factors underpinning its extraordinary longevity) to another, and also from a literary form to a miscellany of moving image work delivered in a way undreamed of until perhaps 50 years ago.

I am proposing that the *Scenes of Provincial Life* can be usefully thought of as a continuation, in another medium, of the Zuihitsu form. I want to be clear there are two connected things

that this framing is not. The first is an exercise in orientalism. This would be the case if I had carried over wholesale the concerns and topics of the Japanese Zuihitsu of whatever era. The second is the simple—unmotivated—use of the Zuihitsu form as a neutral “container” for my work. Although I have cited historical examples in defence of my approach where something close to this second use has, on the face of it, happened, it is always the case that these re-invigorated forms are influenced by—or putting it more strongly ‘mutate as a result of’—contemporary circumstances and concerns and I would also suggest that it is precisely the material contemporary backdrop that somehow summons the revival of an apparently archaic form. In this case it seems to me that the fact of the dynamically updating html page—the blog—creates circumstances into which a diverse, diary like project naturally fits. Likewise, the sheer openness and speed of online person to person communication as well as the efficiency with which material—text, sound, still and moving image can be appropriated and reworked creates a wider and hugely more democratic setting for the kind of practices, both poetic and interpersonal, that we see in Shōnagon in particular. This widening, strangely, does not seem to obviate a striking sense of online intimacy in that we sit, for the most part, alone in front of only one computer, however many people we address.

In section 6 I will make more concrete the quite general assertions made here, by examining and partially enumerating the various and diverse practices, forms and disciplines gathered together under the umbrella of the *Scenes of Provincial Life*.

5. Art and Online Video

The *Scenes of Provincial Life* sequence is Janus faced. On the one hand it exists simply as an online repository of videos made over a period of time, from which individual videos are periodically extracted to be shown in gallery or film festival screenings (see appendix). Ironically, it is precisely that validation of individual works which seems to provide an acceptable justification for the submission of the sequence as a whole as the basis of a doctoral award by publication.

However it is the other aspect of the sequence—its existence as a coherent and in a fashion, unified body of related works which can be conceptualised broadly as diaristic and more specifically in terms of the Zuihitsu with which I am concerned here. Furthermore, it is its less prestigious, dangerously close to hobbyist or outsider “self-published”, existence online which grounds this reading. Finally, it is precisely the ten year or so window of particular kinds of inchoate and over-before-they-completely-cohered practices on the internet as well as the concomitant technical limitations which also characterised that period which provide my argument for the social, communicative practices and the aesthetic qualities which justify the Zuihitsu comparison.

With the exception of DVblog (Golan and Szpakowski, n.d.) an online critical/curatorial project founded in 2005 by the Israeli artist Doron Golan and which I joined shortly after as a writer and editor, there is very little literature on the phenomenon of ‘art video made specifically for online access’. The first book on the subject of which I am aware (Lovink and Niederer, 2008) only appeared in 2008, after a 2007 conference, and dealt almost exclusively with YouTube. Moreover, hardly any of the papers dealt with specifically artistic questions and especially that of what it meant to construct a personal artistic practice around online video. There was a sociological bias to the volume which largely deals with the broader consequences of, and questions arising from, the emergence of YouTube. It largely ignored the fact that a significant number of artists had been using, in particular, Apple’s QuickTime technology, which enabled the embedding and progressive downloading from web pages of video works, for a number of years prior to the appearance of YouTube in 2005 and its subsequent march towards online video hegemony.

At the time of writing (July 2015) I have just been made aware of a forthcoming online book edited by Will Luers and Adrian Miles which will deal with the early days of art video made specifically for online consumption. The call for papers specifically addresses the swamping of early online video practice in the huge, post 2005, YouTube explosion of hosted streamed video and aims to redeem and recover a movement rapidly becoming hidden. Some of the preamble echoes arguments made here:

Just as the term “folk art”, adopted as a genre of the commercial art market, has embedded itself in contradictory notions of collective, egalitarian, non-normative and non-commercial forms of expression, video blogging as a distinct form of non-commercial, networked expression can get lost in the vast networks of monetized

media....Low-res video, as a stand-in for raw experience, is edited into mini cinematic narratives, haikus and lyrical fragments. Some of the videos are just the unedited data of moments captured. Some are remixed, glitched, and processed for aesthetic effect.

(Luers, 2015, no pagination)

A browse through the contents of DVblog (Golan and Szpakowski, op. cit.) will provide convincing confirmation that there was at least an embryonic set of practices amongst a significant group of artists, the outcomes of which were intended principally for consumption by people browsing the net. Furthermore, the circumstances under which this work was made (file size and bandwidth limitations, with concomitant implications for window size and length of video) and a very particular mode of viewing—physically alone in front of a computer screen but at the same time with access to other viewers on email lists and later blogs, made for a particular aesthetic and one which arguably had consequences beyond work viewed on the net. I have argued this case in detail elsewhere (Szpakowski, 2012b). There are a number of reasons why this period was both relatively short lived and remains largely obscure.

A major reason might be the lineage of those working with video. As remarked elsewhere they were cutting against the grain of the majority of those who had understood early the multiple possibilities the early net presented as a site for art work; this however was often a sibling struggle - both Doron Golan and I, early pioneers of online art video, had made “net art” or were associated with those making it. A connected issue was that a degree of technical skill was at that time required to work in this field—capture, editing and compression of work for the net and its embedding in html pages was not then a trivial matter; if one did not have

these skills, it was necessary to painstakingly acquire them or partner with someone who did—often problematic for artists struggling to make work in an unacknowledged area with the consequent unavailability of funding.

The second wave of online video can be dated to 2003/4, preceding the arrival of YouTube, and was motivated by the appearance of the blog. Simultaneously broadband was becoming much more widely available, at least in the wealthier nations, so that the blog format and the not quite so savage file size and bandwidth restrictions came together to spawn a movement known as “videoblogging”(Simmons, 2014).

This, like so much early activity on the net, was by no means unified in its aims and intentions. On the one hand, from the very start there were those who adopted a TV metaphor and delivered “shows”, often themed around some particular personal interest. At the other end, there were those who were consciously attempting to make art of some kind. In between there was a stimulating, if sometimes overwhelming, melange of all sorts of in-between practices which hovered unstably between the two extremes—personal diaries, complex audio visual jokes, ‘outsiderly’ art video...

A number of these people had had a presence in filmmaking or broadcast prior to the internet and they brought skills, and a willingness to share them to the table. 2004 saw the founding of the *videoblogging* mailing list (Simmons, op. cit.) which from the very start evinced the inbuilt tensions between those who repeatedly used the word ‘monetisation’ without blushing and those more interested in art, experimentation or both.

The participants were not wide eyed naifs—those involved initiated historically and artistically aware and sophisticated projects like the Lumière video archive which knowingly

adopted practices from the earliest days of film to what was seen as a parallel period in film on the net. (For a history of the Lumière project see [Szpakowski, 2012c])

During the same period the beginnings of mobile video, either as a function of mobile phones or captured on small cheap dedicated cameras recording to a version of the mp4 file format, emerged. The notion of mobile film making as a practice unto itself would enjoy a vigorous and brief life until, in a parallel with online video, the technology caught up with itself—it no longer became significant or remarkable that a piece had been made on a mobile device, just as eventually the restrictions pertaining to online video melted away with the possibility of high quality streaming.

A complex mixture of technological, social and economic factors limited the “heroic” period of online video to a relatively short time frame and prevented the coalescence of a clear body of online work intended as art. The fact of these circumstances does not in my view absolve us from the duty to examine such work as was produced under this aegis, nor does it mean that this work was either worthless or without subsequent influence.

I’ll end this section by trying to sum up the constellation of factors that ultimately suffocated the nascent online art video movement. The arrival of hosted streaming services, particularly YouTube, made the process of making and uploading video straightforward. Not only did one not need to have any particular technical video skills but it was not necessary to own web space or to be able to embed video in html pages and to upload it and them. (I am not making an argument from snobbery here. I welcome this increased access, but there is no denying that the motives of the vast majority of adopters were not connected with making art, although of course there have since developed a very interesting set of almost outsiderly practices

associated with YouTube and the other facets of what began to be known as Web 2.0. I have written a little bit about this in connection with the photo sharing service Flickr [Szpakowski, 2014a]).

The absorption of broader internet based art practices (“net-art”) into common artistic use, or rather the dissolution of those practices as applied specifically to the net. As the technology became more widely adopted and available and easier to use, the distinction between net artists and artists in general became increasingly vague. So even at a very traditional end of fine art, painters will nowadays often not only source their work from moving image but will create sketches or studies in Photoshop prior to painting. At the same time as this increasing spread of easily usable devices, software and techniques, the off line system of presentation in galleries proved much more durable than many had imagined or hoped. Those who were successful but unknown outside a tiny few and unpaid to boot naturally gravitated towards showing their work in places (usually offline) that would give them more kudos and even sometimes cash. The divide between online and offline spaces broke down to the eventual disadvantage of new ways of presenting work online.

The increasing corporatisation of the net—where huge profits stand to be made—and its re-incarnation as web 2.0 inevitably entailed a bias in the technology used towards standardisation and towards the kind of security necessary to ensure the safety of transactions on line. This went far beyond the protection of the actual transactions to a general tightening up of online security. A consequence of this, and point one above, has been a homogenising of the presentation of video online - the most widely used browser, Chrome, has recently stopped supporting the use of plug-ins to embed QuickTime, for example, and other browsers seem to be headed in that direction too, encouraging the use of the native HTML5 player

instead. The difficulty here is that the process of creating the two or possibly three video formats necessary to display such video is complicated and time consuming and since the eventual result is by no means superior (since to stream video one has to reduce image quality in a way that was not necessary in the progressively downloaded QuickTime) to externally hosted video on YouTube or Vimeo there seems to be nothing like the do it yourself culture that surrounded the two or three years prior to the appearance of YouTube. Even where embedding is still possible, there has been a reduction in the number of both audio and video codecs supported. A consequence of submitting the “Scenes of Provincial Life” here has been that I was forced to go through the project movie by movie, exporting to new video and audio codecs to ensure that things still worked. In addition, some of the quirks of software previously employed by artists have now been ironed out or do not function under the new HTML 5 regime.

The palindrome loop is now only possible within the QuickTime player proper and the fringe but productive possibilities of scripting QuickTime to create generative pieces will also disappear with that format’s life as a browser plug-in—I have had to append notes to at least one movie that it can only now be viewed by downloading it and opening it locally in QuickTime player.

My intention is to keep making and uploading movies to the sequence. I wish to honour its origins. I am painfully aware, though, that the work is much more likely to be viewed either offline in gallery or festival situations or on the various hosted streaming services where I post particular pieces. I am reconciled to the idea that the online version will eventually

simply become a downloadable repository of the work rather as something that viewers and other artists actively engaged with online in its “heyday”.

There are a number of directions in my work that have grown out of the movie sequence and that I will be exploring in the future. One is a keen and new found interest in drawing and painting— in creating the one-off, auratic physical work that one might have thought would be the complete antithesis of my digital and moving image work. The body of work I have been making most recently, *Fifty-One Paintings for Children and Adults*, (Szapkowski, n.d.b) messy and physical though it indeed is, would not exist in the form it does without all the digital and networked prehistory rehearsed here. It involves a similar complex skein of appropriation, remix and cross-reference to that which characterises the *Scenes of Provincial Life* and it is similarly serial in form. I’m not planning on extending it at present but the openness to so doing in all future work is something I have learned from the movies.

My second interest is in the very web 2.0 sites and apps that have indirectly posed such a deadly threat to the movie sequence in its current form, YouTube and Flickr in particular. One of the things that interests me greatly about Flickr is the co-existence in a similar virtual space, with real dialogue occurring, of people like myself who would self-describe as artists, to people who would not but clearly are—hobbyists, outsiders etc.—and the way this can, in an admittedly problematic and limited sense, prefigure the kind of world, where creativity for all is a given, which I discussed earlier.

These interests will come together in January 2016 in the exhibition *We are Not Alone* at the 20-21 visual arts centre in Scunthorpe, running from then until April 30th, which I have both curated and in which I appear. My contribution to the show will be 14 of the movies from

Scenes of Provincial Life, in particular the ones associated with my audio remix project, but also the 51 paintings discussed above. In a very satisfying conjunction of theory/reflection and practice, preparations for the exhibition have been going on during the whole time of the writing of this commentary and each has deeply marked the other.

To make things easier for the reader of this document I am including an offline version of the sequence (file name - **Scenes of Provincial Life.htm**). This looks and behaves exactly like the online version but with no delay in loading each movie. The drive also contains a hyperlinked version of the next chapter (file name - **chapter6_gazetteer_with_links.docx**), with direct links to each movie discussed. This material can be found on the SD card in the CD pocket inside the back cover of this document.

6. A Provisional and Unfinished Gazetteer for ‘Scenes of Provincial Life’

Think of this as guide to some of the characteristics of the movies, and think of them as places or buildings, to be found in the sequence. It is unfinished. Unfinished, in the spirit of the project itself and unfinished because its purpose is not to draw final conclusions about the work, but to marshal some facts, evidence, statements and connections and to fit these to one possible way of thinking about the sequence. The attempt is absolutely not intended to be in any way definitive. The chimerical ‘complete’ version would be better attempted by someone other than the artist. It is finished enough, I believe, to show how the topography of the sequence suggests many routes through; by topic, by form, technique, discipline, degree of finish, tone and content and further, concretely, how it is by no means fanciful to suggest in one reading it might represent a contemporary species of Zuihitsu. The material here might equally well be used to other interpretive ends. Regardless of interpretation, what is not to be gainsaid is the network of reference both within and outside the sequence that I consciously built into it—how the work sits athwart a life.

Some sections here contain fleshed out commentary, others simply pathways and links, some merely point to an idea. It might be instructive to compare this section with one of Shōnagon's lists.

Two notes:

- Each set of movies is a sample rather than an exhaustive list
- When topics appear in **bold** in the body of entries they indicate a connection with another entry - this is suggestive rather than exhaustive.

Animation

Kingfisher/ Kingfisher Flick/ Self Portrait on my 50th Birthday, Walking from Harlow to Bethnal Green along the Rivers Stort & Lee

QuickTime, with its ability to convert a numbered sequence of images into a movie with any given frame rate, is a marvellous tool for cheap and cheerful animation. A very early example is *Kingfisher* where I exported a section of a BBC nature film at a rate of 6 frames per second (usually considered the minimum frame rate for the animation effect to kick in) and then reproduced each frame in drawings in soft pastel on numbered sheets of squared up paper. In a nod to Brecht and the *verfremdung effekt* [alienation or estrangement effect] (International Brecht Society et al., 1980) I left both squaring-up and numbers visible in the final piece. In those days I lacked confidence in my drawing skills and wanted to topicalise my deficiencies performatively. I composed some music which involved a 24 quarter tone note row to accompany it. Although the sinuosity of the music seems to me to echo the bird's rising movement it is far enough from "standard" nature documentary music to set up a certain tension.

In *Kingfisher Flick* I employed a kind of reversal of this process, printing off each frame of the animation to create a small flip book which I then repeatedly attempted to ‘perform’ in a short Lumière.

In this first entry here’s a kind of exemplar, a route, a network of connections:

external film → my drawings → animation + add music, keep drawing apparatus as a nod to Brecht and to my autobiography—my lack of drawing confidence → re-use the drawing material as another kind of animation by exporting it digitally and printing off → physically create a small flip book → ‘perform’ the flip book in my garden (more autobiography) → all the while videoing this under the **Lumière** constraints.

Appropriation, Remix etc.

The Firebird/ Annlee trudged slowly through the still dark forest/ Another Dance Remix

From the beginning the sequence lived and breathed appropriation, remix, homage and collaboration. From the 2015 end of the telescope it’s easy to take for granted the interconnectedness of these concepts, thoroughly stirred together as they are by the centrality of cut, copy and paste to every piece of software one might conceivably use, and by the ease with which entire pieces of work may be both posted to, and found on, the network. For me, certainly in practice, I view all of them as now subsumed under the broader rubric of a developing, embryonic, but nonetheless quite distinct and identifiable, collective, dialogic, network-enabled, inter- and super-personal creativity.

It is worth briefly making a couple of observations about the development of the component ideas, particularly that of “remix”, now often used to stand duty for the whole group of

practices cited above. The first is that far from being new, a practice resembling or prefiguring remix has been absolutely central to at least two key artistic practices in the western tradition. One is music, where building upon the work of others in the form of the use of cantus firmus (Sparks, 1963) variation form (Nelson, 1948) and the incorporation of folk and popular musics (Gilbert, 1917, p577–601) has been a fixture since we can speak of a coherent art music tradition. Equally the outright copying of work, especially as part of a training or self-training regime, is central to the painterly tradition. An example would be Rubens’s repeated copying of works by Titian and others. (Freedberg, 1998). An examination of any of these pairs of copy and original from the tradition will, however, reveal that the word ‘copy’ is a misnomer and that, whatever the intentions of the copier, the copies are inevitably saturated with his or her stylistic “tells”. In the twentieth century Picasso, in particular, pushed this practice forward with projects such as the *Meninas* sequence (Rafart i Planas, 2001) where the artist quite consciously multiply reworks Velázquez’s original through the lens of his own very distinctive approach and sensibility. (Stepping outside the chronological presentation of this argument I would assert here that the *Meninas* sequence in particular will find most appropriate description as an analogue of the audio practices which become fully possible only with digital remix techniques, where a huge palette of manipulations can be carried out upon material which, nevertheless, clearly retains, even under multiple transformations, the mark of its original maker. That is to say: it makes sense to call the *Meninas* sequence a set of *remixes*.)

The specific concept of a remix in the narrow audio sense became possible with the advent of multi-track recording in the 1950s (Snyder, 2003) but it was only in the 70s that Jamaican

dance hall DJs took the possibilities and ran with them, creating a remarkably diverse series of pieces within the limitations of the then analogue technology.

With the advent of digital sound technology the format exploded, at first within the confines of popular music, but, increasingly, once the essential equivalence of all digitised data hit home, it migrated to visual, especially moving image, material and thence by metaphorical extension to all sorts of other practices (Knobel and Lankshear, 2008). At the same time its sheer ease of making and ubiquity meant that, fine distinctions between the various categories broke down, melted into each other. Technically, of course, “appropriation” covers practices of wholesale borrowing, whether rooted in ideological provocation or convenience and “homage” and “collaboration” have time honoured and fairly transparent meanings.

Of course, art-historically one must maintain clarity on the nuances of meaning (and their evolution over time) of each of these concepts.

In practice the sequence accepts and indeed celebrates the recent, common, blurring of these categories (the latest stage, perhaps, in their historic-linguistic evolution)—it takes commonality and collectivity as a baseline and in practice eschews fine distinctions. For practical purposes, and supported by everyday usage, ‘remix’ can stand for all.

A very early piece, *The Firebird*, exemplifies this complexity. The sound is self-appropriated, a tiny fragment from the music I composed for a dance piece in 2001. That music itself in turn utilised samples from a shortwave radio. The visuals are twofold - part derived from a self portrait photo in a bathroom mirror, which I had previously used as an image to illustrate the biography/CV on my website, and which, for this video, I printed off, soaked in white spirit and burned, all the while videoing this process (which video I then

slowed down). On top of this there is a digitally traced image of a bird in flight which glides, bottom right to top left and then reverses its line of flight in the eternal palindrome loop which QuickTime allowed (and continues to allow, but only within the player itself; the palindrome loop within a webpage is now, alas, dead). The palindrome loop also allows a continuous cycle of destruction and re-constitution of the photograph by fire and ‘reversed fire’.

Birds

Kingfisher/ Morning. A Cherry Tree. Two Birds in Flight. /A Jay & Winter Cherry Blossom For Patrick Simons

I share the fascination of a striking number of 20th century artists—Braque, Picasso, Cornell, Ernst, Milton Avery—with birds. And I share, too, the way their treatment of the subject hovers between a summoning of the physicality of the creature but also its presence as a kind of generalised, unexplicated symbol or totem—appearing to symbolise something but it not being clear just what. My guess is it is something to do with the nature of our own embodiment.

Childhood

The Scottish War/ Home & Garden / Whereof One Cannot Speak...

Home and Garden is derived from a 1949 documentary film about childhood and education in York (Encyclopaedia Britannica Films, 1949) which I found in the Prelinger archive.

Although it was made some years before my birth, sections of it evoked, in an almost visceral way, long lost memories of the buildings, rooms, doors, windows and gardens of my childhood. I set to work to carve out these pieces and to enhance them, to chase out and fill in what made the prompts to memory so powerful—this involved manipulating speed, cropping, attempting to restore unclear images and re-sequencing. In particular, I removed all direct

human presence. The final addition was writing and recording the music, the ecstatic lushness of which mirrors the ecstasy of my re-acquired memories.

Collaboration

Train Coming / Orpheus / The Scottish War

In 2003 I had collaborated with the New York based writers Robert Roth and Carletta Joy Walker in a large scale internet opera project entitled ‘5 operas’ (Szpakowski, 2003). *Train Coming* marked a renewal of this collaboration. Roth and Walker came up with a lyric both lapidary and at the same time conjuring a long century of American folk songs about trains. I set it to music and recorded myself singing it. I used the sheet music as the basis for an animation with the silhouette of a duck flying over each words of the lyric as it was sung (as a pointer to each word to aid performance—a kind of customized bouncing-ball). I posted this on the net as a Shockwave movie with a general invitation for people to submit their own performances with modest prizes at stake, including a copy of Robert Roth’s memoir *Health Proxy* and the then current edition of the literary magazine he edits in NYC *And Then*. The sheet music plus imagery was also published as a piece in the magazine. Shortly afterwards I exported the movie to QuickTime and posted it in *Scenes of Provincial Life* with a link back to Robert and Carletta’s piece from the 5 operas. The single post is part of a complex skein of links to a print publication, to audience participation, to other related work, and functions not only as a piece in itself but also as a way of pointing to and publicizing, of bringing into the conversation, Roth and Walker’s work. It is also an homage and a testament to a friendship.

The Scottish War is an after the fact collaboration with my daughter at 6 or 7 and myself at a similar age. I had rediscovered, several years on, a marvellous drawing and narrative she had

brought home from school one day and combined it with drawings I had made at a similar age in 1963. I used a text-to-speech synthesized voice for the narration and added newly composed music. This piece thus completed then suggested a sequel of sorts, *The Scottish Peace*, which remixed elements of the first with the addition of some new visual content (from a magazine, I think) and some, for me, standard procedures, such as reversing the flow of both sound and image.

Documentary

Incident / A Short Documentary/ Intimacy

Incident came into being almost by accident. At the time of its making I carried a small video camera around with me everywhere, on the look-out for potential **Lumières**. I was on a bus in Hungary between Keszthely and a town called Sümeg, a forty minute ride through agricultural countryside. I had the camera jammed into the corner of the window, keeping it as motionless as possible to comply with the fixed camera Lumière rule. The bus slowed down and came to halt in a village, just outside a small general store and an ambiguous and somewhat disturbing scene played out in front of me. It was unclear (and remains so to me) whether what I witnessed was harmless horseplay or unpleasant and violent misogyny. I will never know. The bus moved on and when I returned to the UK I slowed the footage to half speed and added the music to make the final piece, in a kind of framing of or underlining of that central incident.

Intimacy, on the other hand, is simply a “home movie” of my wife and me on a chair lift in Budapest. She hates heights and was talked into making the trip against her better judgment. I was in two minds about using it but when I watched it I realised that, once again by chance, I

had made something greater than the sum of its parts—it seemed to both of us to be a very candid testament to a certain kind of long standing closeness.

Experiment

DVblog H4ckB4ck. / Three Movies With the Same Music / One Movie With Three Pieces of Music

See also **unity/totality**. The overarching form allows for the experiment, the sketch, the study. It provides a setting and implicit commentary for it. This container-hood is forgiving of the unfinished and fragmentary. Or, better, it makes it unnecessary for the unfinished and fragmentary to ask forgiveness, nestling in its broad shelter. Two examples.

The first arises out of a long interest in the relationship between moving image and music or more broadly non-diegetic sound. The prevailing common sense seems to be that music directs and intensifies our response to what is seen. Time and again one reads of the importance of placing music accurately to underscore this effect. It is certainly true that there is huge potency here. I have been interested for a long time, though, in testing and loosening this relationship—what does moving the in and out points of the same piece of music do to its effect? What does the same piece of moving image look like with radically different accompanying music and, vice versa, how does the same piece of music read with different visuals?

Before video equipment and non-linear editing came within my range I would experiment on this question with the performing arts students whom I taught in the nineties—they would devise a dance routine and we would run it with Bach, Cage, jazz and punk and world music soundtracks to see what happened.

This shaped my approach when I seriously began to make moving image work. I did not ignore the relationship between the sound and image but I often created them separately and then “slammed” them together initially to see what transpired. Most often I then left things as they were but I was not dogmatic.

In the two sets of three movies each in the posts *Three Movies With the Same Music* and its immediate predecessor, *One Movie With Three Pieces of Music*, I decided to formally stage the experiment, under, as it were, laboratory conditions. The second set contains footage shot looking out from a train onto a rainy Gospel Oak station on the London Overground as another train opposite sits, starts to move, picks up speed and departs. The three identical pieces of footage are accompanied in turn by a composition by me which employs Schoenberg’s 12 tone “system” and with a nod to Anton Webern’s “klängenfarbenmelodie” (melody of tone colours), a wax cylinder recording from 1907 of part of an aria from ‘*The Barber of Seville*’ and finally a bossa-nova I had written for another movie a while before. The first post contains three different, though not completely unrelated, visuals accompanied by exactly the same spare percussive music.

My second example is the piece *DVblog H4ckB4ck*. In 2007 the French new media/net artist Jimpunk began remixing a number of the videos Doron Golan and I had posted to DVblog and posted these to a site called dvblogh4ck (JimPunk, n.d.). *DVblog H4ckB4ck* was a friendly but nonetheless competitive response to this. I made the piece by downloading a number of the remixes and exporting them as image sequences. I then used an obscure but powerful piece of software, LivestagePro (Miles, 2009) which allowed one to script QuickTime movies using a scripting language not unlike Adobe Director’s Lingo. The final movie called sequences in at random from an image database and subjected them to various

image manipulations. The effect is generative, and once the movie commences it continues until it is closed down. To anyone who is unaware of the scriptability of QuickTime movies the end result comes as something of a surprise as most people's mental model of QuickTime, encouraged by the "movie" metaphor, is of something fixed and linear.

I do not think it overly fanciful to compare this to the kind of poetry competition described in *The Pillow Book*. Here is a practice which involves both citation and a kind of visual punning but in addition there is a competitive edge connected with a kind of virtuoso display of technical skill.

Family

A Tiny Opera for Anna / At Worrall/ Dream

A Tiny Opera for Anna grew out of my previous five operas project (Szpakowski, 2003).

Bandwidth and size constraints had imposed severe limits on the size of the operas, which for me had turned into a virtue. The forced miniature is a constant feature of early work on the net. I began to be fascinated by just how tiny one could make a piece of net-resident "music theatre". (I use inverted commas to indicate that this kind of music theatre is a different creature to its normal referent—but I retain the wording since the kinship seems to me to be close and obvious.) My other concern was the one of trying to make work with my immediate life as a source (and there seemed to be something fitting about an attempt to use apparently undramatic content as the basis for extremely miniaturised work) so I wrote a tiny libretto for a single voice, my own, based upon my relationship with my teenage daughter. In its entirety it runs:

"Where are you going? Out where? Ok, be careful."

Tiny as it is, it seems to me not to entirely lack a certain dramatic charge. I wrote a score for it and then arranged the music for small orchestra and simulated this using MIDI.

At Worrall appropriates and manipulates footage taken by my cousin in the mid sixties of me, my sister and our parents and grandfather arriving at my aunt and uncle's house in the Sheffield suburb of Worrall. The process, of cutting, re-sequencing, cropping, looping resembled that of *Home and Garden* —a kind of intensification of affective force by sculpting and excavation.

Flowers

Landscape with Blue Flowers in Bottom Left-Hand Corner / Cherry Blossom Loop/ Eclogue

I am interested in skating along the beauty/kitsch border. Flowers provide an interesting starting point.

Fragments

Unfinished / Fragment / Poem

In June of 2005 I exhibited an installation at 20-21 visual arts centre in Scunthorpe, North Lincolnshire as part of a touring show entitled “net reality”. The piece was a large box with an arc of dried flowers pasted onto it, shelves and a low plinth in front displaying various found objects, and a screen embedded in it. A programme, written using the Director-associated scripting language “Lingo”, divided the screen area into a number of sectors into which were called various images. Some of these, like a traffic cam feed from the suburb of Sheffield where I attended secondary school, came direct and live from the web; others were from a database held on the local PC. One of the sectors involved randomly calling in all the

movies which had been made at that moment from the sequence which would become “Scenes of Provincial Life”.

Where the movies had sound this was audible. The title of the installation was *some fragments* (fig 1), which title and the treatment of the components as modules within modules indicate a dawning realisation of the nature of what I was making with the movie sequence proper. Observations made by Edward Picot (2006) in his accompanying text contributed to this process of clarification.



Figure 1 *some fragments* installation image, 20-21 visual arts centre 2005

Generativity

DVblog H4ckB4ck / A Tuff Dance Shipping Dubcast / Three Women

It is harder to do now (since the off the shelf software—Live Stage pro [Miles, op. cit.] — which made it do-able if not easy, has ceased production) but it has been possible to date to script QuickTime movies either to interact with the user (making sections clickable, for example) or to be generative, to reconfigure and manipulate a database of sounds and images on every pass through. I used this possibility on a few occasions, partly because generativity had interested me in other net resident work that I had been making (Szpakowski, n.d. a) but also as a kind of provocation. I liked the idea of people assuming they were watching a linear video only to find that the piece behaved contrary to their expectations. I don't necessarily expect these pieces to last—two have ceased to function online and one entirely and I suspect as time passes, for reasons alluded to elsewhere, that these delightful idiosyncrasies will be ironed out.

Glitch/Compression

Poem (version)/ Another Dance Remix / Twilight Dreaming

Nowadays whole exhibitions, conferences and websites are devoted to glitch and glitching but anyone working with online video in the earliest days encountered the phenomenon as an inevitable consequence of the need to savagely compress whatever they were working with.

It was only natural to turn the resulting visual fireworks and beauties to expressive ends.

Poem (version) from 2003 utilises properties emerging from both intense compression and from the reverse phase of QuickTime's palindrome loop feature. The breakout of colour blocks around mid bottom left is a modest precursor of the sort of effects created on an almost industrial scale by the later practice of 'datamoshing' (datamosher, 2009) which involved systematic editing of a movie's code to elicit spectacular "leaks" of colour and motion.

Twilight Dreaming is the only piece in the sequence in which I systematically apply the datamoshing technique.

Harlow

Everything You Need for Christmas /Our Town / Shadow Fragment

The Essex town where I have lived since 1979.

Honkadori

Annlee trudged slowly through the still dark forest / The Angel of History, Lost in East London / Empire

Earl Miner defines the Japanese poetic trope of Honkadori as

“Allusive variation. Recalling some words, basic situation, or conception of an earlier well known poem (or other work) in a new poem, creating a new meaning that transformed the old in the new”

(op. cit., 1968, p162)

It is curious how closely this resembles contemporary quotation and allusion practices around digital culture and particularly the remix. This recalls my earlier argument about the re-purposing of historic forms and practices but also provides a very concrete handle on a number of the pieces in the sequence which combine remix /appropriation type approaches with either a lyric poetic compression or allusion to canonic works of art or literature or both.

Annlee trudged slowly through the still dark forest takes Pierre Huyghe’s acquired minor manga character Annlee (Yap, 2012) and sends her for the eponymous, never ending, walk.

Perhaps this is where she has been, a sort of manga purgatory, since Huyghe “freed” her. (For a great deal more on Huyghe and works drawing on his work see **Play and Playfulness**.)

The Angel of History, Lost in East London works over Benjamin’s own appropriation of Klee (but in a new angelic guise of the sculpture *Aviation* by René Bertrand Boutée) for a trip through the rail approach to Stratford, East London and *Empire* channels a series of derived works about the Empire State Building from Warhol’s 8 hours (The Andy Warhol Museum, 2014) through Wolfgang Staehle’s web-cam version (Staehle, n.d.), through Doron Golan’s (Golan, 2005) informal video, shot from a nearby roof-party, to my final small scale hand drawn **animation** of less than a minute.

Influence

The sequence as a whole celebrates influence. It contains numerous homages. Movie titles, in particular, are taken from works I admire and as I come across new techniques, concepts and artists their spell upon me is celebrated and worked over in various pieces.

Jokes

Ayran / Jokes/ Vincent Van Gogh

Why jokes? Because I like them and I want them there. Because there are not enough jokes in art. Because the Zuihitsu form assembles itself out of one doing just exactly what one wants to do.

London

The Plain Sense of Things / The Commercial Road Breaks / Open Air Song with Found Bagpipe Obligato

In Japanese court poetry there is a specific term, *tabi*—connoting both melancholy and beauty—for the idea of ‘travel away from the capital’ (the word survives today in Japanese as synonym for a trip or vacation) and of course the poetic use of this term arises from a very particular aristocratic relationship with the seat of power. There’s a kind of *tabi-in-reverse* operating in a good many of the pieces set in London—a sense, for me, as someone travelling in from a small and quite parochial Essex town, of heightened possibility, of cultural diversity, of sheer size. I don’t think it is unreasonable to compare the two since despite devolution and good intentions the notion of the UK capital today retains (and indeed in many respects is growing in) a potency not completely sundered from the sense of the Japanese one of centuries ago.

Loop

*Third Avenue Loop / Acton Central Loop/ LiveFeed back #3**

The loop became a hugely significant technique and form in the early days of moving image on the net. The reasons are complex and I have talked about them in some detail elsewhere (Szpakowski, 2012b)

It is curious that something so elementary should have such rich consequences—it becomes a unit of more complex remixing procedures, first in sound and then in image work (Vj-ing software for example, or Furtherfield’s online collaborative *Visitors Studio* project (Catlow et al., n.d.)) and presentationally in the form both of the video loop and the animated gif, it has proved remarkably persistent .

One of its most powerful and attractive features is that it enables the creation of work that is both extremely economical and focussed but also large scale and installation like—it has no

end point and its start point (for the viewer) recedes further and further into the —becoming eternally present until one chooses to disengage.

One might speculate that, away from the web, the loop forms the most natural format for the presentation of moving image work in the gallery, especially short duration work. Of course, with the exception of timed screenings, most gallery based moving image is looped in some way (either individually or as a programme) but it is when the length of the gallery based loop comes close to the actual attention span/presence of the viewer that something very interesting occurs—the reception of the piece becomes more like that of painting or sculpture since the extra dimension of time becomes “compassable” by the viewer and the more so because of repetition. That very repetition also gives rise to a sense of development, even though the material is exactly repeated as the viewer’s focus shifts and her comprehension of what she sees grows on each pass through.

Another kind of *verfremdung effekt* (International Brecht Society et al., op. cit.) is evident when the content of the loop is cut against our expectations—the middle of a word or action, a striking jump cut or an apparently coherent but in fact completely random connection between start and end point and gives rise to completely unexpected emergent properties.

Subjectively the result is a tiny, often highly poetic fragment, which nevertheless expands under the scrutiny of the viewer.

Its QuickTime relative, the palindrome loop (marked * above), where the content runs alternately forward and backwards (with unpredictable audio effects resulting) is a delicious refinement which will vanish as the possibility of embedding QuickTime in the browser disappears, as it sadly will. It enchants by its symmetry, the never-endingness alluded to

above and the simple magic of reversal (see: **Wonder**). It haunts perhaps even more than a simple running backwards in that the viewer is usually lulled by the initial forward flow and does not anticipate the reversal. When it does it delivers a moment of confusion and then a considerable frisson. That first small shock then, in turn, becomes a point of anticipation at each subsequent looping or viewing.

Lumières

Short story/ CSI: Looking-Glass House / Flight Path

In 2007 Brittany Shoot and Andreas Haugstrup Pedersen launched a project/provocation which drew on the conditions of making which obtained in the very early cinema to poetically parallel this period on the internet, proposing a bracing set of restrictions under which online movies might be made. I have written about the background to this at some length elsewhere (Szpakowski, 2012c).

I enthusiastically joined the fray. The form seemed to me to have two great merits. The first was that in programmatically denying sound it created a kind of laboratory for the investigation of image and its relationship with sound (see **Music**). In tandem with this almost theoretical facet the form provided a bracing lesson in looking, seeing and saying no more than necessary. The second was the set of possibilities for **playfulness** and dialogue that arose from ‘gaming’ a set of constraints—from recording in moving vehicles (something with precedent in the Lumières’ time and work) to shooting planned performances and to recordings of on screen events, whether on TV, film or computers.

Music

The Smokers, A Masque/The Plain Sense of Things/ A Little Night Music

Music is ubiquitous in the sequence. A good 50% of the movies have music but, equally, when music or sound is absent I hope this is perceived as an active absence, a positive opting for silence. The majority of the music is written or arranged by me and as a rule of thumb seeks to avoid any feeling that it has been exactly synchronised to the moving image (and that where it happens to sit is somehow inevitable or necessary) . As a kind of corollary or extension to this I have always been keen that the music should enjoy a life of its own, that one's sense of any of the movies which have sound should be that there are two distinct and independent components which nevertheless form a kind of dialogue, that sometimes one, sometimes the other can be the focus of the viewer/listener's attention. The **experiments** with sound and music described in detail elsewhere and my increasing sense of the sequence's life and progress as a whole mean that I have become more and more comfortable with reusing a piece of music across the sequence. For example, the arrangement I made of Orlando Gibbons 'The Silver Swan' first appears in *The Smokers, A Masque* and shortly after re-appears in *The Plain Sense of Things*, making a final appearance, substantially slowed down in *A Little Night Music*.

In addition there is quite a lot of **song** of one sort or another.

Network

Shit Happens in Vegas / New York Stutter / Intersection

A number of the pieces use material gleaned from across the network, in particular Google maps, Google Streetview but also web and traffic cams. Until it stopped working (presumably as a result of the updating of the code on the NY traffic cams site) *New York Stutter* streamed live images from a New York traffic camera and accompanied this with a generative

synthesised guitar sound track (which can still be heard) created by scripting QuickTime sprites (see **Generativity**) .

Play & Playfulness

I am Getting a Cat/At The Fire Man's Ball/ DVblog H4ckB4ck/

In 2011/2012 I started, or got caught up with, two projects which then became intimately enmeshed with the Scenes sequence through a number of videos. One in particular, *I am Getting a Cat*, exemplifies the highly networked nature of the project but also the sense of play and playfulness which I think characterises all my work and in particular the movie sequence.

The first project is called “12 remixes” (Picot, 2014). I decided to enter a remix competition once a month for a year and to post the results to a dedicated blog. I envisioned this as having a three-fold thrust. It was to be a sound project—I was fascinated by the possibility of approaching rights free material (I chose only projects where there were no restrictions on the use of the constituent tracks or “stems” as they are known) guided only by my musical intuition, formed as it is by a very eclectic range of interests from so called “world music”, through contemporary concert hall work, to popular musics and jazz. It was to be a conceptual project—I am well beyond the age at which most people enter remix competitions and I am ignorant of the nicenesses of genre and terminology of contemporary popular music. I decided to conduct the whole project under a pseudonym, “Mickiewicz”, surname of the Polish national poet. I wanted to see what would happen. Finally, and somewhat connected to the second, it was performative—I had created a character which I took some care to ‘firewall’, at least on the actual competition sites and the Soundcloud account I set up for him,

giving no biographical details: age, gender etc., and encouraging deliberate confusion as to nationality. “Mickiewicz’s” work was fed by the oddnesses of a remix procedure arising from my musical and artistic formation, both somewhat traditional and extremely eclectic.

I employed decidedly non-standard software for the remixes, using the notation program Sibelius to run both the stems, which were subjected to a host of manipulations, and other musical lines which I composed and sent to a software sampler. I also allowed myself the same freedom of appropriation of audio material that I employed in my video work.

About half way through the year the urge hit me to take the thing further and to make music videos to accompany the remixes—partly because the audio remix procedure seemed so in tune with the appropriative approach of much of my movie making. This gave rise to *The Secret of Fire*, *Since the Collapse of the Hours*, *The Difference Between the Wild Pear Tree and the Wild Apple Tree*, *Tod's Tennis Match is Chic*, *Count*, *Shit Happens in Vegas*, *A Million Different People*, *OK Good Stand Clear* as well as the piece under discussion.

The block of these remix movies (plus an “arrangement” where I took a concert performance movie by Angel Olsen from YouTube, wrote an arrangement *around* her live performance incorporating strings, bells and mariachi trumpets and then remixed the concert video footage too) can be found from Jan 2012 to July 2013. I also posted the remixes as discrete playlist to YouTube (Szpakowski, 2014b), since part of what I felt the project was about was intervening in a world in which I did not really belong and I felt that that world might be more ready to visit YouTube, with its instant-on, than wait patiently for the progressive download of a QuickTime movies to kick in properly.

As I wrote in my introductory statement for the 12 remixes blog (Szpakowski, 2011):

I'm going to enter a remix competition every month, from August 2011 to July 2012.

I'm 54 years old (55 in early 2012) and although I'm musically reasonably deft I

know little about the culture in which I'm attempting to intervene.

I know none of the specialised vocabulary, can't distinguish genres and although I understand what is being said, just about, I don't speak the language in which posts or comments on this kind of work are framed.

Each of my remixes will be posted here, with a link back to the original track.

My nom de remix is mickiewicz.

cheers

Michael

I think of the YouTube presence as a kind of networked tentacle or creeper reaching out towards another kind of audience.

That is one fork.

The other arose from the announcement of the closure of the Nederlands Instituut voor Mediakunst (Netherlands Media Art Institute) after 35 years of operation due to government cutbacks. The institute mounted a final exhibition under the title *Yes We're Open*. Part of this exhibition, involving a play upon the word "open" involved NIMK setting up an open blog and inviting the posting of works derived from the minor manga character "Annlee" who had been worked over by artists Pierre Huyghe and Phillip Parreno and associates in their 1999 project *No Ghost Just a Shell* (Yap, op. cit.)

The NIMK call reads, in part:

The No ghost, just a shell project can be called a kind of 'open artwork'. In 1999, the artists Pierre Huyghe and Philippe Parreno bought a manga character from “K” works, a Japanese firm that develops Manga figures. Huyghe and Parreno decided to 'free the image from the animation market', named 'her' Annlee, made their own initial works and invited other artists to use Annlee for new art projects, free of charge. .. In the end 28 works were produced by 18 different artists. The project was finalized in 2002 with the artists definitively killing her off ... signing over the copyrights of the image to Annlee herself... A decade after the project came to an end, NIMK invites you to respond to the Annlee project 'unofficially' and hopes to open up the character to new art pieces...

(Nederlands Instituut voor Mediakunst, 2012).

I have always been fascinated and challenged by projects involving constraints of topic or technique and additionally by open and playful ones such as this.

I made a number of works and uploaded them, but additionally, entering into the spirit of the thing, I gave Annlee a email account, a Tumblr blog (annlee, 2012a) and finally a Twitter account (annlee, 2012b) of her own.

In retrospect the Twitter account seems to me to have been the most interesting intervention.

I posted stream of consciousness fragment, found texts, texts mashed up in various semi-systemic ways. I viewed the Annlee twitter account as a kind of time based online performance in a kindred spirit to the 12 remixes. At one point I got very caught up with appropriating material from Annlee’s followers, mashing it up and then re-posting it. In particular I was fascinated by the user : ‘*I have cat*’ (I HAVE CAT, n.d.) whose cat-related

posts were a combination of the banal, the sentimental, the brusquely practical and informative, the cumulative oddness of which at best touched on the condition of a certain kind of poetry. In a second wave of mashing up I then copied and pasted many of “my” annlee’s appropriated tweets and consolidated them into a single block of prose (annlee, 2012c) .

During this time I was also working on the final remix for the 12 remixes project. The material I was working with, a track called *Trojans* (Atlas Genius, 2012) by a band called *Atlas Genius* was, although the best of a bad lot, pretty uninspiring to work with musically and I ended up using only a very basic guitar and keyboard riff from one section which I pitchshifted and otherwise hacked around. I knew that to do anything of interest with it I was going to have to find or write a good deal of striking material and in a small epiphany the notion of using the rhythm track to underpin a synthesised text to speech rendition of my Annlee twitter text occurred to me. I used the AT&T text-to-speech online demo (AT&T Labs Research, 2012) to laboriously convert the text in small batches to audio and I overlaid it onto the backing track. It had, for me, an excitingly deranged quality.

I completed the audio track by writing a long piano based canon and a string quartet arrangement, which unfolded into increasing, but consonant and disciplined, complexity in the second half of the song and which takes centre stage and finally fades out after the “vocal” finishes.

Having created the audio track I then set to work on the video. This was made exclusively from manipulated public domain footage from the Prelinger archive. Two of the movies were very earnest US “youth work” orientated pieces from the fifties and sixties—one called “Why

We Respect the Law” (*Why We Respect The Law*, 1950) and the other “Coffee House Rendezvous” (*Coffee House Rendezvous*, 1969). The third was the section dealing with Lyndon Johnson’s first state of the union address in 1964 from a Universal-International Newsreel (*Universal-International Newsreel 9 January, 1964*).

The preceding account, laborious as it is gives a sense of the complex and playful genesis of the final video. Two things about the final piece strike me. The first is that, although it is immediately clear that there is a process of appropriation at work, a casual viewer/listener would not be able to discern the range of sources involved— the final piece has a sense of unity about and a very definite if strange affective flavour.

The second point concerns that flavour or mood— the first reaction to *I am Getting a Cat* from viewers is usually laughter and I encouraged this in some of the editing— LBJ appears to be asking cat related questions, as does the young juvenile delinquent. However matters do not end there— because, in a manner I have discussed elsewhere, sound and image are not completely “artistically” synchronised there are deeply odd emergent effects. There is something quite moving about the fresh faced innocence of the various youths pictured in the source movies, particularly taken against the piano canon and string charts which are both straight and plaintive but also set against the general ridiculousness of the piece. The flickering back and forth of emotions engendered by and within it is, in my view, not dissimilar to some of the emotional disconnects to be found in *Shōnagon* and *Kenkō*. This suggests to me that the *Zuihitsu* character and ethos is quite deeply embedded in the project— not just part of the surface structure but in the actual composition, the actual, as it were, stuff, of the constituent pieces. This was not a conscious move on my part but, being as objective as I can now, it seems to me undeniable.

Politics, Big & Small

Palestine/ An Enemy of the People / Incident/ Recitation / Snows of Yesteryear /Our Town

Palestine, a short silent documentary account of a pro Palestinian demonstration in London in 2009, *An Enemy of the People*, a musical and visual ‘setting’ of a recording of my late father’s account of his arrest by the NKVD and subsequent incarceration in a Siberian Labour camp and *Incident*, a somewhat chillingly ambiguous found piece which may or may not show an act of violence against a woman, excepted, there is little in the way of “big” politics in the sequence. What there is, is an insistence that matters common to the everyday lives of all, the things that normally go unremarked and even unnoticed, can be a worthy object of art making and that this might be a metaphor for unremarked and unnoticed lives too (And an attempt to defend that lived experience against the ‘enormous condescension of posterity’ [Thompson, 1963]). Those unremarked and insignificant things include at least some popular cultural or folk art practices or subjects. *Recitation*, for example, involves a rhyme in the South Yorkshire dialect of my childhood and hometown which was my late mother’s Boxing Day party piece and *Snows of Yesteryear* is a kind of found poem which gathers descriptions of photos taken by Sheffield photographers and uploaded to Google Earth. *Our Town* portrays the small and deeply unfashionable Essex new town of Harlow, where I have lived since 1979 with a truthful regard to a certain grimness but also, I hope, an eye for its poetry and a genuine affection for my fellow inhabitants.

In addition to the subject matter, there is also the question of a kind of rehabilitation of anti-technique. I am perfectly capable of putting a camera on a tripod but I might choose to hand

hold it in a none-too-steady hand. I choose to use lo-tech equipment such as hand held devices (when they were lo-tech; no longer, alas). I try to hold in my mind not only overlooked lives but also the way the overlooked recorded and decorated their lives—the snapshot, the hymn tune, the houseplant sitting in a used margarine tub and the mantelpiece ornament.

Portraiture

45 Paris Portraits / Portrait of Sam Renseiw / Portrait of the Artist in his Studio

The presence of so many portrait pieces was and remains a quite conscious attempt to flag a link from my moving image work here to the grand tradition of portraiture and hence to the grand tradition in general. I make no claims for the value of what I have done but it marks out an attitude—the connectedness of all artistic endeavour, and a territory—a unified field of comparable and related work, ranging from cave painters to something made this very second.

Seasons

Early Spring/ Babes in the Wood/ Madrid 18/12/11: Carol Singers; a Woman Smoking; a Flying Fish

One of the matters related to the Japanese literary tradition, an interest in which predated any characterisation of the sequence as a whole, was the idea of anchoring a poem (especially a Haiku) in its seasonal context by the presence of a ‘seasonal word’ (Yasuda, 1957 pps53-54) —a word indissolubly linked to a particular season. This notion spoke to my early grounding in an informal aesthetics of nature. So there is a kind of double borrowing occurring in many of these pieces—first one can easily think of them as sort moving image lyric poems (in many cases this is quite conscious for me). Then, given my propensities, an analogue of the “seasonal word” appears either by design or by default.

Song

1. Covers.

Old Paint/ Szpako Plays Pop/ Davy Lowston/ This is Just to Say

I am interested in the performative, in putting myself in the way of potentially looking foolish in the cause of addressing things that have been important to me. As a child I never felt that I could sing, above and beyond the gendered reluctance of my generation to do so. These sorts of feelings are self-fulfilling spirals and it was not until I had worked for sometime as a theatre musician that I began to overcome them. I still think my voice lacks character, although I am satisfied that it is generally in tune. The covers have multiple but related motivations; daring myself to do them, topicalising my effort, awkwardness and uncertainty as a kind of intense self-portrait. I love the idea that I so manifestly have nothing in common in persona or delivery with Iggy Pop but that I might try and solve the problem—attempt to square the artistic circle—of how to deliver *Raw Power* in a way that is neither entirely simply laughable, not simply an empty technical exercise but brings something new and of interest to both song and activity.

2. Remixes

Since the Collapse of the Hours /Tod's Tennis Match is Chic /OK Good Stand Clear

See paragraphs #1- 7 of **Play & Playfulness**

3. Settings

This is Just to Say/ Funny Ideas / Fragment

I have set words to music all my adult life, especially in my days as a theatre composer, where I often came up with the texts too. That is where *Funny Ideas* comes from, a devised show in the mid eighties about the Russian scientist Trofim D Lysenko (Medvedev et al., 1969).

There is also a kind of collecting and cataloguing impulse at work—a desire to call attention to things I value—both in the songs I choose to cover and the words I choose to set. Indeed this impulse holds sway more generally within the sequence as a whole.

Stillness

Alpandeire / Allée Verte/ Door in Late Afternoon Sun

I became interested in the fastidiousness with which writers about the mechanically assisted image distinguished between the moving image and the still (Elkins, 2007; Green and Lowry, 2006; Bazin, 2004; Kracauer, 1997). Partly as a result of having come to making both quite late and in a period where the digital apparatus used for each emphasized their kinship and partly from a predilection for what Brecht called *plumpes denken* (literally “crude thinking”, but actually a sly and self deprecating and not at all *plumpes* kind of application of Occam’s razor) (Benjamin, 2003) I was interested in testing out in practice the limits of this division. Chris Marker’s stunning use of both modes of image making in *La Jétee* (Marker, 1962) was also a spur. I made pieces that were increasingly lacking in movement—where one either had to scrub through the piece to see that such movement as was there was beyond normal perception (like the hour hand on a watch) or where one had to examine a large area quite carefully or wait patiently to discover any trace of movement (a kind of artistic *Where’s Wally?* [Handford, 2011]) (see **Lumières**).

South Yorkshire

Wednesday 27th Sept, about 7 PM: By Tram & Bus from the Midland Station to Broomhill/ Chapeltown-Elsecar-Wombwell-Barnsley / On South Road

My place of birth and upbringing and a kind of expelled-from Eden to me still.

Text

Stavanger Street View / The difference between the wild pear tree and the wild apple tree / Since the Collapse of the Hours

Stavanger Street View consists of text only. Apart from section titles which appear static in mid frame the piece consists solely of a text in Norwegian which scrolls from right to left. I wrote the text in Norwegian and then had it corrected by a native speaker. It does what it says on the tin. It is a description of a number of locations in Stavanger, Norway seen on Google street view. I created the piece with the specific intent of submitting it to the Screen City Festival in Stavanger. To that extent the choice of city and the language are contingent (although not completely—I speak enough Norwegian to know what I am doing, I could not do the same in Hindi, say, or Albanian).

The approach though, the reduction to text in a moving image context is something that interests me and that I would probably have experimented with sooner or later anyway, I think. It bears some relationship to the question of **stillness**.

Time

Things Past /The Scottish War/ Snows of Yesteryear

There is something about the digitisation of diverse forms of document and the concomitant possibility of bringing them together, setting them side by side in a new container, whilst retaining their original form and force which makes for a somehow new and different poetics of time—affect and documentary evidence sit side by side and feed each other.

Added to this is the strong sense of authorial control which comes with the knowledge that this kind of process has been employed in a piece. It allows the affect thus evoked to cling strongly to that authorial persona. The concern with time sits close to my interest in my upbringing, my family and my city of birth and my wish to make something distilled and evocative of these quite commonly shared interests.

Unity/Totality

The Zuihitsu form is paradoxical. It proceeds by accretion and nothing is in principle ruled out in advance. It may be assessed at any point, though obviously there is a final point at which author lays the project permanently aside or dies. Nevertheless, every state of the ongoing piece presents itself as a totality. Fragmentary itself, Zuihitsu allows for the addition of the incomplete, the fragmentary in a kind of fractal structure. The totality legitimises the incomplete within it—see Shōnagon’s lists for example. The form also forgives by framing as performative, experiments which are incomplete or where technique is rudimentary, the early drawing based piece *Karina* for example. There is room within it for what outside of it might be incomplete, provisional—the experiment, the sketch, the study and the misfire or failure. Zuihitsu clasps these to its bosom and makes them at home.

Walking

*Walking Movie/ Self Portrait on my 50th Birthday, Walking from Harlow to Bethnal Green along the Rivers
Stort & Lee/ A Walk from London Bridge to Liverpool Street 22 October 2003*

I do not drive. Hence the large number of movies shot from trains or buses or trams and also the number that involve walking too. Perhaps my inability to learn to drive and my love for walking creates a space for something not so common now and places me slightly out of time—a 19th century flâneur with a digital video camera. The performative impulse which lies behind a good proportion of the work here fuels the longer walks where the walk becomes both performance and perhaps a kind of meditation too. The resultant moving image piece is an attempt to *transcribe* both.

Wonder

Preston/ Pages from the Childrens Encyclopedia / Towards Ranelagh

My mother was fascinated by everything in the world. Perhaps this was an index of her *unworldliness*. A fresh vista, a new product, a casual phrase, a new fact— all would genuinely amaze her and for quite a while. To a great extent I think I inherited this. One of my earliest memories is hanging upside down from a railing by our house and shivering with fear and glee at the *unheimlich* world I thereby entered. Even before this the full length mirror in my parents' room permitted access to a similarly familiar yet disturbing world. This fascination, that *frisson*, has never left me. In the movies this manifests itself in backwards running, in flipping the frame either vertically or horizontally or in speeding up or slow motion or jump cut or some combination of these.

In adulthood I came to associate this complex of feelings with a marvellous quote from Walter Benjamin:

The Hassidim have a saying about the world to come. Everything there will be arranged just as it is with us. The room we have now will be just the same in the world to come; where our child lies sleeping, it will sleep in the world to come. The clothes we are wearing we shall also wear in the next world. Everything will be the same as here - only a little bit different.

(Benjamin et al., 1996)

7. Epistemology of art/conclusion

There has recently been a flurry of writing about the idea of art and knowledge (Schwab and Borgdorff, 2014; Gielen and Bruyne, 2013; Borgdorff, 2012; Busch, 2009; Buckley et al., 2009) particularly in the context of higher education. This has largely been motivated by the absorption of art schools into universities with government imposed expectations of an activity called research and by the recent creation of studio practice PhDs in art.

This arises from a two pronged, but connected, set of changes in the nature of higher education. On the one hand there is an increased marketisation and privatisation of provision where the interests of business increasingly set the tone (Brown and Carasso, 2013; Collini, 2012) and where universities increasingly become corporate organisations, factories for turning out ‘transferable’, i.e. monetisable, knowledge. The second prong arises from the absorption of smaller semi-vocational art colleges (not just visual arts— the same tendency is

apparent in music and theatre) into the university mainstream. Even where this does not imply institutional absorption, colleges are forced to take on the forms of the hegemonic institutions, so no undergraduate course is now complete without a written dissertation to guarantee its academic rigour. This has gone hand in hand with the increasing homogeneity imposed by the Bologna process (Lorenz, 2006). (And whilst much of the Bologna declaration features brave words about culture and values the game is given away by the just as frequent references to the “society’s demands”, “employability” and “international competitiveness” [ibid.] . In the field of art this has led to the adoption of the same hierarchy of degrees as in more traditional academic subjects: undergraduate degree, masters and PhD, particularly that strange creature, the PhD by practice.

The PhD by practice has raised all sorts of questions about the nature of the alleged (and required) *knowledge* that arises from the process of research involved in undertaking it. Research becomes a contested and shifting term and is found side by side with discussions of knowledge. A revealing indication of official thinking on the subject is to be found in the Arts and Humanities Research Council’s (AHRC) research funding guide which states:

Creative output can be produced, or practice undertaken, as an integral part of a research process as defined above. The Council would expect, however, this practice to be accompanied by some form of documentation of the research process, as well as some form of textual analysis or explanation to support its position and as a record of your critical reflection. Equally, creativity or practice may involve no such process at all, in which case it would be ineligible for funding from the Arts and Humanities Research Council.

(Arts & Humanities Research Council, 2015, p9)

A moment's reflection on this implies a bureaucratic re-definition of art. Glossing it might go as follows: 'We will award money to research only in the areas of art which can be justified by practices—i.e. written exegesis or explanation— which lie outside the practice of art itself. You must indicate to us (for it is not apparent) just how your art practice increases human knowledge.' Since these same premises underlie the work and commentary nature of research by practice at doctoral level, one understands that henceforward the practice of art is split into two. One segment is legitimate research which results in certifiable knowledge, and the other is not. However, in a society in which increasingly art practice is enmeshed with the academy (both in terms of it providing a home for many practicing artists and in the fact that the overwhelming proportion of newly minted artists now go through a formal university style training which results in their certification as such), the fact that the highest level of certification as competent (to teach, to research, to comment) might exclude large areas of art practice is surprising and disturbing.

It is interesting to note that even in areas closer to the traditional heart of academia voices have been raised questioning the idea of a research process as leading to knowledge—Collini (2012, p77) sums up an extended discussion of this with reference to the humanities in general with *"It is vital... to emphasize that the goal of work in the humanities...is better described as understanding than knowledge."* I quote this to emphasize the corporate/utilitarian reduction to, and of, "knowledge" is not unchallenged. However, in the particular context of art by practice, it goes no further towards squaring the circle since "understanding" here, in the sense Collini employs it, could prove as problematic a goal.

Within art education itself Scrivener (2002, p1), working from a similar set of observations and assumptions as those outlined above argues in an eponymously titled paper that “*The art object does not embody a form of knowledge*”. What is refreshing about Scrivener’s take on the question is its high level of generality—he attempts to come up with a general solution to the question in a manner very different to many recent participants in the debate. Whilst differing in some emphases with him there is very little in the substance of his presentation of the question with which I would disagree. I think he is profoundly mistaken in his conclusion, however, and that his error arises out of his somewhat narrow definition of knowledge, consonant as it is only with traditional epistemology, as ineluctably propositional in nature (Dancy, op.cit.) . I will shortly try and offer a way forward which retains the bulk of Scrivener’s analysis and his high level of generality but leads to a diametrically opposite conclusion.

This seems necessary to me because one searches in vain for any similar attempt to answer the question with a convincing *general* affirmative within the current literature. This is not to say that partial solutions and real insights are not present but that their force is often vitiated by an approach that is both too empirical and that does not recognise that this empiricism is rooted in a pragmatic response to current specific material social and political circumstances.

A not untypical example comes in Kathrin Busch’s “Artistic Research and the Poetics of Knowledge” (Busch, 2009). In common with many other similar contributions it does not present any single defended position but relies on a series of discussion questions serially posed and a second series of possible answers or assertions involving accretions of often contradictory appeals to authority with no real sustained argument. Many of these questions and assertions are logically exclusive of each other. At one moment Busch asserts bluntly that

“...here science is translated into art and artistic knowledge is generated about the sciences” (ibid., p2) without any attempt to define what such artistic knowledge might be. Earlier she refers to a *“...significant trend in contemporary art that focused on the production of knowledge rather than artwork”*. Again she does not make this concrete, nor investigate how such a process might still be regarded as art rather than as a pass at the discipline it pastiches (ibid., p1) .

A similar set of confusions obtains in the 2012 survey Conflict of the Faculties (Borgdorff, 2012). In common with Busch, Borgdorff surveys a number of conflicting viewpoints without ever proposing or suggesting a clear and general resolution. His arguments oscillate between two contradictory poles, with shadings in between: firstly that art involves a form of knowledge creation which is distinct to itself, affective and “non-conceptual”:

...artistic research seeks not so much to make explicit the knowledge that art is said to produce, but rather to provide a specific articulation of the pre-reflective, non-conceptual content of art. It thereby invites ‘unfinished thinking’. Hence, it is not formal knowledge that is the subject matter of artistic research, but thinking in, through, and with art.

(ibid., p 143)

Secondly, in complete contradistinction, he later promulgates a position similar to the AHRC one quoted above:

It is indeed the case that ‘what artists do’ cannot automatically be called research. In the debate about artistic research, the discussions often turn on the distinction between art practice in itself and art practice as research ... Few would contend that

each work of art or every artistic practice is an outcome of research in the emphatic sense of the word. I shall confine myself here to the question of which criteria must be satisfied if artistic research is to qualify as academic research.

(ibid., pp159-60)

Of course one would not want to exclude the survey as a methodology, nor to insist that real nuances are ignored. However, I think Scrivener (op.cit.) sets the bar high in offering and supporting with detailed argument a very general solution to the problem, even if his solution (and some of his specific argumentation, coming as it does from limiting the purview of his concept of “knowledge”) is one I would reject. That it is relatively easy to find sharp contradictions within those regarded as leading thinkers in the area taken in tandem with the signal lack of generalisation should at the least put us on our guard.

Sitting outside art education specific debates, there does exist a book length attempt to settle accounts with the question. *Art and Knowledge* by the philosopher James O. Young (2001) has the merit of aiming for a high level of generality and somewhat more confidence in a single, clearly argued, position. Unfortunately one of the consequences of Young’s argument is that, even were we convinced by what turns out to be a somewhat laboured defence of art as a kind of cognition of the world, we would have to dismiss a considerable amount of late twentieth century and contemporary art as “not art” as a result of the arguments about the representational nature of art he needs to deploy. This seems far too high a price to pay. Subjectively I reject it out of hand as it means spurning work which by my later arguments will be both art (as I will not be attempting any definition beyond ‘work presented to us as art’ and indeed possibly beyond this to ‘work found by us to be art’) and which work certainly

addresses me in the kind of knowledge producing way I will later sketch out. There are also incoherencies in Young's work stemming from an early espousal of an institutional definition of art mutating into the criterion-led one he is left with to sustain the edifice of his argument.

I am inclined to think that art does generate a kind of knowledge and I believe this to be a necessary part, indissolubly intertwined with something we might call aesthetic force, of what it means for something to be an artwork. Indeed, I will further argue that it is when the formal qualities of the artwork make for a striking aesthetic impact and hence unlock the knowledge creating possibilities of a work that we are most likely to characterize it as "good" or "successful". What I am entirely unconvinced of is that this knowledge generating facility can be reduced to the kind of propositional knowledge most valued by neo-liberals (or indeed, pre-monetisation-possibilities, traditional epistemologists). Nor do I believe that what the artwork offers us can be expressed solely in terms of Collini's *understanding*, although this is certainly part of the process. I believe that the kind of knowledge artworks can be said to generate lies at the core of what it means to be human and that it is the proper role for the academy to embrace this humanistic and non-propositional way of knowing, indeed that it serves to undermine the narrow focus upon economically valuable propositional knowledge that currently lies at the centre of much activity in the university.

I want to try and argue my way from something resembling first principles. I will examine what must be implicit in the idea of art as a producer of knowledge (and I word this carefully, for my argument will be that the artwork makes a species of knowledge generation possible rather than encoding knowledge within it—that it is in fact a kind of *mechanism* for the generation of a kind of knowledge). I will begin by examining ways in which art can be said uncontroversially to generate propositional knowledge but will find that each of these cannot

exhaust what makes art, art. I will go on to try and deduce what the nature of a knowledge producing art object must be. Having done this I will examine work by the philosopher Gilbert Ryle and some results in cognitive psychology to suggest that there are processes which ordinary usage would entirely acceptably term knowledge but which are not propositional in nature. I will then suggest by analogy a third kind of knowledge which can be legitimately said to be a necessary outcome of all successful artworks (and indeed one might use this feature as a test for the success or otherwise of a particular work, although this is not one which can be appealed to objectively).

Let us take a look at how a work of art might generate knowledge in the traditional epistemological sense of propositions, of *knowledge-that*, of statements about the world and its contents which can be said to be true or false or incoherent. Although, before we resume our ideological innocence we should pause to observe that even in the world of (above all) maths, logic and the “hard” sciences, that, although much activity is conducted around a kind of distillation of such knowledge into sets of true propositions, for these to be actively useful they need to be polluted by the world. Even the most pristine maths requires approximations when it is put to work and the real world has never seen a pure force, or a pure vacuum—everything is muddled up with everything else and any application of the pure ideas requires an understanding of this fact and an allowance for it. This becomes increasingly the case the more we move away from physics as the paradigm “hard” science through chemistry to biology, meteorology and into the social sciences where *knowledge-that* becomes altogether more problematic. It is also worth noting that the resources of logic which one might have thought completely underpinned and guaranteed the most pristine of proposition generating

human activity—mathematics—are far from watertight. From Russell’s paradox (Brown, 2008), through to Gödel’s incompleteness and undecidability (Boolos et al., 2002) through to Gregory Chaitin’s generation of true but unprovable mathematical facts (Chaitin, 2001) there is a massive hole at the heart of contemporary maths, a hole, however, which does not prevent the production of results which can be used to help explain the universe and predict outcomes within it.

What kind of *knowledge-that* does art uncontroversially offer us?

Firstly, it is clearly an experimental testing ground for the behaviour of its own materials in a purely material sense. How does pigment A behave on surface B? Does this combination of pigments degrade over time? Does a white made with lead or zinc or titanium have different qualities and what are they and how can they be quantified? How long does it take to cover a certain support with a certain medium?

Secondly, there is clearly something we can dub art historical *knowledge-that* (although this is subject to some of the social science uncertainties alluded to above which means that it might be more appropriate to assign high probabilities of things being correct, i.e. being *knowledge-that*, than certainties). How do we periodise art? What connecting matters are there that go together to form a style? How does topic relate to those funding the making of art? More generally, how do the economic and political circumstances of an epoch affect or condition why, how and in what form art is made and used? It seems reasonable to assume that these questions and others can be at least partly answered by the evidence largely culled from art-works. (Although this is never completely true, of course. At the least one will need a date of making—a fact external to the image—to begin to do history). There is also the

history of the reception of a particular image—the way it is used symbolically to support certain contentions about the world.

Thirdly it is a rich source, usually in conjunction with other kinds of sources, for other histories, of fashion, social and personal behaviour, geography, architecture, of war making, theology and politics.

Broadly speaking, these are incontestable generators of *knowledge-that*. Do any of them go to the heart of what is for an artist to make art? That is, can we claim that the production of such knowledge is a not just a necessary, but a necessary and sufficient condition for making art? It seems unlikely. An art which existed simply to fuel art history would be horribly impoverished and tautological and although it is undoubtedly true that one of the functions of some kinds of art has been that of chronicling images for the future this is only true of certain periods and certain artists and by no means the whole of their practice. Likewise the notion that art exists simply to provide a playground for experimentation with its own materials simply does not chime with the actual importance of artistic practices in our own and every other society.

Another possibility which has to be disposed of is raised by Busch: “...*art that understands itself as research...[where] artistic work does not claim to produce a “work” in the classic sense of the term but rather (often critical) knowledge*” (ibid., p 3).

Undoubtedly artworks of this nature exist (a paradigmatic example is Haacke’s ‘Shapolsky et al. Manhattan Real Estate Holdings, a Real-Time Social System, as of May 1, 1971 [(Haacke, 1971)] but a number of knotty questions arise—one is that even if this approach is unproblematic in other ways it can only represent a tiny fragment of the artworks currently

being made unless (equally problematically) a prescriptive approach is being taken here—that this is what art *should* be. Furthermore, where art adopts procedures from social or other sciences it poses the question of what degree of effectiveness within the “home” discipline the artwork has—if it is *less* effective than standard methodologies then it fails as research (although it might succeed performatively as art; it could certainly topicalise notions of failure); if it is *equivalently or more* effective then it offers itself henceforward as a technique *within* the home discipline; this is related to a third possibility, akin to design or illustration, where the visual or artistic practice ceases to be best conceived of as art and becomes an applied form of visual thinking—a tool. So, when drawing is used in topology to help to visualise structures of which it is difficult for us to conceive, ones that exist in four or more dimensions, for example, it is the explanatory, not the aesthetic qualities of the drawing that do the work. Of course, mathematical drawings can be extremely suggestive and beautiful and can be re-appropriated to do aesthetic work. At this point, however, their explanatory force becomes subordinate or even irrelevant. A failure to understand this has led to work full of category errors where art is said to “deal with” mathematics and particularly topology. A review of a recent exhibition at the ICA, Tauba Auerbach’s ‘The New Ambidextrous Universe’, epitomises this with its claim that “*It’s testament to Auerbach’s art that she is able to distil such complex theories into the sparsely arranged gallery*” (Davies, 2014, not paginated) when it is evident to anyone with even a modicum of mathematical training that she does no such thing.

Let us assume, though, that there is another kind of *knowledge-that* which is a necessary and sufficient component of all art practices across all cultures. We do not need to surmise the

nature of this knowledge to reflect upon what its mere existence would imply, neither do we need to spend time working with any further definitions of art.

Firstly, note that *knowledge-that* by its very nature as propositions or sets of propositions is without exception expressible in language. The implication of this would therefore be that each and every work of art can be reduced to a set of linguistic statements about the world which can be assessed for truth or falsity. This suggests that works of art are at worst a coded form of such statements or at best “carriers” for them where the artistic superstructure is merely decorative or functional but not the centrally important element of the work.

Most of us would feel inclined to halt here because this description is so contrary to our powerful intuitions and our actual experience of works of art (even, one might add, *literary* works), but matters actually get worse, because if art is simply a means of making true statements about the world, this suggests the possibility that there might be some recipe or set of instructions for the construction of “good” art, which involves taking truths about the world and its contents (and let us be generous and assume these are nuanced and complex truths) and then finding the appropriate visual (or sonic, or conceptual or computer code) vehicle in which to dress them, somewhat like sugaring a pill.

At best, this makes visual art a sub-genre of literature (and I am certainly not denying there are whole periods of art history and practice of which this is *to some extent* true); at worst it decouples art from any sense of surprise or wonder and makes it plodding and bureaucratic. Aesthetic questions become secondary or at least separate from what becomes the primary question of encoding verbal meaning—*knowledge-that*.

If art in general provides knowledge then it must provide something other than *knowledge-that*.

At this point in the game I am at one with the arguments of Scrivener, who is a good deal more peremptory than me:

I will not claim that the visual art object cannot communicate knowledge - it can. Instead, I will argue that this knowledge is typically of a superficial nature and cannot account for the deep insights that art is usually thought to endow into emotions, human nature and relationships, and our place in the World, etc.

(Scrivener, op.cit. p1)

but henceforth we part company.

My next section discusses a different kind of knowledge. I include it not because I think it is a candidate for what *knowledge-that* signally fails to do with regard to art but because it provides evidence that there are kinds of knowledge other than *knowledge-that* for which there are both philosophical arguments and experimental psychological evidence. The mere existence of this other kind of knowledge blows a hole in any claims to exclusivity of *knowledge-that* and leaves open the possibility that there may be other kinds of knowledge at least one of which can be unequivocally associated in some way with art in general. On the way we might observe that this second kind of knowledge is more particular to a single human being, less alienable and hence less commodifiable.

In his 1946 paper “Knowing How and Knowing That” the philosopher Gilbert Ryle (2009), starting with common usage of the verb ‘to know’, draws a sharp distinction between a

definition of intelligence which sees it “...as a special faculty, the exercises of which are those specific internal acts which are called acts of thinking, namely **the operations of considering propositions**” (ibid., p222, my emphasis) in opposition to which he

“tr[ies] to show that intelligence is directly exercised..in some practical performances...and that an intelligent performance need incorporate no “shadow-act” of contemplating regulative propositions” (ibid., p223). More concretely, for example,

“When a person knows how to do things of a certain sort (e.g. makes jokes, conduct battles or behave at funerals) his knowledge is actualised or exercised in what he does.. It is not exercised...in the propounding of propositions” (ibid., p228). It is important to emphasise that Ryle is not denying that success in any of these endeavours can in principle at least be explained propositionally but that “*the propositional acknowledgement of rules, reasons or principles is not the parent of the intelligent application of them; it is a step-child of that application*” (ibid., p 229). Having laid out his stall Ryle devotes the rest of the paper to showing that the separation of acts which can be characterised by ‘knowing-how’ into an initial contemplation of propositions followed by actions guided by these results end in absurdity.

Anyone who has ever learned to ride a bike, type or play a musical instrument will be at least open intuitively to the force of Ryle’s argument and indeed there is within modern cognitive psychology a distinction corresponding to his *knowing-that/knowing-how* distinction in the form of declarative and procedural memory and knowledge (Anderson, 2010).

The bike example indeed appears in a 1985 paper:

Consider for a moment how to ride a bicycle. Our ability to articulate just how we co-ordinate steering and pedaling (sic.), how exactly we maintain balance at different speeds, exactly how and when we lean into a turn, and the other mechanics of riding is quite limited

(Cohen et al., 1985)

The authors go on to describe a series of experiments using a group of volunteers with memory deficits/impairments of various kinds which clearly prevent them engaging at a high level with propositional knowledge but who are capable of acquiring and retaining the skills associated with the practical solution of a complex puzzle (The Towers of Hanoi), even when *they cannot remember that they have even attempted this before.*

In the final discussion the authors remark

The way in which this procedural memory system preserves the effects of experience is taken to be akin to what Bruner called “memory without record” which, he argued, captures the way in which encounters are converted into some process that changes the nature of an organism, changes his skills, or changes the rules by which he operates, but are virtually inaccessible in memory as specific encounters. By contrast, the declarative memory system conforms to the traditional memory metaphor of experimental psychology by mediating the encoding of parsed events, sorting and maintaining encoded information in some explicitly accessible form and subsequently retrieving the stored information on demand.

(ibid., p69)

This is striking experimental confirmation of Ryle's philosophical insight and arguments.

Although I am not proposing *knowledge-how* as an exemplar of art generated knowledge it is worth making a few observations.

It is personal. Although it might arguably be capable of being, if not encapsulated, then at least converted into a set of propositions, these are not going to be effective (or in some cases possible— imagine trying to render knowing how to perform any of the Boulez piano sonatas, or how to do a ski jump, as a usable series of propositions) ways of passing this knowledge on to others.

If this kind of personal (but testable) knowledge exists and we are alerted to its existence by use in ordinary language, it is possible that other such ways of knowing also exist and that a fruitful way of searching for them might be to look at how we use the verb 'to know' in our everyday existence.

I would like to suggest we examine expressions such as 'I know how you/she/he they feel(s)', 'I know that if A happened I would have to B', 'Self-knowledge', 'It's a painting/novel/string quartet I know very well', 'I knew how upset she was', 'Knows the ways of the world', 'knows the French, Chinese, Russian people', 'savoir-faire', 'I could not understand a word but I knew very well what she meant'. I would like to suggest further that these phrases are close kin to ones where we might not ordinarily use the word knowledge or the verb to know such as 'I feel your pain', 'I can imagine what it would be like', 'Can you imagine what it would be like?' These usages involve neither propositional *knowledge-that* nor Ryle's *knowledge-how* ('I know *how* you feel' is a false friend— Ryle's *knowledge-how* could be more accurately glossed as *knowledge-how-to*).

The kinds of attributes we associate these phrases with are things like empathy, imagination, experience, wisdom, discrimination, judgement, affect— add your own.

I want to suggest that it is in this field, one suggested by the quote from Chris Harman in chapter one, that art comes into its own as a generator of something one can genuinely call knowledge (what Harman characterizes as “being true to the world” [op.cit. p 154]).

There is a conservative reading of Harman’s point (often found in a rather puritanical version of the Marxist tradition) which associates this “truth to the world” explicitly with realism and often a very narrow sort of realism (for example Lukasz’s privileging of the 19th century novel [Adorno and Jameson, 2007 ; Lukács, 2006]).

Let us note that Harman specifically includes areas of cultural activity such as music that this kind of theory finds very difficult to deal with. Let us also note the range of Harman’s list of affects— ‘torment, exhilaration, contentedness’, which suggests his list, far from being exhaustive, is a kind of inclusive triangulation of affective possibilities to which art might “sensitise” us. I want to try and flesh out a little bit what this assertion—which certainly I feel intuitively to be true—might mean in practice and how it might work.

Let us take that word “sensitise” and try and unpack its ordinary language meanings.

Sensitivity in both the context of human beings and their feelings or expectations and of topic or object implies a willingness to understand, a delicacy in using the products of that understanding, a reluctance to act without understanding, a keenness to be aware of fine discriminations and an openness to nuance and empathy.

It bears repeating—one can be sensitive in one’s dealings with the feelings of a fellow human being and this sensitivity requires empathy or the ability to imagine correctly, to have knowledge of, what those feelings are. Likewise, in one’s sensitivity to a book, a painting or a piece of music, a similar kind of knowledge creating/accumulating/deploying imagination is necessary.

Returning to the congeries of expressions above we note that behind their apparent disorder there is a close relationship between many of them and the fleshing out of sensitivity we have just performed.

I want to suggest that the kind of knowledge art in general gives us is something that might be called *knowledge-with* and that this term is an elastic one, stretching from, on the one hand, empathy with human feelings, this empathy itself ranging from a deeper and richer engagement with the feelings of everyday existence, both commonplace, and those of life’s major turning points, to imaginative projection into the world of those different to us by virtue of history, geography, race, gender, sexual orientation, etc., and furthermore a kind of imaginative empathy with *things*, with *structures* of contrast, of tension and release and of how our sensual engagement ties in with our personal self-knowledge and embodiment. A concrete example being how our response to a particular colour or sound combination might have its roots in our own bodily experience and memories (but also, because we are not islands, how this response may have overlaps with the responses of others). Furthermore I do not believe it is trivial to suggest that there is a kind of knowledge involved in the experience of how two colours or sounds interact with each other in a concrete piece of artistic work. When we examine, commune with, say, Malevich’s *Black Square* we are sorting, sifting, putting what it is and how it makes us feel, into a kind of order, into a place in the world. At

the end of the process our *knowledge-with* it or sense of how it fits, what it does, is greater than it was before.

The key thing about all this is that the *knowledge-with* generated by the art object is not something encoded into it by the artist which the recipient then drinks in through a kind of artistic telepathy but arises out of the confrontation with and examination of that object, where *object*, whether real or virtual, is the key word. As I wrote in 2012,

Works of art are not messages but objects. They don't say things nor ask questions, nor assert, nor investigate. Neither do they as objects have messages somehow encoded or embedded within them. To assert otherwise is a massive category error.

As objects they may of course be brought in evidence, copied, become conversation pieces, be described well, be described badly, be described perversely, be seen, be half seen, be missed, be lost, be found, be written about, point to things, be compared and many other things, some of which have not yet been imagined.

Further, artworks are fuzzily-bordered and not necessarily of a physical or temporal piece - the object is not simply the object (and 'the object' might not be physical but words, a concept, a sound recording, a protocol) but everything that accretes as a result of it – commentary, jokes, other artworks made in response.

If mathematical terminology wasn't so regularly and toe-curlingly abused in the arts, we might refer to them as manifolds, not necessarily connected.

(Szpakowski, 2012a)

To firm all this up I think we need one more idea. A small anecdotal diversion will, I hope, help to make my argument clearer. I have a background in mathematics—my first degree was in the subject and as I was struggling my way towards what you read here, having got as far as Ryle and *knowledge-how*, I came across a sentence in his book *The Concept of Mind* (Ryle and Dennett, 2000) which grew out of the paper I discussed above. It is in the chapter on emotions when he is discussing what he calls avowal expressions such as “I feel depressed”.

He says:

people have to learn how to use avowal expression appropriately and they may not learn these lessons very well. They learn them from ordinary discussions of the moods of others and from much more fruitful sources as novels and the theatre

(*ibid.*, p 90, my emphasis).

The idea of works of art as models for learning behaviours gave rise to a sudden leap and small epiphany, not strictly completely logical but certainly motivated by what I had read.

What hit me suddenly was the congruence between a work of art and a scientific or mathematical model—that is a constructed object (which can be either physical or ideal or both) which does not itself *transmit* or *encode* knowledge but allows us to *interrogate* or *observe* it to enable us to *derive* knowledge. It is important to stress the huge range of such models from scaled down physical copies of complex systems, to complex computer programs, to series of equations.

It seemed to me that this was an extraordinarily fruitful way of thinking about the art object in general. It is a *thing* which in some sense (and this sense will be as broad if not broader than its scientific/mathematical/computational sibling) *models* a part of the world we live in. This modelling carries with it questions of skills and formal beauty, part of the aesthetic charge of a work, but as a model of part of the world, it allows us to focus upon it to discuss it and derive from it knowledge about that world. The knowledge we derive (and I suspect that the elegance and effectiveness of the model as a vehicle for this process forms an indivisible part of the aesthetic charge of the piece) is primarily the knowledge I have described as *knowledge-with* although, as noted previously, this does not exclude other kind of knowledge sometimes being available. Indeed, in a kind of feedback loop, the elegance of our access to this knowledge in turn might ultimately form part of the aesthetic character and value of a given piece. For example, when we speak of a piece of work being to some extent “about” its materials I think what is happening here is a coming together of specifically invoked *knowledge-that* with a broader *knowledge-with*.

None of this is to deny the indisputable fact that personal style plays a role in the construction of these models and that in some sense we borrow the eyes or ears of another when we examine their models of parts of the world.

Does all this seem too fanciful? My initial epiphanic thrill was quickly accompanied by a degree of anxiety but I was encouraged to discover that there is an extensive literature in the philosophy of science with the commerce running the other way. That is, that writings in the field of aesthetics and particularly in the area of the philosophy of literature have been extensively called upon to support explanations of why scientific and mathematical models might be justifiably used. (Contessa, 2010, p215–229; French, 2010, p231–249; Frigg and

Hunter, 2010; Frigg, 2009, p251–268; Godfrey-Smith, 2009, p101–116; Toon, 2009, p301–315)

Personally I am somewhat sceptical—both of the implication that the matter is so firmly resolved on the arts side of matters that it might offer a guide to scientists and also that there is not a perfectly good starting point for those scientists already in the simple question of whether a model in science, physical or ideal, gives solutions that enable successful practice in the real world.

It is important to emphasise that my notion of the artwork as model is not simply a pleasing metaphor. The kind of “*reading-off*” that takes place will be very different to that of its scientific sibling—qualitative rather than quantitative, much more rooted in the particular; but I am asserting that this is a process that *actually takes place* and that the richness or density of what we read off— what one might characterise as *interpretive fecundity*—has been, is and will continue to be part of our criteria for the success of an art work. A way of contrasting the two activities, art and science, would be to observe that science aims always for greater and more comprehensive generalization whereas art is by nature particular and anecdotal, even where one might find more general principles at stake behind the specific piece.

The way of navigating the world that comes with having solved a number of connected but resistant-to-generalisation problems, particularly those associated with ethical questions, has been traditionally known as wisdom. Folk philosophy has always—correctly, I think—insisted upon the possibility (though not the inevitability) of a profound gulf between knowledge and wisdom. Clearly it is better to possess both.

A final point connected to the kind of ‘test of practice’ I discussed above in connection with the scientific model is this: does a greater sensitivity to the broad range of things that art might model, amongst which number the thoughts, the feelings, the modes of living of other, often very different, beings and a clearer knowledge of how ordered sensory input chimes with and can help us to understand our bodies and psyches; does the possession of a more focused ability to look, to perceive and to imagine, do these help us to live more comfortably, ethically and fully in the world? The answer is indisputably yes. Therefore *knowledge-with* can be shown to have practical efficacies different from but entirely commensurate with those made possible by *knowledge-that*. Indeed one might reasonably argue that *knowledge-with* is a necessary precondition for the humane and sensible deployment of *knowledge-that*.

Finally, a broader thought. Everything changes. Everything dies. Human beings die. Cultures die or mutate almost beyond recognition. Art attempts to structure human perception and ideas, to keep a record, to preserve, to shore up and create “true-to-the-world” constructs with order and coherence in the broadest anti-entropic sense against forgetting, change and death.

I have argued that the criterion for the success with which it does this is a human one but an inter-subjectively human one of how much it successfully acts as a model for the production of *knowledge-with* whilst simultaneously generating aesthetic interest and satisfaction. To venture into the territory of definitions of art is giving oneself a lifetime’s work or more. I claim that a necessary condition for art-hood is this deployment of structural and formal force to create an aesthetically potent model which also enables the generation of *knowledge-with*. This basic work done, the resulting construct can also bring other attributes and dimensions into its orbit—those dimensions of *knowledge-that* which may or may not be present—technique, knowledge of materials, record-keeping. The measure of the success of an artwork

is then a collective judgement that it does all of this, manages this complex balancing act, with a high degree of success, that it is both aesthetically engaging and that the “penumbra” it generates is rich and continuously productive.

In this commentary I have tried to do three apparently somewhat separate things.

- One is to give an account of the context, genesis and making of the *Scenes of Provincial Life* sequence and to indicate in what respects it might be regarded as an original (and for obvious reasons—that I regard art making as a social process across a historical continuum—I use the word very specifically and advisedly) contribution qua artwork.
- The second is to step back a little and to offer one possible framework—Zuihitsu—for regarding the work and then absorbing it into ongoing dialogue, thought and practice (and of course there will be many other possibilities) .
- The third thing is to attempt to sketch out a general justification for considering any artwork to be a generator of a kind of knowledge, which I dubbed ‘*knowledge-with*’.

The three strands may be brought together by the reader in judging whether *Scenes of Provincial Life* justifies itself concretely; *works*, is a *success*, is *good art*—and hence *generates new knowledge* or perhaps: *works*, is a *success*, *generates new knowledge*—and hence is *good art* .

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Appendix - Offline Gallery showings/Screenings of work from “Scenes of Provincial Life”, 2005- 15

2015

July 2 ‘Open Air Song with Found Bagpipe Obbligato’ in *One Minute Vol 8* @ Bloc Projects Sheffield

29 -31 May ‘Open Air Song with Found Bagpipe Obbligato’ & ‘Running Man’ in *One Minute Vols 7 & 8*, screened by Directors Lounge Contemporary Art and Media (Berlin) @ Contemporary Art Ruhr, Germany

May 15 ‘Open Air Song with Found Bagpipe Obbligato’ in *One Minute Vol 8* @ Liverpool Small Cinema as part of Liverpool LightNight 2015

Jan 24&25 ‘I am Getting a Cat’ in Artist Film Screenings 2015 @ Karst Art Centre, Plymouth, UK

2014

Dec 06, 2014 - Dec 21, 2014 ‘A Christmas Medley from Barnsley Town Centre’ shown in *Videorover archive* as part of Videorover: Season 9 / Workshop Series @ NURTUREart Gallery, Brooklyn, NY, USA

Nov 28 & 29 ‘Open Air Song with Found Bagpipe Obbligato’ in *One Minute Vol 8* @ Galeria Art Affairs, Gdansk, Poland

Nov 20 ‘Open Air Song with Found Bagpipe Obbligato’ in *One Minute Vol 8* in Nightcinema @ Sleepwalkers Film Festival Tallinn Estonia

Nov 1/ 2; 8/9; 15/16; 22/23 ‘Open Air Song with Found Bagpipe Obbligato’ in *One Minute Vol 8* @ Furtherfield Gallery, Finsbury Park London UK

Sept 3 & 13 ‘I am Getting a Cat’ in *Synthetic Zero* @ Bronx Art space NY, USA

Aug 15 ‘On a Train’ in *Presentism* @ Whitespace Gallery, Atlanta, Georgia, USA

May 15 – June 11 ‘Running Man’ in *One Minute Vol 7* @ The Chester Film Co-op , UK

May 2 'Running Man' in *One Minute Vol 7* @ Rogue Artists Studios Project Space Manchester, UK

April 17 'Running Man' in *One Minute Vol 7* @ Ginsberg Film Festival, Steve Biko Centre, Ginsberg South Africa

March 25 'Running Man' in *One Minute Vol 7* @ Plymouth Arts Centre, UK

March 8 - 29 'Running Man' in *One Minute Vol 7* at Chester Film Co-op.

Feb 17 -21 'A Christmas Medley from Barnsley Town Centre' in *Videorover #7* at the Pratt DDA Gallery Brooklyn NY USA

Feb 13 - 15 'Running Man' in *One Minute Vol 7* at Bloc Projects Sheffield

Jan 25 & 26; Feb 1 & 2 'Running Man' & 'Blossom' in *One Minute Vol 7* & *One Minute Remixed*

12- 4 pm , Furtherfield Gallery , Finsbury Park, London

2013

Nov 21 –Dec 19 'A Christmas Medley from Barnsley Town Centre' and 'Madrid, 18/12/2011: Carol Singers; a Woman Smoking; a Flying Fish' in *Click & Spill*, Artemis Project Space York UK

Dec 14- 24 'A Christmas Medley from Barnsley Town Centre' in *Videorover #6*, NURTUREart Gallery, Brooklyn, NY, USA

Oct 25 – Nov 2 'Stavanger Street View' in Screen City Festival, Stavanger, Norway

Oct 12 'Numbers' in *One Minute Vol6* 20/21 Visual Arts Centre , Scunthorpe, North Lincs UK

Oct 11 'Recitation' in *One Minute Vol 5* @ 20/21 Visual Arts Centre , Scunthorpe, North Lincs UK Oct

July 20 'Blossom' in *One Minute Vol 5* @ 20/21 Visual Arts Centre , Scunthorpe, North Lincs UK

May 24-27 2013 'Numbers' in *One Minute Vol6*, Hong Kong Contemporary Art Fair, China

May 4 'Numbers' in *One Minute Vol6*, Magmart festival @ CAM, Casoria Contemporary Art Museum, near Naples, Italy.

Feb 2 & 3 'Numbers' in *One Minute Vol 6*; 'Recitation' in *One Minute Vol 5* @ Furtherfield Gallery, London

Jan 26 & 27 'Blossom' in *One Minute Vol 4* @ Furtherfield Gallery, London

2012

Nov 24 'Numbers' in *One Minute Vol6* @ The Museum of Club Culture Hull, UK

Oct 25 & 26 'Numbers' in *One Minute Vol6* @ Aid and Abet, Cambridge, UK

Sept 27 'Numbers' in *One Minute Vol6* @ London Underground Film Sessions The Horse Hospital, London

10 & 11 August 'Blossom' in *One Minute* at 'Welcome to the Treasuredome', Cultural Olympiad,

Weymouth UK

4 – 26 April 'Blossom' and 'Recitation' in *One Minute Vols 4 & 5* Peloton Gallery @ 13 Gibbons St, Redfern, Sydney, Australia

1 March 'The Commercial Road Breaks' in *Nine-to-Five-to-Nine* @ 14 Park Square Leeds UK. Curated by Yvonne Carmichael for Art in Unusual Places

25 Jan 'Recitation' in *One Minute Vol 5* at Directors Lounge, Naherholung Sternchen, Berlin, Germany

25 Jan 'Recitation' in *One Minute Vol 5* at Artists Cine Club at FACT, Liverpool, UK

2011

14th -18th Dec 'Palindrome' at Madatac #3, Cineteca Matadero, Madrid, Spain

8 Dec 'Recitation' in *One Minute Vol 5* screened at Void Cinema, Sheffield Hallam University, Sheffield, UK

28 Nov 'Recitation' in *One Minute Vol 5* screened by Vertical Cinema at Gwdihw Cafe Bar

Cardiff, Wales.

1 Nov -14 Jan 2012 'An Essay on Beauty' in a programme curated by the Cutting Room at the CAST bar, Nottingham Playhouse, UK

13 -16 October 'The Lost French Horn Player' in *Festival Internacional de Videoarte*

Casa de la Cultura de Adrogué, Buenos Aires, Argentina

8 Oct 'Recitation' in *One Minute Vol 5* as part of GLIMMER : The Hull International Short Film Festival at The Museum of Club Culture, Hull, UK

9-11 Sept 'The Village Pump – A Short Opera' shown as part of the Wikipedia Art installation at *New Forms Festival*, Waldorf Hotel, Vancouver , Canada.

17 August 'Recitation' in *One Minute Vol 5* as part of The London Underground Film Sessions at The Horse Hospital London

15 & 16 July 'Incident' in *Fast Movies Parcours Urbain*, Avignon, France

Curated by Benoît Labourdette for La Manufacture.

15 July 'Recitation' in *One Minute Vol 5* at Aid & Abet Cambridge UK

6 April 'Blossom' in *One Minute Vol 4* The London Underground Film Festival at The Horse Hospital London

23 March 'Blossom' in *One Minute Vol 4* Flatpack and Fierce Festival at VIVID, Birmingham, UK

2 March 'Building & Sky Diary' in *ArcheTime Film Screening* The WIX Lounge New York City USA

28 Jan & 12 Feb 'Incident' shown as part of *Fast Movies*, curated by Benoît Labourdette, at the Festival de Liège, Belgium

2010

17 Dec 'The Lost French Horn Player' at *The Zone*, Blank Gallery, Brighton UK

- 7 Nov 'Blossom' in *One Minute Vol 4* Kinofest, National Museum of Contemporary Art, Bucharest Romania
- 20/21 October 'Untilted' & 'The Angel of History , Lost in East London' in *IVth IN/OUT Festival* Łaźnia Centre for Contemporary Art, Gdańsk, Poland
- 'Untilted' selected for curated DVD to promote future Łaźnia Centre events.
- 19 October 'Blossom' in *One Minute Vol 4* Plymouth Arts Centre Plymouth UK
- 18 October 'Blossom' in *One Minute Vol 4* Stew Gallery Norwich UK
- 10 October 'Three Short Films'(October/Untilted/The Plain Sense of Things) *The Scientist 4th International Video Art Festival* , Ferrara, Italy
- 8/9 October 'Jump Loop', 'Kingfisher' & 'Shadow Loop' *Short Shorts* BBC Big Screen Millennium Square Leeds UK
- 30 September -15 October 'An Essay on Beauty' in *Communicating More Authentically* Nottingham Playhouse UK curated by The Cutting Room
- 24 September 'Blossom' in *One Minute Vol 4* Paradox, Showroom Cinema, Sheffield UK
- 18 September 'Blossom' in *One Minute Vol 4* in *Futureproof* , Marseille Project Gallery, Marseille France
- 7-9 September 'Blossom' in *One Minute Vol 4* Ukrainian Arts Festival Koktebel Ukraine
- 10-24 August 'The Dancers' showing as part of Storyline Transports *Shadow and Light Festival*, Chicago USA
- July 'Blossom' in *One Minute Vol 4* BBC Big Screens Manchester and Liverpool (on all BBC Big Screens in August)
- 2 -4 July 'Blossom' in *One Minute Vol 4* Directors Lounge Contemporary Art & Media @ Contemporary Art Ruhr, Essen, Germany.
- 9 June 'Building & Sky Diary' *ArcheTime Film Festival* , The Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts EFA Project Space , 323 W 39 St , New York City, USA

4 June 'Blossom' in *One Minute Vol 4* Directors Lounge Contemporary Art & Media @ The Meinblau, Berlin, Germany

.14 May 'Blossom' in *One Minute Vol 4* PRISM @ Sheffield Independent Film

6, 8,9 May 'Blossom' included in *One Minute Vol 4* screenings curated by Kerry Baldry

(Preview 6 May) as part of Crouch End Open Moors Bar Crouch End, London

16 - 25 April 'Untilted' *The EYE-KEA project* , Basement Project Space, Cork City, Ireland

26 March 'Incident' Rencontres du Court Montpellier France

21 March 'D-D-D-Dance' Projection Cine Pocket, Bar du Matin, Brussels , Belgium

15 Feb 'Corps' *Because the Night* @ 6thInternational Director's Lounge Berlin Germany

6 &7 Feb 'Corps' *Because the Night* @ Aurora Picture Show, Houston Texas USA

17 January 'The Dancers' *Ausform Performative Screen* @ Cube Microplex Bristol UK

3 December 2009 – 27th February 2010 'Jump Loop', 'Kingfisher' & 'Shadow Loop' *Short Shorts* 42 New Briggate Leeds UK

2009

23 Nov 'Incident' Festival Pocket Films @ 19th Semana De Cine Experimental de Madrid, Spain

25 Nov 'Incident' Festival Pocket Films @ Trioletto, Montpellier, France

11-15 Nov 'Incident' Festival Pocket Films @ Mobilefest MIS Museu da Imagem e do Som, Sao Paulo, Brazil

7 Nov 'Incident' Festival Pocket Films @ Post Flux Media Night, Bozar Centre for Fine Arts Brussels, Belgium

October 19 – Nov 13 '**Corps**' *Because the Night* Guggenheim Gallery at Chapman College, Orange, California

October 9-11 'Home and Away' *The Scientist 3rd International Video Art Festival* , Ferrara, Italy

October 3 'Incident' @ *Cologne Conference 2009*, Cologne, Germany.

June 11-14 short film 'Incident' awarded the Prix du Jury in the *Compétition Internationale*, Pocket Films Festival 2009, Forum des Images, Paris, France. Also shown: 'Old Paint' & 'Rain Dance'

April 6 – May 5 'Broxbourne' and 'Grid #1' *Something About Nothing* Kuhn Fine Arts Gallery, Marion, Ohio

April 16 '9 Third Avenue Haiku' *Terminal Short Video Festival* Austin Peay State University Tennessee

March 15 –April 12 'Orpheus' *Bits and Pieces* Hyde Park Art Center, Chicago. Special screening and talk April 2.

Jan 10 – Feb 28 selection from Scenes of Provincial Life *Moab Video Project* Locust Projects, Miami

2008

Nov 22 - Dec 6 'Incident' *Europa Neurotisch* Petersburg Project Space Amsterdam

Nov 21 -28 'Il Ritorno Di Ulisse in Patria' in *Pocket Films Festival 2008* @ Semana de Cine Experimental de Madrid

Nov 4 2008 - Jan 4 2009 'Cherry Tree in October Wind #1, #2 & #3' *Pixelpops! 2008* Krannert Art

October Selection from Scenes of Provincial Life programmed for a month on MAC21 TV station, Moab, Utah, USA as part of *Moab Video Project* <http://www.kzmu.org/moabvideoproject/moab/october.html>

25 Sept – 9 Oct 'Il Ritorno Di Ulisse in Patria' in *Pocket Films Festival 2008* @ Rio de Janeiro international film festival

Aug 9 & 10 'Found Poem' *Microcinema International* at *Virgin Mobile Festival* Pimlico Racecourse Baltimore USA

June 13-15 'Il Ritorno Di Ulisse in Patria' in *Compétition Grand Ecran* at *Pocket Films Festival 2008* Forum des Images/Centre Pompidou, Paris, France

March 11-15 'D-D-D-Dance' *Pocket Films Festival 2007* @ Vidéoformes festival Clermont-Ferrand, France

Jan 18 - 1 Feb 'Call and Response' *Inter Alia* Chelmsford UK

2007

Sept 21 –Dec 31 “Recitation”, “Self Portrait With Scanner” & “Numbers” in *1800 Frames Take 3* Jersey City Museum NJ USA

Aug 2 “Recitation”, “Self Portrait With Scanner” & “Numbers” in *1800 Frames Take 3* Woods Hole Film Festival Woods Hole, MA USA

July 25 – 27 *An Enemy of the People* in *untitled video program #1* Scope Hamptons Wainscott NY USA

July 13 - 29 D-D-D-Dance *Pocket Films Festival* @ dLux media arts, The Australian Centre for Photography Sydney Australia

June 23 Funny Ideas in Open Source Workshop Darklight Symposium Dublin Ireland

June 8 - 10 D-D-D-Dance *Pocket Films Festival* Centre Pompidou Paris France

June 9 -10 Woodland Oratory, The Garden May 20th & Home Movie in *Pixelodeon*, American Film Institute Los Angeles CA. USA

April 28 - June 9 Self Portrait on my 50th Birthday, Walking from Harlow to Bethnal Green along the Rivers Stort & Lee in *Fingers and Codes* Eyedrum Center Atlanta GA. USA

March 11 “Recitation”, “Self Portrait With Scanner” & “Numbers” in *1800 Frames Take 3* Pioneer Theater East Village NYC

Feb 22 - 26 “Recitation”, “Self Portrait With Scanner” & “Numbers” in *1800 Frames Take 3* Scope New York Lincoln Center NYC

2006

Dec 14 - Jan 18 "Recitation", "Self Portrait With Scanner" & "Numbers" in *1800 Frames Take 3* City Without Walls Gallery Newark NJ. USA

Dec 15 "Found Poem" Mobile Exposure 2006 Mesa Arts Center AZ. USA

Dec 13 "Found Poem" Mobile Exposure 2006 Central Cinema Seattle WA USA

Dec 5 -10 "An Enemy of the People" *Brityjsko Polska Manifestacja/British Polish Manifestations* The Foundry London UK

Dec 2 "Santa Monica" & "Unfinished" *Open Source Shorts* Galway Arts Centre ROI

Nov 3 "Found Poem" Mobile Exposure 2006 Clone Digital Film Festival Helsinki Finland

Oct 25 "Found Poem" Mobile Exposure 2006 Project 101 Paris

Aug 2 "Found Poem" Mobile Exposure 2006 Dallas Video Festival TX USA

June 22 "tales heard at my grandfather's knee" in *Eyeteasers – Video Art Podified* Escape Artists Society Vancouver, Canada

June 9 - July 9 all movies included in "*some fragments*" installation in *Net Reality* @ Shrewsbury Museum & Art Gallery, Shrewsbury UK

April 15 - May 13 all movies included in "*some fragments*" installation in *Net Reality* @ Brindley Arts Centre, Runcorn UK

Feb 17 "Found Poem", "Homage to Stan Brakhage", "Train Entering Liverpool Street Station" & "Transfiguration" Mobile Exposure 2005 Modified Arts Phoenix AZ USA

Feb 8 "Found Poem", "Homage to Stan Brakhage", "Train Entering Liverpool Street Station" & "Transfiguration" Mobile Exposure 2005 Central Cinema Seattle WA USA

Jan 19 - Mar 3 all movies included in “*some fragments*” installation in *Net Reality* @ Space4 Peterborough UK

2005

Dec 29 *Mobile Exposure 2005* Miami Beach Cinematheque FL USA

Nov 12 – Dec 18 all movies included in “*some fragments*” installation in *Net Reality* @ Q Arts Derby UK

August “Found Poem”, “Homage to Stan Brakhage”, “Train Entering Liverpool Street Station” & “Transfiguration” included in screening tour and DVD ‘mobile exposure 2005’ curated for Microcinema international by Patrick Lichty.

July 23 – Oct 19 all movies included in “*some fragments*” installation in *Net Reality* @ 20-21 Visual Arts Centre Scunthorpe UK

July 16 – August 6 *Cell Outs and Phonies (revival)* Niche Gallery Los Angeles CA USA

July 13 the world is all that is the case *59 sec video festival* Project 59 NYC

June 2 - 8 Return to My Native City and 5 other movies in *obsession* Gallery X Istanbul Turkey

June 1 -2 selection of movies in *1800 frames 2005* City Without Walls Gallery Newark NJ. USA

April 30 *from the prelinger archive* Highland Park Gallery Los Angeles CA USA

April 29 - May 1 Return to My Native City in *Red Shoe Delivery Service @ Nottdance 05* Nottingham UK

March 21 -27 selection of movies *jianghu 3 mobile video exhibition* Lijiang Yunnan China.