













**STRANGE  
MACHINES**  
the films of  
**PHILLIP  
BARKER**

# Contents

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# Introduction

by Mike Hoolboom

Do you believe in magicians?

When I met him he was staging *Trust A Boat* (1988), a strange and singular spectacle that lived for a moment in downtown Toronto, and across Holland. Phillip stuffed warehouse windows with projections that accumulated to form a single image, and alternated this with live silhouetted performers. There was a crazy amount of planning and production involved, yet the experience itself was not a hyper-controlled cine edict, but a wandering tapestry of needless beauty. Its public occupation asked fundamental questions about what this city could become, or what it meant to be a citizen, even as our industrial scape was converted into a giant aquarium of floating wonders.

Sometimes he would show me drawings of strange cinema delivery machines, construction cranes re-purposed to hoist mobile screens that moved slowly across fields while audiences followed. Or else giant lizard projectors vomiting pictures and sounds. Could the interface, the theatre itself, become a new machine that would make us strange enough to discover our roots again?

Even when his frames are filled with people (though never more than two or three) everyone looks like they are alone. His character avatars look lonelier in company, speaking in the remains of language, covered in industrial detritus, as if they had just crawled out of an excremental palace. They are survivors, though the nature of their trials and memories are only hinted at, suggested.

The girl-women who appear are invariably thin and white, as if adolescence had never let them go. They appear as apparitions, ghost studies, haunting diners and shipwrecks. They turn the world upside

down. They are elemental, part of a natural world that appears as balm and threat. Sleepwalkers.

The artist's mother floats down a river (is it the oldest fantasy — staging the death of our parents?), a troubled and withdrawn teen in a diner upends the scenery, a captain's wife experiences a reverie of sexual awakening as soon as she's able to forge a link to the forgotten history of her new home. The bond between past and present is also the mystery of aging and death. This is the secret that each of these women carry, and once they are lit up with the knowing, everything around them begins to turn, gravity cannot hold.

Anne Carson describes Echo as “the girl with no door on her mouth.”

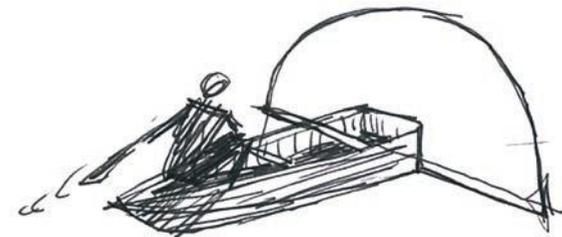
How to say I love you to a machine? Perhaps we do it every day with our longed-for devices. How we love to tune into the rhythms, re-form our bodies, open ourselves to the new framings required by our new and constant companions. But the cinema of Phillip Barker hearkens back to an earlier moment in our love affair with machines and a utopian science. Here are tools grown independent of their makers, no longer following the old laws, but instead offering a steady disordering and upending. A turning.

To say that there is a dream logic at work suggests that here is no logic at all, or that it is only a logic for one person. Imagine a car designed for a single trip. A building designed to be lived in for a single night. A meal that can be eaten once.

This eccentric and singular cinema has deep roots in the artist's own experience. In this volume there are a pair of interviews, one dishes personal stories, while the other weighs in on his movies. He has worked a parallel practice all these years, designing handsome sets for his pal Atom Egoyan, so there's a chapter where each weighs in on their collaborations. A brace of international talents sound off about

his movies. He hasn't made so many after all these years, because each one has to be lived and then drawn out in storyboards and then there is the money and unlikely technical demands, before the comrades of sound and editing and camera gather to convert the impossible into the inevitable.

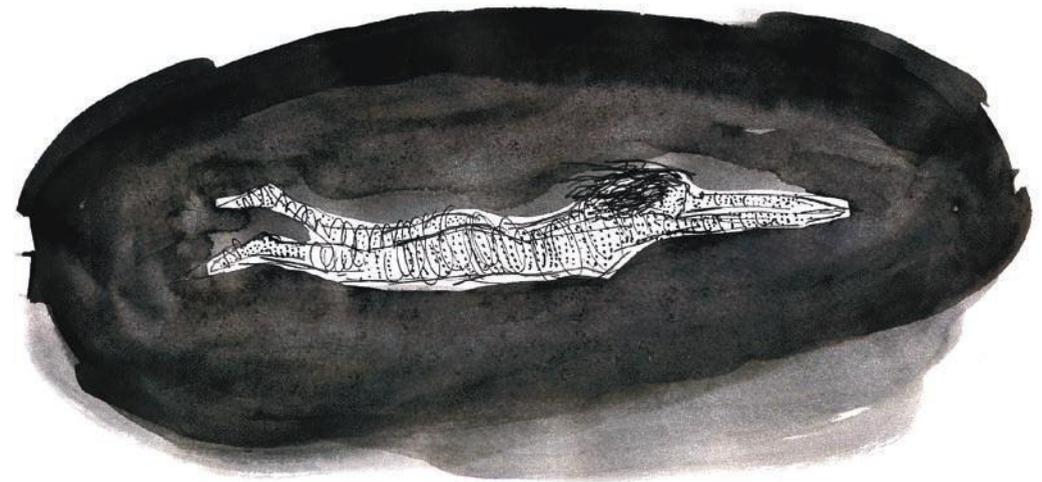
There is a deep secret in his work though this book does not share it. Instead there are lists and exclamation marks. The grail of the imperfect. The most important things have been forgotten. Welcome to the magic of Phillip Barker.





# SEARCH LIGHTS:

The Films of Phillip Barker

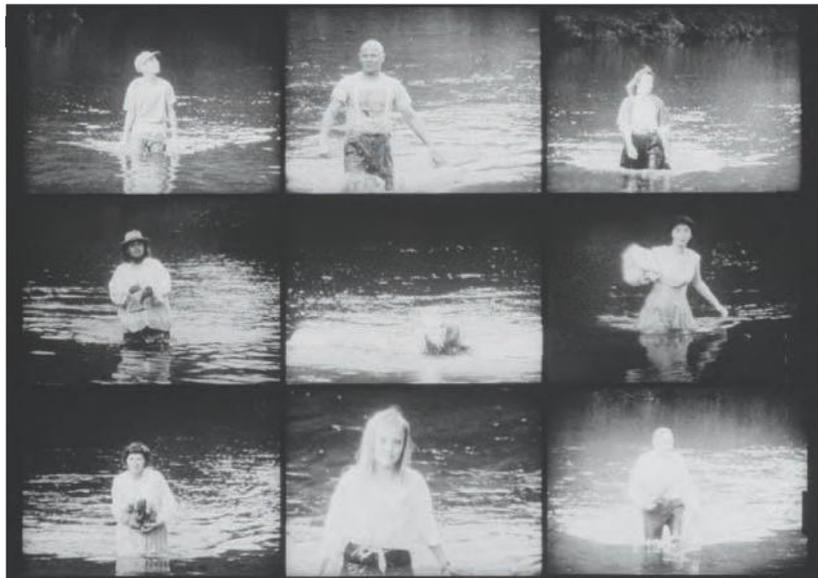


by Tom McSorley

*"I look, and looking is a way of asking."*

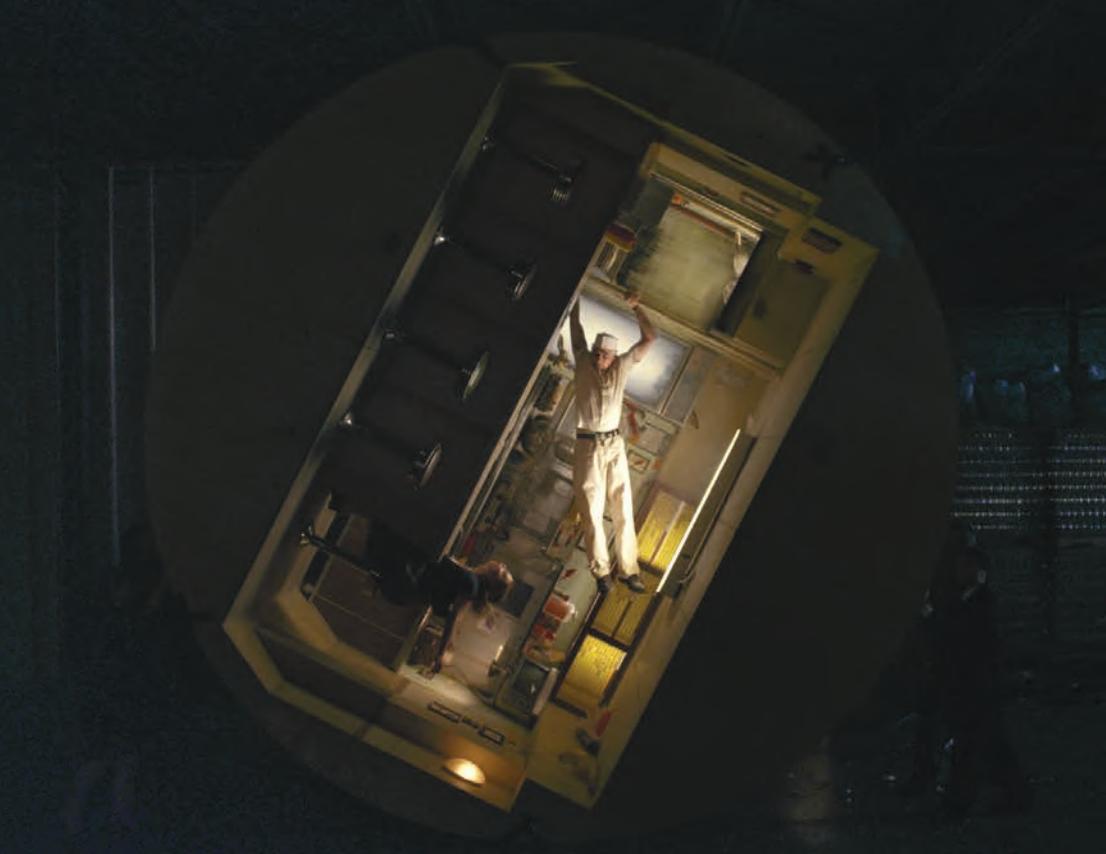
Luis Buñuel

Even within the already richly imaginative, idiosyncratic tradition of short film production in Canada — a history teeming with daring works by such filmmakers as Sparling, McLaren, Wieland, Snow, Lipsett, Epp and, more recently, Maddin, Hoffman, Hoolboom, Cournoyer, and Ushev — the startling work of Phillip Barker occupies a particular and distinctive cinematic space. Impeccably crafted, blurring the lines between experimental, documentary, and dramatic modes, Barker's films incorporate contemporary fairy tales, occasional Steampunk fabulism, and the abstract, angular movement vocabularies of contemporary dance. Not unlike the pioneering cinematic conjurations of Georges Méliès, bursting forth with optical tricks suffused with a simultaneously playful and sinister sense that cinema is a form of quasi-magical practice, the films of Phillip Barker recalibrate our ways of seeing moving images *while* we are in the process of watching them. Barker's peculiar magic operates in two visually arresting and overlapping zones, both of which fuse into a broader investigation into not only what it is we are seeing, but *how* we are seeing it.



One of these zones literally and figuratively reconfigures the world by defying gravity. From *I Am Always Connected* (1984) to *Dredger* (2015) Barker's fictional spaces (roads, rooms, diners, ships, rivers), populated by solitary characters who dream and desire, are defined by dramatic moments which overturn the law of gravity. The axis of reality will suddenly (as in the cramped confines of a tiny city diner in *Malody* (2012) rotate into chaos and instability as characters struggle to find their now radically reoriented relationships to the world: spatial, temporal, and emotional. In those disquieting, uncertain states of being charted so poetically in Barker's films, not even gravity can be counted upon; in Barker's cinema, that fundamental natural law is rewritten. Things fall apart: in *Regarding* (2002), a bathtub's water falls up a wall that we thought was a floor; in several films characters hang suspended sideways across frames, their bodies at war with newly arrived, profound, and perverse gravitational forces. The striking visual effect of this eccentric *mise-en-scène* suggests profound uncertainty and states of alienation (not unfamiliar in the Canadian cinema); it also summons a palpable sense of the uncanny, of something familiar suddenly transformed into something strange for characters and audience alike. It is in such transformational zones, in moving bodies and the moving image worlds they inhabit, that Barker's characters and their tangled stories emerge.

To the strangeness and mystery is added another layer, another filmic dimension. Invariably, as the vertiginous spatial contorting and tumbling (reminiscent of contemporary dance choreography by Sasha Waltz, Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui, Tedd Robinson, et al.) and perceptual dissonance of these images and narratives unfold, Barker often pulls his camera back to reveal the construction of his astonishing sequences: we are shown sets mounted upon huge wheels being turned by the crew, off-frame instigators of gravity's upending. Intentionally, the illusionist's hand is tipped and the secrets are revealed about Barker's world's unique gravitational fields.





Our making of meaning, our interpretive process, is consequently stitched to the revelation of the physical process of making images with this onscreen appearance of the very apparatus of production. Surprisingly, however, while the movie magic tricks may be fully disclosed, the mysterious narrative effects of the films remain: Barker's characters remain suspended, trapped, searching still in worlds of ceaseless, topsy-turvy motion. Our awareness of the artifice of illusion resolves nothing: their haunted existential predicaments will go on, as perhaps will our own.

This trickery and its unmasking connects intimately to Barker's cinema's overarching investigation of that elusive relationship between images and meaning. Such epistemological uncertainty as theatricality is not new in Canadian cinema, as seen in works across our cinematic spectrum from Norman McLaren to Atom Egoyan,

but Barker's poetic, allusive, and elliptical elaborations on this idea are both original and frequently breathtaking. For example, the multi-image Cubist construction of a woman's face in *A Temporary Arrangement* (1995) disorders and re-orders our idea of reality and representation. In arguably the most fully realized exploration of this theme, *Soul Cages* (1999), Barker's protagonists — a photographer and a film processor — appear to co-exist in the shared states somewhere between image capture, image lab processing, and printed image consumption. Here, image and reality blend into a Möbius strip of meaning, not unlike an M.C. Escher drawing collapsing into and expanding out of itself an infinity of possible meanings and possible realities. Is the image an artifact, a document, an event, a mirror, a dream? All of the above? In *Night Vision* (2008), a woman is shown a photographic image and asked to construct a story out of it, a "storytelling test" that will reshape and redefine the

meaning of that image, for her and for us. This idea is further elaborated upon in *Slow Blink* (2010), where the image is at once a product of the camera looking at the character and the character regarding the camera: who is looking at whom?

And, finally, where are we? As spectators, we find ourselves looking at the looking and, as the beguiling films of Barker prompt us to do, pondering the significance and implications of that essential, primal act of the cinematic encounter. Echoing Buñuel, in encountering Barker's films, we look, and our looking is a way of asking. The questions are legion; the answers, fluid and ever elusive.

As strange, wondrous, and other-worldly as his films may appear, the foregrounding of the materiality of images, the visibility of the cinematic apparatus, and the presence of human figures isolated in various environments all connect Phillip Barker's remarkable work to Northrop Frye's stubborn, still quintessential Canadian question: Where is here? At a number of levels, from actuality to ontology, there is a search for "here" underway in all his films, a double search for terra firma and terra nostra in amongst all those tattered, unfinished cartographies of human experience. In this, Barker is not alone. The Canadian cinema is crowded with tales of characters alienated from their environments, from each other, from themselves. As many filmmakers have demonstrated, whether in shorts or feature films, the search for that obscure object of "here" demands daring and imagination to fuel its restless quest across vast, uncertain Canadian territories. In the cinema of Phillip Barker, where Méliès meets Escher meets Frye, these demands are certainly met, if not exceeded. His singular, inventive work offers vivid new ways of seeing moving images; in the mysterious, magical process of looking and asking, Barker's films also present us with the possibility of locating in them some shimmering, fragile outline of ourselves, perhaps now and, at last, perhaps here.

*Tom McSorley is the director of the Canadian Film Institute.*





Soul Cages Script



1 EXT. RIVER / BEDROOM -- NIGHT

DAY 7

ANGLE DOWN ON

scratch on cheek

(a) Details of objects as they emerge from a river. A portrait of Jesus, a framed family photograph, and a pair of eyeglasses on a bedside table. A floor lamp, its bulb buzzing and flickering. The iron headboard of a single bed. A single bed. A floating bed sheet enters frame and wraps itself around a sleeping figure emerging from the water: THE PROCESSOR. As the water recedes from the bedroom, he sits up and puts on his glasses. He is completely dry.

(b) He reaches to the lamp and switches it on and off in steady rhythm.

INT. - Light on proc. face  
- fingers push buttons, advance DAY 3 NEGATIVE.

CUT TO:

20

2 EXT. -- FILM LAB -- NIGHT

A One Hour Photo Processing shop on an empty city street. Every now and then a light pulses from the interior darkness.

CUT TO:

DAY 3

3 INT. -- FILM LAB -- NIGHT

No scratch

(A) THE PROCESSOR, a grim looking man in his mid-thirties, sits operating a photo processing machine. Ash from the cigarette attached to his lower lip, falls upon newly printed photographs. His work table is stacked with plastic bins containing canisters of film waiting to be processed, and cameras to be repaired.

(B) An endless strip of photographs flow from the top of the machine and move vertically down past THE PROCESSOR'S face.

B His face breaks into forced gestures of surprise and merriment, as he imitates the people in the photographs. After each expression his face returns to a blank stare.

30

Title?

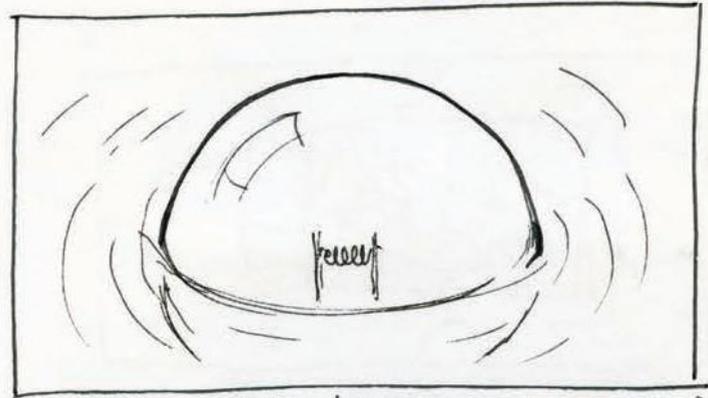
Prints of A FAMILY in an aluminum fishing boat scroll past his scrutinizing gaze.  
he removes glasses, does not stop imitating, looks serious.

(C) As he takes a new plastic bin of films to be processed, he notices that these canisters are marked with large red, hand-painted numbers from "24" to "34". One by one he stacks them in a pyramid upon his table.

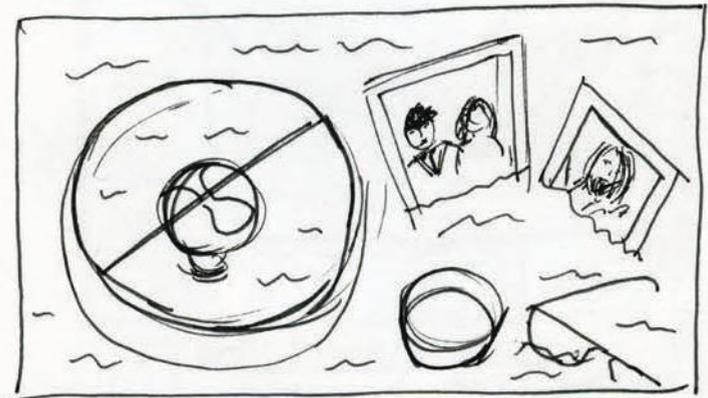
20

personal id

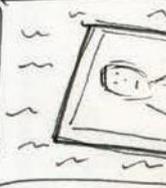
Cardboard box with camera and film.



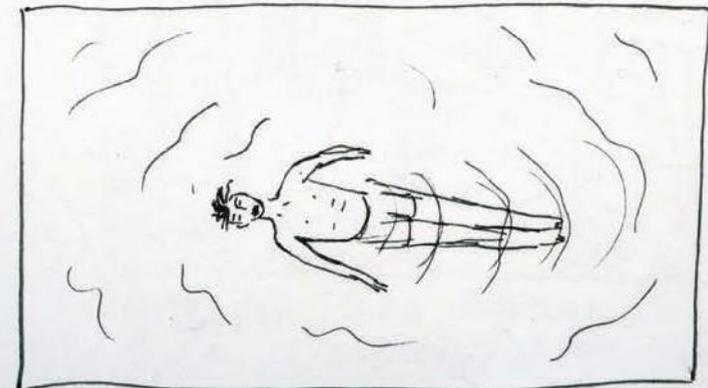
1A EXT. RIVER / BEDROOM (ALL NIGHT)  
DETAILS OF EMERGING OBJECTS



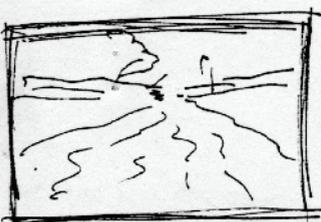
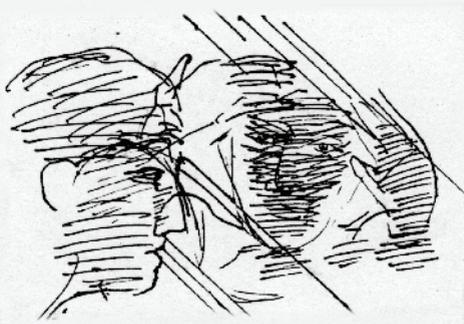
1A EXT. RIVER / BEDROOM  
DETAILS OF EMERGING OBJECTS



FRAMED PHOTO FLOAT B.



1A EXT. RIVER / BEDROOM  
HE FLOATS NAKED!!!





7 EXT. RIVER MORNING  
SHE REACTS TO APPROACHING BOAT...

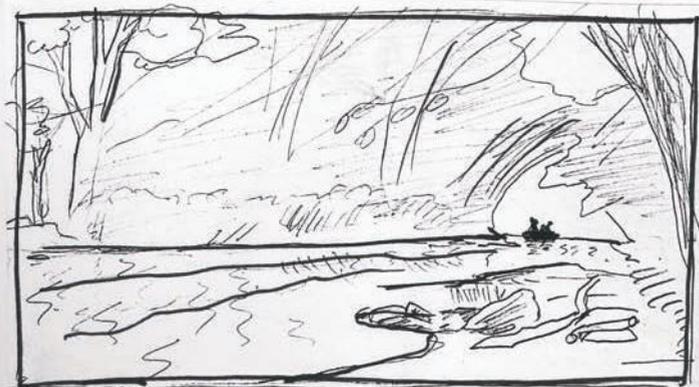


7 EXT. RIVER MORNING  
SHE SINKS DOWN LIKE AN ALLIGATOR  
(CONTINUATION OF LAST SHOT)

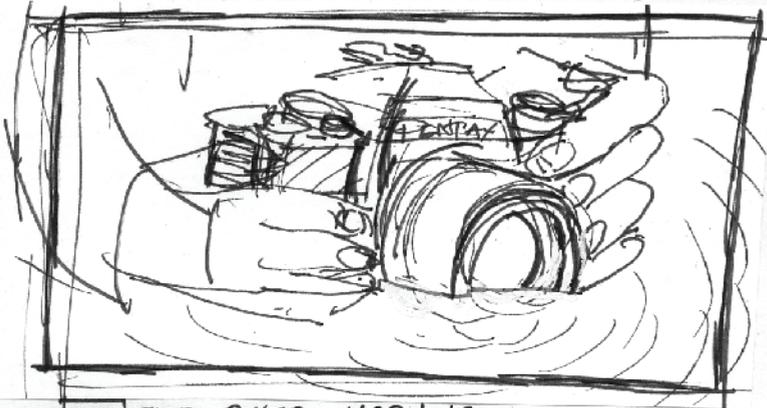


7 EXT RIVER MORNING  
...SHE SQUASHES MOSQUITO

pt 2

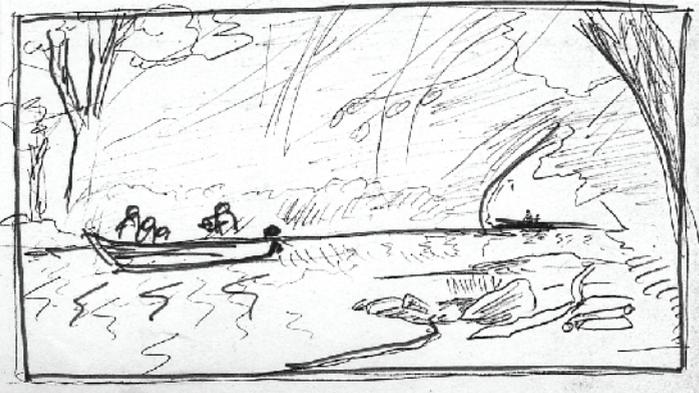


7 EXT RIVER MORNING  
APPROACHING FISHING FAMILY...

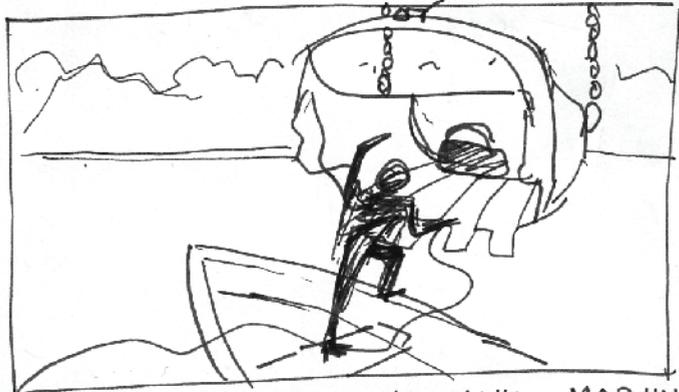


7 EXT. RIVER MORNING  
SHE SINKS UNDERWATER LIKE AN ALLIGATOR...

pt 2



7 EXT. RIVER MORNING  
FAMILY DRIFTS DOWNSTREAM - TAKE PICTURES



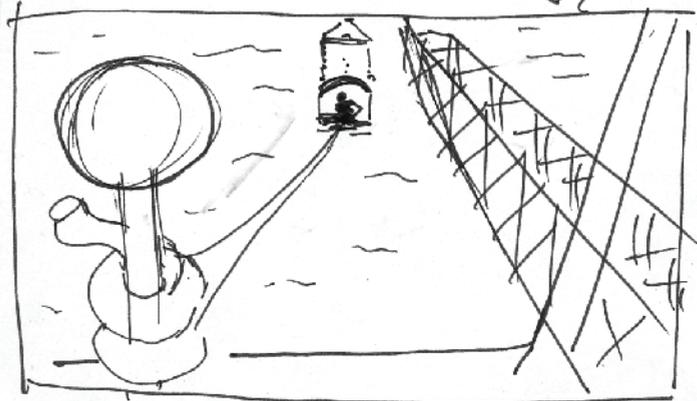
10 EXT DREDGING MACHINE MORNING  
SHE CLIMBS IN BUCKET

4



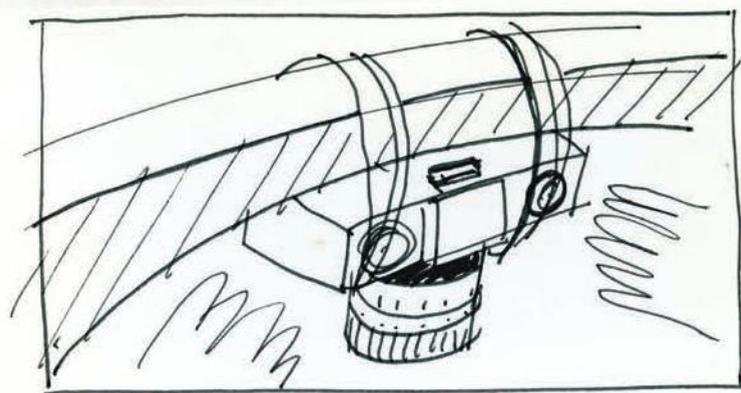
10 EXT DREDGING MACHINE MORNING  
~~SHE PUTS AWAY DRESS~~ / TAKES OUT CAMERA

7



10 EXT DREDGING MACHINE MORNING  
SHE PULLS ON ROPE

12



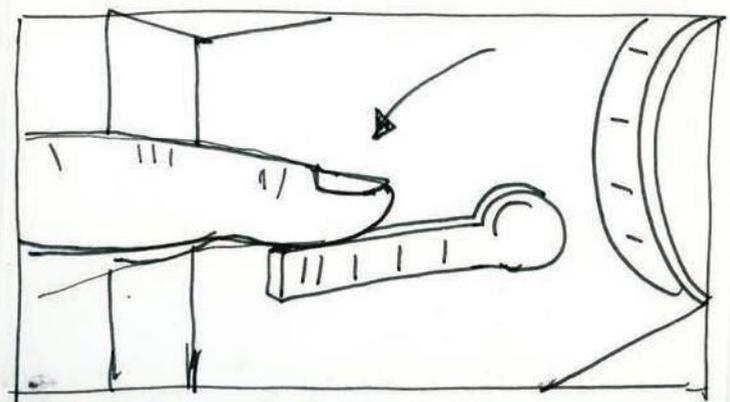
10 EXT DREDGING MACHINE MORNING  
HER HANDS TAPE (WIRE?) CAMERA TO BUCKET

8



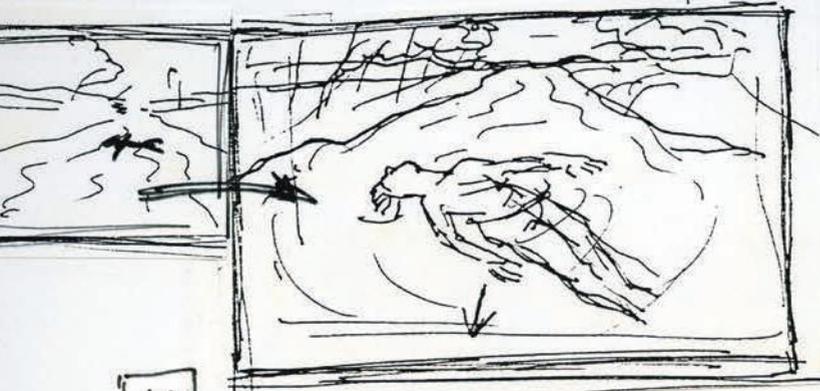
10 EXT DREDGING MACHINE MORNING  
SHE GOES UP IN AIR...

15



10 EXT DREDGING MACHINE MORNING  
SHE COCKS SELF TIMER ...

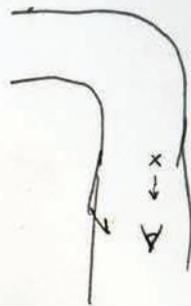
9



11

EXT. RIVER MORNING  
HER BODY FLOATS UNDER LENS

SHOOT  
7.15 PM!



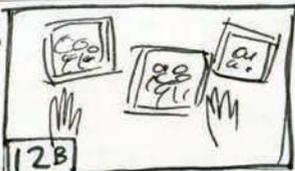
29

EXT RIVER EVENING  
HE FLOATS PAST FAMILY IN BOAT



12A INT. PROCESSOR'S BEDROOM NIGHT

THE PROCESSOR AWAKE  
LOOKS AT PHOTOS



12B

C.U. PHOTOS



30  
DUSK

AND

36B  
DAY

EXT DREDGE MACHINE  
THE PROCESSOR IS LIFTED OUT OF WATER.  
VARIOUS VICTIMS ARE LIFTED. O



13A

EXT. DREDGING MACHINE DAY  
IN BUCKET, SHE "HOLDS" THE LENS

15



31

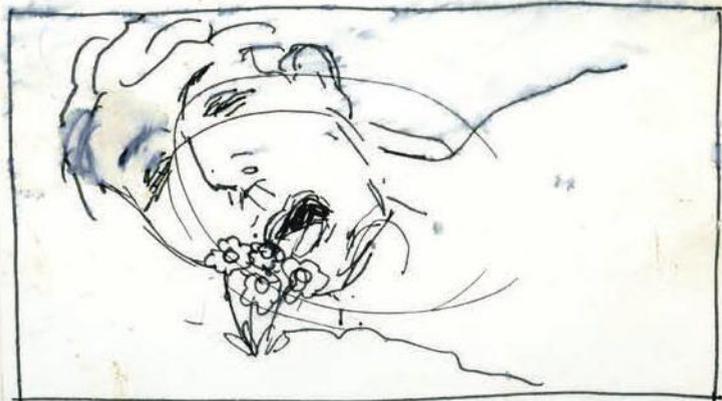
EXT RIVERBANK NIGHT



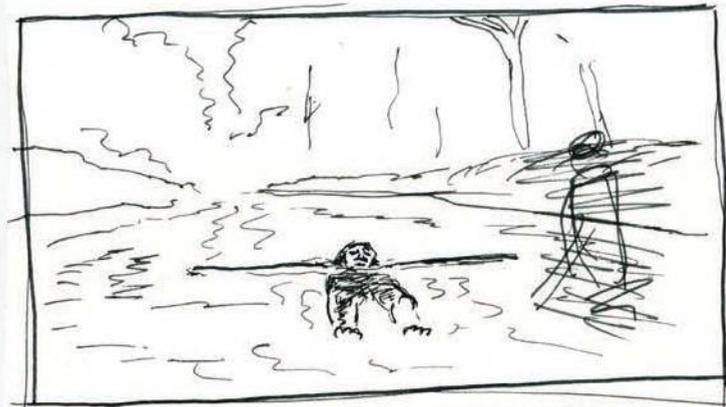
31 EXT RIVER BANK NIGHT



31 EXT RIVER BANK NIGHT



31 EXT RIVER BANK NIGHT



33 EXT RIVER MORNING  
HIS MUD COVERED BODY FLOATS AWAY



35 EXT RIVER MORNING  
HE OPENS HIS EYES.



Grandad and Grandma Barker  
dressed up as each other

## Origins

an interview with Phillip Barker

*Mike:* I remember sitting with you on a sunny porch that banished time. You hauled out a large book of sketches filled with strange cinema delivery machines. One showed a forklift truck moving across a field, its fork holding a suspended screen that showed the movie as the audience slowly walked behind it. Can you talk about some of the other machines that filled those dreamy pages, and what drew you to thinking outside the usual cinema frames?

*Phillip:* Yes, there's a bulldozer that carries a giant moon to the edge of a lake and lowers it into the water. A construction crane, high above the city, moving in circles at night, suspends images of reclining, sleeping children (or are they flying?). The machine gently lowers them down into a parking lot. A large excavator, dressed as a papier-maché swan, holds in its beak a 16mm film projector from which images of a reclining woman are projected upon the ground of the Plaza Mayor, Madrid. An earth-moving machine, carrying a projector and a screen, moves slowly backwards through the wastelands of a construction site. An audience walks slowly behind the machine, watching projected images of a walk down the Champs-Élysées, in Paris.

I always imagined these image-moving machines as giant and very obvious plot devices. Deus ex machinas. Who can deny the presence of God within a machine whose main purpose is to gently land a sleeping child upon the earth? There is an inversely proportioned relationship between the size and power of a machine and the lightness and tenuousness of the projected image. The heavier the saucepan, the more delicate the flavour.

I am the son of an auto mechanic. We lived in England at a time when people believed that machines would make dreams come true.



Through my father's knowledge of machines we were welcomed as immigrants to Canada. He worked in a factory that manufactured fun contraptions that blended beauty and function. Outboard motors — scrutinized, inspected and approved by my father at the Outboard Marine Company of Peterborough — propelled us into the heart of our new country. But my favourite machine was the film projector, which had no purpose beyond creating illusions.

He bought a super 8 camera for our visit to Canada, and recorded us waving, always desperately and relentlessly waving. "Wave at the camera" wasn't a suggestion, more of an order from a film director. Even on holiday Dad liked to control things. Our smiles stretched painfully across the screen. He was equally interested in the backgrounds. We were specimens caught and preserved in the surreal backgrounds of Expo 67, the Big Nickel of Sudbury, Giant Moose, and the complicated engines of a steampunk festival.

Expo 67 had a huge effect upon my twelve-year-old self. There I saw Josef Svoboda's project *Polyvision*, one of the earliest multimedia



works. These multi-projector pieces connected me to the magic of Dad's film projector.

He used to run the super 8 projector backwards for me, making me laugh. My sister and I rolled backwards up a hill, my mother danced backwards at a New Year's Party. Reverse hokey pokey. In one shot we were waving at the camera when the frame left us and started to follow an attractive blonde walking down the street. When we had people over for movie-night parties that was apparently hilarious.

The moving image machines came from a period in my life when I roamed around Europe for three years, making a living on the streets playing my mandolin as a busker. Finally craving a home, I settled in Paris. I remember once watching a TV that was in a shop window, glancing up occasionally at a surveillance camera. I imagined the eyes of the security guard watching me, watching the clock, and then imagined him at home, watching television with his family. I was jealous. For several years I was a mobile home, carrying everything on my back like a crab, my astrological sign.



I settled in Amsterdam because I was in love. I lived for three years in a building next to a construction site where giant pile drivers pounded wooden poles into the ground, laying foundations into marshy earth, slowly reclaiming land from sea. Perversely, the Dutch drove their last remaining trees back into the earth. The few they left standing today have serial numbers stamped on little plates nailed into the trunks. This constant pounding of the spongy earth set my building to swaying. It rocked like a moored boat. I was fascinated by the effect of spatial disorientation.

Like my Dad I'm pretty handy, so I redid the plumbing where I was living: a five-floor converted office building. I plastered the walls around the shower. The next day the plaster had cracked and lay in pieces on the floor. Then I understood why the walls of Amsterdam were made out of fabric. The buildings were swaying houses of cards, badly moored and ready to float away.

People in Holland dressed their windows to be seen from the outside. The woman who lived across from me had a bust of Chopin on her piano facing me, not her. If I closed one eye I could sight Chopin and gauge how much the building swayed when a Heineken truck drove by. We used to look toward each other, but not really at each other, slightly off to one side. I imagined she

was mid-composition, convening with her muse, while I was just gazing at nothing, spacing out, like my Dad used to do when he got home from work and we would eat dinner silently together.

After all that I guess I needed something stable: a home, something dependable like a good machine. I still doodle these machines — hundreds of them. They are the most recent attempt to balance things. They represent in-between states, like when I leave the cinema and the world appears changed before it comes back into focus.



*Mike:* One of the reasons the Tanakh, the Bible, the Koran continue to resonate is that they contain stories that are still lived today. For instance, in the book of Shemoth/Exodus, Moses is exiled from Egypt and spends forty years wandering in the wilderness. What a cruel prophecy he is given: that he will be allowed to glimpse the

promised land, but never to enter it. If this tale still rings, it may be because so many of us have wandered in the desert of our own lives, often because something has stopped working, because some unspeakable heartbreak or refusal has ensured that the old questions and answers no longer hold. Could you talk about those seven years without a home? What led to your departure?

*Phillip:* Home is something I have searched for since I experienced the first crack in my life at the age of thirteen. We were new immigrants, fresh off the boat. I had taken a walk by myself and found a river full of giant carp. Everything was bigger here in Canada! I had two more pictures left on a roll of film inside my Konica C35. After photographing the carp, I placed the camera down on the riverbank and walked away, leaving it there by accident. The other twenty-two pictures on that undeveloped roll of film showed my childhood friends in England. Mostly pictures of shaggy-haired boys in their school uniforms lined up by the school fence, giving me the thumbs up. Boys I would never see again. Later, I returned and found the camera was gone. On that river-bank, I felt a large cavernous space open up between who I thought I was before, and who I was now. The camera was never returned, I assume the photos were never processed, yet I see all the pictures now in my mind in great detail. Schoolboys and carp and my grandparents and their smell of Scotch — all these things and more, shrunk to what I could bear.

One day we skipped school. We set out to walk through a train tunnel, at least a mile long. There were my old friends John Alison, Romano Polochonski, David Hopper and possibly Brenner, the boy with asthma. We were all avid train spotters. We prepared for it in Hardy Boys style — we made sandwiches, and packed flashlights and matches. After we walked half an hour in the tunnel we still saw no light ahead. The tunnel slowly curved and eventually we ran out of light behind us. Complete darkness. It was at that point we heard a



train coming. These were the days of steam and the engines were really loud. We put our ears to the tracks to feel the vibration and yes, the train was coming. We began to run, looking for a safe place, a niche or something. We didn't find one; the screeching of the train was upon us. So we pressed our backs against the wall, we all held hands and closed our eyes as the sound of the express train roared over us. We opened our eyes. Nothing. It was a ghost train. (It turns

out that there was a second tunnel that ran parallel to the one we were in; the train was in the adjacent tunnel.)

When I make pictures and movies I sometimes think of those two pictures left on the roll. I am used to tailoring my shots to the length of end rolls, or three minutes of a super 8 cartridge. It's different now, shooting digitally. When I call "Roll camera" for another take, the cameraman whispers in my ear, "It's still rolling." And now, in post-production, I have even more images to sort through: pictures of an empty set, pictures of actors not acting, pictures of technicians fussing with bits of coloured tape.

Like most kids my age at the time, I was infected by the romantic portrayals of the world I read about in books. I set out with my backpack. It was painful, like I was travelling inside of myself, in my guts. Who was I? The answer was always changing. I tried on different versions for strangers, travellers and eccentrics I met along the way. Identities changed as often as the landscape. It was liberating. Eventually, who I was becoming was less fictionalized. This freedom from secrets kept me in motion for seven years.

I would ask the most seasoned of travellers, the ones with sun-stained lines across their faces, "What's the most amazing place you've been to?" Then I would go there. I ran out of money, forged my train pass, changing the expiry date so that I could sleep six hours on a train to anywhere when I couldn't afford a hotel. I woke up who knows where, dirty and hungry. I began to lose it, friendless, aimless. On my way home, my backpack was stolen in New York City. I returned with a cardboard box. Inside the box were some of my belongings I had retrieved from the garbage cans near where my backpack was stolen. What do you think was in the box?

After taking a flourish of photos (mostly of the dog), my son Dexter immediately decides which images will be stored to memory and

which will be forgotten. The decision process is as intuitive and impulsive as a nine-year-old, and yet also determined by the camera itself. It has a smile detector. There are no sad photos in Dexter's camera. Image stabilization controls his focus and blur. Image recognition puts names to his subjects. Backgrounds are mapped by Google Earth. Digital files imprint dates and times to the second. There are no photos of blurry, lost or unknown people. Ambiguity equals delete.

Inside the box was a well-worn copy of Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922). Each page read at least twice. Too heavy for travel, I cut it in half, storing the second half in a hostel in Athens, picked up two months later and taped back together again. This 360-page book about a single day explores the borders between many conflicts I was feeling at the time — for instance, the desire to wander aimlessly, and the desire to have a destination.

It took me three weeks to read that book. I was living on a beach in Chios, Greece, in a tiny Canadian Tire pup tent. I met a French couple.



The guy, Jacques, told me to come and visit him if I was ever in Paris. Many months later I showed up at his door. He moved in with his girlfriend, and gave me his place, a small room in the Beaubourg. He hardly spoke English and didn't know me. As the weeks went by he insisted I stay there. I ended up there a year, busking on the streets, surviving on the generosity of Parisians. I don't know if I was grateful enough back then. Even now, I am not sure if I know how to give thanks, or to give as freely as others, like Jacques did. It's something I often return to, as I think that what I do has no direct benefit to others.

The secret is not in the picture at all, but the person behind the lens. So far, cameras only go one way. The clue to a photo's inner world is the subject's attitude to the camera.

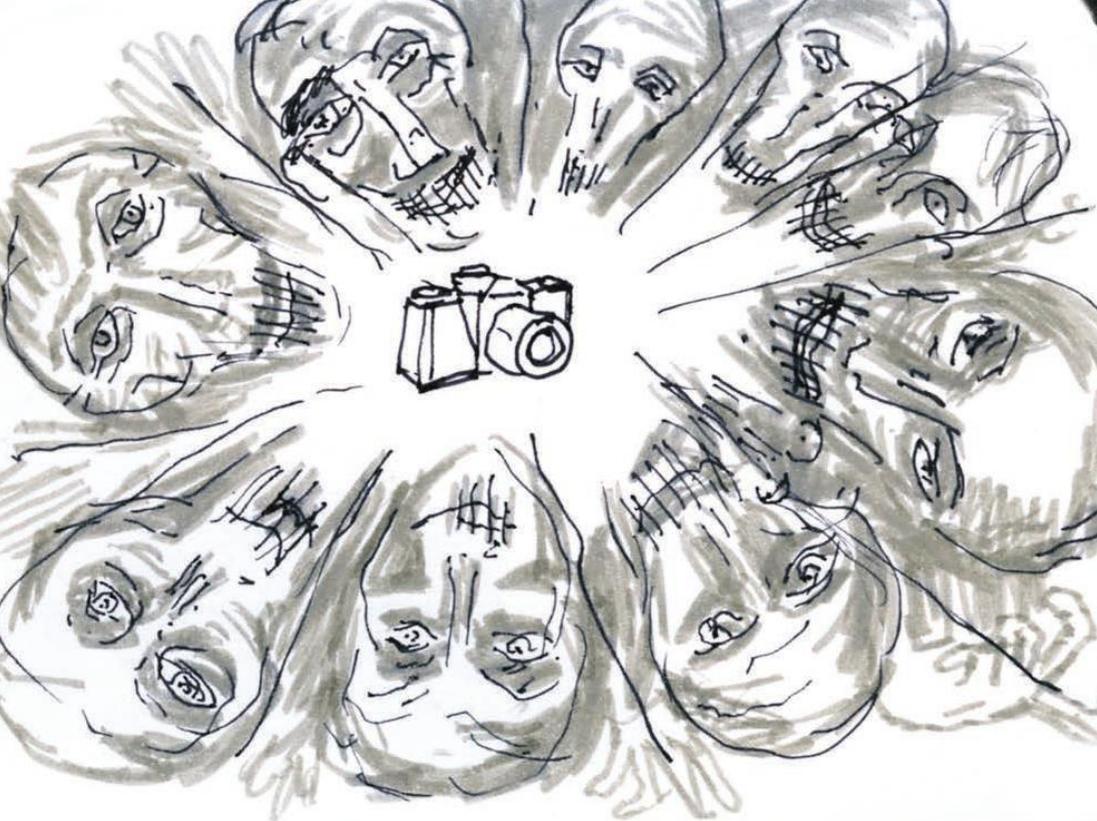
I am constantly reliving, reviewing and redefining my childhood and my own experiences with my father, through the experiences of being a father to my son. Trying to do it better. Once, when Dexter and I were swimming together in the middle of a lake, the sky turned dark



from an approaching storm. We were out far. As we swam quickly to the shore, images came to me with the rhythm of my swim stroke — a dozen men launching a rescue boat into a ferocious storm. One of my earliest memories in Blackpool on the west coast of England. I saw the men in the lifeboat rowing over the giant waves on a rescue mission. The boat would disappear as it crowned the crest of the waves. I can't imagine how they survived, but I can imagine them drowning. I can imagine the most horrible things happening, and when I begin to imagine them, I cannot stop myself imagining them to their bitter conclusion. Raising children can be frightening because the possibility of pain can be as great as the love.

A non-sequential flip book triggered to unspool by a dark cloud over a lake.

Futile acts. Heroic, doomed gestures. I give artificial respiration to an elderly lady collapsed on a Paris street. We come out of the Metro for a break from busking and step towards a sunny, blissful café. Chris the guitar player (where are you now, Chris?) says holy shit and without thinking I run across the street to where she is reclining on the sidewalk. An elegant old madam, dark coat and hat, like she's off to church and decided to have a lay down on the street, her hands folded over her chest, eyes closed, a little pool of blood seeping from under her skull. I look around but there is nobody else to hand this task to, the hundreds of people who would have been better at this than I are not in the street. So I begin to perform mouth-to-mouth resuscitation, and she gives a shudder of life, the smallest spasm, light in my hands like a bird that I once held as it died in Point Pelee. I continue for what seems like twenty minutes until the ambulance arrives. The paramedic shines a light in her eyes and shakes his head. I sat on the curb for a long time, somewhat aware of the small crowd now. They seem to be avoiding my gaze, though I need them to forgive me for failing. But when I look, they look away. Someone has given me a paper cup of cognac. Salut.



Each page of the flip book shows pictures of the dead bodies I have seen in my life. In a provincial park, car accidents, blanketed corpses in Nepal and Thailand. All the people floating in my films that have died and that are dying.

My son looks at photos of himself from last year — a photo of his foot in a cast from a fracture — and says, "Remember the good old days?" His first taste of real physical pain is still a pleasurable memory because he remembers time off school, being at home watching movies. There is a photo of me, the same age as my son, on a blanket nursing a broken arm. Looking at this photo is like undoing the cast, looking curiously at the unhealed wound. The wound isn't painful. My skin is pale, thin and sensitive to air.



Other images begin to flow from the abandoned fields where I broke my arm, a landscape within which we experienced coming-of-age rituals. I am a seven-year-old soldier with a plywood machine gun stalking the enemy. I am hit by a bullet, and I am falling from a high wall. I lay on the ground, my arm bent under me the wrong way. Cradling my broken arm, I am a lone figure standing at the vanishing point of a perspective drawing of my street.

Back in the field, a girl wearing a plastic raincoat, her silhouette outlined against a fire. We are smashing bottles upon rocks, throwing knives between our parted legs. Playing with matches and gasoline and smoking dried reeds, pretending they are cigarettes. Lying in the long grass, we speak authoritatively about sex the way older kids do. People do strange things to each other, right? We look at each other's bodies.

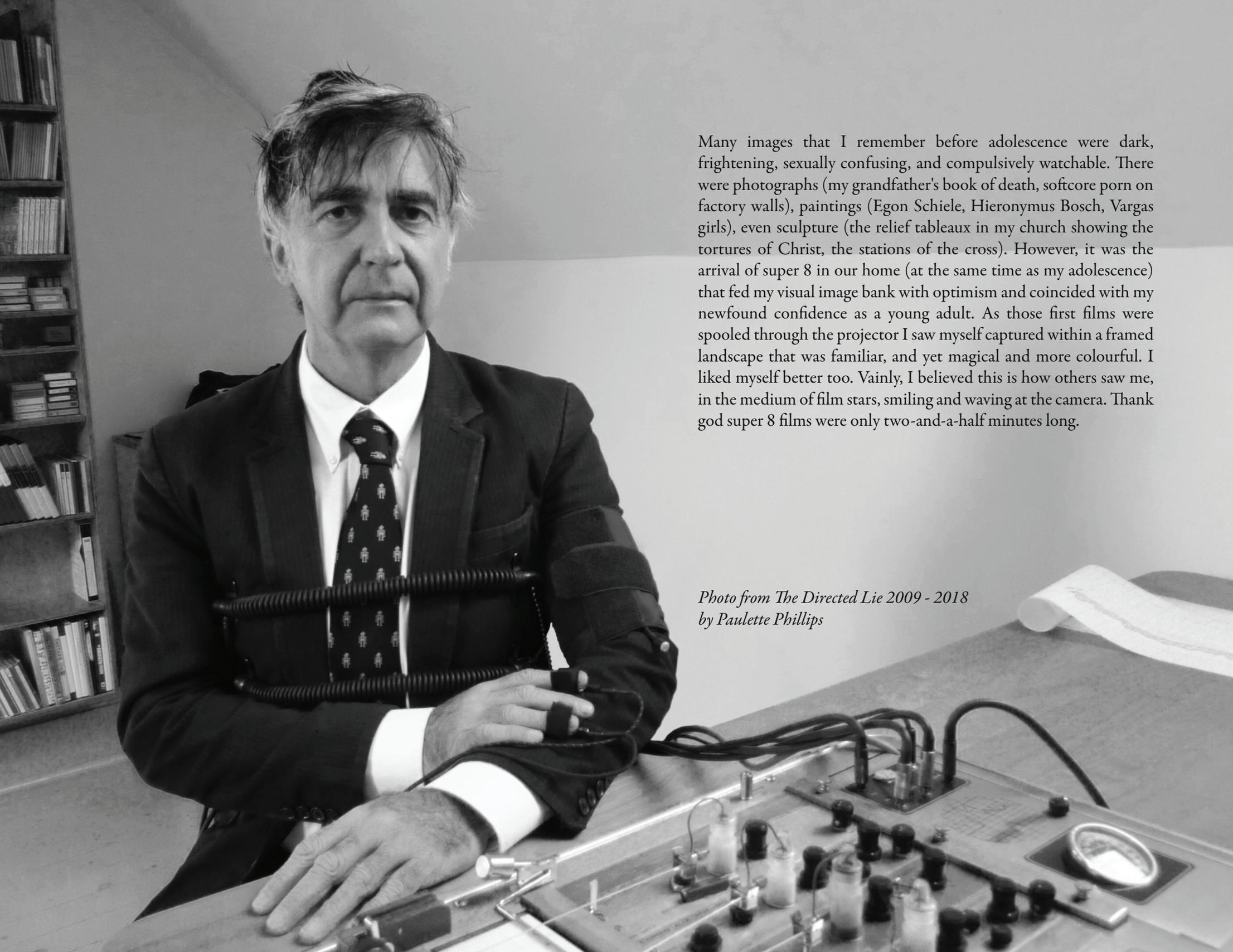
I remember the spoken words and ambitions of my childhood friends more than their faces on that unprocessed roll of film.



Raymond the robot scientist, Tommy the priest, David the writer-intellectual, Romano the advertising man, Brenner the explorer — although his severe asthma prevented him from prolonged periods outdoors so I doubt that's what he became. His mother invited us up to his bedroom for a visit. Was he dying? Did he die?

My grandad's attic was a boy's playground, jam-packed with well-organized things he had found in the street (he was a street sweeper), and other objects he had collected from the war. He had survived three years in a Nazi prison camp in France. I had the feeling that he would have been a street sweeper even if his job wasn't sweeping streets. He was the first Barker — he was adopted — and true to the Barker name he told stories on the street. That's how he saw himself: as a collector, a hoarder of objects and stories. I think he did more storytelling than street sweeping. I can see him leaning on his broom, straight out of Dickens. He had a fine sense of self-worth, and was not shy about telling anyone about the things he deserved. If a park bench was occupied, he would announce in a loud voice, "I've been sitting on that there park bench for twenty years," and go on and on until the people got up and gave him the bench.

A handgun, a German helmet, a propaganda photo book that warned of the perils of the "hun." This book was a photographic survey of victims of atrocities from World War 1: bodies without heads, heads without bodies. It had an embossed skull on the cover with a title that ran below announcing "Death." I ran my fingers over it.



Many images that I remember before adolescence were dark, frightening, sexually confusing, and compulsively watchable. There were photographs (my grandfather's book of death, softcore porn on factory walls), paintings (Egon Schiele, Hieronymus Bosch, Vargas girls), even sculpture (the relief tableaux in my church showing the tortures of Christ, the stations of the cross). However, it was the arrival of super 8 in our home (at the same time as my adolescence) that fed my visual image bank with optimism and coincided with my newfound confidence as a young adult. As those first films were spooled through the projector I saw myself captured within a framed landscape that was familiar, and yet magical and more colourful. I liked myself better too. Vainly, I believed this is how others saw me, in the medium of film stars, smiling and waving at the camera. Thank god super 8 films were only two-and-a-half minutes long.

*Photo from The Directed Lie 2009 - 2018  
by Paulette Phillips*

# Magic Lanterns

by Atom Egoyan

Sometimes it just happens. You see a piece by a new artist and it answers something within you in a direct and powerful way. I had that experience nearly twenty-five years ago when I first came across Phillip's work.

A delicate paper house — a beautiful lantern — was suspended on a shallow pool of water. Projected on the walls were black-and-white super 8 film images of various people floating on a river. Everything about the work suggested a sense of deep introspection and suspended animation. As though inner and outer worlds were simultaneously projected on this mysterious object. Reflections played in the water and I was astonished by the way the liquid became a phantom screen.

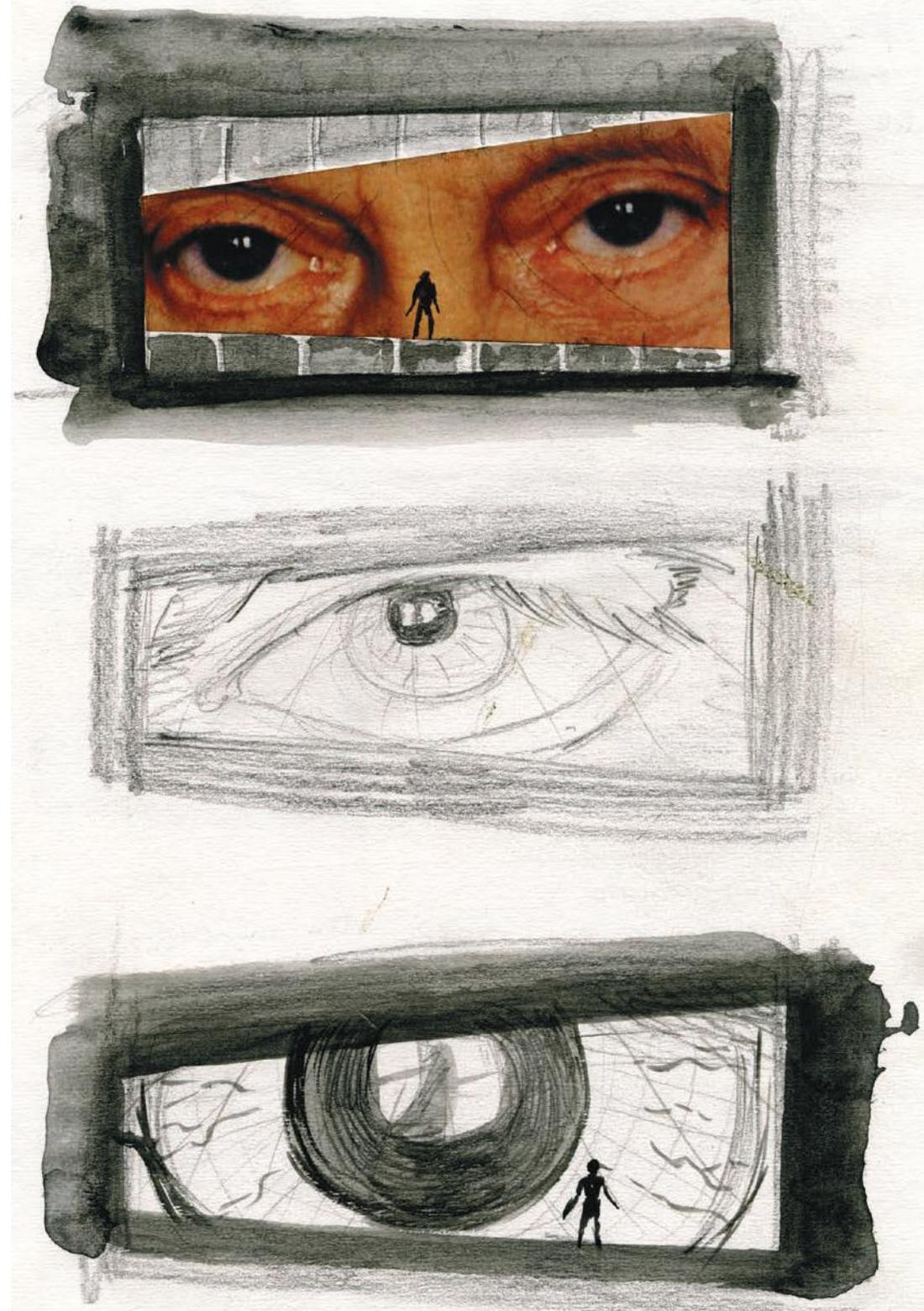
Getting hold of Phillip after seeing his work was something of a challenge. I was looking for a designer to collaborate with me on the set for an original chamber opera I was presenting at Buddies in Bad Times Theatre late the next year. There was something about Phillip's art piece that almost looked like a model for a set, and I wanted to discuss it with him. After several repeated calls, we finally met. I was immediately drawn into his dark eyes and the way he would absorb anything I said for a suspended moment before responding. His calm and politeness came as something of a surprise. For someone so intent on astonishing people with his work, there wasn't even a hint of anything remotely brash about his manner. I somehow felt that this was the beginning of a long and beautiful partnership, almost like falling into a woozy form of love.

Astonished is a word that would come to characterize many of my experiences with Phillip's films and theatrical realizations over the coming years. I would be filled with a sudden and overwhelming sense of wonder and amazement. This was not simply a response to the innovative techniques that Phillip deployed, but to the way these formal strategies could amplify and extend my relationship to my own seeing.

I've always been haunted by that nineteenth-century philosophical idea that our sense of reality is limited by the tools we've been equipped to perceive the world around us. Phillip's art extends these tools by offering us new ways to see things. The characters in his exquisite short films are always exploring their own limits of understanding the worlds they are in, and yet they rarely seem confused or emotionally rocked by the possibilities that are exploding around them. They have a cool way of accepting things as they are, while we viewers are invited to radically shift the way we understand the unfolding events. This creates a particular and distinct artistic personality, and I've had the great fortune to work with Phillip as an intimate collaborator for nearly twenty-five years.

Our best-known work might be the seven features we've made together, but I'd like to focus on the operas, since these pieces directly bring together our shared sensibilities as strictly visual artists. In some ways, I view these collaborations as theatrically-staged art installations. The experience of working together on my first major project for the Canadian Opera Company was particularly rich.

*Salome* is based on Oscar Wilde's richly poetic evocation of frustrated desire. While setting the biblical story of King Herod in his exotic court, this production was stripped down to a bare expressionistic stage where the psychodrama of this young woman's obsession could be played out. Her guard, Narraboth, whom she ignores, lusts after Salome. His soldier, whom he ignores, lusts after



SALOME  
SCENE I  
SURVEILLANCE SCREEN STORYBOARD  
BY PHILLIP BARKER

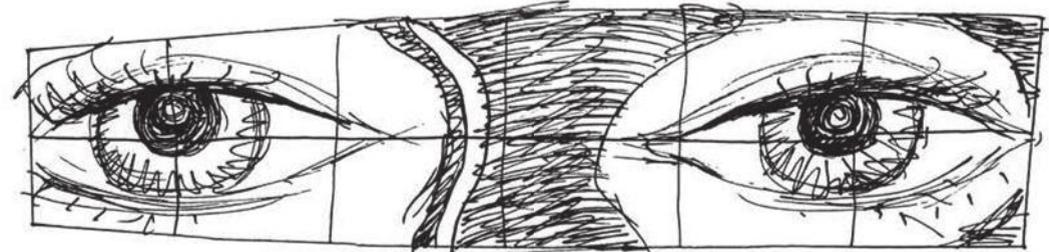
Narraboth. Salome lusts after John the Baptist, who ignores her. The only person who gets what he wants is Salome's stepfather Herod, who has his stepdaughter perform a sexually provocative dance for him.

King Herod is so pleased with Salome's dance that he promises her half of his kingdom. According to the biblical tale, it is Salome's mother who insists her daughter demand John the Baptist's head on a platter. Wilde, however, has Herod promise his stepdaughter anything she wants before she dances, with Salome violently rejecting any intervention from her mother. It's this altered narrative on which the libretto for Richard Strauss's opera is closely based. Salome begins her famous dance knowing exactly what she wants and how she will get it.

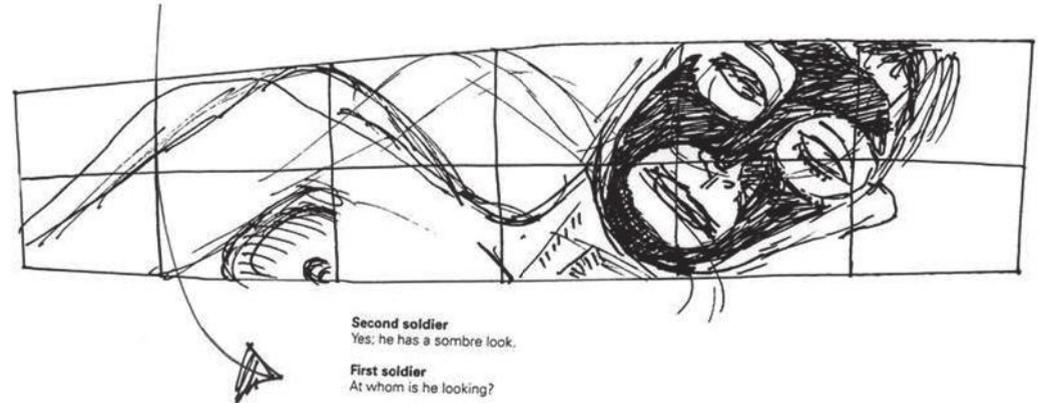
Just as Wilde reinterpreted the story, there was a pressing need to make certain things clearer — to find some justification for Salome's horrific behavior. Why is this young woman so violent? What is it in her upbringing that has brought her to demand the murder and mutilation of her object of lust? Wilde's language in his play is extremely overwrought. When Salome can't have something, she describes it with fetishistic precision and almost orgasmic verbal elaboration. From the beginning, I was inspired by working with Phillip, as we struggled to find a way to transpose words and the extraordinary music of Richard Strauss into indelible stage images.

What I saw in Phillip's work at the time was a similar fascination with mutilation, though in a far more conceptual and lyrical way. In his short film *A Temporary Arrangement* (1995), a young woman is "beheaded" in an extraordinary manner, as nine cameras fracture her face into a series of grids and visual patterns that delineate distinct psychological spaces that constitute a shifting sense of identity.

In writing these words, I am aware that I might be talking about my own artistic questions and it's odd to conflate Phillip's process with

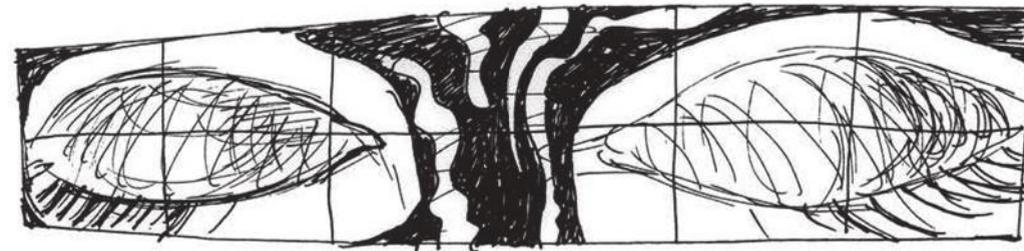


**The voice of Jokanaan**  
*(from the cistern)*  
After me shall come another mightier than I,  
I am not worthy so much as to unloose the  
latchet of his shoes. When he cometh, the  
solitary places shall be glad. When he cometh,  
the eyes of the blind shall see the day, and the  
ears of the deaf shall be opened.



**Second soldier**  
Yes; he has a sombre look.

**First soldier**  
At whom is he looking?



**Narraboth**  
How pale the Princess is. Never have I seen her  
so pale. She is like the shadow of a white rose  
in a mirror of silver.

**Page (very agitated)**  
You must not look at her. You look too much at  
her. Something terrible may happen.

my own issues of “otherness.” Growing up as a first-generation immigrant in the city of Victoria, British Columbia in the 1960s made me sensitive to social and personal constructs. The more I got to know Phillip over the years, however, I came to understand how his own experiences as a new immigrant from England had also marked him, though in a much less overt way. Like everything else from that country, there was something buried and discreet about Phillip.

The themes of fetishism and obsession in *Salome* lead us into surveillance and voyeurism, so we moved the lavish biblical court offstage and made the set as bare as possible. The court — now a temporary pool party — was pre-filmed by Phillip, as were images of Salome emerging from a mud bath and staring into the surveillance camera. All images would be projected on this bare stage, using a variety of projection surfaces. In fact, we had taken the idea of the first lantern I had seen on the tray of water in Phillip’s piece and transposed a version of it onto the massive COC stage.

I loved Phillip’s unique use of optically-enhanced multi-screen imagery in *A Temporary Arrangement*, how a set of frames attempt to come together to form a portrait of a single face. Each frame seems to occupy a distinct yet incomplete aspect of identity, only making sense when all the pieces fit together puzzle-like on the screen. Yet even at this point something seems slightly off, because the viewer understands that this portrait is indeed little more than a temporary arrangement.

We explored how questions of identity and shifting sexual intensity in his short film might find their way into our interpretation of Strauss’s groundbreaking opera. Phillip was invited to bring the sensibilities he exhibited in his carefully made cinematic poems to a live stage setting.



Since most of the action was now offstage, the production began with the characters watching both Herod's biblical court offstage, as well as looking at video surveillance of Salome as she lies covered in mud. Phillip used the same radical portrait technique he had deployed in *A Temporary Arrangement*, this time recomposing the nine-frame "standard" format composition of that film and widening it to a "CinemaScope" sixteen-frame image. Salome's eyes are also covered in mud. When she first hears John the Baptist's voice her eyes reopen. She is seen diving into a pool to wash away the mud, and walking through the garden (all on video), before entering live on stage.

Since our *Salome* was first presented in 1996, digital technology was still somewhat primitive. It certainly existed, but the projectors were relatively weak. When the production was remounted a few years ago, many of the older technologies we employed in that first production had become obsolete and needed to be transferred to new digital counterparts. While this made things easier, I must confess it took away much of the mystery that I first felt when I saw Phillip's magic lantern installation with the floating bodies in super 8 film some years before. While we originally used three separate projectors, each rear-projecting onto a suspended screen, it was now possible to digitally reformat all the images into a single image, for one projector.

What was achieved with that first production of *Salome* over twenty years ago was very different from the remount presented in 2013. In the mid-90s, it was an analog multimedia show that felt much more hand-made. Not only was a 16mm film projector rolled onto the stage and threaded by a character in the opera before being turned on, the film was then projected onto a huge screen that actually emerged from Salome's dress as she sat on a swing that rose into the sky. The image of a blindfolded girl walking through a forest became a completely mysterious apparition, as this 16mm

projection of her walking on a moving belt (so she was static in the frame), was superimposed over an extremely long photographic glass slide of an empty forest. This slide was then manually pulled in front of an extremely powerful focusable light that became a sort of lantern magica. The juxtaposition of the 16mm projection of her striding on the walking belt and this physically moving glass slide of an empty forest was quite extraordinary. Its impact might be compared to the moments in Phillip's films *Malody* (2012), *Dredger* (2015) and *Shadow Nettes* (2017) when the entire frame/room begins to revolve. It was impossible to immediately understand how the effect was achieved, but the result was astonishing.

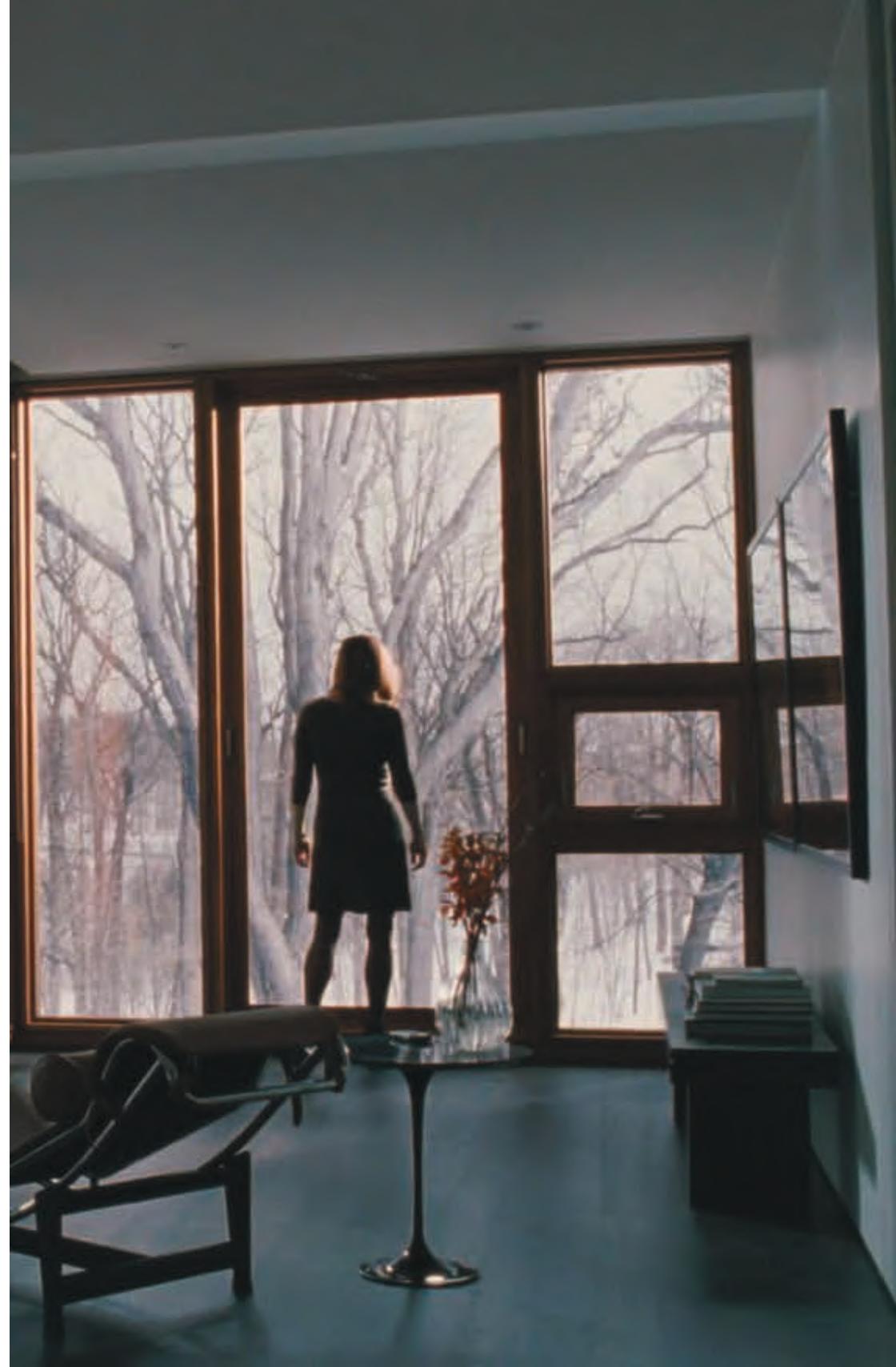
This scene in *Salome* was the beginning of the famous "Dance of the Seven Veils," which is usually presented with the singer onstage performing a series of movements and costume changes over the next seven minutes of music. In our production, this music was used as a soundtrack for cinematic flashbacks, beginning with a young Salome walking through a forest and ending with a violent shadow show that involved a horrifying gang rape filmed by one of the participants. In this way, the violence that young Salome witnessed and experienced became the seed for her wish to have her object of desire so violently destroyed. Unlike Phillip's film, the arrangement in this case — the beheading — was quite permanent.

Over the course of the many years that followed this theatrical production — which actually predated our first feature film collaboration — Phillip and I would work together on more conventionally narrative projects, but those moments from *Salome* remain fixed in my mind as the purest marriage of our two sensibilities. A shared obsession over where and how we find ourselves in any particular place had brought us together in some place strange and new.

This past summer, I finally had a chance to visit Phillip's beloved cabin where so many of his shorts have been filmed. I found myself sleeping in another one of this amazing artist's creations. He had built an extraordinary studio set for the top floor of Julianne Moore's house in *Chloe* (2009). After the shoot, Phillip deconstructed the set and shipped it by boat from the studio in Toronto to the remote location in Northern Ontario where I now found myself. That night, after we had shared a lovely bottle of wine, I made my way back to this "bunky" and stared at the night forest through the big open windows.

Twenty-five years ago our journey had started with a tiny house of projections, and now I had been placed — so politely — in another. Phillip had repurposed one set of choices; now I found myself physically in the middle of those decisions, the product of another temporary arrangement.

*Atom Egoyan is a Toronto-based film and theatre director.*





# On Production Design

by Phillip Barker

Canals circle through Amsterdam like the rings of a tree. On one of these canals, the Keizersgracht, in the summer of 1984, I installed my film-sculpture *Trust A Boat*. Twelve 16mm films were rear projected onto the windows of a three-storey house and viewed by an audience gathered on the other side of the water.

Also on the opposite shore, on the second floor, was a film production company. I heard they were looking for a production designer for *Zoeken Naar Eileen (Looking For Eileen)* (1987), a Dutch feature film they were prepping. So I walked over the bridge and applied for the job. Apparently when they worked late into the night they would watch my film installation with its dreamy images of ocean, accordions and fish reflected in the waters of the canal. They hired me thinking it would be interesting to use a “real artist” as their production designer. In that moment I discovered a zone—like the intersecting parts of a Venn Diagram—between my personal and commercial art.

I had also discovered a way of making money to live while making art for myself, and didn't have to be too concerned with being part of any art scene. My two practices inform each other in many ways. I borrow from commercial filmmaking all the time. I became fascinated with the machinery behind illusion making, and learned that it takes collaboration to create these complex pictures. I met people in the film business who, like me, loved the medium and were eager to make something outside of commercial film. They became my friends and collaborators.

During the school-bus crash in *The Sweet Hereafter*, the stunt driver's wife ran down the road blowing kisses to her husband through the rear-view mirror as he drove the bus through the guard rail and dropped over the cliff.



If we needed another humvee or a tank we called up the Prince of Jordan on his cellphone.

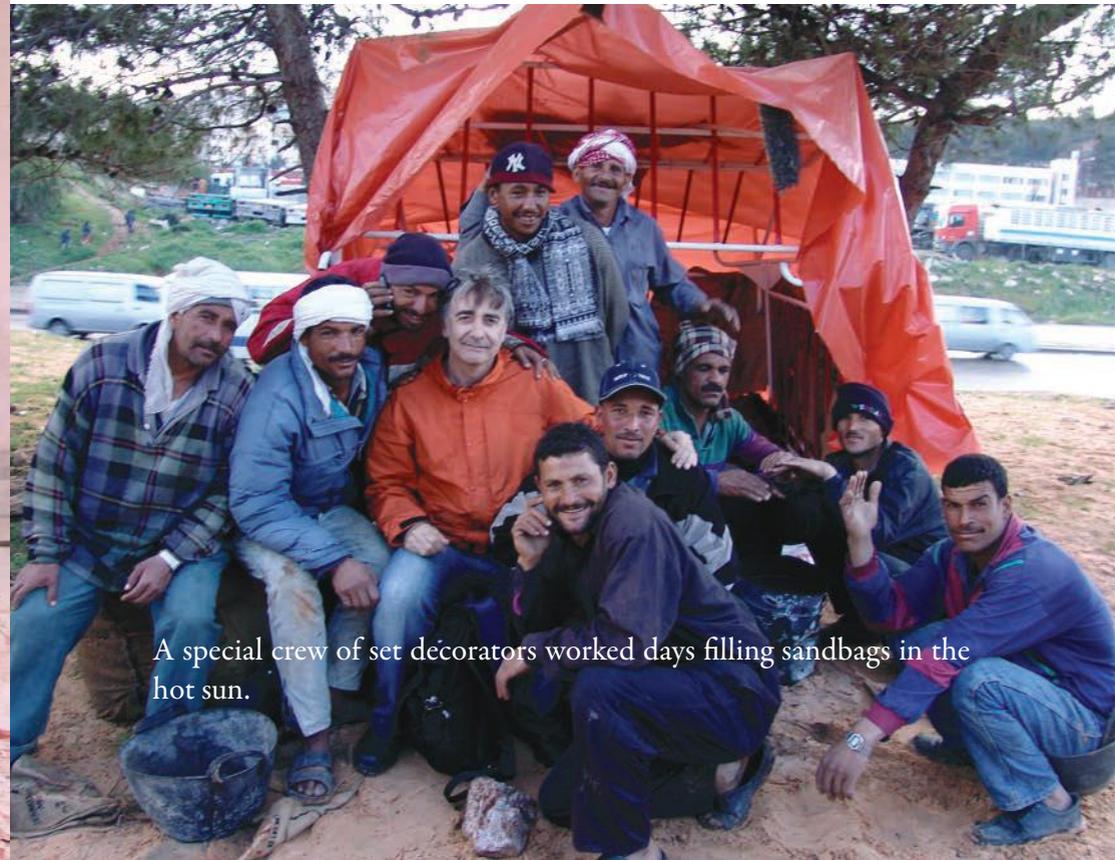
## Redacted *all the sets were made of steel*

There's not many trees in Jordan, all the sets of Brian De Palma's film *Redacted* (2007) were made of steel. Paint choices were green and beige.

De Palma liked to have everything set, lit and blocked before he arrived. The AD's would yell "Brian's getting out of the van." and then "Brian's entered the studio."



A family rented us their home to stage horrific scenes of slaughter, the owner of the house laughing as I emptied 5 gallons of stage blood in their living room.



A special crew of set decorators worked days filling sandbags in the hot sun.



Reign  
*what's outside the frame*

When the creators of *Reign* (2013-2017) threw historical accuracy out the window, I was on my own to reinvent a history I could live with. The question became: what's outside the frame? What's not acceptable? Quaffed hair, low-cut blouses, Champagne (invented 1693) and potatoes. They didn't have potatoes in Europe in the early 16th century. What if Mary Queen of Scots throws an apple?





Ararat  
*folding of truths*

*Ararat* (2002) tells the story of a filmmaker making a film that reconstructs the Armenian Genocide of 1915. I made a street set of an Armenian quarter in the city of Van. The set was adorned with carpets, food, bibles, jewelry and other original artifacts loaned to us by the Armenian community, some of whom were direct descendants of those who fell in the Genocide. During the filming these same people filled the streets as extras, performing their duties as merchants and market-goers with heart-aching sincerity. For a few sun-drenched hours, this was their Armenia.

There were real tears shed as we burned down the set for a scene.





The Wickerman  
*the curse of the remake*

They ignored the best parts of the original: the trippy songs, the story of sexual repression, the frolicking nudity and replaced them with violence and thinly veiled misogyny. At least I got to make a 60' tall man out of sticks and burn him. This film appears in many "worst films" lists.



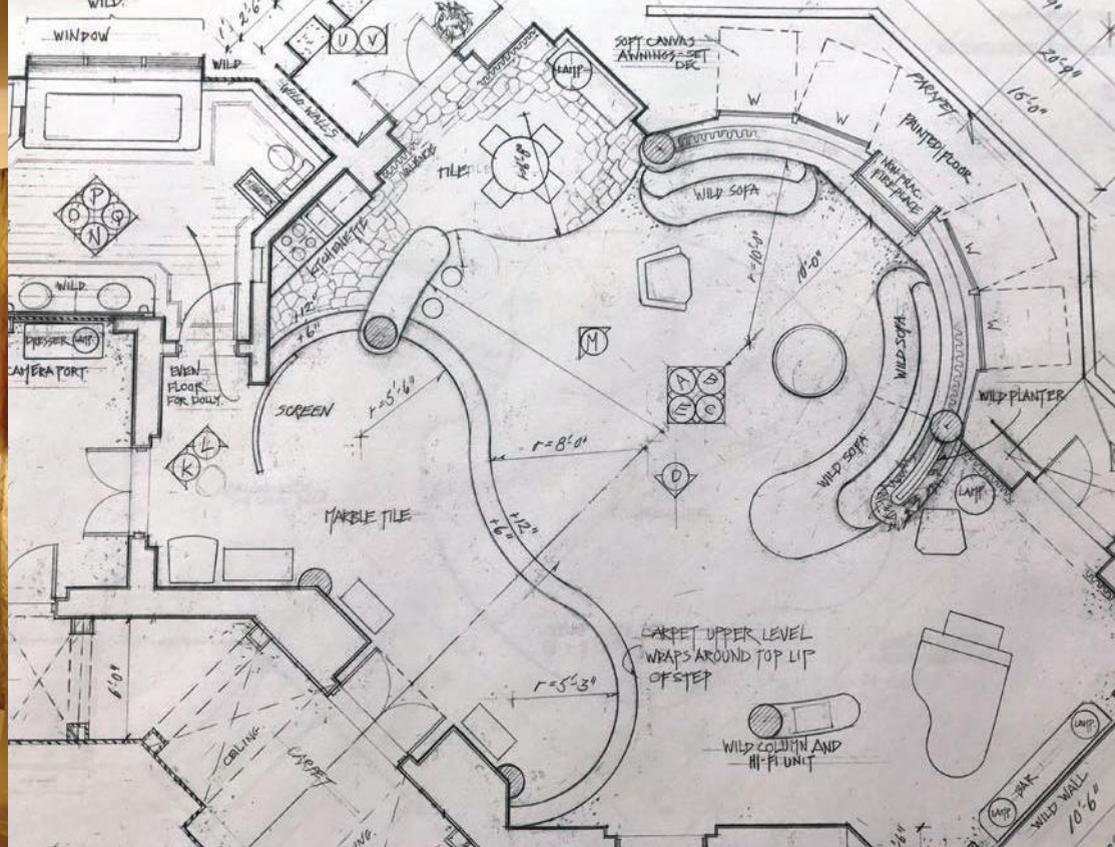


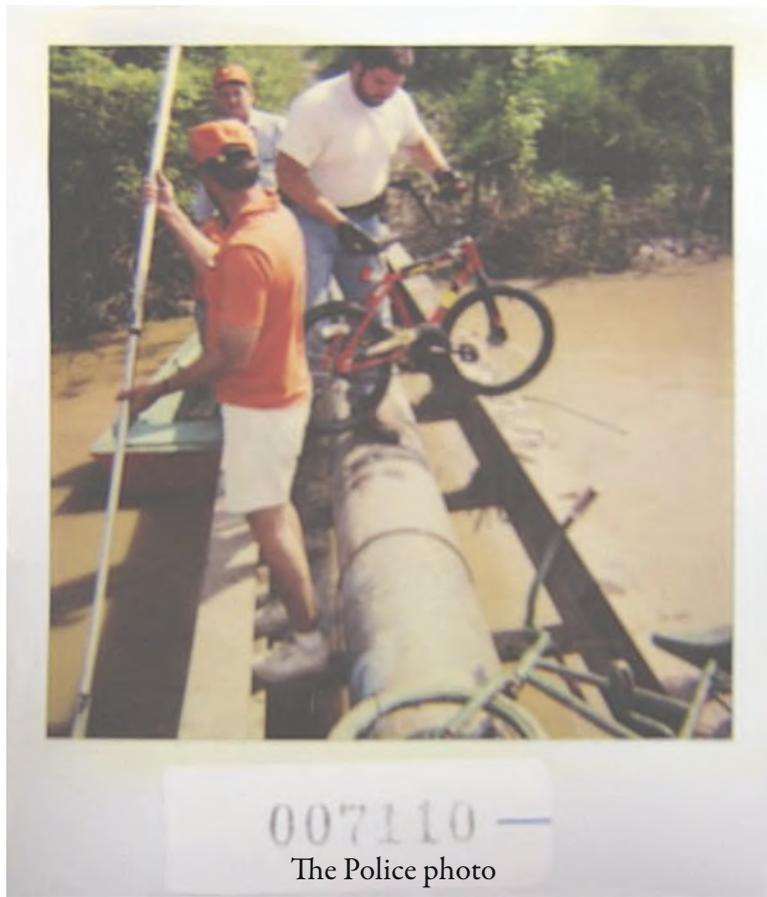


*Where The Truth Lies*  
*Miami in the UK*

We built the 1950's Miami Versailles Hotel Suite and a 1974 Pan Am 747 in Shepperton Studios in London, England. Rented furniture used on Kubrick's film sets. I worked with British tradespeople who admitted me into a world of miniatures, plaster of Paris, marbelizing, glazing, masonry, bas-relief and hand-painted backdrops. There were props builders who worked on Monty Python films having learned their skills from their fathers.







The Police photo

The Devil's Knot  
*the sewage pipe*

It was cold, hard, and rusty and carried solid waste across the creek. It was like the intestines from a human or an animals body. It became the symbolic conduit of evil that ran through the the film *Devil's Knot*, the story of the West Memphis murders.

Atom and I visited this site, stood on the pipe and it suddenly became real. It became one of many things I had to recreate.

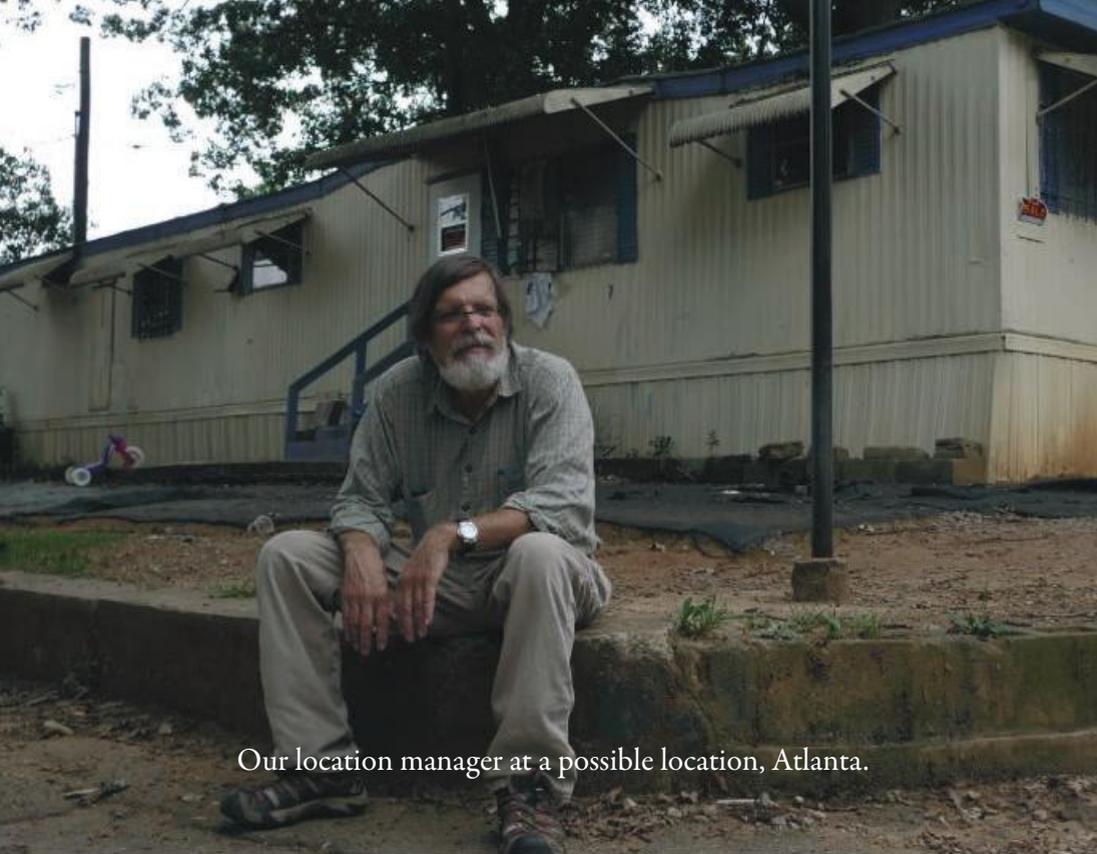
I began to dig into police evidence and read up on various versions of what happened. I found there was no shortage of research material.



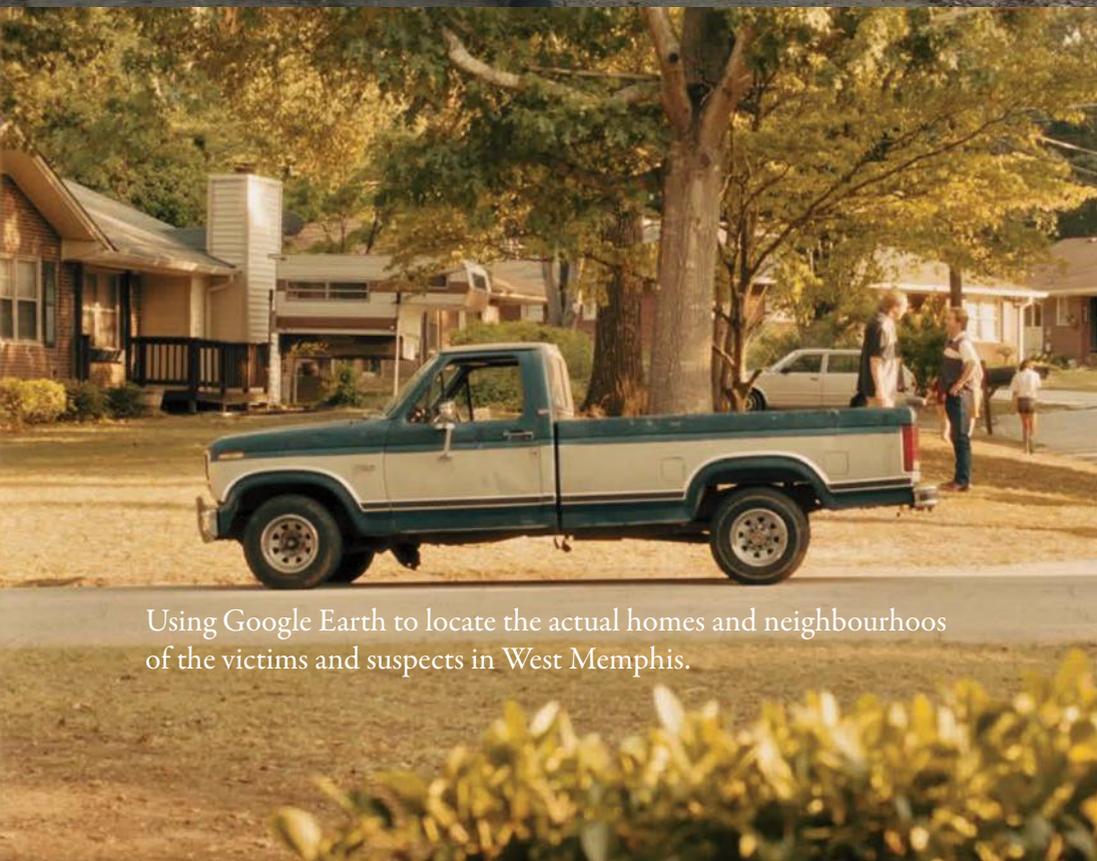
With Atom at location of the actual murders, West Memphis



The sewage pipe recreated for the film in Atlanta.



Our location manager at a possible location, Atlanta.



Using Google Earth to locate the actual homes and neighbourhoods of the victims and suspects in West Memphis.



I recreated the mugshots, the real Memphis Three on the left, the actors in the movie on the right.

I threw myself into the details: homes, cars, pickup trucks... as a way to not deal with the enormity of the actual murders.



## Movies

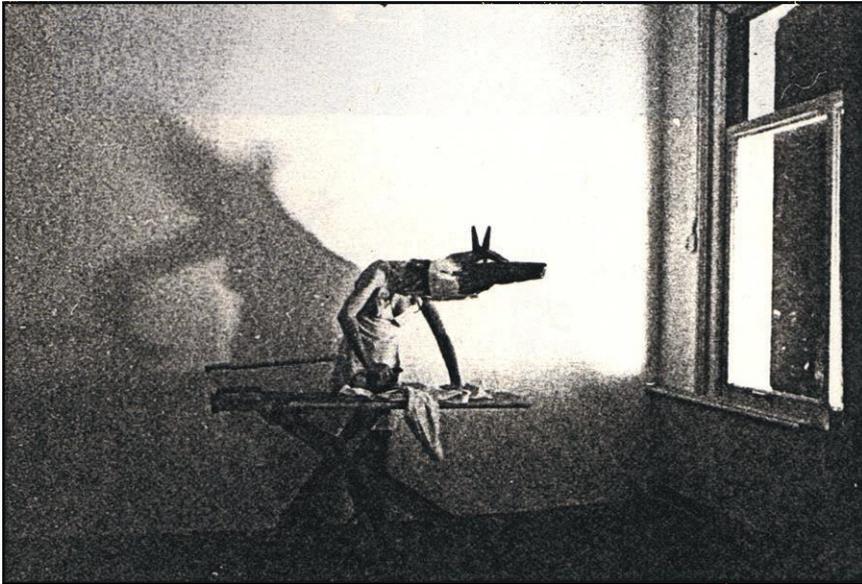
an interview with Phillip Barker

*Mike:* Your earliest work was made in super 8, the surreal documentary you called *I Am Always Connected* (1984). Can you describe the contraption you built for it, and how it all unfolded?

*Phillip:* One night in Amsterdam I was staring at the shadow of an old ironing board when it suddenly turned into a wolf. I recognized this animal from within myself, a dark beast that sometimes came along to announce that something was going to change in a very fucking painful way. It usually came unannounced — once it jumped out from the darkness of a dream and clamped its jaws upon my forehead and didn't let go — but here it was upon my wall. So I began to ask why and work with it, making everything I knew how to make. I painted it with India ink on the walls and floor, the window glass, everything. I painted the black beast on the body of my dancer friend Marianna, and she made it dance. I made it into a papier-mâché sculpture and she attached it to her body and it made her dance. It's like they were flirting with each other and I was kinda jealous until I realized the wolf dog was me. I attached them both to a painted background and they circled each other, taking turns leading. I jacked the whole thing off the ground and pierced the center of the painting with a steel pipe upon which I clamped my super 8 camera. I grabbed a couple of friends and we drove out to the Netherlands polder dikes, miles of farmland reclaimed from the ocean. We filmed the dance on a country road lined with elm trees.

I joined the film's head to its tail and projected it back upon the painting hundreds of times. The shitty projector carved lines into the photo emulsion of the super 8 film. I took black-and-white photos and printed a flip book. The flipping back and forth of light and dark, black and white, good and bad, cerebral and carnal, bestial and

humane. I searched for sounds that fit the whole thing like the endlessly variable song of the sparrow, the never-changing and maddening drone of crickets, all accompanied by a reel-to-reel tape recording of a vacuum cleaner played at half speed. It all came together. *I Am Always Connected* connects me to myself like nothing I have made before or since.



Years later I went back to the road. All the trees were cut down; I think they had a disease. When I returned to Toronto, John Porter showed the original super 8 film to a packed audience at Innis. The projector began to stutter and we all watched as the machine slowly ate the first scene. There was sprocket clawing, horizontal ripping and then, the inevitable jam as we all watched the freeze frame melt, a bubbling frame flambé. Poor John was mortified, but I thought it looked cool. Recently I transferred it to digital and the burned section is my favourite part.

*Mike:* Your installation *Trust A Boat* (1984-1986) was a dreamy street spectacle that combined live performers and a battery of

16mm projectors that lit up a suite of windows. It transformed Toronto's Queen Street for a moment back in 1987, but it had its origins much earlier than that. Can you talk about how you came to this unusual form?

*Phillip:* The idea came from many places. I was living in Amsterdam trying to figure out who I was, and questioning myself about the point of my art. I couldn't figure out what to do — drawing, painting, music, theatre, film — I loved them all. I complained to a friend that I couldn't decide. Her answer was simple and liberating: do it all.

I was reading Joseph Conrad's *Lord Jim* (1900). There's a scene in the book where three men are adrift, lost at sea in a lifeboat. To stay sane, they begin to imagine coastlines around them: "There's England and France directly ahead!" It was their way to ward off insanity, to assuage the hunger of the body through the imagination. "Trust a boat on the high seas to bring out the irrational that lurks at the bottom of every thought, sentiment, sensation, emotion."

My apartment in Amsterdam was a building that swayed back and forth with the passing of the trucks, like a boat on the ocean. To get my bearings I would fix my gaze upon the apartments across the street. There were only two TV channels available, and the twenty apartments I could see lit up with one or the other, creating organic shapes that ran through the building.

And water, everywhere in Holland there was water. My fear of being underwater (I was a late swimmer). I saw giant fish, life-saving accordions as breathing machines, gravity unfixed.

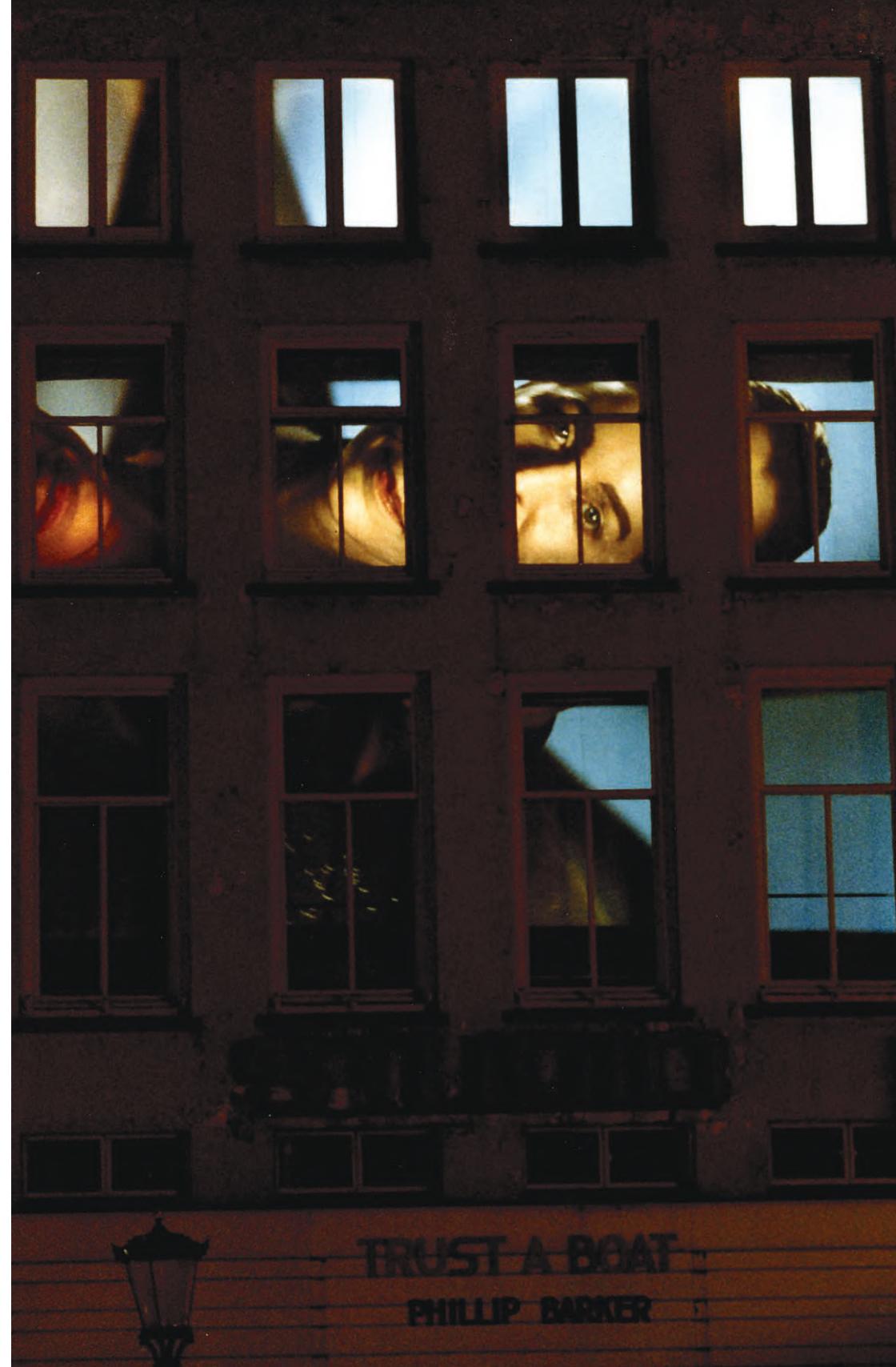
I was pretty naïve at the time. I thought I could just take nine 16mm cameras and strap them onto a stick and shoot all the films at the same time. I began calling all the well-known Dutch DOPs,



directors, and actors. The great cameraman Jan Wich agreed to help me with the project. He said, why don't you just film the scenes with one 35mm film camera and divide them into nine 16mm films with an optical printer? I had no idea what an optical printer was but eventually talked a local film lab into doing it for very little money.

There was no script, only drawings of a series of shots that transitioned from a house in Amsterdam to the Atlantic Ocean. The hero, our guide, was a street musician who continues to play his accordion despite the fact that the earth around him is floating away. He was my Lord Jim who dreamed of being a hero on the high seas. (Later in the book, when the ship he is in charge of becomes damaged and begins to sink, he jumps in a lifeboat and abandons the crew and cargo of 800 slaves.)

It was an impossibly ambitious project but somehow it captured people's imaginations. Soon I had a film crew who also ran the projectors. There were six of us, we all had super 8 cameras and were shooting each other all the time. Even at that time super 8 was nerdy. We scoured libraries and schools for free 16mm projectors, then found a range of lenses to match the various rooms and throw distances. John McDowell composed some music and found outdoor speakers. We were given a beautiful house on the Keizersgracht, a well-travelled canal street in the center of Amsterdam. The films ran only ten minutes and it took five minutes to set the films back up, so during the rewind we improvised a live silhouette performance. In later performances we hired two welders and put them on adjacent roofs to spark up during the rewind time. We asked people to walk their dogs past the building, anything that seemed remotely related to the project and to fill up rewinding time. We invited local performers to join our live silhouette dance until there were nine performers, one in each window.





The show gave off this ethereal magical peaceful vibe to the audience, but inside it was a mad house. There was a “head of projection” who would talk into a microphone attached to speakers throughout the house, directing the other projectionists on each floor when to start their projectors. Each projector had the first frame in the gate, one floor of projectors were all plugged into a power bar. The director of the projection would start the show “5, 4, 3, 2, 1 — launch torpedoes!!” until we all cracked up. I was like, “Come on guys, be serious... this is Art!” The show looped for about four hours per night for two weeks. It was popular, hundreds of people stood there and watched, other people saw them watching and came and watched too. There was a traffic jam on the street, and suddenly the police were directing traffic; I have no idea how that happened. I remember mingling with the crowd and eavesdropping on the comments. It was interesting to see that, unlike sitting in the black box of a cinema, the audience talked to each other about the thing they were experiencing. With very little advertising, people had no idea what it was. I was in an ecstatic state, having only had a few gallery shows until then, art shows that only friends and a few other artists saw. Here was something on the street for everybody, regular people, hundreds at a time! I was busking again. Every night was different. We were invited to other cities so we threw everything in a van and the six of us drove around Holland performing Trust A Boat in different locations during the long summer of 1984.

*Mike:* Can you talk about *Slow Blink* (2010)?

*Phillip:* Filmmaking can be so dull compared with other art forms. It’s bogged down with planning, scheduling, and heavy equipment. Dancer Susanna Hood and I thought we would try to make a spontaneous dance film, zeroing in on some unique things to each discipline — improv for dance, the close-up for film. So we decided to meet near Cherry Beach on Wednesday. I brought my super 8 camera and a few rolls of film, she brought herself. We decided not to say a word, just arrive and roll camera.

Susanna blindfolded me and turned the camera on me. False start. Then I gave her a box of volcanic ash from Mount St. Helens that she blew into the air, and the wind blew it back over us. She stood against the sun and threw flowers at me. It was getting a bit *Zabriskie Point*. But then something happened. She went quiet and her breathing deepened. Digging into some deep place inside, she started to twist and stretch her mouth, her face, cross her eyes; moaning turned to screaming as she hit out at me, spitting at the lens like a tortured animal. She can curdle your blood when she slips into her zone of brutal passion. She can go from sweet baby face to get-the-fuck-away-from-me.

So that was it, it was pretty good. We decided to re-do the film. We examined what we did and chose a few emotional shifts that we liked, from sweetness to agony, from seduction to murder, from happy youth to the edge of death. We broke down these gestures into 300 steps and shot each step with a still photograph as we paced our way across changing landscapes ten feet at a time. My friend Curtis Wehrfritz shot the stills using about five Holga still cameras that were constantly being reloaded and supplied to him by my future cinematographer Kris Belchevski. Holgas are known for their mechanical faults, light leaks and overlapping exposures. I didn't want the re-filming of the thing to be staid, so using these cameras added another layer of unpredictability. Curtis had the brilliant idea to tie a rope from his waist to Susanna's to maintain the same focal length as we moved across the landscapes. I shot super 8 over Curtis's shoulder. In the edit I dissolved the hundreds of stills into each other using her eyes as the anchor point. Tom Third layered her cries of agony over sounds of rushing trains and piano clicks. The film disturbs me even now, I don't know what it is, what we made, what it means. It just flickers there, a weird child born out of improv wedlock.

*Mike:* Can you talk about your installations?

*Phillip:* I am drawn to art and stories of disasters, ocean storms, shipwrecks and survival, and the ever-present beauty in death and decay. In Géricault's painting *The Raft of the Medusa* (1819), the survivors of the shipwreck are so beautifully depicted, frozen heroically within the horrific scene. It gives you permission to openly gaze at death, and I wanted to find a way to do that. I began to imagine life-sized landscape paintings populated with real people. *Magnetic Fields* (1989) came from experiments with projecting paintings upon a vertical field where harnessed performers could attach themselves to the projection screen.

I attached a forty-by-forty-foot scaffolding structure to a Victorian house on McCaul Street in Toronto, the former gallery of the Ontario College of Art. On the surface of the structure we stretched a large canvas screen. I found actors, dancers, gymnasts, an accordion player and a trapeze artist; performers willing to wear harnesses and clip themselves to the scaffolding through holes in the projection screen. I made ten paintings and projected them onto the screen, providing background landscapes, scenes of floods and fires. Artist and musician Sharon Cook played live accordion, standing at the edge of a lake. Dancer Pam Abbott, dressed identically, hung upside down below Sharon's feet, playing the role of her reflection. A man fell from the sky, grabbed a flying accordion and played it as he descended to his demise. A story emerged, told in slowly moving tableaux of drowned souls and demonic fire dancers. If a message emerged it was to myself: that when faced with a catastrophe, dance. The show was strange and had some magic.

Catastrophes of broken relationships and an intense self-doubt descended upon me during those years. *Magnetic Fields* raised questions of how I was going to survive those disasters. Ironically, a hurricane hit Toronto on the second day of our performance. The set was partially destroyed and we decided to cancel the show because it was unsafe for the performers.



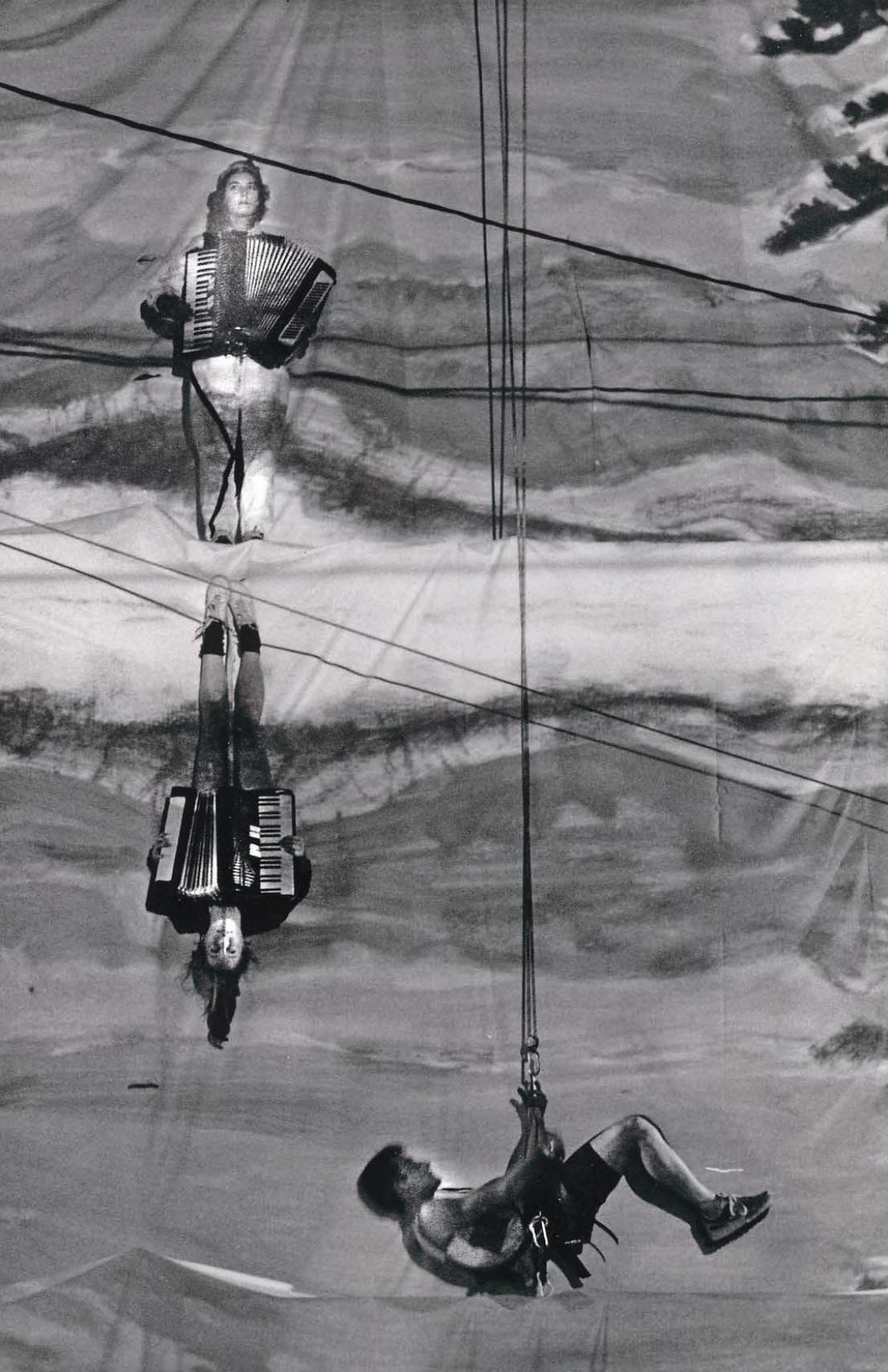
Out of *Magnetic Fields* came *Campos Magneticos* (1991), a live projection performance conceived for ARCO, the international art fair in Madrid. A man riding a bicycle, suspended twenty feet in the air, in the centre of a 16mm film projection of a passing landscape, which slowly begins to revolve. The bicycle turns upside down, the man falls and meets a woman who has fallen from a tree, so they fall together to the bottom of the ocean where a dog puppet resurrects their drowned souls. Dreams, myths, Chagall-like dances of death. A demonic band played live to the whole thing.

It was a doomed project. The first Gulf War broke out the day before the crew of twelve Canadians flew to Spain. Electronics were banned from flights, so we couldn't bring our playback computers and electronic instruments. The piece we did was not what I had imagined, creative solutions were not borne from the adversity. The videotapes that document the project sit in a box in my studio,

unseen by myself or anyone else. I could say I learned from the experience, that when you experiment you must expect failures, but the collapse of *Campos Magneticos*, followed by another disastrous projection performance the following year, left me shaken and exhausted.

Time passed.

A helicopter lifts large nets crammed with the corpses of caribou from a raging river into the sky, then drops them on piles stacked high. 10,000 caribou the TV newsman said. It was an unimaginable atrocity perpetrated by Hydro-Québec when they flooded pristine valleys to make colossal hydro dams to feed America's appetite for power, and provide a source of income for a province bent on becoming independent from the rest of Canada in 1984. The caribou were running on instinct, simply walking into the deluge of



water following their inherent migratory path. The Cree had tried to erect a fence to stop them. These images played on the news in Holland, and I was stunned. The raw news footage became the material for a couple of installations.

Invited to show something at the Canadian Pavilion at Expo 92 in Seville, I rear-projected the drowned caribou footage on a tent that I partially submerged in a pristine reflective pool. It was called *Trial By Water* (1992). The theme of the Canadian Pavilion was celebrating our pure water. The Quebec minister of culture found me handing out a factsheet about the hydro dam disaster. He was not impressed.

“Is this your art?”

“Yes.”

“It is shit.”

I was told to stop handing out the leaflets. I threatened to go to the press... it got messy.

For *Swimming Grasshopper Lake* (1990) I blacked out the windows of Pages bookstore in Toronto, leaving a peephole. The viewer looked down onto a scale model of a valley of trees that circled a mythical lake. Projected images of dead caribou were being pulled from it, and these dissolved into images of swimming grasshoppers, a fictional species soon to be annihilated by floodwater.

There was something about the political drive of these works that I mistrusted. They seemed preachy and my mistrust of preachers went back to Catholic school. I returned to looking inside, making personal things in oblique ways, making up my own myths.

*Mike:* In *A Temporary Arrangement* (1995) you offer a suite of nine portraits, each person floats down the same black-and-white river. Your description says that it began “as a simple experiment: to study



the human form suspended in water, floating down a river. We made a twelve-foot camera tower lashed to two canoes. However, during the filming, individual dramas unfolded as each person had to confront their ability, or inability, to relinquish control to the flowing river. A narrative unfolded as I witnessed friends and family coming to terms with this natural force.” Could you talk about your own needs for floating bodies, and how the river managed to bring each of its inhabitants into relief?

*Phillip:* I was going on a lot of wilderness trips and experienced a kind of existential awakening about survival. The weight of the mayflies forces the lower ones under the surface of the water to drown, the lucky ones on top successfully passing on their lives and supporting the chain of life, like endless turtles holding up the universe. Later I read Dawkins’s view that life is a river of genes through time, and that our bodies are just temporary hosts for these genes.

On the other hand, we are so connected to our bodies and share fears of losing them. For some people, floating headfirst down a slow-moving river for two-and-a-half minutes (the length of a roll of super 8 film) requires a great force of will. For others (like my mother, who seemed to be so trusting in her son’s request to take a float), it was done readily with a peaceful smile. In fact, she barely pierced the surface of the water, like a leaf. Like that old soap commercial: “So pure, it floats!”

I asked each person in the film to bring an object that represented them, something that they were willing to let float away in the river. My dad brought a model boat that he had made, a scale model of a fishing boat that he later built full-scale. (He also built a scale model of his workshop door to check if he could get the full-scale boat out. He still happily demonstrates this action to anyone willing to sit and watch.)

Since making the film, two of the floaters have passed on to float in some other existence. Chris Yarwood was a mason and a mean harmonica player. He let go of his “float,” a tool that bricklayers use to hold wet cement. Ken McDougall, one of the two stars of the film, has also passed. He took the bus up north to meet us but I didn’t find him at the bus station. I finally found him miles away walking confidently down the road fully dressed in a beautiful suit and briefcase walking in the opposite direction. I miss them both every time I see the film.

Passed along to successive generations, our successful genes make high-fidelity copies of themselves, like digital encoding. In some ways, the digital revolution has enabled me to go back to where *A Temporary Arrangement* left off. This summer I will return to the river to make another film with the realization that I never really left it.

*Mike:* *Night Vision* (2008, recut in 2011) opens with a woman undergoing what appears to be a psych test. She is shown a picture, and asked to make a story out of it. The story she relates, though rarely in words, becomes the movie we’re seeing. The box within a box unfolds as a dreamy river trek, undertaken by a scientist and her two child charges. Impeccable, hyper-real cinematography delivers us heavenly fireflies, underwater cascades and rising river mists. What an endless luxury of seeing there is; it feels like a long gorge at the dessert table, each item meticulously sculpted. I’m never sure why one delicious morsel should follow the next, but with so much beauty on offer, who’s counting? She dives for roots, the children plummet over a waterfall, and together they create a human firefly.

Midway through the movie a second movement is broached: the psych test stutters open again, and then we follow a blind man through the forest, pausing in a rapture of tree and sun, before making his way to the river. Large soap bubbles carry his dance

dreams forward and backward. Meanwhile she dons a newly fashioned suit of light and after a final immersion joins him on the bank, where her children are also waiting. As she climbs out of the river, there is some feeling of community gathering, even reconciliation.

Part of what makes the movie so unusual is that it is all rendered via deluxe production values, in rapturous 35mm with a crew hovering behind every frame. But on the other hand, the form is very open, the fragments of the movie are left for viewers to put together. There is a winning tension between the rigorously composed pictures, and what we used to call “the open text” in which they operate. This divide informs so much of your work. Can you talk about this movie, and these countering tendencies?

*Phillip:* My film scripts are really just collections of drawings with a few directions for camera and actors scratched below. I avoid words if I can. What do words have to do with water, the night air, our compulsion to find images in floating clouds? *Night Vision* grew from random things surrounding me at the time.

My father was diagnosed with macular degeneration, an eye disease that slowly degrades the central visual field. He was told he would slowly go blind within a few years. I suggested to him that he would become more nocturnal, like animals that hunt at night who make primary use of their peripheral vision. He might start an inventory of images, renaming things to include their colour. Redblanketbaby with graphiteblackhair and eggshellwhiteskin eat pearlybluefish. I interviewed my dad and his list of coloured events became the dialogue for the character of the old man in the forest.

At the time my massage therapist was taking experimental homeopathic pills. She recorded her dreams of seeing in the dark, which flooded into her waking world, as she experienced seeing the



darkness within her clients. When the test period was over, she was told the pills were made from a distillate of crushed fireflies.

At the time my wife Julie was studying psychology. She would bring home psychological tests and try them out on me. In one test, drawings were shown to patients and they were asked to make up stories about what they saw. The results informed the psychologist about the patients' fears and compulsions.

I began to see that all these things seemed to connect, and I wanted to film them all. I imagined a scientist working with a particular species of fireflies and deriving a drug that would cure blindness. Through her blind obsession with her work, she loses her children. The film was strung together like a fable, framed as an improvised story, perhaps as witnessed through the eyes of a child (it is my son who floats on the raft). As a fable, this disaster hybrid would require a happy ending, and offer something to be learned. The children are rescued by the blind man who puts his faith in imagination (giant soap bubbles) and regains his vision by ingesting the spirit of the firefly.

One of my dreams is to make a film of Alain Robbe-Grillet's *Le Voyeur* (1958). It is the story of a logical man, a time-obsessed watch salesman who is stuck overnight on an island. During this time a young girl on the island is murdered. In an almost detached way, he adds up the facts and deduces that he must be the murderer. Some years ago, I interviewed Robbe-Grillet in his Paris home. I asked if the hero of the novel committed the murder and his reply was yes and no. We are all innocent and murderers at the same time. Events that seem to occur one after another are really happening at the same time.

In his hallway there was a painting by Magritte of a high-heel shoe filled with blood. Robbe-Grillet had painted droplets of blood onto

the wall that went from the blood in the painting into a real high heel sitting on a side table, also filled with (presumably fake) blood. “It’s impossible to make this book into a film,” he said. Assured I would fail, he gave me non-exclusive rights to the film.

Cinema died for me in April, 1967. That month, my father brought home a super-8 camera and projector. The projector came with a short demo film, a war drama called *War Is Hell* (1963). At the impressionable age of eleven I discovered that war, as a recreated spectacle for the camera, could be a gruesome, frightening hell. But war as a projected phantasm, as a flickering light across my living room wall, was deliciously seductive and strange. One click with my finger on the “still” button and I could freeze those soldier-actors just before they were shot. I could hold them cryogenically, indefinitely. When they were blown-up, I could give them back their life with the projector’s reverse button. This was my first interactive experience. Since then I have been in love with cinema’s illusions but also distrusted them deeply. I was no longer able to simply watch a film and get lost in the story; I became curious about how the film was made, the machine behind the illusion. What’s happening just beyond the frame?

*Mike:* You’ve recently completed a trilogy of high-tech mystery plays. Neo-narrative puzzles that invite speculation. I wonder if you could offer some words to help frame these high-sheen question marks?

*Phillip:* *Malody* (2012), *Dredger* (2015) and *Shadow Nettles* (2017) are from a series of ten short films I wrote with the intention of stringing them together into a long format film called *TransFugue*, a word that jams together themes of trance, transfusion, fusion, and fugue — the musical weaving of themes, and also fugue — the psychological condition relating travel and memory. But I am not sure anymore. How long will this take? Will the films work together? Isn’t every film I make a chapter of the same long film?

There are common themes of sacrifice, masculinity, explorations of in-between states (like between innocence and experience); contrasts of opposites (being faithful to something, to someone, and a desire to be free, to become worldly); to embrace chance, to trust in the irrational, to be brave. Besides these somewhat lofty themes, I wanted to have fun, to play around with film and its illusions, and, as much as possible to make things up as I went along. To make film the way I improvise while playing music. Jamming.

They are not complicated films. I feel for those who get frustrated trying to figure them out, as if there’s something deeper and scholarly at play. They sometimes push together events to see what happens. They have definite boundaries, but within those walls, it’s playtime! This curiosity connects us to each other.

As these films developed momentum, I took a step back and let them go. It’s a risk that doesn’t always go well. *Dredger*, for example, has too many themes and refuses to “wrap them up.” It just lingers between beginning and end, not going anywhere in a hurry. It wasn’t as popular as *Malody*, so it left me feeling regret and a bit foolish for feeling a need to have my ego stroked by “popularity.”

These films are heavily influenced by some of my favourite filmmakers: Andrei Tarkovsky, Jacques Tati and Jean Vigo. The characters that inhabit their films are everywhere in mine. They are doomed losers, failing to live up to their high standards. Innocent people caught in adult situations. Monsieur Hulot, the affable and sad child-man of Jacques Tati’s films, wonders aimlessly around in a grown-up world with wide-eyed innocence. He attempts to fit in by mimicking those around him. His actions create reactions that end up destroying social constructions, and reveal to us just how absurd we can be. His disasters are funny and sad, contradictions I relish.

When opposites meet, there's always a third thing produced. To me, watching M. Hulot, that third thing is a feeling of selflessness. I am left floating in a why-can't-I-be-like-that quandary. To be like a child. There's the miracle of birth and the inevitability of death, it's all in there.

In my film *Malody*, a sick woman (named Malody) sits in a diner and conjures up a younger version of herself. A little girl enters the diner through a mirror, does a little Scottish highland fling on the counter, and proceeds to set the world turning. The younger Malody takes the older Malody through some healing rituals that include a bit of dying and being entombed in bread dough along the way.

The entire restaurant revolves, everything falls. Water in a glass begins to meniscus sideways, responding to a new and changing

gravity. The glass slides off the counter and crashes into the viewer. A glass of water in the face! This is what you do to awaken an unconscious person, or to sober up a scoundrel. Hey, wake up! Who do you think you are sitting comfortably behind that fourth wall? And to further unseat the viewer, the fourth wall is removed, revealing nothing more than a dirty old warehouse. I show the entire set on a truck as it turns. It's a shot that recurs in the last three films. Though it can really upset people, to see themselves watching themselves watching a movie.

The girl at the diner then takes her woman-self down to a river where they roast a bird over a fire and religiously — piously! — devour it. Not just any bird, but their fathers' beloved cardinal. Her dad, the cook at the diner, is another self-effacing hero, a man of sacrifice like Alexander in Tarkovsky's *The Sacrifice* (1986), my favourite film. Her dad will give up everything he values, even his fishing boat, to save his daughter.





In my experimental sea yarn *Dredger*, as in Jean Vigo's beautiful *L'Atalante* (1934), three shipmates are caught in a lover's triangle. The captain's wife is trapped in a dull marriage, tricked into joining the voyage by an offer to "see the world," but instead trapped in a steel boat, enslaved and tormented by her own dreams. Pierre, the old shipmate, ignites a passion in her to experience adventures, but also warns her of dangers. Armed with possible bravery, she leaves the ship and heads off to the city of Hamilton.

The sets in *Dredger* are like a Russian nesting doll — bedrooms inside hotels, bedrooms inside a ship, a dry dock ship that contains another ship, all inside an artificial world that is turned upside down by people making a film. All this is a promise and projection for an audience that is struggling, or has given up trying to make sense of it all.

With the third film, *Shadow Nettes*, I once again dug into my own experiences with my father, and being a father. What went wrong, and how could I possibly learn to un-do it? Da, the father in the film, literally projects a manlier version of himself on a portable screen, showing his son how to attract fish, and possibly a wife.

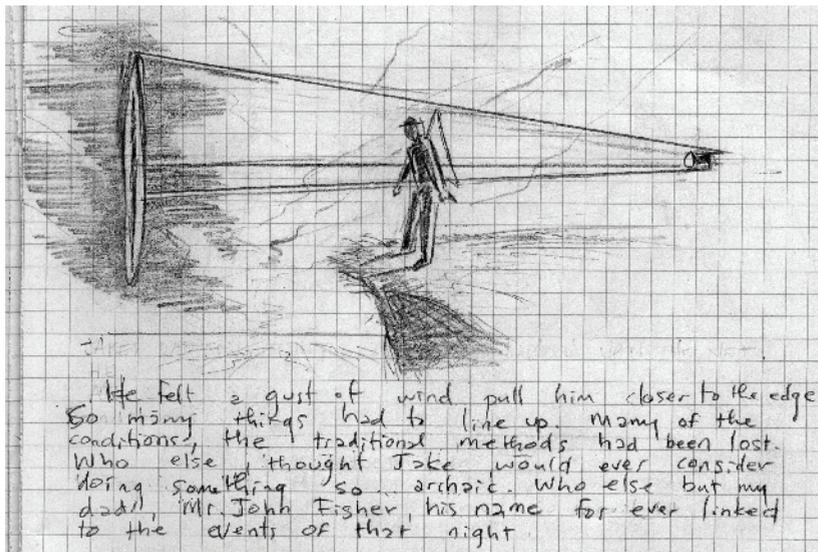
I imagine physical contraptions that allow us to see mysterious things. Things like forgiveness — a structure that connects the forgiver to the forgiven. Or a device that turns the head of a child away from an atrocity. A mechanism that catches a discarded love letter and lowers it slowly to the ground.

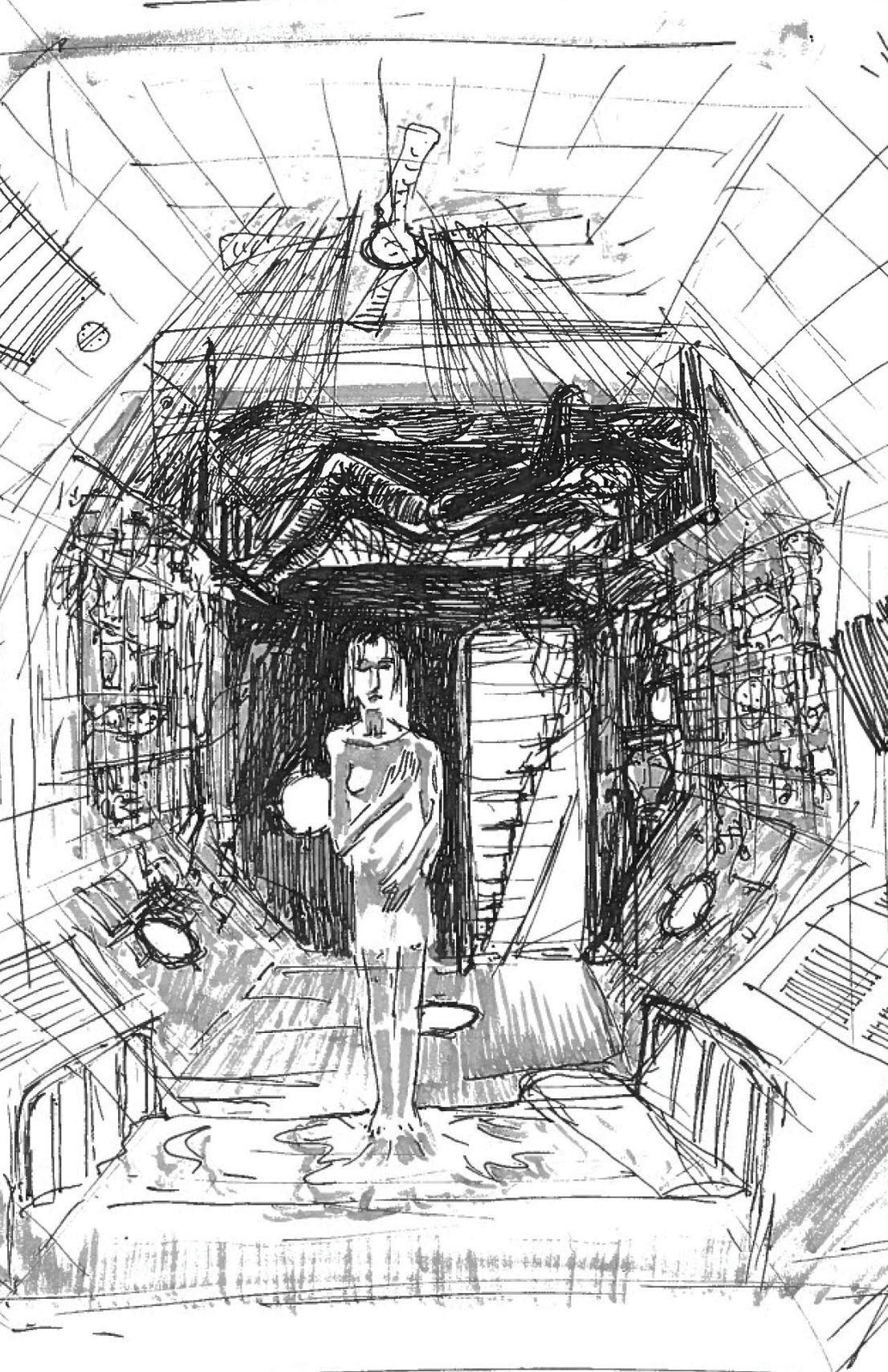
A wearable projection screen, powered by an eternal flame that casts the shadow of its bearer upon a screen. The gestures are transformed by the machine into grander, stronger, more virile representations of oneself. This latter contraption, the thing you always carry around with you is, of course, a Shadow Nette. We all have them, often in the front part of our minds, the way we see ourselves interacting with the world like in a movie.

The Shadow Nette is a real device that arrived to me fully formed. A contraption with its own history, complete with a manual that explains how to operate it (The Five Precepts, including #4: Project a chaste self, free of the seven temptations of the enemy), and a series of illustrated gestures to adopt while wearing it. These stances of the body would guarantee a projected better version of yourself, and, if you are fishing, would attract the required prey.

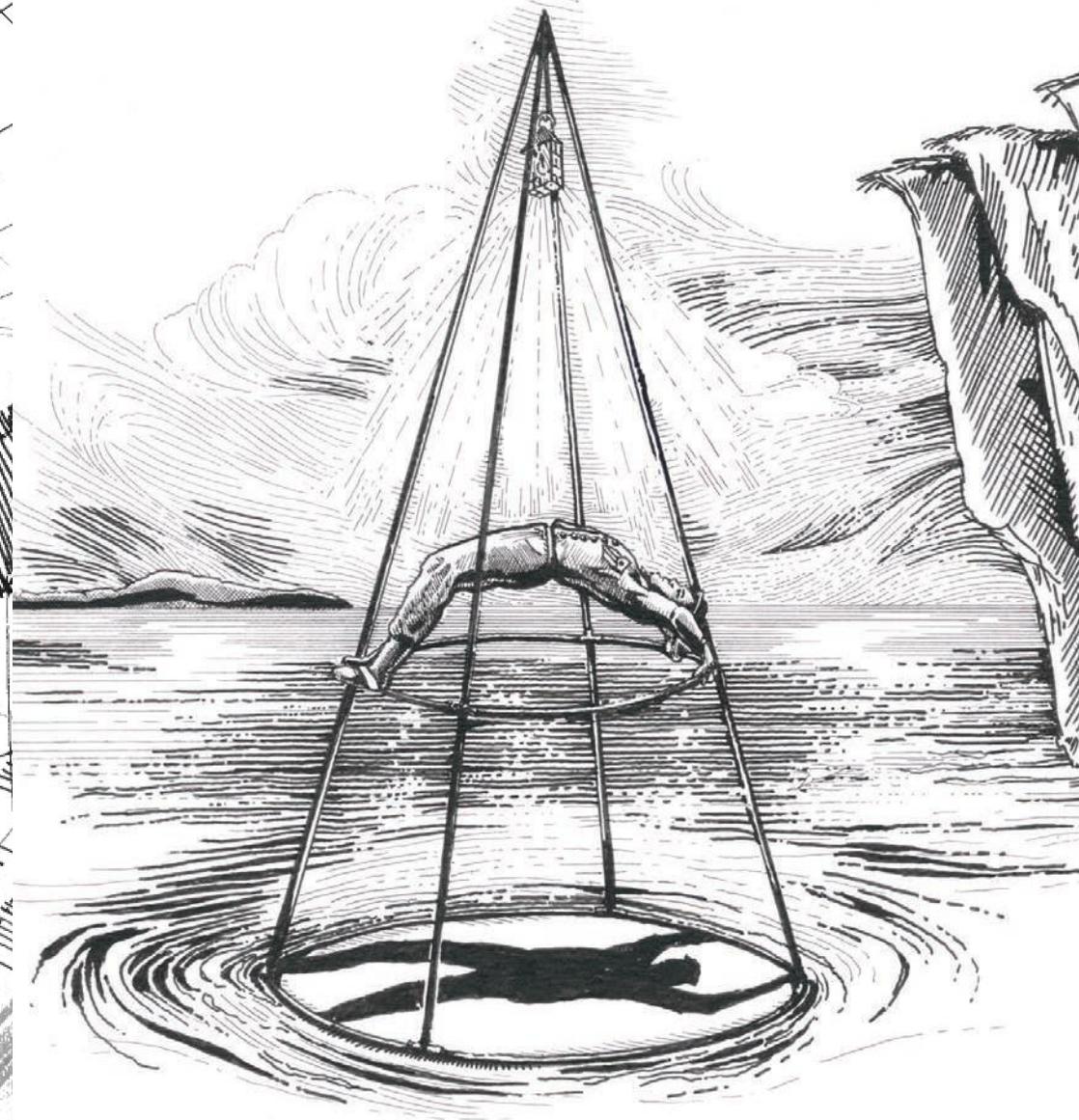
I thought up the manual, then proceeded to follow it to a T. I built the contraption and gave it to a man who was playing a father, and asked him to demonstrate the gestures to a younger man who was playing his son. I think this was an elaborate attempt to become a better father than my father was.

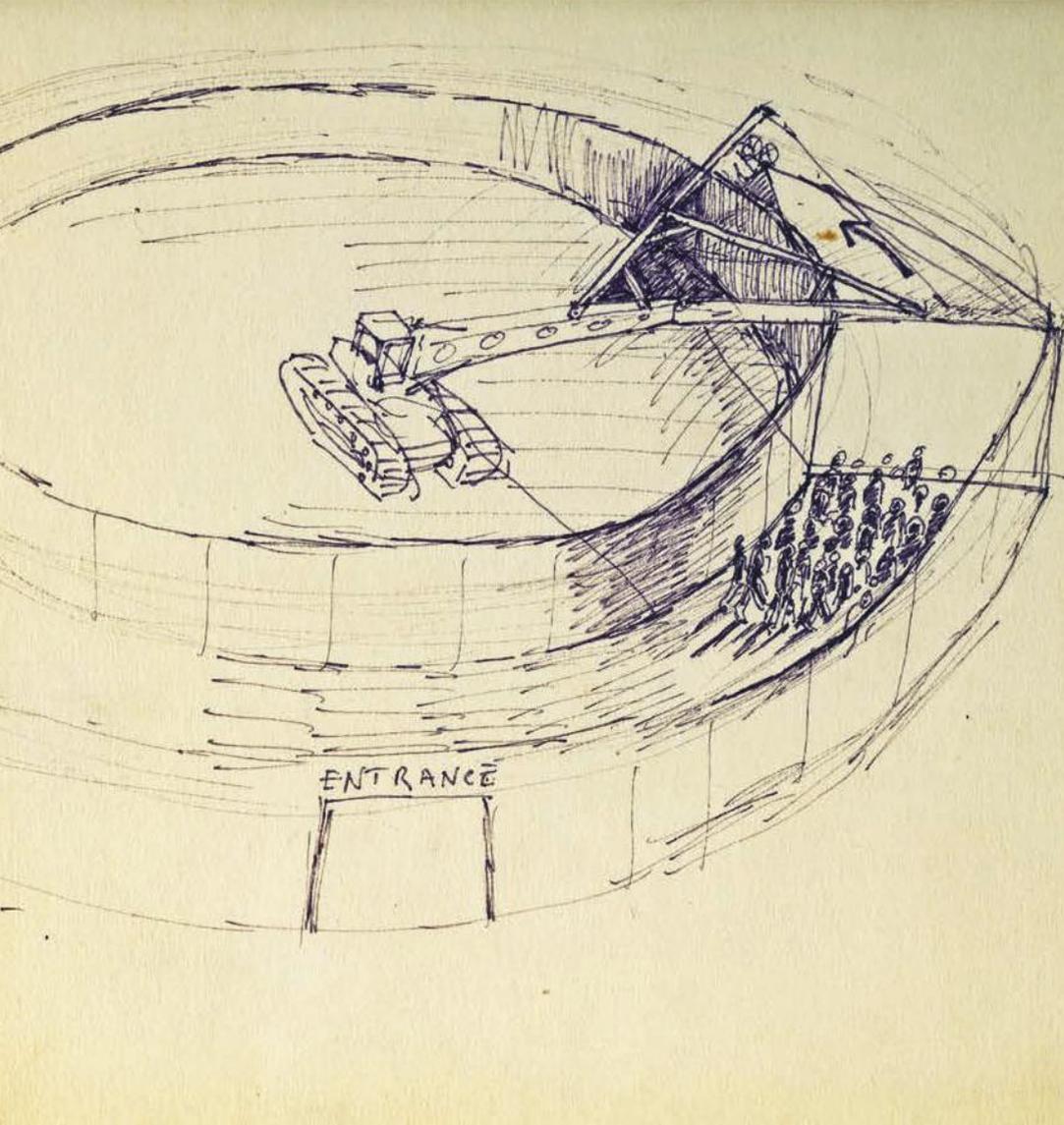
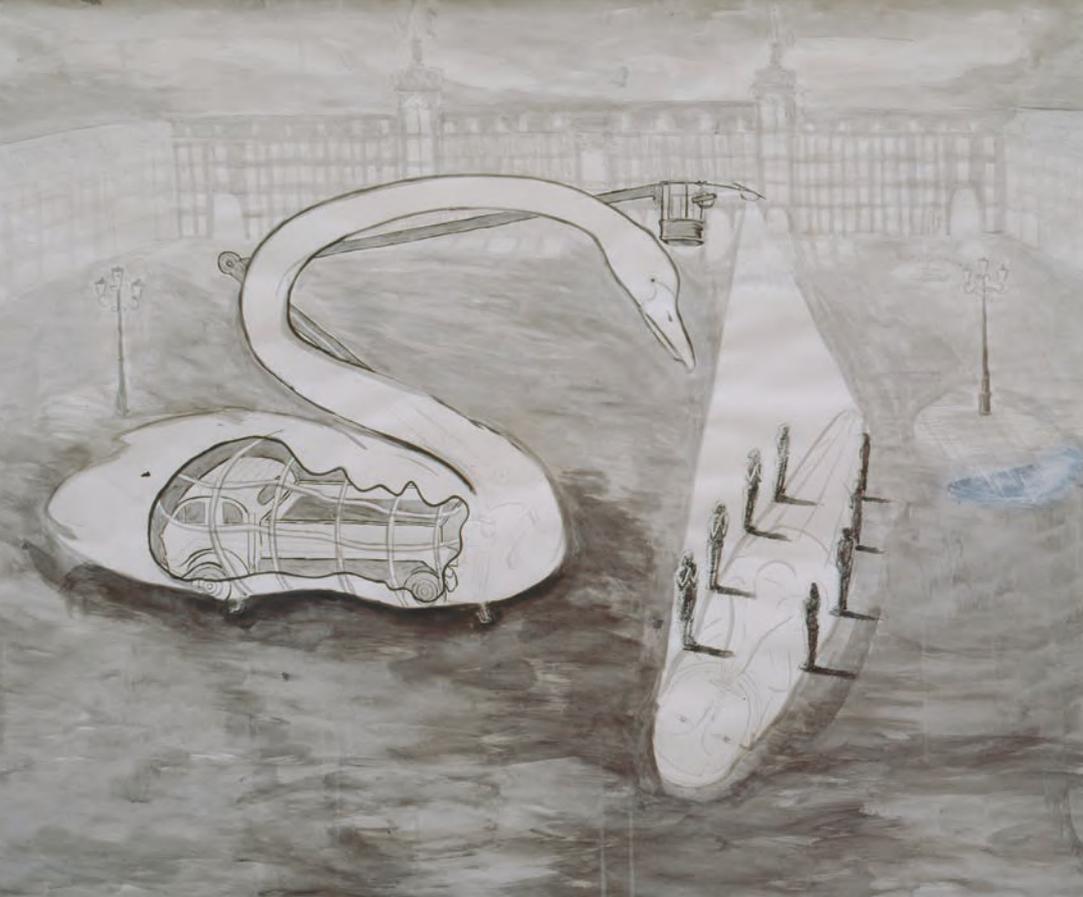
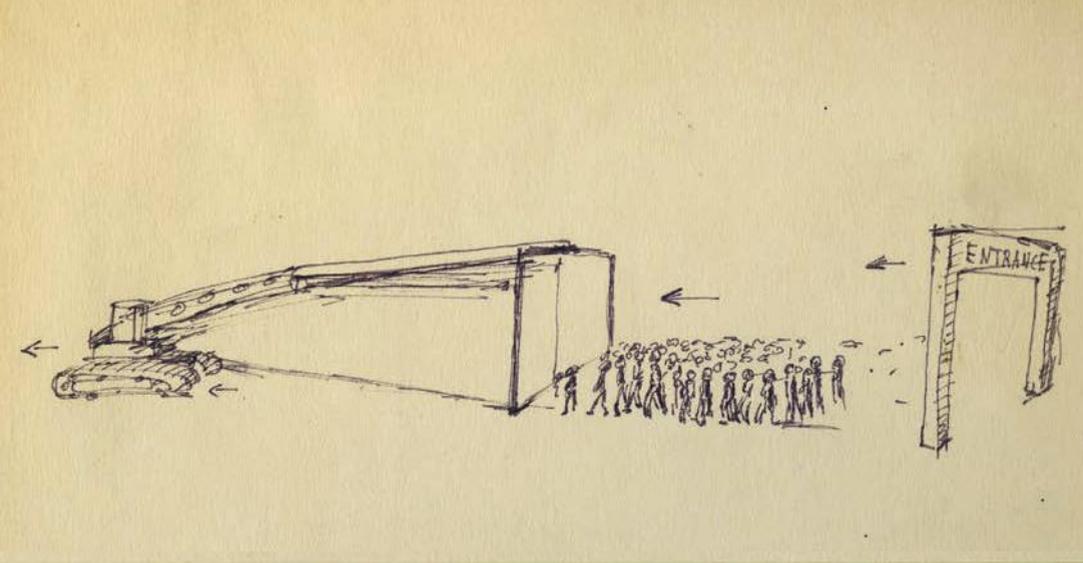
The last thing I want to do is explain my films because by the time the films are done, like you, I don't know them and need to relearn them. If I do learn something about them and try to communicate this to you with words, the meaning disappears. If I don't learn anything I will re-cut them. I never read the cards on the walls of museums. If you're not moved by art, no words are going to help.

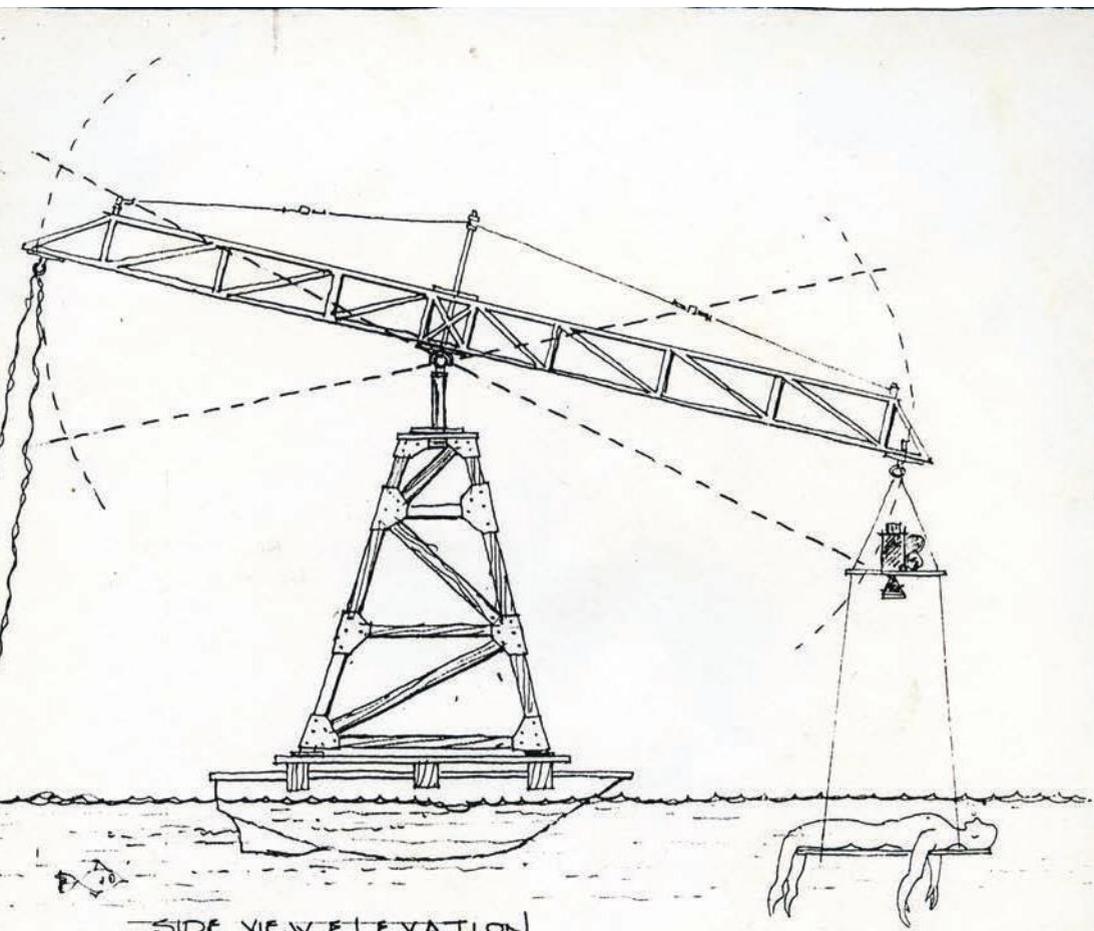




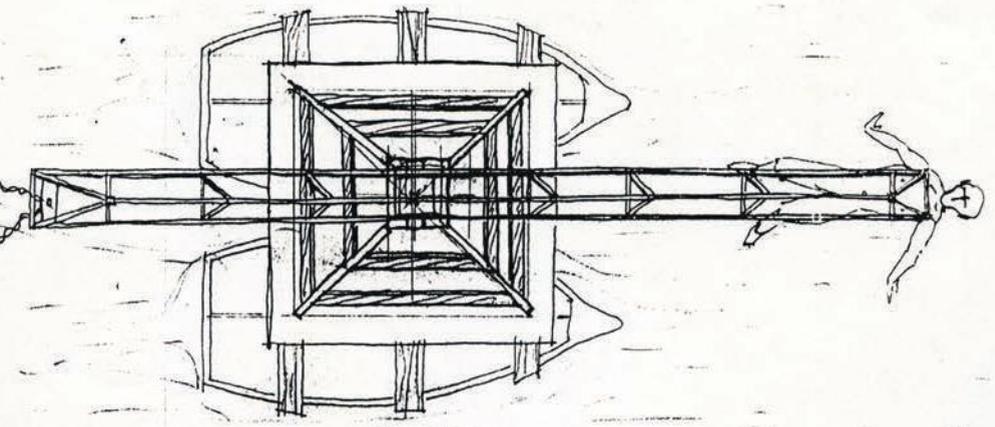
Machines  
Sketches for mobile cinemas



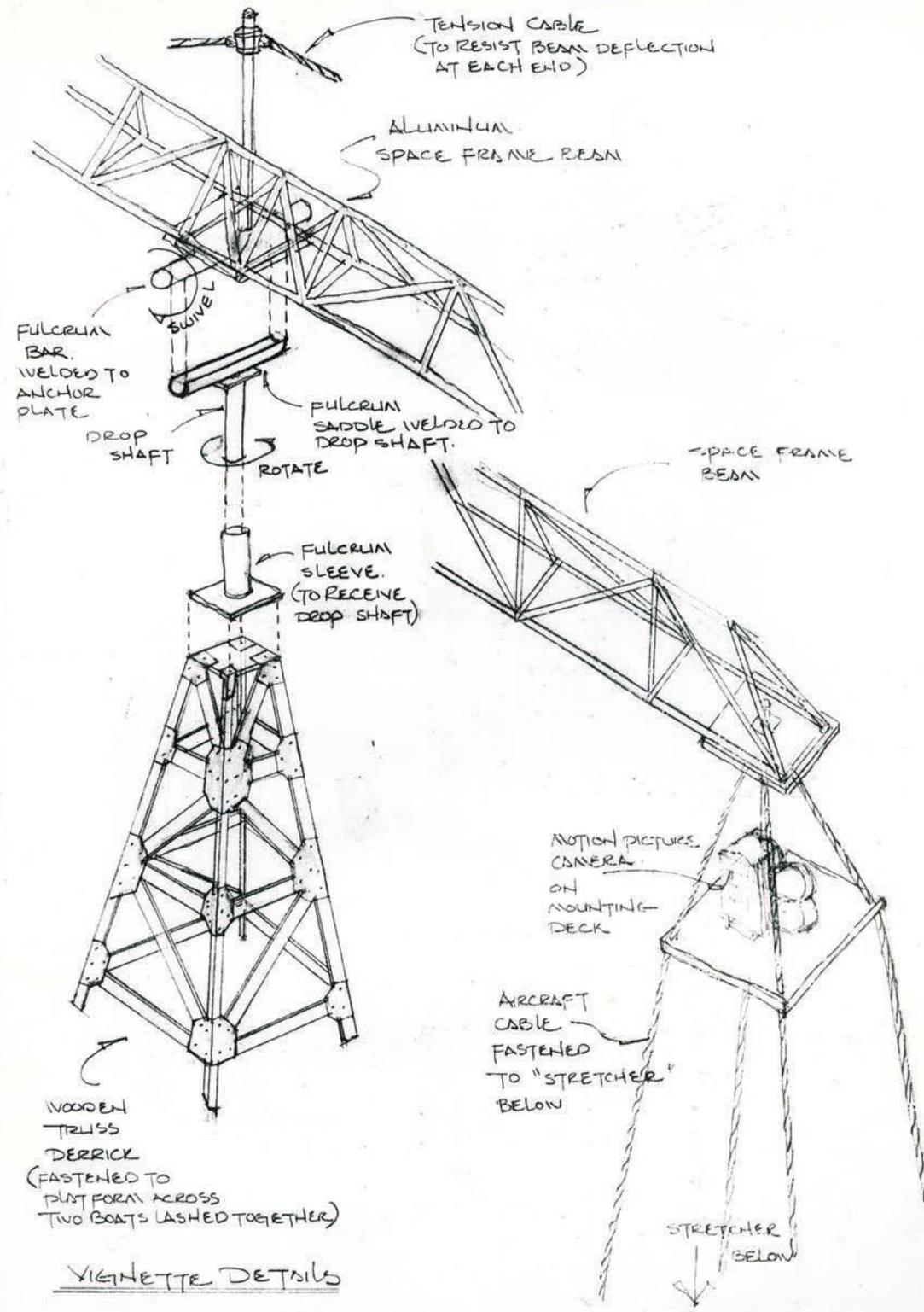




SIDE VIEW ELEVATION



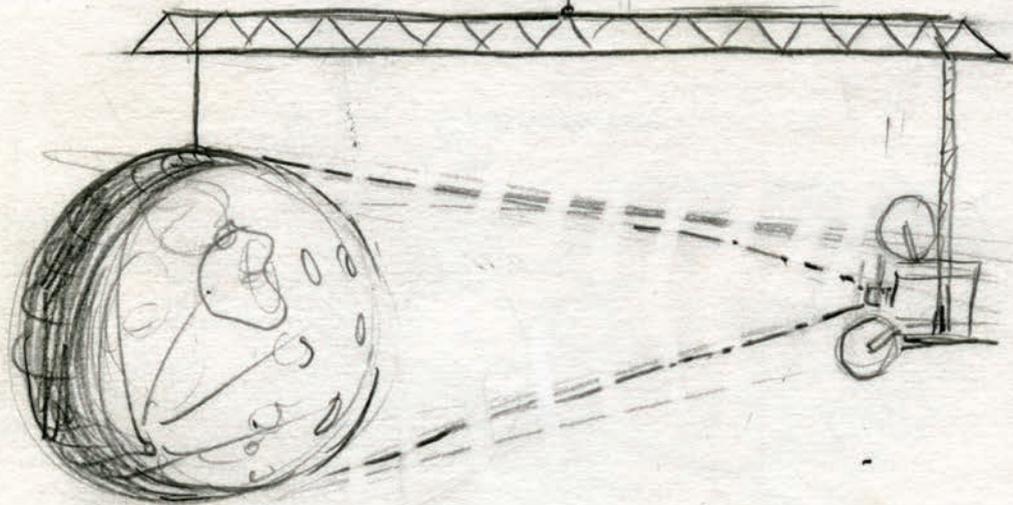
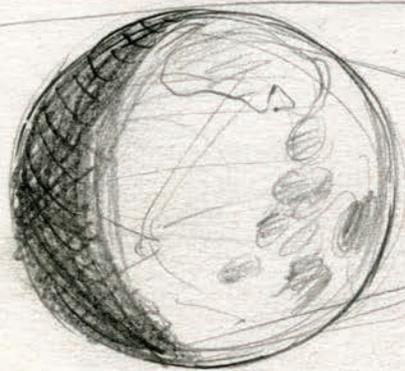
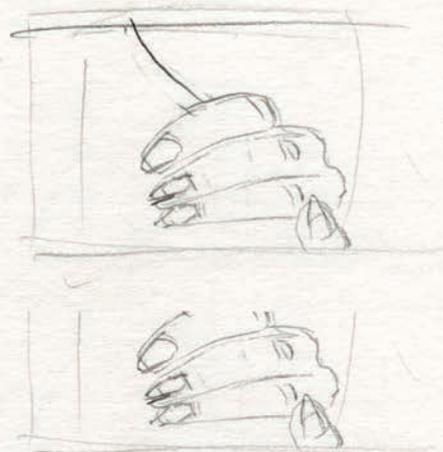
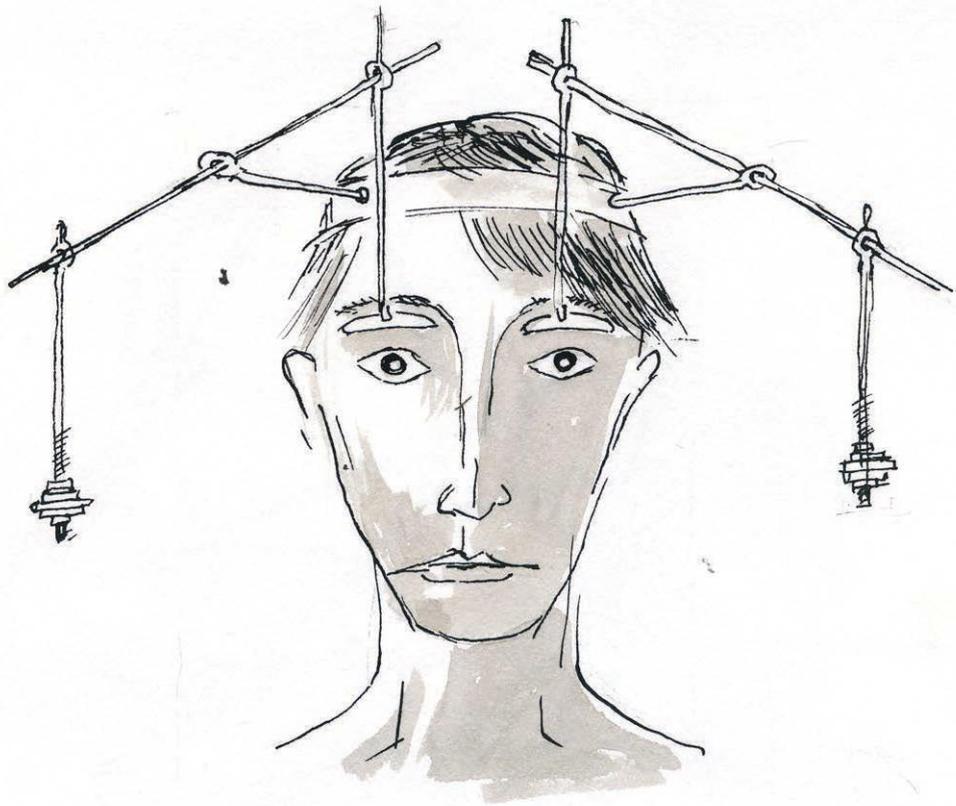
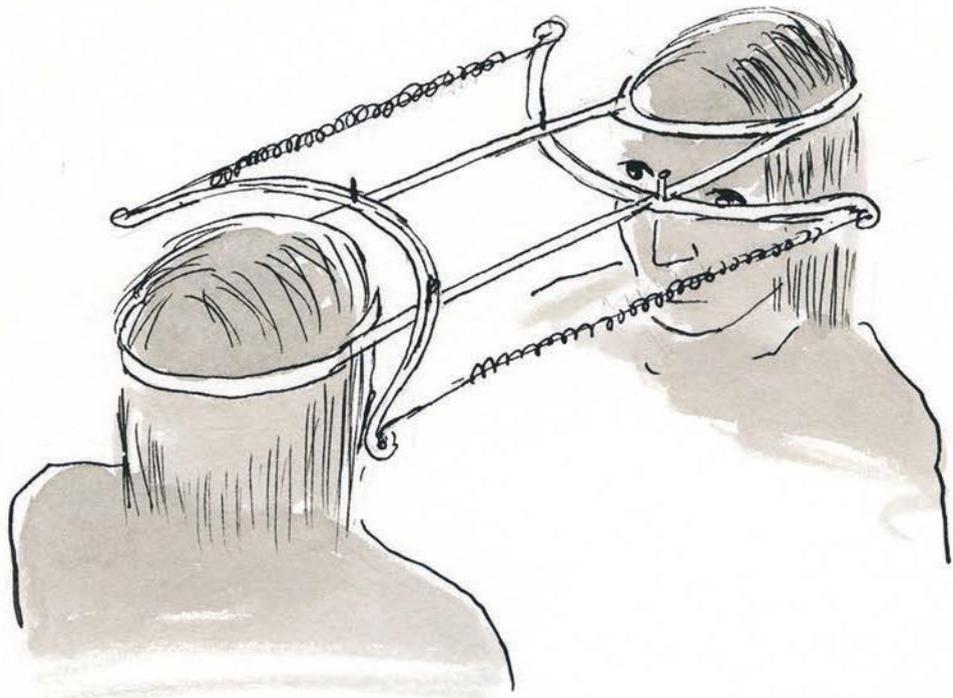
PLAN VIEW ABOVE



WOODEN  
TRUSS  
DERRICK  
(FASTENED TO  
PLATFORM ACROSS  
TWO BOATS LASHED TOGETHER)

VIGNETTE DETAILS





Films





# I Am Always Connected (1984)

by Yann Beauvais

Welcome, ladies and gentlemen, the show is on its way in three acts. Oh, no, it is already happening!

As if we were in another cinematic period, a trick is taking place. We are facing a shadow play of a woman ironing something, arranging elements of an ironing table, transforming it into a kind of pet.

The second and longest shot of the film stages a picture within a picture, in which the bodies of the woman and the creature-animal (a kind of skinny dog) blend into a becoming-animal. She walks the dog not on a leash but with her whole body and its extensions. The hybrid creature — with a wink to Rebecca Horn — is separated by a wooden stick that moves to the centre of the image as the perspectival axis of the camera obscura. The entire image turns, the creature and the beast, the frame and its “manipulators,” which is in fact a presentation/painting of the space in which the action is taking place. The viewer tries to adjust to these two levels of representation. We move from a suspension of disbelief concerning motion toward a directed awakening about illusion, for which the *trompe l'oeil* as much as the *mise-en-abyme* are means to deal with.

The film closes with a third shot in which the creature seems to bid a humorous farewell, not only to a pseudo-surreal iconography, but also to cinema itself, as if, in fact, it had never needed any props to dissolve the boundaries of the dream factory. This film is like a toolkit dealing with the pre-histories of cinema, particularly in painting. It concerns the problem of the fake.

*Yann Beauvais has been a film activist since the mid 70s, working here and there...*





## A Temporary Arrangement (1995)

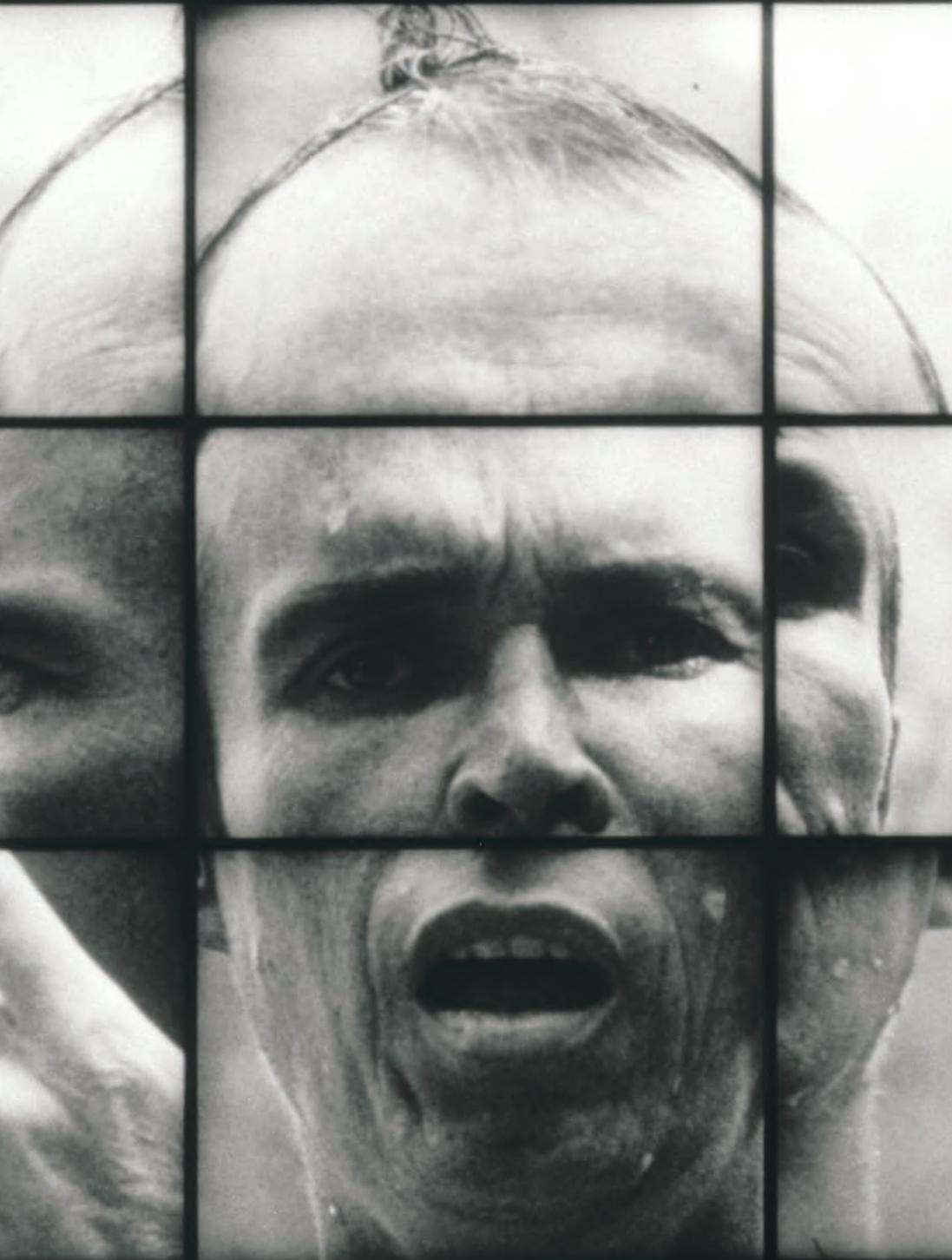
by Jean Perret

### The floaters

A film about a floating adult. Multiple images are projected in nine frames to create a choreography of bodies drifting gently on the surface of a river; the water is shallow and this man in a suit and tie stands to get out. He walks but a misplaced step makes him stumble. He is again immersed in the water before managing to stagger out of it. His smiling, angular face looks at the camera; he remains silent and appears amused by our presence.

We are familiar with recumbent figures, those funeral sculptures in Christian art depicting persons lying down and given over to eternal beatitude. But here the filmmaker appears to give a second life to this man, this woman, and all his bathers. Here is a rejuvenating bath in a suspended temporality that the granular black-and-white enhances in a landscape of velvety harmony. We recall the beautiful face of the somewhat elderly woman biting into a fruit, which is a quintessential fruit that she enjoys with her eyes closed. A drop of juice forms on her chin. And above all we meet another younger woman, the counterpart of the older one. She appears to be searching for herself. Her face looks strange, divided between the nine squares of the screen. It's a form of disjointedness in which the look loses its presence among us. How does one look to one side and the other at the same time? Phillip Barker wants to make use of his demiurgic power to transform this unique face, broken up into nine duplications.

The film then provides nine different expressions and appearances. An assortment of faces: eyes shut, sleepy, worried, questioning, staring, shifty and smiling — which are all forms of uncertainty



about one's presence in the world. The symphony of bird and insect songs lends a paradise-like dimension to a territory lined with a deep, downy foliage of trees. The floating protagonists, filmed from above with plunging shots, form an imaginary raft on the divided screen. Adults yield to the fantasy of the filmmaker, who wants to test the weight of their bodies immersed in this amniotic river and to assess the presence of their humanity in this Temporary Arrangement.

The film ends on a progressively worrying note. Enhanced by a musical score combining piano, percussion and an oppressive voice, the young woman's face reappears. It's disjointed again and shows a faded beauty. At the heart of Nature, between a river of all joys and guardian-like trees, she fades into the darkness of the film with her eyes closed, to either escape or be swallowed up — only Phillip Barker knows which — in indescribable nightmares.

*Jean Perret has committed years to the cinéma du réel, tackling the borders of fiction and documentary and looking for hybrid territories where cinema essays are invented.*



## Soul Cages (1999)

by Laura U. Marks

In a commando-like operation, a bold photographer takes advantage of a briefly abandoned crane by the river to hoist herself up, install her timed camera, and photograph herself dropping into the water far below, her upturned face smiling.

A man who works processing photographs collages himself into a family's self-portrait in a canoe: a bespectacled, alien uncle, stretching his arms wide to embrace them all. The photographer exposes herself to this man through the window of the café where he sits. Deftly she frames her figure against the glass with her hood, so that he can see her hand reach into her blouse and caress her own breast. Then she photographs him.

*Soul Cages* describes the pleasures of capture, framing, holding, for both captor and captive, framer and framed, holder and held. Made in 1999, the film documents the physical materials of photographic capture: the carefully labelled canisters, the satisfying click of the shutter, the patient work of printing and enlarging photographs. We are reminded that analog photography often entailed an intimate transaction between strangers, the photographer and the processor.

Thanks to the filmmaker's seemingly effortless mastery of every element of filmmaking, what might have been the tale of a stalker and her prey appears instead as a series of playful encounters of surprisingly tender eroticism. A brisk narrative rhythm makes possible moments of luxurious abandon. Saturated shades of green and sensations of cool water enhance a feeling of innocence, as do the quick, graceful gestures of Susanna Hood (the photographer) and the vulnerable stoicism of Srinivas Krishna (the processor). The music enhances the feeling that something can be both pliant and sturdy, like the tree limbs that cross above the river where much of the action unfolds.



An accident happens. The man is floating in the river's swift current, unconscious, a cut on his craggy face. The woman pulls his body from the water in the metal bucket of the crane, naked, lying curled on his side, as the princess drew up the abandoned infant Moses in a reed basket. She bends to kiss his mud-streaked face. She photographs him again. Profound human wishes to be safe, cradled, rescued — and perhaps to tempt danger in order to be rescued — resonate in the eroticism of this scene. Only later, when he prints her photos and sees his own sleeping body captured there, will the man know what he underwent. And at last the mysterious photographer appears to the man in a contact sheet, coming to life before his eyes in all thirty-six black frames.

*Laura U. Marks writes, teaches, and lives in Vancouver*





## Regarding (2002)

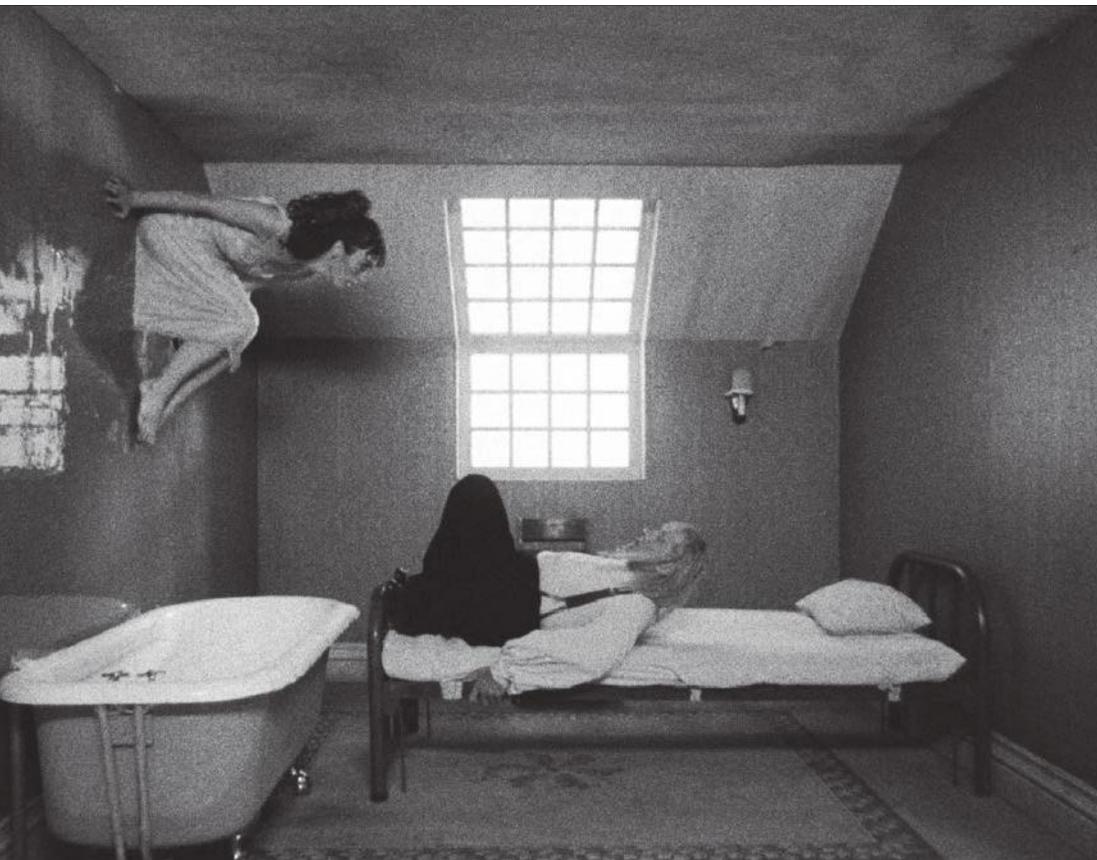
by Dirk DeBruyn

In a room fashioned like an early cinema set, with both bed and bath, in a grainy image to match, a young woman is being coaxed by an older man. We could be looking through the keyhole into one of the rooms from Jean Cocteau's *Blood of a Poet* (1930). She enters the bath with her clothes on. Gravity swirls around the room, emptying the bath. She sits comfortably on the wall. She hesitates. She eloquently holds onto the bed with parkour-like resolve to resist floating upwards. He asks her "don't you want to be famous?" She acquiesces. He takes her photograph.

The woman's tortured soul is materially performed, to be exorcised out of the body and into the image. It is a familiar meme. This short dance hunts down its past present and future. Doesn't *Regarding* hint at early Brackhage psychodrama, or Deren or even William Friedkin's *The Exorcist* (1973) from the mainstream? There is certainly a trace of women's hysteria here, as captured at Paris's Salpêtrière Mental Hospital in Jean-Martin Charcot's 1880's photographs. Charcot's archive is a compendium of body movement and emotion, that re-surfaces in the gestural vocabulary of silent film. Charcot's subjects did become famous, but as symptoms framed in Charcot's name. Now the selfie is enough to dip one's finger willingly into a self-delusional public pot like Facebook, a program that can eternally freeze your transgressions. Everyone knows Facebook, but does anyone really know you? The meme migrates here from symptom to line of code. Phillip Barker's film also reminds me of the professional fashion model photo shoot and its shadow, that studio portrait industry servicing the aspirant wannabe. What these situations offer up are further opportunities for the "dream factory" to capture, colonize and order personal space.

Barker's unsettling trickery is delivered through the materiality of the set's physical impact on his actors. This set is a rotating room with the camera bolted to the floor. The whole room rotates vertically, enabling gravity to impact on bodies as we have observed with astronauts recorded in space stations circling the earth. Barker chooses not to use the hyper-malleability VFX delivers, part of the post-production arsenal of contemporary image manipulation. Barker's core intervention is physical, planned and constructed in pre-production and as a result appears more 'real'. It is not 'real'. It is measured and informed magic.

*Dirk de Bruyn has been making innovative moving image work, as well as writing and curating in this area internationally since the early 70s, predominantly based in Australia but also Canada in the 90s.*





## Night Vision (2008)

by Catherine Bush

Why do we tell stories? To be witnessed, to make ourselves known to ourselves and others, to weave a thin ordering thread through a chaotic world.

A woman enters a room that might be a therapist's office. In this black-and-white realm, an off-screen voice tells her, "This is a storytelling test." She is shown a photograph and told that she has five minutes to make up a story based on its contents. "See how well you can do," the voice intones, the implication being that she will be judged. Some stories are better than others.

The photograph that she sees, and we see, is also black and white and displays a drama of disconnection. A woman, seen through a doorway, sprawls across a bed. Outside the room, a girl and a boy sit on the floor amusing themselves. A frayed, pained man in the foreground faces the camera. Woman, man, children are separate planets. Contact between them appears impossible, unthought of. Do we attempt to explain what we see within this static, imprisoning frame or break out of this world and create a new one?

The principle of stories is transformation. Stories require change in order to be. Telling a story is an act that can be set against the unshifting repetitions of trauma. The re-enactment of a traumatic condition calls attention to what needs to be released but can't yet be.

Entering her own story, a woman finds herself travelling down a river, on a raft. The natural world around her is a moving zone of colour: water, trees, misty air. Leaving her children to float downstream on the raft, she strips to a bathing suit and dives into the water, swimming through its murky depths.

In the story-world of *Night Vision*, everyone is given the chance to see something newly: as her children watch, a mother turns the light of fireflies into an alchemical substance that may restore sight; a near-blind man peers through a magnifying glass at an upside-down forest. A diving suit made of tiny lights that don't electrocute the wearer as she swims becomes the element that reconnects woman, man and children. Actions remain mysterious, fuelled by wonder and longing. The story ruptures and re-begins. Stories don't have to strip away mystery, only give it energetic form. A story may defy judgment even as it enacts change. The energy of this story is uncanny and recuperative in its many transformations.

*Catherine Bush is a Toronto novelist.*



# Slow Blink (2010)

by Erin Robinsong

Watching a gaze turn sonic.

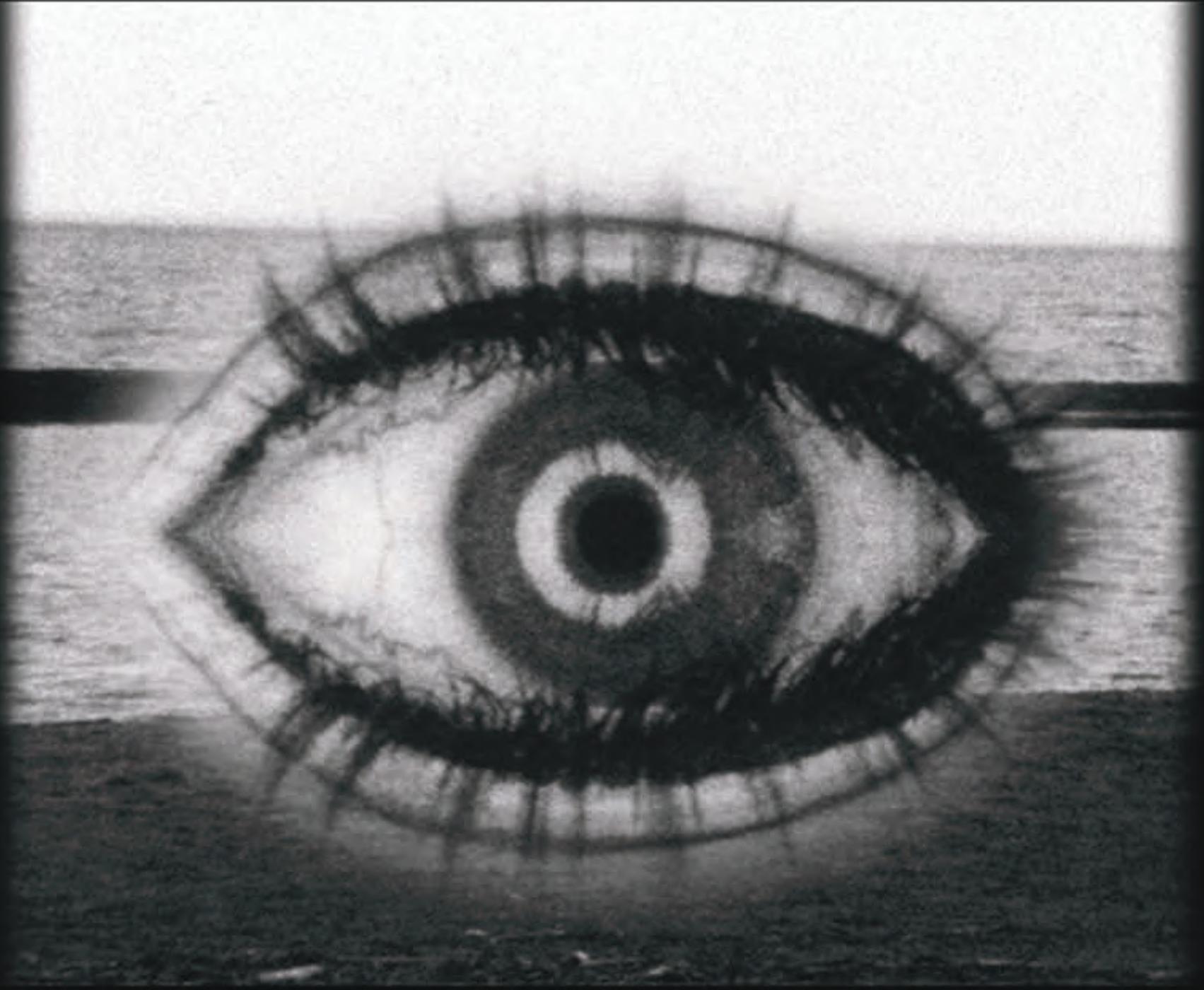
How many storylines are pretexts for looking at a face, receiving its information? Tinder, the wildly popular dating app, traffics in this — no words, only swipes, looking for a face. Its fuel is the famous and ancient wordless gaze of lovers, babies, creatures, advertising and film. *Slow Blink*, performed and choreographed by Susanna Hood, begins like a date with a face. Perhaps she is a starlet, or a private investigator — deeply interested in you, a gorgeous surface projected outwards. Like a Tinder utopia, it is a date without words, only mesmerizing pictures.

Eyes eyes eyes. A perfect pool for gazing. But perhaps it is hard work being a pool and our date yawns, trying to maintain sociality, but slipping back into herself, some other place, her face twists and contorts. Where has she gone? What are all those other holes in her head, and where do they lead? We notice the face is also the head — full of holes, portals, resonating chambers, gazes of other kinds, faces with nothing to sell.

And then the date is over, she walks along a road. Released from close-up, her visage shifts. In soft encounter with her surround, her gaze spreads out, becoming diffuse and open, multivalent and stereoscopic. A failed date, ah well, exchanged for all this.

She yawns again, again — as if unfolding her head. She begins to sing. She trades her face for a resonating chamber. The vibratory is thrown open! What is this? She composes herself, in all senses, gazing into a mirror. More or less normal. Eye makeup still good. Then she looks into her mouth and falls into the lush wet dripping eye rolling contorting screeching universe in there. Something like an organ or a







piece of foie gras is dislodged and ejects out her mouth, and her vocal journey gets wilder. (How many women have something lodged in the throat? I think of Björk's "Mouth Mantra" – *remove this hindrance/my throat feels stuck/I was not allowed/I was not heard (x4)/there is vocal sadness.*)

Vocal sadness/hindrance expelled, we see a face freed, vibrating, resonating, its forty-three muscles vastly exiting "resting date face" and roiling in the pleasure and vast weathers of sensation and sound. It's an ending you come to wish for all films where women's faces are presentable all the way through, composed by and for who.

*Erin Robinsong is a poet and performance maker, and the author of Rag Cosmology (2017).*





## Malody (2012)

by Emily Vey Duke

Let's set the scene. It's today, only it looks like twenty years ago. We're in a diner, once the inspiration for a Saturday Night Live skit, only the regular staff has been replaced by a single oldster behind the counter, where he faces his young charge, and then there's a girl on the far end. That's me, of course.

I know, Dad, you can do anything. You can put me into whatever world you want. I bet it's a fantasy for a lot of parents, getting to control every aspect of their child's environment, even if it's only for ten minutes, an hour. Just getting to, like, put 'em in the snow-globe and shake it up! Watch them play snakes and ladders at the afterschool club, or go over to Nana's to help her put up a new pair of curtains. Whatever wholesome thing.

The world you choose to put me in doesn't have any obvious therapeutic benefits, though. I think it's more like you're trying to figure your way through something — but at the same time, of course, the film has to be surprising to your audience. It's not all about you, or me.

You dare them to watch and not feel something: the old guy tying flies with the young guy, both of them exuding decency. The taxidermist. The frail, ginger-haired girl.

Do you think you're that old guy at the counter? The stooped, almost deferential person who basically just lets it all happen? Do you use him to express your feelings of powerlessness within this realm where in fact you have total control? Interesting. I love those two dental crowns on his left side. A compelling detail.



I do love getting to see the way you imagine I was as a child. I didn't know I was such a little scamp! An imp! But having the child-me cut the oxygen tube to the sick, malodorous, older me? That's strange. Do you think I hate myself, Dad? Do you think I want to cut off the flow of air to my teenage life? That's dark! That's darker than I expected. It's cool, I guess, but for real I am OK, OK?

Of course, when you make such an absurd world, a world that pivots around whatever whim drifts across that clever mind of yours, anything goes. A couple of emails and there's batter pouring out of the ceiling.

Do you think I like that boy? The sort of Tragically-Hip-fan type with the tattoos? Newsflash! I hate guys like that! God, can you imagine me bringing someone like that home? Under no circumstances! He's so *Canadian*, you know? Earnest seeping from every pore. That guy is a bit of a dad-dream.

But you seem so passive in the face of my illness — when things start getting super real and my oxygen tube is cut and then the whole room starts to literally spin and then it gets meta because there's a pullout to reveal how the image is being produced. Which is cool, but it's also a bit film-schooley. Basically same for the batter. "Hey, guys, I have this great image for a film: imagine we cover a girl in batter! She's, like, lying on a table and batter pours all over her!"

So maybe, now I'm thinking, you're actually the guy we see rotating the set. He suits you better — he's like a skilled worker-guy, a technician entrusted with an important job on set. And the godlike power, of course.

Another thing I like about the movie is how I wind up being with my impish, shit-disturbing child self. I like how, in the end, you see me as being able to take care of myself. And I'm glad we get to see me in a post Faces-of-Meth state. I wouldn't want you to leave people with that image of me.

I wonder if you talk to your therapist about your movies as much as I do. I always have a starring role. Sometimes it just takes a while to figure out where. But this one was easy. And even if you are making yourself (and the Tragically-Hip-fan guy) look like a dork, I like the way you showed me in this one. It's good. I like her. I like me.

*Emily Vey Duke is an artist and writer who works mostly in collaboration with her partner Cooper Battersby in a house full of animals.*





## Dredger (2015)

by Helen Lee

### Bird on a String:

Helpless hanging birds, rustling to life. Oily black sludge dripping up (or down) floating figures. Charming bric-a-brac, ordinary treasures imbued with meaning... It's inevitable to believe Phillip Barker's work is image-based or visually-driven due to his renown as a production designer. Rather, his artistry is more concerned with bodies and how they move in nature and space, where gravity and performance collide. Our sense of perspective is upended in a perpetual play of realism vs. artifice, surface vs. depth. Narrative emerges as necessary by-product, through the persistence of our pattern-making, an after-effect. Which is why Barker's films and installations seem aesthetically cumulative or collage-like in combining artistic forms, yet completely sui generis.

In *Dredger*, where a barefoot ship captain's wife (Bird, the "wifmaid"), her husband (Jean) and his shipmate, the eponymous Dredger, commingle in a dramatic pas-de-trois, you are left grasping for wisps of story among symbols, soundscapes and ideas so arresting and pungent (the fantastical origins of "wifmaids" trapped through shadow nettes by fishermen searching for wives), they supplant the question, "What does that mean?" with "Really? And what now..." Here, these interstitial moments usually left unsaid or omitted emerge — the peripheral, personal detail or Barthesian punctum —but even then only obliquely so. "Atmosphere," Barker told me, "is a character." Uncontainable, ephemeral but distinct.

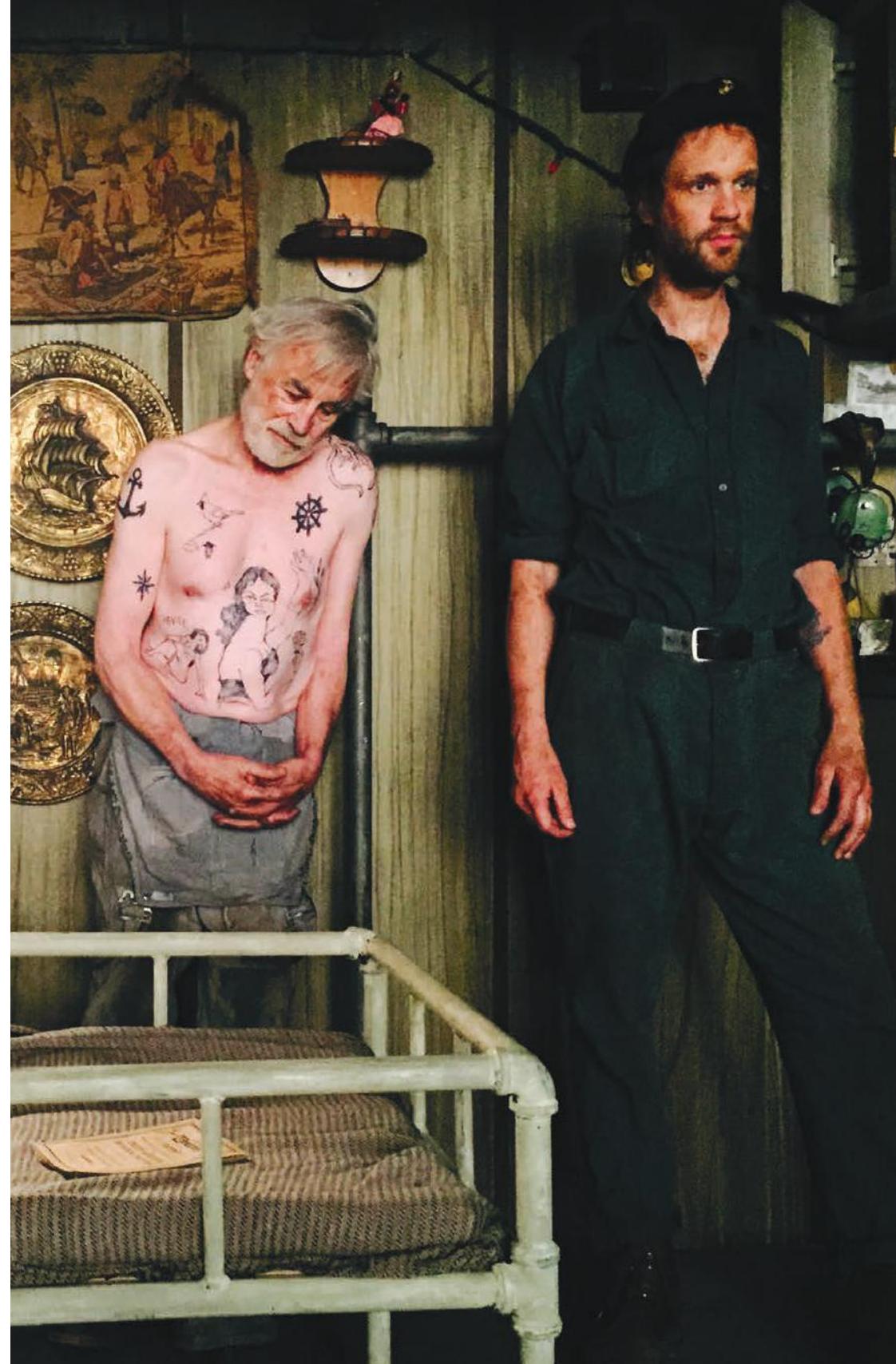
The filmmaker cites Jean Vigo's *L'Atalante* (1934) as inspiration, and you can see how the film's contours of an ambiguous love triangle, and inventive melding of constructed sets with natural locales are a touchstone for *Dredger*. At once meticulously studied and riskily

improvisatory, the film invites the spectator on a picaresque journey referencing Vigo's film, its inherent romanticism pulled by darker human instincts. There is always something underneath, in the "negative space" of the story — not to mention the actual spatial configurations within and outside the cinema frame.

The film, abetted by Tom Third's gorgeously ominous score, operates on a scale ranging from majestic and surreal (ships at sea and gigantic docking bays, coastal vistas featuring Toronto's skyline and hugely ambitious gimbal sets) to gendered macro (voyeuristic frontal gaze of nipples beneath her dress; her fraught glances, stained by male ego and interference, set against the competing men's). In Barker's image spectrum, all carry equal weight or "dramatic value" — those usual narrative algorithms displaced in favour of new inventions and possibilities for the imagination. After a fraught episode where all three are literally suspended and soiled, Bird is back on dry land (and in proper shoes), seemingly freed from the paradox of stillness/movement and servitude/freedom of wifely ship life but, drawn into her consciousness and repossessed of her own desire, she's still haunted, still in limbo.

Resisting narrative conventions of psychologizing character or promoting audience empathy, *Dredger* —unlike *L'Atalante* or just about any feature film that resolves itself through confrontation and catharsis — culminates in a show-stopping sequence, cross-cutting her and him, where the blanket of Bird's bed becomes her shroud. Defying gravity, perspective-shifting and ultimately abandoning illusionism, the film ends with a breathtaking reveal of the gimbal set itself, its hand-pulled operation — the wizardry behind the curtain.

*Helen Lee is a writer, filmmaker and teacher based in Korea and Canada who continues grappling with the unhomely moment.*







## Shadow Nettes (2017)

by Greg Klymkiw

There are plenty of fish in the sea, they say, but Good Lord Almighty, trying to score a prime fillet takes a whole lot more than casting the widest net imaginable. It takes the cunning of Br'er Rabbit, the patience of Job and the dagnabbitest contraption since the Clapper to haul up the catch of a lifetime.

Phillip Barker's short film *Shadow Nettes* expertly demonstrates the fine art of angling, but be advised, we're not talking the quarry sought in the likes of actor/musician/director John Lurie's immortal PBS cult series *Fishing With John* (1991), nor any of the fine array of reality-TV-based output on offer at the World Fishing Network. Nay, we're not talking scaly, slippery, smelly smelts of the sea.

We're talking the variety sought by healthy fellas the world over who troll club districts, bingo halls, church basements and popular online dating sites like the appropriately monikered "Plenty-Of-Fish."

Barker's film goes the distance in charting this worthy pursuit; it is a glorious film fantasia that offers a step-by-step journey into a far more rich and romantic pursuit of Adam's rib. Beginning in the late-nineteenth-century never-never land of a rich mixed forest overlooking a bucolic lake, we are introduced to a lanky, golden-locked young man of the rural persuasion (imagine Max Baer from *The Beverly Hillbillies* (1962-1971) as Jethrine Bodine sans a floral-patterned dress and adorned, rather, in Jethro's dude-duds) who observes his father sailing the waters upon a queer conical vessel with a wide, round platform, stilts reaching and converging to a point up top with a platform situated at its most heavenly point, which holds a mysterious box-like filter.

What manner of contraption is this? Well, of course, it's a shadow nette. Duh! Grab a brain!

We continue on Barker's strange journey to witness Dad attempting to train Sonny-Jethro, not unlike the Pat Morita/Ralph Macchio teacher-student gymnastics immortalized in John G. Avildsen's *The Karate Kid* (1984). Dad strikes a series of manly poses. Sonny-Jethro awkwardly attempts to mimic them.

At nightfall, however, we get the most delectable demonstration of all. The shadow nette is placed upon the rugged ground of the Canadian Shield and Dad steps inside it. From the thinnest end of the cone, light beams onto the round, white, net-like screen at the bottom end. Dad stands before the screen, casting a shadow upon it.

But what is a shadow when it doesn't behave?

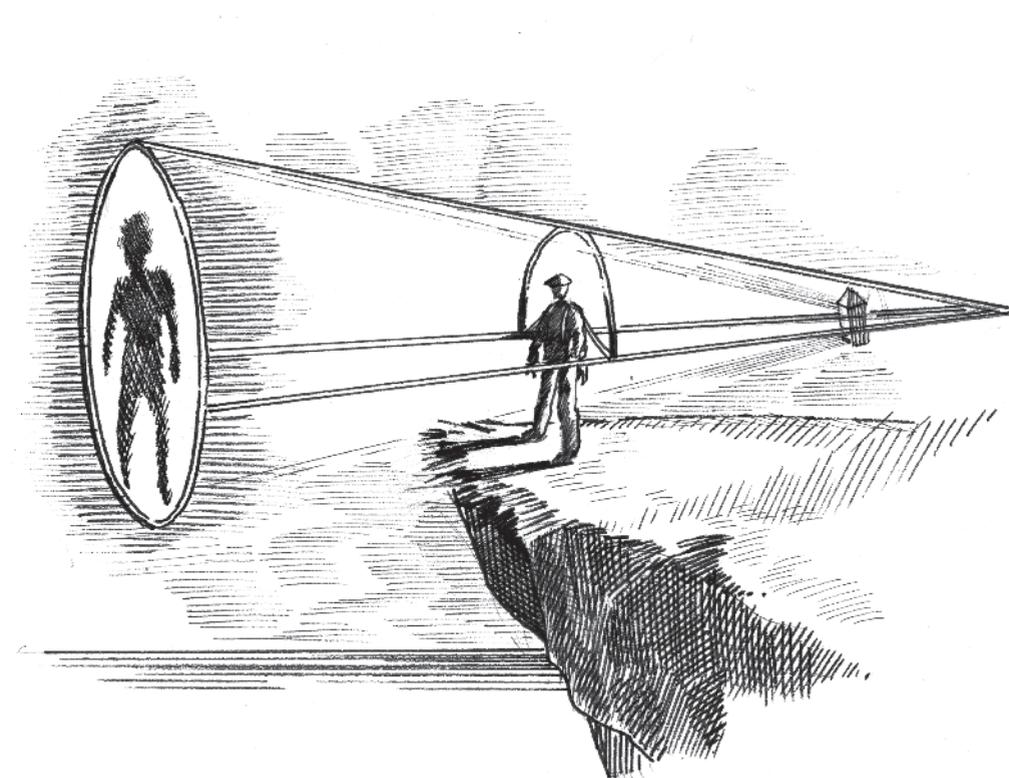
Shadows are never what they seem to be. The light casts Dad's shadow, but the shadow has a life of its own. This is no mere replication of his image. Dad demonstrates that he must control light and shadow to create the image he wants to present. This, of course, is not dissimilar to the image most gentlemen wish to present, especially in their pursuit of a mate.

It's also not dissimilar to the act of filmmaking. What film artist worth their salt doesn't control light and shadow to present precisely what they've set out to display to an audience? Barker's film cleverly kills both birds with one stone.

As his picture progresses, Barker delivers one visual jaw-dropper after another as he reveals the full force and power of the subject at hand: to capture an image of oneself, manipulate said image to capture its quarry and ultimately, to not only capture it, but indeed, create it out of one's own image. This, in addition to the very clear subtext with respect to the power of cinema, and by extension, the power of the artist/creator, is what makes *Shadow Nettes* a very worthy companion piece to Barker's previous short films *Dredger* (2015) and *Malody* (2012).

In *Malody*, a young woman, sicker than those who dare eat the food at the all-night diner she's perched in, catches an eerie reflection of herself as a child, inspiring a topsy-turvy cataclysm, hermetically sealed within a huge wheel rolling through a movie studio. In *Dredger* (which includes a reference to the shadow nettes contraption in the form of an ancient booklet referenced during the film's halfway point), a young woman aboard a massive freighter engages in a perverse form of "phone sex" with her lover via the waves of sound manifested through an old two-way radio. In *Shadow Nettes*, a young woman is created via immolation and a child is born from the union of a man's entire fist entering her abdomen.

Phillip Barker is clearly one of Canada's leading avant-garde film artists. He is also one sick puppy. This, however, is a good thing.







All three of these films display a cheeky, playful tone, but Barker (also a veteran production designer) manages to have his cake and eat it too by imbuing them with a strange melancholy. *Shadow Nettes*, the third film in a kind of oddball trilogy, takes his combination of audacity and the funereal to a glorious pinnacle.

Shadows, by their very nature (and that of cinema itself), reveal movement. Shades, on the other hand, traditionally reflect that which is immobile. Cinema, like all art, cannot be ruled by strict definition. With *Shadow Nettes*, Barker reminded me of the final rumination of Gabriel in James Joyce's *The Dead* (1914). The "shades" that we all become, no matter what life brings, no matter how, where and when we live our lives, are finally all we have left. Cinema, the dazzling amalgam of collaboration and media, might indeed be the ultimate shade — that moving shadow captured within the fixed shade of a frame, multiplied a thousandfold to generate a reflection of the artist's psyche and our own.

*Greg Klymkiw is a film journalist, movie producer, screenwriter and cinema studies teacher from Winnipeg (who has long been forced to pay rent in Toronto).*

# Filmography

## *Movies*

- I Am Always Connected* 4:17 minutes, b&w, stereo, super 8, 1983  
*A Temporary Arrangement* 12 minutes, b&w, stereo, 35mm 1995  
*Soul Cages* 22 minutes, colour, 5.1, 35mm (also available in HD), 1999  
*Regarding* 4:25 minutes, b&w, stereo, 16mm (also available in HD), 2002  
*Night Vision* 19:30 minutes, colour, 5.1, HD, 2008 (recut in 2011)  
*Appliance* 6 minutes, colour, 5.1, HD, 2009  
*Slow Blink* 6:20 minutes, colour, 5.1, super 8 and Holga stills – HD, 2010  
*Malody* 12:10 minutes, colour, 5.1, HD, 2012  
*Dredger* 13:30 minutes, colour, 5.1, HD, 2015 (recut in 2016)  
*Shadow Nettes* 17:00 minutes b&w, 5.1, HD, 2017

## *Installations*

*I Am Always Connected Installation* 1983  
Lumen Travo Art Gallery, Amsterdam, The Netherlands  
Film projected upon a painting while a mechanical dog crawled along a wall.

*Trust A Boat* 1984-1986  
Amsterdam, Utrecht, Groningen (Holland),  
Toronto, Peterborough (Canada)  
Nine 16mm films were rear projected upon nine windows of a three-storey building. Nine people performed in the windows. Audiences were on the street. The performance toured Holland and Canada with a total of 23 shows.



*Voor Mijn Voeten Uit - Matter of Seconds* 1987

“Stipendia 85-86” Commissioned by WVC, Dutch Ministry of Culture

The audience looked down from the top floor of a warehouse to simultaneous projections on a road and a floating screen on a canal. A musician played in an adjacent apartment.

*Magnetic Fields* 1989

Gallery 76, Toronto

Ten performers, including a trapeze artist, a mountain climber and an accordion player were suspended on a 40’ vertical screen stretched over a three-story Victorian house. The performers ‘inhabited’ painted landscapes that were projected from across the street.

*Swimming Grasshopper Lake* 1990

Pages Bookstore Window, presented by Pleasure Dome

A model of a forest and a lake. In the lake were projected TV images of 10,000 caribou who were drowned by waters rerouted for the James Bay hydroelectric project.

*Campos Magneticos* 1991

ARCO International Art Fair, Madrid, Spain

A man, a woman, a bicycle and an accordion were suspended by wires on a 40’ outdoor film screen in a parking lot, with a live band, playing an original composition.

*Trial By Water* 1992

EXPO ‘92, Seville, Spain

Video installation critical of Canada’s environmental protection policy projected on the walls of a flooded camping tent within the Canada Pavilion’s reflecting pool.

*Awash* 1994

Above ground pool, Peterborough, Ontario  
Performance and projection in the pool.

*We Floated Down River Street* 1996

Dunlop Art Gallery, Regina

Mediatrics, Cold City Gallery, Toronto

Images of floating bodies were projected upon a model of a building while a cello plays notes through an underwater speaker.

*5 Souls Released From Fetters* 1998

Musée Régional de Rimouski, Quebec

Five 16mm film loops projected from the windows of a church situated on the banks of the St. Lawrence River. Backwards footage of various people as they are submerged in water.

*Critical Mass* 2004

64 Steps Contemporary Art, Toronto

Film rear-projected in a gallery storefront. A larger than life woman scrutinizes and tracks the progress of people passing by the window.

*Adoration Street* 2008

University of Toronto Football Field, Nuit Blanche, Toronto.

An 80’ long photograph of a suburban street in Toronto, six rear-projected films on windows. Collaboration with Atom Egoyan.

*Malody Revolution* 2015

As part of the Parkdale Film and Video Showcase, a film loop of a rotating diner was rear projected on a storefront window..



# Image Credits

**Front Cover** The making of *I Am Always Connected*, near Nijmegen, The Netherlands, 1983

1 Molly Johnson, *Shadow Nettes*  
2-3 Severn Thompson, *A Temporary Arrangement*  
4-5 Srinivas Krishna, *Soul Cages*  
6 making of *Shadow Nettes*, photo by John Galbraith

## Introduction

7 Patries Moulen, *Trust A Boat*  
8 Miruna Rox, *Night Vision*  
9 Susanna Hood and Srinivas Krishna, *Soul Cages*  
10-11 Thomas Hauff and Alex Paxton-Beesley, *Malody*  
14 *Trust A Boat*, performance in Amsterdam 1984

## Search Lights

18 Molly Johnson, *Shadow Nettes*  
20 family and friends, *A Temporary Arrangement*  
22-23 making of *Malody*  
27 Alex Paxton-Beesley, *Dredger*  
28-29 Alex Paxton-Beesley and Ryan Granville-Martin, *Dredger*

## Soul Cages script

30-31 Susanna Hood, *Soul Cages*

## Origins Interview

44 Mary and Gordon Barker, grand parents  
46-47 school camping trip, Yorkshire 1965  
48 pb with school chums, Yorkshire 1966  
49 6 pb's first band, *The New Generation*, Yorkshire 1966  
51 sketch for an unrealized installation based on exploring a train tunnel  
53 pb, Polaroid 800 Land Camera  
54 pb, on location *Soul Cages*  
60-61 pb taking a lie detector test, *The Directed Lie, 2009-2018* by Paulette Phillips  
63 family and friends, *A Temporary Arrangement*  
65, 67 sketch for film and video projections for the Canadian Opera Company's presentation of *Salome*, directed by Atom Egoyan  
69 Severn Thompson, *A Temporary Arrangement*  
73 Juliana Moore in *Chloe*. Thanks to Studio Canal

## Production Design

74 from Atom Egoyan's *The Sweet Hereafter*, Ontario and British Columbia, Canada  
76-77 the set of Brian de Palma's *Redacted*, Amman, Jordan  
78 the set of *Reign*, Cinespace Film Studios, Toronto, Ontario, Canada  
79 Megan Follows, *Reign*, photo by Mark Manchester  
80-81 the set of Atom Egoyan's *Ararat*, Cherry Beach, Toronto, Ontario, Canada  
82-85 the set of Neil LaBute's *The Wickerman*, British Columbia, Canada

- 86-89 the set of Atom Egoyan's *Where The Truth Lies*, Shepperton Studios, London, UK.  
 90 researching *Devil's Knot*, West Memphis, Arkansas, USA  
 91 from the film *Devil's Knot*, directed by Atom Egoyan  
 92 Norm Bielowicz, Locations Manager, *Devil's Knot*, Georgia, USA.  
 93 the real mugshots of the 'Memphis Three' on the left, the recreated prop photo of actors on the right

#### Movies Interview

- 94 on the set of *Dredger* with Alex Paxton-Beesley and Thomas Hauff  
 96 workshopping *I Am Always Connected* with Marianna Ebbers  
 98-99 *I Am Always Connected* with Marianna Ebbers, Peter Kregting, Trix Engelen and Ton Thoosen  
 101 *Trust A Boat*, Utrecht 1984  
 102 testing the twelve 16mm film projectors used for *Trust A Boat*, Amsterdam, 1984  
 106-107 Live performance *Magnetic Fields*, McCaul Street, Toronto, 1989  
 108 Sharon Cook playing accordion, Pam Johnson upside down playing her reflection, and Jacques Raybaut in *Magnetic Fields*  
 110 Ken McDougall, *A Temporary Arrangement*  
 111 making of *A Temporary Arrangement* with cinematographer René Sauvé  
 114 David Fox in *Night Vision*  
 118-119 Thomas Hauff and Alex Paxton-Beesley, *Malody*  
 120 Alex Paxton-Beesley, *Dredger*  
 123 Bill Coleman, *Shadow Nettes*  
 125 sketch of *Shadow Nettes* by Theresa Shain

#### Machines

- 130 shooting *Shadow Nettes* with cinematographer Kris Belchevski, Johann Montreuil and pb, photo by John Galbraith  
 130 floating, rotating camera rig *A Temporary Arrangement*, pb and cinematographer René Sauvé  
 131 *The Ambassadors*, a collaboration with inventor Graham Smith (right). Anamorphic Super 8 machine.  
 132 *Coping Mechanisms*, 2018, a work in progress.  
 133 *Moon Machine* proposed 16mm projection rig for Atom Egoyan directed opera *Salome*, Canadian Opera Company

#### Films

- 135-134 Susanna Hood, *Soul Cages*  
 136 workshopping *I Am Always Connected* with Marianna Ebbers  
 138-139 workshopping *I Am Always Connected* with Marianna Ebbers  
 140 Chris Yarwood, Ken McDougall and Karina Barker, *A Temporary Arrangement*  
 142 Ken McDougall, *A Temporary Arrangement*  
 145 Susanna Hood, *Soul Cages*  
 146-147 Susanna Hood, *Soul Cages*  
 148 shooting *Soul Cages*  
 149 Susanna Hood, *Soul Cages* - photo by Chris Walsh  
 150 on the set of *Regarding* with Severn Thompson  
 152-153 Severn Thompson and David Fox, *Regarding*

- 154 Miruna Rox, *Night Vision*  
 156 156 Dexter Barker-Glenn and Adelaide Page, *Night Vision*  
 157 David Fox and Severn Thompson, *Night Vision*  
 158 158 Susanna Hood, *Slow Blink*  
 160-161 Susanna Hood, *Slow Blink*  
 162-163 Susanna Hood, *Slow Blink*  
 166-167 Alex Paxton-Beesley, *Malody*  
 169 Ashleigh Warren and Alex Paxton-Beesley, *Malody*  
 170 Alex Paxton-Beesley, *Dredger*  
 173 Thomas Hauff, Ryan Granville-Martin, *Dredger*  
 174-175 on the set of *Dredger*  
 176 Malte Zumbansen, *Shadow Nettes*  
 179 sketch of *Shadow Nettes* by Theresa Shain  
 180-181 Molly Johnson and Malte Zumbansen, *Shadow Nettes*  
 182 Bill Coleman, *Shadow Nettes*  
 184 Malte Zumbansen, *Shadow Nettes*  
 188 Bill Coleman, *Shadow Nettes*  
 190-191 Susanna Hood, *Slow Blink*  
 196 Jacques Raybaut, *Magnetic Fields*

**Back cover** pb and a stray dog on a beach in Mexico. *Dog kept following me around and laying in my shadow.* -pb

all sketches by pb unless noted

pb thanks:

*My long time collaborators and friends Curtis Wehrfritz, Jim Ruxton and Tom Third, who has made such beautiful music to all my films and installations Atom Egoyan who continues to inspire and challenge me The Black Magic Markers, my musical comrades Julie Glenn and Dexter Barker-Glenn, and their pure, funny love Mike Hoolboom and Sean Scofield for all this and to all my family and friends who have floated with me and to all the animals real and imagined*





