

THE LEAKY DIMENSIONS OF FILM AND WAR, OR SOME CONNECTIVE TISSUE



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A desire to understand a thing can precipitate a range of acts on the part of the researcher on their quest for knowledge. For an artist-researcher the materiality of their practice often plays a key role in their ‘coming to know’. This writing interrogates how particular materialities played into my research process in coming to ‘know war.’ All of the gestures along the way were intentioned toward arriving at ‘knowledge’ through the body. The essay looks at the materialities of language, sculpture, performance, and moving image and their various potentials for creating knowledge events—encounters where we can come to know through experience. The central question in the research becomes: can a moving image work make war felt? This writing is an exposition of a short film I made in the process of this research and how temporality, duration and an ekphrastic practice can work to create such a knowledge event. This is a performative piece of writing that enacts the play of elements that drive creative-practice research. It shows up the complex tangle of the personal and bodily, the theoretical and writerly, which co-create our coming-to-know.

KEYWORDS

nonrepresentational theory, affect, moving image, creative-practice research, event

The setting is Khao Lak, Thailand, 2015. It's hot. I'm reading the 2013 Winter issue of the *Granta Magazine of New Writing* themed "Betrayal" (2013). There are twelve works in the collection—fiction, non-fiction, a photo-essay, a poem—and they all in their way, according to *Granta* press-releases, explore "the sting of betrayal by a loved one, our leaders, and from within our own hearts," they look at "betrayal's many forms," and the "many shapes of betrayal" (n.p). This collection had been on my bookshelf for some time but it is only in 2015 that I picked it up as a summer holiday read. A strange choice, perhaps, for a poolside trip to Thailand. But I like the short story form for a holiday read, easy to pick up and put down between dips in the pool. A really rewarding themed collection, though, is one where the related/unrelated short pieces resonate in a way that illuminates something bigger beyond the small bites on offer. For me it wasn't betrayal but war that held it all together.

Connective tissue, the fascia, holds things-apart, together. This is what we mean when we say things 'resonate': a vibration in and between things. We might think of the way sound does this as it travels through walls, connecting or remaking the boundaries between spaces and entities across those spaces. Resonance between parts could also be thought of, or experienced as, a certain kind of intimate relation between things that appear separate but are not. The force that things that are separate exert on each other, and the quality of that intimacy, is of interest here in this essay. In particular I am interested in resonances between the specific materialities of sculpture, performance and moving image, and philosophical frameworks that give us language around the question of knowledge and research. Further to this, this essay interrogates what an appropriate response to affectively intense material is—for the philosopher, the artist, the researcher, the audience, the reader.

The research investigation unpacked in this essay is about tactics for measuring the weight of war. I pointed to the moment by the poolside in Khao Lak as a kind of 'inciting incident' for this investigation. I set the scene in this way because I can pinpoint this moment as the moment when a troubling—that had already been lodged in me—started to arise and become inextricable from my reflection on the way my troubling took shape. My writing here is not a critique or literary analysis of the *Granta* collection, though it is tangled up in the story of it all. The content of the pieces in the collection, the thematic thread, was indeed about betrayal and not war. Reading the *Granta* collection that held within its pages

contexts around the globe that had political conflict, sitting alongside the more focussed stories around the theme of betrayal, was certainly a gateway into my own investigation. My investigation was born of a special confluence of things: being in Khao Lak post the 2004 tsunami where its effects were still visible and the affects thick (devastation and relaxation); the dissonance between what I was reading and what I was doing (violence and relaxation); the state of being relaxed enough for knots of violence held deep down in my body to loosen a little and come up to the surface; the attention to the weight of the body in and out of the pool; in and out of the humid air; in and out of earshot of the hotel workers who were many, attending to only myself and 4 or 5 other guests. Syria, Lebanon, Burkina Faso, Wyoming were some of the places the stories were set. I was thinking of the Arab Spring, the Syrian crisis, the refugee crisis in Australia. This complex of things exerting their force on each other gave rise to an investigation into finding an appropriate response to my troubling about war.



An Ode to John Smith, iPhone 5 [2:34], Smiljana Glisovic, 2015

This writing, which reads partly as an exposition of my search for a response to war, is an experiment into whether it can serve as the fascia of the story about how particular materialities in art might access a certain kind of knowledge. How exactly these materialities and concepts interrelate in the quest for a certain kind of knowledge, and how this kind of writing can give a sense of the quality of that interrelationship is also of interest here. I will trace various ways in which the body, in relation to knowledge, can figure in artistic research, both for the maker and for the audience. And how the materiality of the medium the artist-researcher

is working with has particular significance in this dynamic between knowledge and body. I do reach for some theoretical concepts to help me understand and articulate the movements made along this investigation. I do this with the help of Deleuze and others on the topic of affect and the co-constitution of bodies, experiences, and worlds. I consider the problems with aesthetic representation and use non-representational theory to help me articulate knowledge as an 'event' rather than an 'artefact'. With this I privilege contingency, performativity, and the encounter. I will think through my acting training and how this has come to bear on the processes that have shaped this research. I look at sculpture in terms of how physical objects act on bodies in affective ways, and end with a discussion of how all this relates to the moving image and a short video work that I made: *An Ode to John Smith* (2015).

In Khao Lak, the troubling that bubbled up—as I read, and swam, and ate, and witnessed a minotaur being bludgeoned to death by the hotel staff—was that I needed to 'comprehend war', all of its effects and affects, in a total and graspable way. A discomfort in the shape of responsibility arose and I proceeded to use metrics as a way of alleviating it: I had to know all the facts, the where and who and why and *how much* (of it all) of all, wars. But simply 'knowing' the facts and figures would not do it, these facts and figures had to take on a weight, and it was this weight I wanted to manifest in the shape of a sculptural work. What would I measure? Dead bodies? The weight of them? Would I make a globe made of bullets? A globe that gets heavier as more bullets are added as wars around the globe flourish? I was thinking of a physical mass that would quantify war. My sculpture would be a rationalised object of war, without emotion or gore. I wanted to create a simple object, a single thing, unequivocal, something one could not debate. I didn't want to get caught up in the mess of it, in the things that leaked, but rather in numbers and hard facts that were physically relatable to the size of our own bodies. I am talking here about gravity—the natural pull of forces—the (indisputable) gravity of the situation. To turn the amorphous and invisible into something concrete is to bring it into the physical realm where it is governed by the same laws as our bodies. The 'meaning' and 'significance' of the work would lie in simple mathematics. The uncomfortable 'not knowing' would be alleviated through a knowledge with the body. What I wanted was epistemological control because anything otherwise was too frightening. I want to evoke Timothy Morton's "hyperobject" here because it is a conceptual offering that articulates how I was experiencing 'war' at his moment: too big for me to think: it is unthinkable, it is everywhere, it permeates all of our worldings (2013). The impulse toward mak-

ing a simple object that did not permeate everything everywhere but had visible, sensible boundaries seemed a way I could contain this frightening 'everywhere'. By creating a physical object, rather than having to grasp a troubling idea—the thing I can't grasp, grasps me. The (imagined) sculpture would strike the body and make itself known. The thing I couldn't understand or relate to relates and makes itself understood by its size, weight, dimension. This was the first impulse, one that came from fear.

But I knew better than to think of an object as separate from me simply because it and I have skins that apparently keep things in and apart. An object and a body are openings toward a certain kind of material and affective relation. Seigworth and Gregg's definition of body in their rendering of affect is:

bodies defined not by an outer skin-envelope or other surface boundary but by their potential to reciprocate or co-participate in the passages of affect. [...] Affect marks a body's belonging to a world of encounters or a world's belonging to a body of encounters but also, in non-belonging (2010, 2).

Speaking of bodies does not mean human bodies. The thing that defines a body is simply this potential (not even ability) to "reciprocate and co-participate" in what the authors significantly call 'passages', as in movements, of affect. Plus: bodies also think. Deleuze defines the "thinking body" not as a body that thinks, but a body that plunges us towards the "unthought" (1989, 182). This kind of body must move toward a new way of being, it moves toward new knowledge that remains otherwise inaccessible. The body is our transport towards transformation. This kind of body is active, not controlled by the mind as a separate organ that resides in the head. Deleuze is theorising this in the context of his work on cinema. The lineage of the idea starts before this on his work on Proust with the notion that sensual "encounters...force us to think" (1972, 161). Here the argument is developed that our sensual encounters with artworks plunge us towards the unthought.

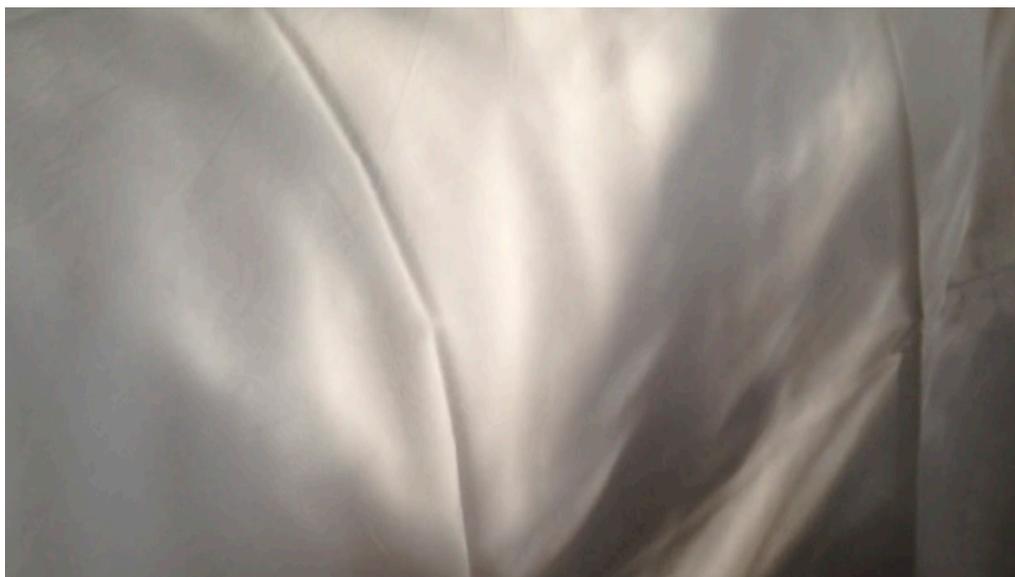
And let's not forget the researcher also has a body and not just a mind that thinks. My war sculpture proposition seems to hinge on the idea that I can create a condition for an encounter between the body of the sculpture and the body of the audience; that this encounter opens up passages of affect, of knowing. How does an artist-researcher go about creating this condition: a potentiality for the audience to be moved toward the unthought, which is to say toward a new way of becoming? Are there limits to the kinds of conditions I can create? Can a sculpture do this work? So far I have come up with no instruments of measure, only this kind of practice of exposition and plaiting of fascial tissue. What's more is that I do not have a sculptural practice. This is obvious, I'm sure, in the naive way I have been talking about what sculpture can 'do', how it 'speaks' or what it has the potential to instigate.

My sculptural proposition was a very representative offering. By swapping representation for reverberation, we come to a non-representational way of proceeding. A non-representational researcher is not interested in observing the world and notating those observations in order to classify, order, and attach meaning to those observations. This kind of researcher's work uses "techniques that do not concern themselves so much with representing lifeworlds as with issuing forth novel reverberations" (Vannini 2015, 12). A reverberation is felt, sometimes may-be heard, a reverberation is hard to describe or represent. A reverberation moves through walls, like sound, it's no good to try and contain it; it may feel different depending on where and how you are standing, depending on who you are, depending on the receptivity of your flesh. Reverberations are a result of gestures and movements; there's only the moment or "event" of the act.

Erin Manning relates events to thinking: "to place thinking in the event is to once more challenge the idea that the precomposed subject is extra to the event, and that the thinking happens from outside-in" (2015, 61). The event is the thinking and the event is composed of an entire complex of reverberating entities. This is about presentness, privileging action, practice, performance. I am speaking here of the researcher's acts and of the audience as another actant in this field of relations. I am speaking about a co-evolution between all kinds of bodies involved in the act of research, and in the act of experiencing the thing offered up as 'the artwork' to an audience. This goes to the heart of the matter: the world is in flux, I cannot hold onto it, not even objects with their apparently well-defined boundaries will be held and measured and weighed. As a non-representational researcher I think and move like an essayist, in the first instance listening to what reverberates and how it intermingles in the continual flux of the world. This kind of research takes into its fold all of the inevitable contingencies. Research is contextual, situated, personal, biased; it has a human dimension. Accounting for these things can be interesting, revealing. Ignoring these things is probably bad research, less interesting, less true. To research is to participate in the unfolding of the world "from the very inside of our being" (Ingold 2015, viii).

Jill Bennett has done some wonderful work around the way "trauma might not readily conform to the logic of representation" and why art's capacity for affective experience is a powerful mode with which to explore these experiences (2005, 3). Bennett makes an important distinction that "affect doesn't come from an emotional response to a represented experience", which is perhaps what we might term sympathy or emotional identification, but rather a "direct engagement with

sensation as it is registered in the work” (2005, 7). She, too, follows Deleuze’s construction around the relationship between art’s affective potential and concepts. She says “if this affective transaction does not in and of itself convey the ‘meaning’ of trauma, we must also pursue the question of how it might lead us toward a conceptual engagement” (2005, 7). This for me brings forth a provocative question: what does affective knowledge look like? Bennett’s study looks at particular works of art and how they offer up an “empathic vision” of trauma in this non-representational aesthetic mode. Whilst this is also my project here



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in relation to working with materials in the art context, in order to understand something of the subject of war; my focus is not structured along theoretical lines of ‘empathy’ as it is with Bennett, who constructs a beautifully crafted argument on empathy being affect plus thought. Whilst Bennett’s study has the capacity to greatly influence the lines of inquiry here, my troubling was not about an instance of the trauma of war in relation to a particular lived experience. Rather than understanding someone else’s pain and taking it on as my own (which is what much of the critical writing in this field focuses on and which Bennett unpacks), it is about the very inability to ‘know’ a thing such as war when it is outside one’s own direct experience. My work is in understanding the quality of grappling with the impossible-to-know, rather than offering up an affective experience of the thing. Non-belonging and the hyper-object defined my troubling: the impossibility of having epistemological control over something devastating which is everywhere.

A sculpture of war has already been made: *Balkan Baroque* (1997), by Marina Abramovic. Actually, countless sculptures of war have been made (too many for there to be need of me giving any citations here). And actually, *Balkan Baroque*

isn't really a sculpture, it is more a performance work, or perhaps we should call it a performed sculptural work? The work had some sculptural elements, such as the large pile of animal bones on which Abramovic sat. The number of bones and their weight are, I think, not especially relevant. It was more about her performative act of cleaning the bones, and the relationship between this and the other elements in the installation: a video depicting Abramovic playing a Doctor that lectures us on the nature of rats; Abramovic playing a Bulgarian seductress dancer; a video portrait of her mother, and a video portrait of her father. The real Abramovic sits in front of these videos on the pile of bones, and cleans them one by one with a brush. She is there in the dungeons of the gallery for 4 days, with the rising heat and stench of the blood and bone. In videos documenting the work you can see people holding hands over their faces to block the smell out. This work is about endurance, as much of Abramovic's work is. It is about the time she spends in the gallery, the effort of the body, it is about the impossibility of ever getting clean. Still, I would not call her act a futile one; it is an act she must continue to perform even if her task is impossible to achieve. The labor of the act is what is important, the difficulty, and through this pain we feel the pain of the Balkan war, and if we are to extend the affective dimension of the artwork into its theme, we might say that the pain of war is impossible to ever erase. In truth I can only imagine the affective dimension of Abramovic's work, which is more a cerebral act than an affective one, because I haven't experienced the work myself. But I am intrigued by the material leakage of this work—not only in the sense of the leaking stench of the bones as they decompose and surely Abramovic's perspiring body as she works—but the leakage of the various materialities of the live act, the video, the artefacts in the space. I can only imagine that to experience the work is to experience how these expressions are entangled with one another; but I can't quite imagine the affective intensity of these entanglements.

As an aside—Abramovic and I share the same motherland. I was much younger than she at the outbreak of war, and at the time she made this work. Actually, I was completely unaware of her or the work at the time. But I had the same impulse towards pain: I too was safe whilst many that I knew were not safe, and a certain kind of shame comes with that. I understand Abramovic's impulse toward creating pain for herself in order to alleviate some of the shame. This is an aside, but interestingly brings us back to this original feeling of needing to know what a thing feels like, as an act of responsibility. I wasn't thinking of making an artwork when I was thinking about my sculpture. I was only grappling with my

own lack of understanding, and for me embodied cognition happens through the act of making, of handling materials, moving the body. But this isn't an aside at all. The entire project under construction and evaluation here is about fields not through-lines, about the quality of connection not a hierarchy between connected elements. Surely to proceed in this way does away with the concept of the aside.

And so I will tell you another part of this story that involves a 'healer' I see. The last session included her bringing up a long-forgotten memory from my own childhood. I had been in Australia only a year or two when the war back home broke out. My parents tried to shield me from it as much as they could, I suppose they thought it was not something a child could possibly process or understand. Nonetheless, what they never knew was that I went to bed every night composing speeches I would give to the entire nation which would move them in such a way that they would all stop fighting. I actually thought this was possible: for a ten year old to speak such words that would stop a war. It was a painful time, it was a pain that sat deep in my belly, which the healer is now trying to "throw up into the light"—whatever that means. The healer speaks in a language that I'm sure is inadequate to what she's actually seeing and experiencing during the session; but I mostly think I 'understand' what she's saying. Mostly I just feel things moving in my body. Mostly we don't speak. This story relates. It speaks of other practices that recognise that things can get stuck in our bodies. It also relates because it takes us back to how old my troubling with war really is. Back then I thought some poetry would help. I grew up and thought a sculpture would work to do the job. And now I'm writing words that keep working at the very same problem. Except that I am learning, with experiences such as the one with the healer, that access to these other non-verbal spaces, spaces that we so inadequately refer to as 'the light' for example, might be necessary.

My consciousness about this way of experiencing and thinking about the world, where the body was a way toward a certain kind of understanding and knowledge unavailable to other registers, was developed when I was training to be an actor. As an actor prepares they ask: where does it sit in my body? This question is particularly useful in moments that are difficult to understand, the moments that don't immediately yield an impulsive response to a situation, to how the character you are playing might react. Notice that I do not say feel, because in this school of thought feelings are irrelevant, it is *how the body is moved* that is of concern. Or rather: feelings take care of themselves and we do not need to manifest them or focus on them at all, they are only a consequence. By the time emotion arises as such the impulse, or the body's response to a stimulus, has already passed. Emotion is something we name after the body has already responded to a past moment. I take emotion here to mean a cognisant awareness,

an ability to name and classify what has happened in/to the body as a response to something. Affects are the passages, the movements, in and between bodies that emotion doesn't quite capture (see Cataldi (1993) for a perspective on this via Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology). As an actor prepares they are most likely



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not thinking of the philosophical traditions that have engaged with these ideas; this was not the framework for the training. What I share here on acting was a knowledge I came to through experience. It is an experience I drew upon when thinking about my sculpture. From my current position reflecting back, I do turn to philosophical concepts on the subject in the hope it will help me draw together things that have so far sat apart. Manning, reading James, says:

to reorient the real to include that which can be experienced (rather than known as such) is to profoundly challenge the notion that knowledge is based on quantification, for what is real in James' account cannot, in all cases, be quantified. What is real is the field of relations through which an experience comes to act, comes to be felt as such. What is real is as much the in-act of experience unfolding as what has come to be (2015, 55).

Neither experience nor philosophy, neither the world, nor the researcher are already formed and simply on offer for observation, annotation, and deduction. The field of the stage helps me think this through in a material way. I think of the stage and everyone on/in it, all of its actants held together, part of the same membrane. As one actor moves (as a result of their body being struck by another body), everything changes, new relations are formed. Encounters change everything.

CAPACIOUS

We might think of the stage as an assemblage in the Guattari and Deleuzian sense (2004), where an assemblage is just this kind of encounter of relations between bodies. Assembl-*ing* would be a more accurate translation of “agencement” because it articulates the transitive nature of this *thing* that is a *situation*. There is a *holding together* but also a constant forming and reforming, never the same, never again quite in this way. An actor’s main task is to attend to the singularity of each moment, or to ‘stay present’. The present moment is found and lost simultaneously by virtue of impulses propelling you into the future—you are not feeling an emotion and then responding according to it. You do not play the emotion, that is a turgid approach, because you are then occupying the past and the future and not the present. An actor simply plays the present, in action, by allowing themselves to be moved by the other actors on stage. Pre-conceiving and determining cognitively how to respond to situations and events is apparently bad acting—and also bad research. The question: “where does it sit in my body?” is a passage of affect which ‘moves’ the actor across the stage, in relation to other bodies on stage. This is a kind of ‘move’ by a thinking body toward an ‘appropriate response’. Paying attention to where something strikes the body and allowing impulses to arise in response to that sensation is a kind of thinking of the unthought. Of course all of this is held together by myriad things such as the situation that the play-script has already somewhat determined. This is to say that our ‘impulses’ are also structured, there are parameters within which we are working, there’s always scaffolding that keeps a show from being utterly derailed.

My purpose here is to pay attention to the co-constitution and evolution of bodies, experiences, worlds, and to attune to the thought-in-the-making (see Manning & Massumi 2014). It is also to explore what happens when there are interruptions to our experiences, in such instances such as war; how these traumas reach deep into our entanglements and worldings. And I’m wondering whether any of the concepts or philosophies I am occasionally drawing on can have a grounding effect/affect; I suppose in the way I had desired of the sculptural object? I’ve already made my confession that I do not have a sculptural practice and that all of this talk of sculpture only remained at the conceptual level.

I do have a moving image practice, and so I turned my attention to this. Of course, we have Resnais’ *Night and Fog* (1956), and we have Farocki’s *Images of the World and the Inscription of War* (1989). They both use the moving image as document, as evidence that is rooted in a particular time and place of traumas. They both interrogate the ‘archive’ and take us toward reading the images anew. But for my intentions I did not have images to go back to. My problem was not one of representation. I wasn’t troubled by extant images of war. It wasn’t the shock of a single image and its implications that I was interrogating, the emaciated or

immolated body. I yearned for a sense of a kind of totality, an understanding, all at once, of all the places war touched. To proceed, I considered my move from sculpture to film. Though the sculpture as conceived was highly representational, its affect was conceived to arise from the physical size and weight of the object. And so in this same way I was interested in whether the moving image could achieve this sense of weight and size, this status as 'object', but not in a representative way? What is the weight of film: the celluloid, the light, the screen, the volume of air? Could weight on screen articulate gravity and dimension of the sort I had imagined for my sculpture—one that strikes the body? Was the only measurable thing in film its length, its temporal dimension? Or the inverse of that: could duration as a quantitative measure have qualitative affect? Film has a more determined temporality and duration than sculpture does. But temporality and duration are also important to sculpture. I won't perform an analysis of the material and ontological differences between sculpture and film, that is not my intention. The significance is the way in which my thought-experiment on sculpture led me to consider whether the moving image could do the work of making war felt. I could turn here to many films and a lot of excellent literature on the affective power of film, such as Marks (2000), Sobchack (1992), Rutherford (2011), Shaviro (2010), amongst others. But this literature doesn't quite address my particular concern around affect and weight. I wanted to understand pain in terms of weight. What can the moving image do in measuring the weight of pain? What is the difference between moving images and other art objects? How do I use the impulse toward sculpture and object creation in understanding moving images better?

To frame this discussion I would like to call on non-representational research again and proffer that film, too, can be a generating field of encounters rather than an object of the already thought. My moving image practice is one that I use to help me think. I turned to the moving image clips I archive in my mobile phone to help me think my way out of the sculpture and into another way of exploring my 'troubling.' I flicked through some small morsels of video I had captured here and there. I came upon a couple of clips that I had shot whilst in Khao Lak. One was a close up of the shadow of a tree cast on the hotel bed sheets. The other was a flag on the beach blowing in the wind. I found a couple of other ones that were of a similar material quality to the shadows on the bed sheet and the flag from Khao Lak. One was a curtain blowing in the wind, taken a couple of years earlier in my bedroom. I remember the moment: lying on the bed in a relationship-break-up stupor, noticing the quality of movement and

becoming aware of the gentle warm breeze coming through the window. The light, the implication of breath, called forth the war sculpture. Not weight but weightlessness. Here, there is a significant confluence of things: hotel rooms, videos, wars. This brought to mind the filmmaker John Smith and his *The Hotel Diaries* (2001–2007) film series. Whilst on the film festival circuit Smith made small diary films with his camcorder in his hotel rooms. They appear accidental and mundane, there's nothing beautiful about his compositions. He stutters and lisps his way through seemingly unstructured and unthought-through musings on the state of the hotel, the grime on the taps, and on the faulty TV. But there are other topics of conversation, too. He tells us about what he has seen beyond the four walls where he is filming, things he cannot show us because he is in Gaza or Lebanon where he cannot take out his camcorder. He muses on current politics in his casual, laconic tone. He puts on an innocence that holds only so far. Sometimes he can't but throw in a sharp and exacting polemic. He is trying to identify with the various political situations he finds himself in, through his slightly stupid, uninformed, white male lens. Of course this is the part of the performance that helps us to identify with these war zones through him. But he doesn't really acknowledge the viewer, it seems he is only making these records and musings for himself. This is his holiday video which his unfortunate family members might be subjected to upon his return home—or that is the conceit.

I made my own Smith-inspired film, which resuscitated the sculpture. The images we see in the film are the curtain blowing in the wind, the light playing on the bed sheets, the light playing over a contact sheet from Mekas' film *Paradise Not Yet Lost* (1979), and the flag fluttering. The sound we hear is the blowing of wind, a siren in the background. I told the story of the sculpture in this video, with my own Smith-esque voice-over which was rather white text on a black screen. Smith's voice-overs have a sense of being a draft version, a work on its way to being something else, accidental sketches taken as prompts for thought. My film practice takes this same shape of the incidental, the improvisatory, the openings that precipitate further thought. I called this film 'An idea for a film', then 'An idea for a film of molten lead', then *An Ode to John Smith*. I had to make a work in order to gesture toward a work that I was never going to be able to make.

This kind of ekphrastic practice imagines the impossible work in such a way so the work is made in the imagination of the viewer. In this case the moving image work is posited as 'not the real thing'—just a stand-in for something else in the making—or that is the conceit. The intended sculptural work is about volume, something to put in people's paths, so that it isn't just another fleeting, forgettable piece of poetry. The film is apparently just an interruption while the other work is being properly conceived. The film consists of pictures of light and wind. The

images themselves are not already reduced to meaning, but rather offer an experience of qualities such as lightness—perhaps evoking the question of gravitas, of dimension and significance, and how these are measured. There is an interplay of materialities here between the text on screen, the black space in the frame, the silence, the qualities in the moving images, the rhythms they play out. We might also call these aesthetic interruptions: the plunge into the black on screen, the move toward the text, the blunt address of those words. We might remember that affect is “both relatedness and interruptions in relatedness, becoming a palimpsest of force-encounters traversing the ebbs and swells of intensities that pass between ‘bodies’” (Seigworth and Greg 2010, 2). Significantly there are no human figures in this video work. There is no one to identify with, a deliberate denial for the potential of emotional or sympathetic attachment. Rather the video creates a dwelling space for a thinking body to play out the tensions of my own grappling with the topic of war. The ‘dwelling space’ is created through time and relatedness between the frames of the film. The most basic measurable dimension of the film-as-object is its duration. Can duration measure the weight of pain? If we apply the logic of the sculpture here, we would be saying: can a time-based work be long enough, make its audience endure enough, to approach an understanding of something like war? And what kind of pictures would the audience need to endure?

But this is to treat film as an object. And this is the very thing that is put into question by the film. Length does not equal weight. So when I speak about time and length I mean: the length of a breath. An audience breathes together with the film. An audience is beholden to the duration of the work, this is an intimacy and a particular kind of fascia holding bodies together. What is between the frames is the other dimension of film’s affective capacities that leak beyond the simple duration and time that we experience in a linear manner when we say: how long is the film? This capacity is a film’s visual depth, the way events—thematic, textural, material—across the film resonate with one another. This chiming across the images has the potential to evoke a multiplicity which isn’t determined by the linear, measurable length of the film, it is a leaking that can break the limits of the frame entirely. The film itself does not address this capacity of excess but rather its lack: I call the film a ‘place card’ as if it in itself is not enough, it doesn’t do the job, it is not complete. This is a playful dimension of the work that puts in mind the particular access film has to formal registers different to the sculpture, or essay, or philosophical proposition.

With video I worked toward the fleeting, banal, everyday image that was not of any *thing* but of quality (light, texture, movement: the most basic elements of the moving image). I also used words which did not anchor meaning in the images, but spoke of things I could not film. The weight of the sculpture is compared explicitly with the weight of the film. It is only a speculative proposition that hopes to precipitate a thinking about the relationship between objects, events, measures, and what the knowledge and art object or event are capable of instigating. To do this work the film puts scale and materiality at the centre of the investigation by posing questions around its own value, around what it can do as a place-card *only*, until it gets-it-right or manifests a sculpture of concrete, of molten lead. But then we watch the flag fluttering in the wind, awakening the rhythm of our own body, and here open the passages of affect: the event that precipitates movement, then thought. *An Ode to John Smith* became an accidental act in ekphrasis, whilst denying its own status as an artwork. The film is at-a-loss, rather than grasping-it-all. The film leaks: it has a duration but no single temporal dimension; its spatial dimensions offer no anchors in a representational sense. Black space holds the text on the screen which plays out slowly, laconically arising and falling as a slow, not urgent, thought. This black space is another moment of vertigo, untethered in time and space, at-a-loss. The gravity of our subject cannot be given in terms of simple measure, there are leakages, and interruptions and also moments of lightness and lostness. The film is not an object. It is a body, like the actor, like the sculpture—full of potential and only a possibility. I am left with the echo of the following: to grapple; to handle; to act; to be present; to be at a loss.

In this grappling we're trying to come to an understanding. But non-understanding is also useful. Non-understanding, just like non-belonging, might give rise to alternatives. Jane Bennet proposes this for the potential of art (2009, 21). So does Morton: "art sometimes gives voice to what is unspeakable elsewhere" (2010, 12). The practice of art provides alternatives to thinking, alternate paths for research, alternative ways of knowing. In this instance the film enacts the limitations and possibilities for how art thinks the alternatives, where alternatives here mean not thing-containers of knowledge but conditions for "thinking otherwise". As McCormack says, the experimental quality of affective spacetimes is not so much that they provide "opportunities to prove or demonstrate a prefigured idea, but that they have the potential to generate a feeling of something happening that disturbs, agitates, or animates ideas already circulating in ways that might open up possibilities for thinking otherwise" (2013, 9-10).

My ode is a provocation to experience ‘otherwise’, to ask: where does it sit in my body? This particular provocation happens by way of questioning the limits of the form. *An Ode to John Smith* is an unfinished thought and gesture; it is a space made of duration and light, for the contemplation of the heaviness of war. Attending to how these lines of thought and practice converge and refract as I have done in this essay can also find a place for the elsewhere or the otherwise. Both are experiments in the passages and interruptions in the search for understanding the ungraspable.



This is just a place card for that work
while I work out its proper dimensions

An Ode to John Smith, iPhone 5 [2:34], Smiljana Glisovic, 2015

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