SPATIAL MONTAGE:
MEDIATING A NON-LINEAR EXPERIENCE OF TIME

JOHN GALVIN

Doctoral Thesis

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SPATIAL MONTAGE:
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JOHN GALVIN

ABSTRACT

This PhD by Practice presents a theoretical and methodological exploration of what Lev Manovich has termed *spatial montage*. In essence spatial montage may be understood in opposition to traditional, temporal montage (the ‘film cut’ of narrative cinema) as a durational work involving “a number of images, potentially of different sizes and proportions, appearing on the screen at the same time” (Manovich 2001, p.322). Spatial montage is defined as a hypermediated representational strategy, in which multiple images (both still and moving) are placed in adjacency and/or overlapping within a post-perspectival frame. This thesis defines a conceptual background to the accompanying artefacts, providing a theoretical framework (for the operations of spatial montage and its constituent parts – the photographic and filmic image) through which the temporal identities of digital spatial montage are determined. It is argued that spatial montage does not only produce *representations* of time but rather *constitutes* a subjective, non-linear experience of time, in which time’s multiple planes, perspectives and positions are perceived simultaneously rather than in sequentiality.
DECLARATION

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Thesis submitted: 14/04/2013
Thesis defended: 07/05/2013

DECLARATION BY CANDIDATE:
I hereby declare that this thesis is entirely my own work and has not been submitted to any university or higher education institute, or for any other academic award in this university. Where other sources of information have been used they have been acknowledged and fully referenced.

Signature:...............................................................
Date:......................................................................
DEDICATION

To Dawn, for everything.
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A very large thank you indeed,

To my supervisors: Kerry Hagan and Jürgen Simpson, for their support and encouragement, and most importantly their clear-sightedness whenever things got (worryingly) vague.

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FOREWORD

While living in London in 2006, I began reading Austerlitz, the last novel completed by W.G. Sebald before his death. This book (ostensibly a work of fiction) is structured around Sebald’s major themes: “emptiness, an absence, migration and exile, the unreliability of memory, the non-linearity of time and the huge gap between the representation and reality of human experience” (Lash 2007, p.441). At one point the eponymous protagonist of the novel visits the Greenwich Observatory in London. On a similarly “cold day not long before Christmas” (Sebald 2001, p140), I visited the observatory and stood in the dome of the building so vividly described by Sebald. While observing the room around me, comparing it to the written description still fresh in my mind (“the simple beauty of the wooden flooring, made of planks of different widths, and… the unusually tall windows, each divided into a hundred and twenty-two lead-framed glass panes” – Sebald 2001, p.141) I became acutely aware of the multiple strands of time condensed into that one moment. An overlapping of temporalities, those inhabited by the fictional protagonist, the author who stood in the same spot, and myself - both remembering the text and experiencing the reality around me. That moment became temporally layered - a palimpsest of multiple temporalities condensed in the present. I still think of that experience as a form of slippage, where the solidity of the present became almost fluid; a permeable membrane in which the co-existence of the past in the present became momentarily visible.

The development of a theoretical and methodological approach to spatial montage described within this exegesis and the series of artefacts that accompany it, may be
viewed as an attempt to create artworks that mediate this non-linear experience of time – its multiple planes, perspectives and positions.
INTRODUCTION

This PhD is based upon the artefact and exegesis model in which, according to Scrivener, “…theory and practice become inextricably linked and mutually dependent” (2000, p.1), it consists of a written thesis (exegesis) and a body of work (artefacts).

The PhD develops a theoretical understanding and details a methodological approach to what Lev Manovich has termed spatial montage. In essence spatial montage may be understood, in opposition to traditional, temporal montage (the ‘film cut’ of narrative cinema), as a durational work involving “a number of images, potentially of different sizes and proportions, appearing on the screen at the same time” (Manovich 2001, p.322).

According to Manovich there are two conditions necessary for the creation of a spatial montage. Examining these conditions provides a framework through which to view both the exegesis and the accompanying body of work:

1. Juxtapositions of elements should follow a particular system, and
2. These juxtapositions should play a key role in how the work establishes its meaning.

1. The artefacts produced are a direct response to the first condition, representing my development of a methodological approach to the composition of spatial montage.
2. The second condition is approached within the exegesis, outlining the theoretical and conceptual factors (within the operation of montage and its constituent parts within my methodology – photography and film) that create temporal meaning. The multiple and complex temporalities present within (and created by) spatial montage are the fundamental theoretical concern within the exegesis.

The exegesis consists of five chapters and may be examined in two parts. Part one, consisting of Chapters One and Two, presents an historical and methodological framework for the exploration of spatial montage. Part two (Chapters Three to Five) examines the artefacts, emphasising the interrelationship between theory and practice.

Chapter One provides a theoretical and historical framework through which to examine what will come to be defined as spatial montage. The process of remediation, defined by Bolter and Gromala as ‘the making of new media forms out of older ones’ (2003, p.80), requires the contextualisation of new-media objects within the conventions and techniques of traditional media forms. Defining digital spatial montage as a new-media object requires that we situate it within the broader cultural dialogue of its constituent parts. If, as I will argue, both static and moving images have been redefined by computer-based media, then the traditional interpretative frameworks surrounding these mediums will continue to inform their redefinition. This chapter defines spatial montage within the terminology of traditional film/ photography theory and as one particular iteration of multiple image, multi-temporal representational strategies within an historical continuum.

Chapter One traces the ‘double logic’ of remediation, providing a genealogy of immediacy and hypermediacy through a series of historical representational strategies.
It is an attempt to elucidate why, despite the consistent presence of multi-temporal, hypermediated representational strategies (in which the signs of mediation are multiplied) in the centuries before and including the twentieth century, the dominant form for the moving-image in the ‘cinematic century’, so consistently embodied the single-image/single-frame paradigm. The contemporary ‘media window’ is proposed as a key challenge to the transparent singular image of cinema. It is my contention that despite the overlapping spatially and temporally fractured ‘windows’ of the computer display having become our new visual vernacular; this new representational form has yet to be fully explored aesthetically.

The chapter continues by defining montage in general through the traditional theoretical structures of film studies. Two contrasting techniques of montage are presented and defined. The first, which we may term temporal montage, is associated with mainstream (traditional) continuity editing; while the second, termed spatial montage (after Manovich), claims a direct lineage with modernist, anti-illusionistic forms. Spatial montage celebrates fragmentation and dissonance, foregrounding its mode of enunciation.

The temporal consequences that result from the fractured, multi-layered imagery present within spatial montage are the key rubric through which this chapter, and the thesis as a whole, may be examined.

There follows a discussion on photography and film – which within my methodology are the constituent parts of spatial montage. I argue that what we traditionally assume to be the essence of the photographic and filmic mediums are in fact inextricably tied to
their normative social uses. This leads to a re-examination of the ‘essence’ of both the still and moving image in which I attempt to dismantle the traditional binary mechanism defining photography and cinema in opposition. By questioning the ontological tensions described by this dialectic, I attempt to define the essential temporality shared by the photographic and filmic image – as an inscribed trace of a moment someone chose to capture.

I posit that free of their assumptive social roles, and no longer defined by the ontological determinism prescribed by a Barthian conception of the ‘still or moving’ image, both photography and film reveal that their true relationship to time is a multi-temporal one. This reading of the essential temporal attributes of both photography and film is predicated on an understanding of what is defined as the *photographic effect*, the contraction and intermingling of multiple images of time.

It is my contention that spatial montage (as an amalgamated and hypermediating frame) proclaims a new kind of temporality, no longer constrained by the parsing of photography and film into rigid ‘tenses’, but which instead opens up a space of temporal fluidity. The action of digital spatial montage - as the orchestration of images (simultaneous, overlapping, adjacent) - creates its own time, revealing that temporality is not so much produced *in* the image-referent but *between* one image and another.

A reading of Youngblood’s *Cinema and the Code* provides a taxonomical framework for a methodological approach to spatial montage. Spatial montage is defined as a durational work, presented on a screen and potentially composed of both still and
moving images arranged in superimposition and/or as spatially separated framed/unframed images seen simultaneously and/or in succession.

The chapter ends by proposing that spatial montage is not only a means of producing representations of time but also constitutes a subjective, non-linear experience of time, in which time’s multiple planes, perspectives and positions are perceived simultaneously rather than as a sequential teleology. Bergson’s ‘contraction-image’ is adapted as a metaphor for a visual experience, which - through the unique set of conditions provided by spatial montage – becomes temporally thick; a non-linear visuality defined by the inextricability of past and present.

Chapter Two defines the methodological approaches of three artists, David Claerbout, Christian Boltanski and Robert Rauschenberg, through the analysis of selected works. While none of these artists operate within methodologies that could be strictly termed spatial montage (as defined in Chapter One), they are presented here as a series of lenses through which to view the methodological concerns and temporal consequences of montage in general. This chapter then may be understood as an attempt to examine the theoretical structures presented in Chapter One through a discussion of these artists’ individual methodologies.

David Claerbout interweaves photographic and filmic elements to create temporally ambiguous artworks. His work is discussed in terms of the temporalities (fluid, multiple) that are engendered within his compositions. Claerbout deconstructs the still and moving image’s ‘fixed’ relation to time, suggesting that the ‘now’ and the ‘then’ continue to co-exist. Key to the discussion of Claerbout’s work is the temporal fluidity
engendered by digitization. His works reveal the essence of the photographic effect: the contraction of multiple images of time – the past anamnetically inscribed in the present.

Christian Boltanski is discussed in relation to his use of anonymous found photographs and the photographic effect engendered within his works. I argue that Boltanski’s works are temporally thick, presenting us with an experience of multiple temporalities collapsed within the embodied now of the installation space. The anonymous photographic images (re-photographed and de-contextualised), stripped of their socio-mnemonomic function present a rupture – a divergence between image and meaning – revealing the photograph’s temporal significance outside of the referent. Boltanski’s approach to the ‘open’ artwork is discussed in relation to Perec’s unanimist project.

The work of Robert Rauschenberg is discussed from an almost exclusively methodological vantage. Key to the development of my own practice was an examination of what Steinberg terms Rauschenberg’s ‘flatbed method’. The flatbed method decries the possibility that the enframed pictorial space may be read as a transparent ‘window on the world’. The study of the flatbed method was vital for my own understanding of the screen ‘space’ of the media ‘window’ as a surface, that no longer operated as a transparent ‘windowed’ reality, despite the presence of mimetic photographic and filmic imagery.

Part two of the exegesis consists of Chapters Three, Four and Five. These three chapters together outline the practical application of the theoretical methodologies outlined in part one of the exegesis. Part two of the exegesis examines the various compositional difficulties exposed and resolved through the analysis of a selection of my compositions.
Chapter Three outlines the development of Etude No.4, the last in a series of four studies that together represent my initial attempts to respond to Manovich’s definition of spatial montage. The chapter describes the three interrelated ‘problems’ within the structure of this work defined as: 1) The persistence of single-point perspective, 2) the use of compositing rather than montage and 3) a reliance on the use of cross-dissolves to introduce new image-material. Etude No.4 reveals its methodology to be concerned with compositing layered superimpositions within a single frame; the sutures between images are supressed, creating an illusionistic (though not photo-realistic) perspectival picture surface.

Chapter Four analyses the suite of four durational works composed for the exhibition Foto-Arbeiten (February 2012). These four works take as their source material six found photographs, which represent a clearly bounded and finite ‘database’. The limited source material required that I extract and enlarge particular segments of the photographic image. This resulted in image-fragments that were essentially abstract, stripped of their contextualising surrounds. This abstraction as well as the inclusion of painted elements may be understood as an attempt to destabilise the ‘loaded’ black and white archival photographs. The resulting works may be regarded not as interrogations into the multi-temporal possibilities of spatial montage but rather as a concentrated attempt to reconcile both the photographic and painted elements within a single pictorial space. The works in Foto-Arbeiten represent the exploration of specific compositional strategies at the expense of others. In light of the overall methodological development of my work, these chosen strategies now seem ineffective but it was vital to explore them in a systematic manner. Knowledge with regard to the efficacy of any compositional
strategy (and its spectatorial consequences) could only be gained through the physical making and presentation of the works.

Chapter Five begins with an analysis of two compositional studies: *Rauschenberg Study One* and *Rauschenberg Study Two*, in an effort to elucidate certain methodological developments that occurred within my practice after *Foto-Arbeiten*.

The main discussion within this chapter concerns the four durational works developed for the exhibition *at once a surface and a frame*. These works represent a formal interpretative break with the illusion of the screen as a transparent ‘window on the world’ – as an enframed excision into a three-dimensional perspectival space. The photographic and filmic images, each in itself representing an illusionistic space, are now held within the bounded frame of the montage. These works represent a summation of my methodology developed over the previous two years and constitute multiple-image, multi-temporal digital spatial montage. Key to this development is the conceptualisation of the space of the virtual screen as an infinitely thin membrane – a liminal site – where surface meets depth.
PART ONE

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

This chapter provides a theoretical and historical framework through which to examine what will come to be defined as spatial montage. The process of remediation, defined by Bolter and Gromala as ‘the making of new media forms out of older ones” (2003, p.80), requires the contextualisation of new-media objects within the conventions and techniques of traditional media forms. Defining digital spatial montage as a new-media object requires that we situate it within the broader cultural dialogue of its constituent parts. If, as I will argue, both static and moving images have been redefined by computer-based media, then the traditional interpretative frameworks surrounding these mediums will continue to inform their redefinition. This chapter attempts to define spatial montage within the terminology of traditional film/photography theory and as one particular iteration of multiple image, multi-temporal representational strategies within an historical continuum.

It is important to note that while the term digital is frequently used within this thesis, the definition of the term digital is itself a contested space; the digital being most commonly defined in relation to its objects or modes of production. My use of the term embraces both the modes of production and presentation associated with digital media and the temporal complexities engendered by the inherent non-linearity of these media.
Section one of this chapter begins by elaborating upon the process of remediation. Bolter and Grusin define the “double logic of remediation” as constituting two distinct representational strategies: immediacy and hypermediacy (1996, p.313). In essence immediacy is concerned with erasing the evidence of mediation, while hypermediacy multiplies the signs of mediation. This section traces the historical presence and co-existence of these two seemingly contradictory strategies. This genealogy is not intended to be definitive but is rather a series of snapshots reflecting how representational techniques have been altered by cultural and technical influences. It is an attempt to elucidate why, despite the consistent presence of hypermediated representational strategies in the centuries before and including the twentieth century, the dominant form for the moving-image in the ‘cinematic century’, so consistently embodied the single-image/ single-frame paradigm. It must be emphasised that the genealogy does not trace a linear teleology but it does define immediacy in relation to the illusionistic and transparent representational strategies associated with Renaissance linear perspective and by extension photography and narrative cinema, while the (at times suppressed) presence of hypermediacy is described in relation to Gothic multi-narrative painting, modernist painting, twentieth century collage and ultimately spatial montage.

Section two defines montage in general, through the traditional structures of film theory. This results in two clearly delineated types (techniques) of montage. The first, which we may term temporal montage, is most commonly associated with narrative continuity editing (immediacy), while the second, termed spatial montage (after Manovich), claims a direct lineage with modernist, anti-illusionistic forms (hypermediacy). Spatial montage celebrates fragmentation and dissonance, foregrounding its method of
construction. The temporalities that result from the fractured, multi-layered imagery present within spatial montage are the key rubric through which this chapter, and the thesis as a whole, may be examined.

Anne Friedberg posits the hypermediated ‘media window’ as a challenge, in the last two decades, to the transparent single image of cinema. Friedberg claims that the overlapping windows of the computer interface have more in common with the fractured picture surface of Cubism than the illusionistic, mimetic ‘window’ of cinema. However, key to the development of this thesis, is that despite the overlapping spatially and temporally fractured ‘windows’ of the computer display having become culturally ubiquitous, this new representational form (and its consequences for traditional media) has yet to be fully explored aesthetically.

Section three raises fundamental questions with regard to what extent a new media object such as digital spatial montage is mediated by and remediates older representational languages. What are the effects on the indexical qualities of the photograph when it is no longer a palpable object but instead resides in duration on a media screen? Can we still speak of a moving-image that is stripped of a causal, narrative logic as being cinematic? In order to understand how the static and moving-image has been re-defined by computer-based media, this section explores the key theoretical structures surrounding photography and film. This begins with an exploration of the indexical status of the photographic image before discussing the condition of ‘post-indexicality’. Any discussion with regard to the indexical qualities of the photographic image brings one quickly (and it would seem unavoidably) into the long shadow cast by Barthes’ Camera Lucida, and its associative claim with regard to
photography’s kinship with pastness and death and, by dialectical extension, cinema’s ‘presence’ and association with life. The key question here is whether the binary mechanism of this traditional dialectic still operates upon these dematerialised mediums, post-digitization. What are the inherent temporal qualities of these mediums outside of their normative social and cultural modes?

In the fourth section the term ‘photo-filmic’ is adopted as a more appropriate designation for the multi-mediated imagery, which may be both/neither photographic and/nor filmic, present in spatial montage. A taxonomy of spatial montage is then proposed. The chapter ends with the contention that spatial montage is not just a means of producing representations of time but rather constitutes a subjective, non-linear experience of time, in which time’s multiple planes, positions and perspectives are perceived (experienced) simultaneously rather than in sequentiality.
1.1 Section One – Tracing the Double Logic of Remediation

1.1.1 Remediation

In his hugely influential text, *The Language of New Media*, Lev Manovich attempts to contextualise the objects of new media within the conventions and techniques of traditional media forms, “such as the rectangular frame, mobile viewpoint and montage” (2001, p.8). He claims that the “computerization of culture” has had a profound effect upon existing cultural forms such as photography and cinema that necessitates an investigation into how the landscape of visual culture in general has been altered by the computer revolution. Chapter One of the exegesis is concerned with how both static and moving images have been re-defined by computer-based media and what new aesthetic and temporal possibilities are available as a result.

In order to understand how our aesthetic horizons have been expanded by the advent of digitization, it is necessary to situate these developments within the framework of traditional forms of representation, which continue to mediate new-media objects. As Manovich continually emphasises, all new media forms are indebted to (remediate) older cultural forms: “Users are able to acquire new cultural languages, whether cinema a hundred years ago, or cultural interfaces today, because these languages are based on previous and already familiar cultural forms” (2001, p.79). The ways we look at and understand various modes of communication are culturally constructed rather than being fixed, immutable entities. Jonathon Crary’s book, *Suspensions of Perception*, “is based

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1 “A new media object may be a digital still, digitally composited film, virtual 3-D environment, computer game, self-contained hypermedia DVD, hypermedia Web site, or the Web as a whole” (Manovich 2001, p.14).
on the assumption that the ways in which we intently listen to, look at, or concentrate on anything have a deeply historical character” (p.1). Crary goes on to state that:

If vision can be said to have any enduring characteristic within the twentieth century, it is that it has no enduring features. Rather it is embedded in a pattern of adaptability to new technological relations, social configurations and economic imperatives. What we familiarly refer to, for example as film, photography and television are transient elements within an accelerating sequence of displacements and obsolescences, part of the delirious operations of modernisation.

(2001, p.13)

This ‘pattern of adaptability’, however, requires a continuous conscription of older cultural languages in the service of newer modes of expression.

In his book, *Photography and Cinema*, David Campany argues for the cultural conditioning that colours both our interpretation and use of both these forms of visual representation. He states that both photography and cinema are: “To a great extent the sum of the kinds of images we have chosen to make with them”. He goes on to argue:

If, for example, we think of photography as a medium for ‘capturing moments’, ‘treasuring memories’, or ‘recording facts’ (all familiar, even clichéd uses), does this mean that these functions are inherent in the medium, or is it that these are the roles that have been given to photography for a long period of its history? Similarly, if we think film is a medium of movement and narrative, is this a technical definition or a description of its more familiar applications?

(2008, p.11)
These questions open up a space where both photography and film can be re-examined not as fixed entities but as media continually in flux as they are pushed towards new representational ends.

1.1.2 Immediacy and Hypermediacy

Bolter and Grusin argue that contemporary media remediate older, pre-existing representational strategies in order to achieve either *immediacy* or *hypermediacy*. A representational technology/technique concerned with immediacy strives to suppress its mediation, that is, its interface - its mode of presentation - becomes transparent. In Bolter and Grusin’s account:

A transparent interface is one that erases itself so that the user would no longer be aware of confronting a medium but instead would stand in an immediate relationship to the contents of the medium.

(1996, p.318)

Contemporary representational strategies that pursue immediacy adopt earlier strategies based on linear perspective such as photography and film. These earlier media attempt to present a unified visual space, an illusionistic ‘window on the world’.

Within the logic of hypermediacy, the interface does not erase itself, rather it foregrounds its mediation. Hypermediacy may be considered as a counterbalance to the desire for immediacy.

Where the logic of immediacy suggests a unified visual space, hypermediacy offers a heterogeneous space, in which representation is conceived of not as a
window onto the world, but rather as ‘windowed’ itself – with windows that open onto other representations or other media. The logic of hypermediacy calls for representations of the real that in fact multiply the signs of mediation and in this way try to reproduce the rich sensorium of human experience.


The following genealogy traces the logics of immediacy and hypermediacy through a number of historical representational strategies. It is important to clarify that spatial montage operates within the logic of hypermediacy.

1.1.3 Toward a Genealogy of Immediacy/Hypermediacy

This genealogy is not intended to be definitive, but is rather a series of snapshots reflecting how representational techniques have been altered by cultural and technical influences. It considers spatial montage as one example of a hypermediated representational strategy within an historical continuum. It is an attempt to elucidate why, despite the consistent presence of multi-temporal, ‘poly-scenic’ (in which a single spatial frame may contain multiple images of time) compositions in the centuries prior to and including the twentieth century, the dominant form of the moving image in the ‘cinematic century’ was so consistently embodied by the single-image/single-frame paradigm.
1.1.4 Hypermediacy in Multi-narrative Paintings

Hypermediated, multi-narrative painting “had played a prominent role in European visual culture for centuries” (Manovich 2001, p.322). An excellent example of this is the Turin Passion (ca. 1480) by Hans Memling (Ill. 1.1). Although the painting appears to present a unified visual space, it is in fact composed from multiple temporally distinct moments. In opposition to the logic of immediacy, the painting does not present a single illusionistic moment in time but rather multiple moments within a single space. Both the perspectival space of the picture surface and the temporality of these ‘micro-narratives’ are compressed - presented simultaneously (Ill. 1.2).
Ill. 1.2 Hans Memling, *Turin Passion* - Detail

This detail clearly demonstrates the spatially and temporally compressed compositional structure. In this small section alone, there are four distinct moments from the Passion tale presented simultaneously, within a ‘flattened’ perspectival space.

Ill. 1.3 Medieval builders at work (from *Romance of Girart de Rousillon*)

(Toman 1999, p.155)

This medieval painting demonstrates the flattened perspective of the pre-Renaissance, in which multiple ‘vantage-points’ are present simultaneously within a single image.
1.1.5 Renaissance Perspectivalism

We will next discuss the interrelationship between linear perspective, developed during the Renaissance and the logic of immediacy. Friedberg begins her study of perspective in *The Virtual Window* with Alberti’s treatise on painting and perspective, *De Pictura* (p.1). Written in 1435, it describes a clear series of rules for correct perspectival representation within an enframed space. In Alberti’s formula the ‘picture’ became re-interpreted as:

…A surface, a plane that intersected the visual pyramid of sight at its perpendicular axis. The picture plane was thus imagined as a flat, vertical surface between the artist (and viewer) and the scene depicted. The planar surface of the painting formed a material support for the painting’s virtual representation.

(Friedberg 2006, p.28)

In Alberti’s formula the picture plane is conceptualised as a transparent window enframing a unified visual space. For the Renaissance perspectival painting to be successful, following the logic of immediacy, then all signs of mediation (i.e. the brushstrokes) must be meticulously erased. “If executed properly, the surface of the painting dissolved and presented to the viewer the scene beyond” (Bolter and Grusin 1996, p.319). The illusionistic painting must erase the brushstrokes that would draw attention to the *surface* of the work; it must erase the act of painting itself in order to become transparent.
Friedberg explains that Renaissance perspectival representation is predicated upon a *fixed* vantage point, for both the artist and the viewer:

The perspectival image constructed from this single viewpoint also needed to be viewed from a single point, encoding the position of its viewer into its representation. Perspectival representation was dependent on two important divergences from human vision. The mobility and binocularity of vision was reduced to a static, monocular “point” of view. The vertex of single-point perspective took on the monocular view of the painter and positioned the viewer to share its vantage.

(2006, p.28)

Ill. 1.4 Woodcut illustration from Albrecht Dürer, *Underweysung der Messung*, Nuremberg 1538

(Friedberg 2006, p.39)

This famous woodcut demonstrates the fixed vantage point required for the artist to produce linear perspective. The subject is viewed through a frame that represents the picture surface, allowing for the translation of ‘correct’ perspective (the three-dimensional natural world) onto the two-dimensional picture surface.

In other words, the viewer must remain immobile in order to decode the perspectivally rendered, virtual (the illusion of) space represented inside the frame of the painting.
This is in contrast to multi-narrative painting in which the intellectual mobility of the viewer is required to decipher the temporally distinct yet spatially related narratives.

Although Alberti “famously instructed the painter to ‘regard’ the rectangular frame of the painting as an open window (aperta finestra)” (Friedberg 2006, p.1), Friedberg argues that the painting was not intended to copy a literal view out of a window but to recreate a spatial reconstruction of such a view (2006, p.30). Friedberg is far more concerned with the metaphorical and cultural consequences of the ‘window as frame’ than the narrow reading of Alberti’s formula as being a ‘window on the world’: “Contrary to the common and flawed use of Alberti’s window as a model for realist representation, Alberti supplies us with a Renaissance root for the concept of a windowed ‘elsewhere’\textsuperscript{2} – not a realism of subject matter but a separate spatial and temporal view” (Friedberg 2006, p.32).

\textsuperscript{2} This concept of the frame as demarcation between the reality of the viewer and a virtual reality is a key component of this thesis and will be elaborated upon in relation to my own work in Chapter Five.
Ill. 1.5 Antonello da Messina, *St. Jerome in His Study*, ca. 1450-55 (Hartt 1987, p.404)

Renaissance linear perspective – a single image within a single (literal and metaphorical) frame. The enframed space becomes a transparent, windowed ‘elsewhere’.
The development of Renaissance monocular perspective has been consistently associated with depictions of a “unified pictorial space frozen in a single moment in time” (Friedberg 2006, p. 36). However, Renaissance painting does not wholly abandon a multi-narrative approach. Multiple images continue to be presented simultaneously, whether within the “fictional space of a painting or the physical space of architecture” (Manovich 2002, p.69). Lorenzo Ghiberti’s *Gates of Paradise* (1425-52) (Ill.1.6) contains a multitude of separate images placed in adjacency within the physical architectural space. Although each image conforms to a linear perspective, each narrative ‘shot’ is present simultaneously. The architectural space may now be viewed as a hypermediated spatial frame containing multiple images of time.

This disrupts the (overly) neat interpretation of the Renaissance monocular perspective as being metaphorically indistinct from the mechanical fixity of the photo-chemical process. Friedberg claims that, “Renaissance painting long thought to be the rational representation of a single moment in a single space – the proto-equivalent of a photograph – may not have had this ‘snapshot’ quality, but instead contained a fracturing of times within a single space” (2006, p.36). This argument illustrates that while “the logic of immediacy has perhaps been dominant in Western representation, at least from the Renaissance until the coming of modernism” (Bolter and Grusin 1996, p. 330), both immediacy and hypermediacy have continued to co-exist. Bolter and Grusin argue that hypermediacy is “immediacy's opposite number, an alter ego that has never been suppressed fully or for long periods of time” (1996, p.330).
Ill. 1.6 Lorenzo Ghiberti, *Gates of Paradise* (East Doors), 1425-52 – Detail (Hartt 1987, p. 232)
1.1.7 The Mechanical Fixity of Photography

Photography presents a radically different possibility of preserving a single point in both time and space. Friedberg contrasts the ‘fixed’ photographic image with ‘poly-scenic’ painting (in which a single spatial frame may contain multiple frames of time), stating:

But even as a mechanical reproduction of the Albertian principles of space, the photograph had an important counter-distinction to the painting: a new potential for preserving a single instant of time. The chemical processes that fixed the image of the camera obscura fixed an image of both a single perspectival space and a single moment of time.

(2006, p.88 – my italics)

The photographer’s negative now replaces the painter’s ‘planar surface’, mechanically capturing a monocural, fixed-point, fixed-time snapshot of ‘reality’. The photochemical
process of photography presents time and space as a *unity*; objectively recording a perspectively correct, frozen moment in space and time on the negative plate. The photograph is transparent, seeming to remove the subjective, mediating hand of the artist and automating linear perspective.

Photography offered its own route to immediacy: the photograph was transparent and followed the rules of linear perspective; it achieved transparency through automatic reproduction; and it apparently removed the artist as mediating agent between the viewer and the reality of the image.


While not wishing to complicate the argument, it is worth briefly discussing Photodynamism, which foregrounds the time of photographic exposure in order to capture the “intermомental fractions of movement”. The Photodynamic image becomes a record of the duration of the photographic process (the blurred image results from prolonged exposure times), a trace of the photographic event itself (Ill. 1.8). In highlighting the act of photographic capture (its mediation), Photodynamism makes a virtue of what is suppressed by photography’s historical striving for instantaneity. Photodynamism reveals that despite photography’s apparent (and culturally enshrined) momentariness, each photographic image/instant is an image-event.

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3 Bragaglia believed that Photodynamism could capture the essence of movement in a way that photography’s frozen representation of reality and cinematography’s shattering of time into sequential frames could not: “To put it crudely chronophotography could be compared to a clock on the face of which only the half hours are marked, cinematography to one on which the minutes too are indicated, Photodynamism to a third on which are marked not only the seconds, but also the intermомental fractions existing in the passages between the seconds” (Bozolla and Tisdall 2000, p.138).
Ill. 1.8 Anton Giulio and Arturo Bragaglia, *The Roses*, 1913

(Lista 2001, p.62)
1.1.8 Chronophotography

The analytical investigations of movement conducted by Etienne-Jules Marey and Eadweard Muybridge offer two distinct models of how the photographic camera can represent motion and, by extension, time (Friedberg 2006, p.89). Friedberg posits that within their separate approaches to recording movement photographically, Marey and Muybridge “provide important distinctions between the use of the single-frame image and a more ‘poly-scenic’ representation of time” (2006, p.89). In essence, the ‘time-photographs’ (chronophotographie) of Marey record a sequence of movements on a single photographic plate (multiple exposures) – a “composite of layers of time within a single frame” (Friedberg 2006, p.90); whereas Muybridge records individual, sequential ‘snap-shots’, exposed in individual frames and “viewed in a series of successive and adjacent frames, [as] a set of multiples that parsed movement into constituent shots” (Friedberg 2006, p.92). Rohdie elaborates upon Muybridge’s representational strategy:

Muybridge’s locomotion studies were composed of fixed instances within a continuous movement… Each instant of a particular movement, say of a horse at gallop, a nude walking, an athlete leaping, was frozen in time in a single image, an instant in time. The images were arranged in sequence and could be read or seen as a continuum. Each image was a unity (one time, one space) and because Muybridge was concerned with delineating the background of the action, the image conformed to a traditional perspective view. It gave an effect of three dimensions, just as the sequential series of images made up of instantaneities produced an illusion of movement. The time between one image and the next was effaced by the narrative of a movement in sequence.

(2006, p. 135)
This last point is vital, even though Muybridge’s photographs were printed in a book (all present simultaneously to the eye), the causal, narrative logic of movement arranged in a sequence resulted in them being read as a continuum of single images rather than as a hypermediated multiple-image montage.

Rohdie then contrasts Marey’s methodology with that of Muybridge’s:

Marey eliminated the usual and customary dimensions of the image: its linear one-point depth perspective, its tonal modelling, the volume of its figures, its hierarchy of detail and its implied chronology (Muybridge’s sequences). The single image of multiple moments is an image where time is grasped in a simultaneity, not in a linearity or continuity.

(2006, p.136)

Marey’s representational strategy is a form of hypermediation, in his striving to represent the ‘reality’ of motion he foregrounds the mediation of his photographic technique.

Friedberg considers these two approaches to capturing movement (and by extension time), to constitute two distinct lineages - one concerned with simultaneity, the other with sequentiality. Marey’s lineage of “spatially contained but temporally fractured” images contains “filmmaking (and now digital) strategies that include layers of superimposition, double exposure, or stop-action substitutions” (Friedberg 2006, p.90), while “strategies that combine multiple framed images in adjacent display – whether it be split screens, multiple screens or the overlapping ‘windows’ of computer display – follow [Muybridge’s] lineage of movement and frame” (Friedberg 2006, p.92).
Ill. 1.9 Eadweard Muybridge, ‘*Transverse Gallop*’, 1887 (Campany 2008, p.23).

Friedberg’s interpretation of Muybridge as embodying the same hypermediated representational approach as the overlapping windows of the contemporary media display is based on a reading of his studies as a collection of unrelated and discontinuous images seen in adjacency. With regard to the compositional layout of his images (as presented on a page), this is entirely justified. However, I contend that the overarching logical continuity of movement within the image content forces the work to be read sequentially rather than spatially. These movement studies are designed to be read as a sequence, being clearly numbered in a left to right progression.

It is very important to clarify, as stated above, that it is the linear causality of the movement depicted in Muybridge’s works that effaces the simultaneous adjacency of their presentation on the page. This is most clearly evidenced in Muybridge’s development of the *Zoopraxiscope*, a device that allowed for the arrangement of sequential images along a disc, which when spun at the correct speed created the illusion of movement, the sequential single-frame images becoming reconstituted into a form of virtual movement (Friedberg 2006, p.92). Although Muybridge was dismissive of these moving images - the movement caused the loss of the analytical insights made visible by the presentation of the images in sequence - it is clear that the *Zoopraxiscope* is a “key transitional device for producing the illusion of movement” (Friedberg 2006, p.92) and by extension, a fore-runner for a cinema developed around sequential frames, each frame containing a single time in a single space.
I would see Marey’s lineage continuing through the modernist movements that followed the development of Cubism, toward what we now term spatial montage, the presentation of spatially and temporally fractured moments within a single frame⁴.

1.1.9 Cubist Simultaneity

Cubism developed Marey’s hypermediated representational strategy, exploring multiple temporal and spatial perspectives within a single frame, through the ‘subjectivity’ of paint rather than the mechanical fixity of the camera. For the ‘fractured modernism’ of Cubism to present multiple successive moments simultaneously within a static painting necessitated a profound break with the strictures of linear perspective. Kepes argues that, “[Cubist] painters shifted the point of vision into a kind of cinematographic sequence and represented the projection of several points of view in one picture” (quoted in Friedberg 2006, p.121). This description of Cubism’s representational approach has clear echoes of Marey’s model of capturing movement. Cubist painters attempted to represent sequential moments in time and space within a single frame; offering a thoroughly fractured picture surface capable of representing multiple spatio-temporally distinct layers. Kepes’ metaphor of the cinematographic sequence can perhaps be best understood through a work of early Cubism - Picasso’s *Portrait of

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⁴ Chapter Five examines the interrelationship between Marey’s and Muybridge’s representational strategies within my own work, in which images are viewed both simultaneously and in succession, overlapping and in adjacency. This requires a broader reading (at the risk of further complicating the argument) of both Marey’s and Muybridge’s representational strategies as being hypermediated forms of montage-within-the-shot, as I will define later in this chapter.
Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler (1910) (Ill. 1.11). The spatially fragmented picture surface also implies a temporal fracturing; as if the sequential frames of multiple cinematographic ‘shots’ are playing simultaneously within the single frame of the painting.


Multiple points of view (implying multiple moments in time) presented simultaneously within the static frame of the painting.
Antliff and Leighten discuss the Cubist representational system in opposition to the Euclidean concept of space (and by extension single-point perspective):

Vanishing point perspective also assumed a one-to-one correspondence between a fictive ‘moment’ in time and the placing of the beholder at a fixed position in space. Since Euclideanism thoroughly informed this spatialized concept of time, the association of a single moment in time with a single point in space was also refused in favour of [the Cubist] notion of ‘simultaneity’, wherein many different moments could be depicted in a single painting.

(2001, p.71)

Ulrich Wilmes echoes this point, stating: “[Cubism and Futurism’s] respective approaches dealt with phenomenological-theoretical conditions of simultaneity and succession in a two-dimensional image” (1999, p.122). Wilmes goes on to claim that “the ambiguity of the representation arises from the presentation of the complete essence of the thing in different but simultaneous views, which later are assumed into the totality of the static image” (1999, p.123 – my italics).

The Cubist representational approach does not erase the surface of the painting (the interface) to become a transparent window on the world, but rather, it foregrounds its mediation, its surfaceness, in order to present multiple moments in time simultaneously within the static painting.

Contrasting Duchamp’s *Nude Descending a Staircase No.2* (1912) with a similarly themed sequence by Muybridge clearly demonstrates Duchamp’s condensation of multiple perspectives and points in time into a visual simultaneity (Ills. 1.12 and 1.13).
Although he is not defined as a Cubist, Duchamp’s *Nude Descending a Staircase No.2* (1912), provides an excellent example of the multiple, sequential cinematographic ‘shots’ presented simultaneously within a single frame.
1.1.10 Cubism and Collage

Even more than Cubism’s painterly fracturing of the picture plane, the Cubist invention of collage is now considered “the most important historical legacy of the movement for later twentieth century art” (Antliff and Leighten 2001, p.159). Most significantly, for Antliff and Leighten, “collage allowed a more perfect abandonment of illusionism, however radical had become Cubism’s depiction of three-dimensional forms in space, in favour of the literal incorporation of objects (wallpaper, calling cards, coffee packets) that might once have been fictionally depicted” (2001, p.161 – my italics). Collage can be viewed as the ultimate end of illusory perspective. Transforming the transparent frame of the painting into an opaque substrate, collage replaces the immediacy of a ‘windowed reality’ with the hypermediated materiality of it surface⁵ (Ill. 1.14).

Ill. 1.14 Georges Braque, La Clarinette, 1913 (Celant 2007, p.105)

⁵ This ‘surfacereness’ will be discussed in relation to Robert Rauschenberg in Chapter Two and with regard to my own work in Chapter Five.
This is a crucial point that requires elaboration in relation to my own methodological approach to spatial montage. When a viewer confronts a collage there is a tension between immediacy and hypermediacy, between *surfaceness* and *transparency*. The viewer oscillates between looking at the fragments of paper and paint on the surface of the collage and “looking through to the depicted objects as if they occupied a real space beyond the surface” (Bolter and Grusin 1996, p.334). My approach to spatial montage uses both photographic and filmic material, which purports to represent a transparent, ‘real’ space that lies beyond mediation, yet their placement (multiple and simultaneous) within a spatial montage denies their immediacy.

In *Collage: Assembling Contemporary Art*, Craig claims collage as a methodological approach to our contemporary representational habits:

> Although it is neither possible nor desirable to track an evolutionary account of collage without sacrificing the nuances of individual intentions and effects, a broad historical overview could at least demonstrate the phantasmagorical plurality let loose by the apparently basic act of cutting out and sticking down. It might also establish how *fragmentation, hybridisation, appropriation and simultaneity have come to be perceived as more relevant analogies for human experience than the single, coherent, illusory image.*

(p.11 – my italics)

This interpretation of collage is all the more relevant when viewed in relation to contemporary representational strategies, in which the simultaneous and fragmented overlapping ‘windows’ of our media displays have become culturally ubiquitous.
Maraniello argues that montage has become the legitimate response to this fragmented cultural/visual experience:

What is required is the practice of “montage”, the give and take of meaning with regard to the impulses and occasions derived from communications and from the expressive modalities guaranteed by other (and not only artistic) disciplines and practices. It is no longer a question of “knowing-what-to-do”, but of “knowing-how-to-do”.

(2007, p.18 – my italics)

This situates montage first and foremost as a method, - the operations of montage become more important than the image content. Friedberg states that: “If perception is conditioned by representational habits, then our new mode of perception is multiple and fractured” (2006, p.194). These new representational habits have yet to be fully explored either aesthetically or with regard to the spatio-temporal complexities that result from them. The development of a theoretical and methodological approach to the composition of spatial montage is an exploration of the hypermediated multiple perspectives (both spatial and temporal) that have become our visual vernacular. The next section defines montage in general, through the traditional theoretical structures of film theory in order to approach a definition of spatial montage.

6 I use the term montage here to move the argument outside of what might be interpreted as the purely physical act of ‘cutting out and sticking down’ associated with collage.

7 I would trace this argument back to Benjamin in The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction: “During long periods of history, the mode of human sense perception changes with humanity’s entire mode of existence. The manner in which human sense perception is organized, the medium in which it is accomplished, is determined not only by nature but by historical circumstances as well” (Benjamin 1999, p.216).
1.2 Section Two - Defining Spatial Montage

1.2.1 Two Techniques of Montage

In attempting to define spatial montage specifically, it is first necessary to define montage generally, as associated with traditional film (as older cultural forms inform the new). Campany suggests that in the broadest sense “any orchestration of images is montage” (2008, p.72). Montage is not exclusively a cinematic operation, but it has been the subject of endless debate within the film theory of the twentieth century; I will utilise this theoretical framework in order to define montage. For the purposes of clarity within this thesis it is sufficient to distinguish between two basic techniques of montage: temporal and spatial (Manovich 2001, p.148).

*Temporal Montage*

The first technique is temporal montage or ‘montage-between-shots’, in which “separate realities form consecutive moments in time” (Manovich 2001, p.148) (Ill. 1.15). This technique, which we may term ‘the film cut’, is far more common, being the accepted method of montage within the dominant form of the moving image in the twentieth century – the traditional narrative film. While extensive theoretical attention has been devoted to montage in the twentieth century, most famously by Sergei Eisenstein[^8], these

[^8]: Eisenstein developed a set of principles encompassing many aspects of montage including: “metric montage, which uses absolute lengths of shots to establish a “beat” and rhythmic montage, which is based on a pattern of movement within the shots. These methods can be used by themselves to structure a sequence of shots, but they also can be combined within a single sequence” (Manovich 2001, p.157). It is
theoretical and metaphorical structures are almost exclusively concerned with editing different shots together over time, to form a longer sequence (Manovich 2001, 156). As Manovich states:

Twentieth century film practice has elaborated complex techniques of montage with different images replacing each other in time; but the possibility of what can be called ‘spatial montage’ between simultaneously co-existing images was not explored as systematically.

(2002, p. 70)

Anne Friedberg echoes this point, arguing that despite early cinematic experiments with compositions involving multiple images within a single frame, the sequential, temporal editing between single-image ‘shots’ became the dominant visual paradigm for the moving image in the twentieth century:

As filmmakers began to have one shot follow another, the logic of shot-to-shot sequentiality – the ordering of images one after another, not one adjacent to another – became a basic constraint of cinematic construction.

(2006, p.199)

important to clarify that these “methods of montage” are concerned with the dimension of time – that is ‘montage-between-shots’.
A shot sequence demonstrating temporal montage. Separate spatial and temporal realities occur sequentially, linked together by the ‘film cut’.

**Spatial Montage**

The second technique is spatial montage or ‘montage-within-a-shot’, which “is the opposite of the first: separate realities form contingent parts of a single image” (Manovich 2001, p.148) (Ill. 1.16). This technique has been the almost exclusive domain of the avant-garde or experimental film in the twentieth century (Friedberg 2006, p.192).

Spatial montage offers an alternative to the traditional sequential editing mode of narrative cinema suggesting that the relationship between moving images may be explored spatially and simultaneously as well as in succession.
A frame still from a film by Vertov demonstrates spatial montage. Multiple cinematic shots are superimposed within a single frame - separate spatial and temporal realities become contingent parts of a single image.

1.2.2 Manovich’s Spatial Montage

Manovich argues that because “most images and spaces of contemporary culture are juxtapositions of different elements” (2001, p.158), in order for a new-media object to qualify as an example of montage,

It should fulfil two conditions: juxtapositions of elements should follow a particular system and these juxtapositions should play a key role in how the work establishes its meaning, and its emotional and aesthetic effects. These conditions would also apply to the particular case of new spatial dimensions of
digital moving images. By establishing a logic that controls the changes and the correlation of values in these dimensions, digital filmmakers can create what I will call *spatial montage*.

(2001, p.158)

Manovich defines spatial montage succinctly, if perhaps vaguely: “In general, spatial montage could involve a number of images, potentially of different sizes and proportions, appearing on the screen at the same time” (2001, p.322).

It is my contention that spatial montage provides a synthesis of the fragmentary, multiple-image representational techniques of modernism (hypermediacy) and the realism of the photographic and filmic image (immediacy).

**1.2.3 Compositing and Montage Compared**

It is important at this point to distinguish between compositing and montage. Although tempting to treat them as synonyms, montage and compositing come from two historically distinct representational systems, which may now be understood as immediacy and hypermediacy. Manovich defines them thus: “Montage aims to create visual, stylistic, semantic and emotional dissonance between different elements. In contrast, compositing aims to blend them into a seamless whole, a single gestalt” (2001, p.144). Compositing as a technique is present in the vast majority of contemporary cinema, in which many different image-materials (be they recorded ‘reality’, CGI animation, actors shot against a ‘green screen’ etc.) are seamlessly layered to create a plausible and transparent *single* image.
Although compositing could be regarded as a form of montage-within-the-shot, the key difference is situated at the edges, the borders where multiple images meet. Manovich claims that new-media is “anti-montage” because where old media relied on montage (the film cut), new media utilizes smooth, continuous compositing: “Elements in different media are placed next to each other without any attempt to establish contrast, complementarity or dissonance between them” (2001, p.143). The essential difference between montage and compositing is to be found here; montage celebrates the gaps and ruptures between elements while compositing seeks to sublimate all elements within a seamless (often photo-realistic) surface; “the elements are not juxtaposed but blended, their boundaries erased rather than foregrounded” (Manovich 2001, p.155).

Ill. 1.17 Mario Bellusi, *Traffico modern nell’antica Roma*, 1930 (Celant 2007, p.199)

An example of montage - in which the presence of and interrelationship between numerous superimposed images is foregrounded.

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9 I would argue that Manovich’s positioning of new media as “anti-montage” is perhaps overly reductive; as I will discuss later, the multiple, ‘windowed’ representational system present in most digital interfaces is a key challenger to the single image/single frame of cinema.
Montage and compositing may be defined as two distinct representational strategies. The former foregrounds the method of its construction, celebrating the semantic and semiotic dissonance between elements (hypermediacy), while the latter is concerned with maintaining the clarity of its illusionistic diegesis (immediacy). It is worth noting that although both spatial montage and compositing have their antecedents in early cinema, placing multiple images within a single frame (whether as individual entities or seamless layers) has become immeasurably easier to achieve with the advent of digital technology.
It is important to clarify that the ruptures between elements (with its attendant fragmentation and dissonance) may be foregrounded in both temporal montage – between shots in a multiple shot sequence – and between elements sharing a single frame, as in spatial montage. It is the intention behind montage that is key. Rohdie contrasts the temporal montage of Eisenstein with that of D.W. Griffith, drawing attention to the ruptures and discontinuities present in Eisenstein’s films:

Griffith makes unities of fragments. He joins shots in a manner to mask or efface the join and emphasise instead a natural progression. Eisenstein proceeds by breaks so that a repetition dilates time and resists progression.

(2006, p. 33)

While both Griffith and Eisenstein are concerned with editing a sequence of shots together over time, Griffith is aiming for transparency, erasing the mediation in his shot-sequences, while Eisenstein foregrounds mediation (as montage) - the constructedness of his films.

Darley elaborates upon these ‘two fundamentally different conceptions of montage’, which we may now examine through the framework provided by immediacy and hypermediacy:

There arise therefore, with the new stage of technological mediation based upon photography and film, two fundamentally different conceptions of montage: one theorized and challenging, the other viewed as intrinsic and natural. One links montage with highly specific modernist aesthetic techniques and the other connects it to the industrial and mainstream (traditional) cultural and aesthetic development. The latter is, perhaps, most apparent in the conventional make-up of classical Hollywood film. It appears to be inherent or
at one with the medium in which it occurs, remaining unobtrusive, functioning as a transparent glue or catalyst for the organic whole that constitutes the work – subservient to forms of mimetic or illusionistic realism. The modernist version however, is conceived and used to create precisely the opposite effect: fragmentation, dissonance, disunity and an impression of incoherence and disorganization. Thus it tends much more to foreground itself as a technique within the work itself – thereby linking itself to anti- or counter-realist/illusionistic forms.

(2000, p.131)

The form of montage associated with narrative cinema strives for transparency in order to create a seamless and illusionistic diegesis. The modernist version of montage may be understood as a form of hypermediation. The spatial montage I am concerned with operates within this modernist interpretation of montage. It foregrounds its method of construction and celebrates the ruptures between multiple still and moving image-elements presented simultaneously. The advent of digitization has allowed multiple photographic and filmic materials to be placed within a single frame with unprecedented ease. Digital editing software means the creator of a multiple image composition is no longer working against the strictures of analogue technology – which was designed to capture a single image in a single frame.

1.2.4 Dominance of the Cinematic Paradigm

Friedberg argues that in opposition to the perspectival fragmentation (with its spatial and temporal consequences) in modernist painting and collage, the historical dominance
of the single-image, single-frame paradigm within cinema is remarkable (2006, p.192). I disagree, as stated above, traditional narrative cinema strives for immediacy; it desires to efface its mode of enunciation in order to create a seamless story-world. Traditional cinema is necessarily legible in order to entertain as wide an audience as possible.

Classical realist film effaced all marks of its cinematic construction and established a subject position that bound the spectator to the world of fiction.

By masking the operation of cinematic narration, this ‘suturing’\(^{10}\) was believed to produce a seamless and transparent work.

(Leighton 2008, p.30)

This transparency was predicated upon the historical representational strategy of a single image in a single frame associated with immediacy. To clarify, although temporal montage (the de facto mode of editing in narrative cinema) can splice radically unrelated spatio-temporal perspectives together\(^{11}\), these perspectives are singular images contained within the unifying structure of a single frame and a causal, narrative continuity.

Variations of scale, position and camera angle from shot to shot may alter the positioned fixity of the camera’s view, but these shifts in “perspective” are sequential and do not occur on the same picture plane as in cubist painting, chronophotography, or dadaist collage. As moving images follow each other in sequence – frame-by-frame, shot-by-shot – they are held within the fixed frame of a screen, a surface that holds its constancy regardless of the continuous or radically discontinuous spatial and temporal relation between

\(^{10}\) Suture theory seeks to “restitch the ruptures in the seams of a spatially and temporally intact diegesis, to realign any fractures in perspective/points of view” (Friedberg 2006, p.81).

\(^{11}\) As discussed in relation to Eisenstein.
shots. In this way the prevailing format for moving-image media did not follow literary, painterly or even architectural challenges to the perspectival frame.

(Friedberg 2006, p.192)

The development of spatial montage questions this constancy of the screen-surface – disrupting the transparent perspectival frame through the presentation of multiple distinct moments in time and space within the frame.

Rohdie explains the ‘logical continuum’ of continuity editing, which may be used to suppress the ‘breaks’ (ruptures) between sequential shots in a multiple shot sequence:

At the level of shot to shot (each shot is made up of 24 frames that pass through the gate of the projector in one second) a change in scale or point of view can be covered (and most often is) by a dramatic, psychological and linear logic. Thus, in the breakdown of a mastershot of a scene into shots that are fragments of it (details of objects, persons, actions, spaces, moments), the logical and dramatic relation between shots is such as to make the break between them unremarkable. The spectator is, one might say, sutured into the continuity of action represented in the shots.

(2006, p.134)

Tanya Leighton describes this as cinema’s ‘reality effect’: “The constitutive illusion of presenting the spectator with an unmediated view of the world” (2008, p.30).

There were, of course, alternatives to the dominance of cinematic immediacy, strands of avant-garde film, which “evolved across the middle decades of the twentieth century as
an anti-narrative poetics. Its preference was for the expressive montage of fragments, resisting the presentation of seamless stories” (Campany 2008, p.10) (Ill. 1.19).

![Ill. 1.19 Andy Warhol, *Outer and Inner Space*, 1965 (Friedberg 2006, p.208)](image)

Warhol presents a hypermediated array of multiple moving-images – foregrounding the method of construction by filming Edie Sedgwick in front of her own pre-recorded video image.

These developments, however, remained firmly avant-garde. Campany’s statement exposes the relationship between the single-frame image and cinema’s ability to communicate a seamless narrative. Both the single image in a single frame and the unifying clarity (clarifying unity) of temporal, continuity editing are inextricably linked within traditional cinema. Sam Rohdie succinctly defines ‘classical Hollywood montage’ as being:

… Concerned with making clear, with providing perspective, with unifying and thus enabling an audience to follow events without undue difficulty. This cinema was concerned with legibility and comprehension and what went along with them, excitement and drama, for which a coherence of action, of detail, of space and of time were essential elements, all the better achieved by the control and accords made possible by carefully linked continuity editing.

(2006, p.91)
As stated at the beginning of this section, spatial montage (in opposition to temporal, continuity montage and compositing)foregrounds its method of construction, celebrating the ruptures (semantic, stylistic, semiotic) between images. It favours spatial and temporal complexity over the legibility of narrative causality and transparency.

1.2.5 The Media ‘Window’

Friedberg argues that in the last two decades, with the advent of digital imaging technologies, the media ‘window’ has begun to challenge the entrenched single-image/single frame paradigm of cinema (2006, p. 192). She posits the screen-space of a computer display as having more in common with a Cubist picture surface, with its overlapping planes and suppression of depth, than with the virtual depth of Renaissance perspective (Friedberg 2006, p.3). The multiple windows of the computer interface are a key example of hypermediacy. Bolter and Grusin state that “the multiplicity of windows and the heterogeneity of their contents mean that the user is repeatedly brought back into contact with the interface” (1996, p.329).

The multi-windowed interface does not present a unified visual space from a single point of view; rather each window (each in itself transparent) defines its own heterogeneous point of view.
Friedberg explicitly states that although this multi-perspective *windowing* is now a part of our visual vernacular,

> We still require new descriptors for its fractured, multiple, simultaneous, time-shiftable sense of space and time. Philosophies and critical theories that address the subject as a nodal point in a communicational matrix have failed to consider this important paradigm shift in visual address.

(2006, p.3 – my italics)

Bolter and Grusin echo this point, stating, “the possibilities of the windowed style have probably not been fully explored and elaborated” (1996, p. 329). It is important to note that neither Friedberg nor Bolter and Grusin elaborate upon what form these new descriptors might take.

This is a vital point; the overlapping windows of our media displays are culturally ubiquitous and may be defined in sharp contrast to the transparent single-image of cinema. The presentation of multiple media in overlapping and adjacent windows has become commonplace to the point of invisibility. Yet despite the ubiquity of this simultaneous mode of visual address it has yet to be fully explored aesthetically. Spatial montage presents a synthesis of our contemporary hypermediated display (with its associative link to modernist representational strategies) and what we may term the immediacy of cinematic and photographic realism. In order to define these *new descriptors* within the conceptual framework of spatial montage, it is essential to discuss the constituent parts of spatial montage – the still and moving image.
1.3 Section Three – The Still and Moving Image

1.3.1 The Index

The status of the photographic image as an index is the fundamental point of departure for twentieth century photography theory. This section defines the photograph as an index before discussing the condition of ‘post-indexicality’, in order to elucidate how the still and moving image has been re-defined by digitization.

The index refers to the terminology of the semiotician Charles Sanders Peirce, who theorised and categorised a number of sign types, which include the icon, the symbol and the index (Elkins 2007, p.26).

In an icon (for example, a picture or a graph) there is a relation of similarity or reason between the sign and the object signified. The index signifies by virtue of an existential bond between the sign and its object (for example, a footprint), and the symbol is sustained by a conventional, or habitual, or lawlike relation between itself and its object (for example, language).

(Doane 2002, p.92)

Doane, using Peirce’s taxonomy of signs, defines the index as being “dependent upon certain unique contingencies: the wind blowing at the moment in a certain direction, a foot having landed in the mud at precisely this place, the camera’s shutter opening at a given time. Unlike icons, indices have no resemblance to their objects, which, nevertheless, directly cause them” (Doane 2002, p.92). Thierry De Duve defines the photograph as an index:
Though the photograph appears to be an icon (through resemblance) and though it is to some extent a symbol (principally through the use of the camera as a codifying device), its proper sign type, which it shares with no other visual representation (except the cast and of course, cinema) is the index, i.e. a sign causally related to its object. In the case of photography, the direct causal link between reality and the image is light and its proportionate physical action upon silver bromide.

(1978, p.113)

For de Duve, as for many other theorists in the twentieth century, it is the physical and causal relationship between light striking an object and registering upon the photochemically sensitised material within a camera that gives photography its (arguably unique) status as an index.

However, the advent of digitization has necessitated a re-examination of photography’s enshrined indexical relationship to reality. If any ‘photographic’ image can be produced and manipulated at the level of the pixel, where then do we position it with regard to its privileged status as ‘evidence’? Or to ask the question differently, if the photograph is no longer a ‘document’ (that is if it can be created digitally without a pre-existing external real world referent), is it still of indexical value?

1.3.2 Post-Indexicality

The possibility of digital manipulation has led to the widely held stance that the photographic image is now ‘post-indexical’ – that it no longer operates as a directly inscribed record of reality. It is my contention that although the photographic image no
longer operates as unassailable documentary evidence of real-world events (which has always been questionable) it has not lost its unique ability to inscribe a moment in time. Peter Osborne defines photography in “its expanded (and still expanding) sense as the historical totality of photographic forms”\textsuperscript{12}, or types of images produced in one way or another by the inscription of light: predominantly, until recently, chemical photography, of course, but also film, television, video and now – absolutely, I shall claim – digital photography”(2010, p.61). He claims that anxieties with regard to the loss of indexicality are a result of the digitization of the two-fold process of traditional photography, both the capturing of the image (in which visual information is translated into digital data) and the manipulation of that data through digital editing software (Osborne 2010, p. 63). It is the disjuncture between these two processes that generates concern with regard to digital photography’s indexicality. The second stage in this process, in which the digital data is manipulable is, Osborne argues, also a feature of traditional photography. Artists and photographers have been “intervening in the mechanisms of the photographic process since its inception, without generating the ontological anxiety about the loss of the real (loss of indexicality) that has accompanied the advent of digital technology” (Osborne 2010, p.64).

It is essential to emphasise, further to this discussion, that the act of photographic capture retains the deictic\textsuperscript{13} aspects of photographic indexicality, allowing for an extended (though more complex) understanding of the photograph’s status as a moment captured, irrespective of whether the ‘reality’ of the referent has been digitally altered.

\textsuperscript{12} While this is a very useful definition, I will continue to designate photography and film as separate entities unless otherwise stated.

\textsuperscript{13} Where meaning is inseparable from the physical context of the speaker’s utterance, e.g. ‘here’, ‘now’, ‘this’, ‘that’ etc. are descriptors that only acquire meaning by being anchored in the specifics of time and space.
Even in a digital photograph, the moment of releasing the shutter causally links that action to the moment captured in the image.

1.3.3 Photography as a Performative Gesture

In emphasising the moment of photographic capture as a performative act, Green and Lowry argue for a form of photographic indexicality that is both a trace of a physical event and a gesture, a moment someone chose to capture:

Photographs therefore, are not just indexical because light happened to be recorded in an instant on a piece of photosensitive film, but because first and foremost, they were taken. The very act of photography, as a kind of performative gesture which points to an event in the world, as a form of designation that draws reality into the image field, is thus itself a form of indexicality.

(2003, p.48)

This allows us to consider the act of photographic capture as an indexical gesture causally related to a moment in time. The photograph is an index not just because of the imprint of light on photosensitive material, but because someone stood behind the camera and secured the image at that moment in time\(^{14}\). The photographic index, in shedding its absolute relationship to reality retains its unique status as an inscribed fragment of time.

\(^{14}\) Barthes understood the “that-has-been” of the photograph as relating exclusively to the referent placed in front of the lens (Barthes 2000, p.76).
In order to develop a clearer understanding of the *temporal meaning* of the photographic index and how it is affected by its presence within spatial montage, it is essential to frame both the still and moving image within the traditional theoretical structures of photography and film theory. These theories have tended to discuss both these modes of visual representation, not in terms of their specific relationship to reality but instead with a focus on their temporal attributes and the presence/absence of movement. An examination of these theories is required in order to understand to what extent digitization has altered our cultural assumptions with regard to photography and film. As Thomas Elsaesser frames the question: “Does the digital image constitute a radical break in the practice of imaging, or is it just the logical-technological continuation of a long and complex history of mechanical vision?” (2006, p.13). It is my contention that spatial montage challenges the traditional modes of thinking with regard to the still and moving image.

1.3.4 *Camera Lucida* and the ‘Still or Moving’ Image

*Camera Lucida* (1982), Roland Barthes’ moving elegy for his mother, has cast a long shadow upon any critical discussion of photography in the twentieth century. This work is a haunting argument describing photography in relation to time and its passing, and, by extension, death. The influence of *Camera Lucida* is such that discussions with regard to the photographic index are now understood within “a wider set of cultural discourses concerning the relationships between photography, memory, death and mourning” (Green and Lowry 2003, p.47). *Camera Lucida* associates photography with pastness and death and, by dialectical extension; cinema is linked to *presence* and life.
This section explores this traditional dialectic before questioning whether it still operates upon the dematerialised mediums\textsuperscript{15} of photography and film within spatial montage.

Laura Mulvey uses Barthes’ writings as a point of departure as she attempts to define the relationship between photography and film. She defines the problematic nature of this relationship in the form of two interconnected questions: “Does the property of indexicality, so easily and consciously attributed to the still, tend to get lost in the moving image? And then, if stillness does appear in the moving image, does the cinema’s indexicality find a new kind of visibility?” (2003, p.79). Mulvey succinctly summarises Barthes’ stance in relation to photography and cinema:

Barthes suggests that as the photographic image embalms a moment of time, it also embalms an image of life halted, which eventually, with the actual passing of time, will become an image of life after death. In numerous passages he associates the photographic image with death. But he denies that this presence can appear in cinema. Not only does the cinema have no punctum, but it both loses and disguises its relation to the temporality characteristic of the still photograph because of its movement.

(2003, p.79)

In his seminal essay, \textit{The Pensive Spectator}, from 1984, Raymond Bellour paraphrases Barthes’ key distinctions between the photographic and cinematic image, in which cinematic time “doubles life” through movement and a present/presence, while photographic time, in its stillness, returns “brushed by death” (2006, p.119)

\textsuperscript{15} For the sake of clarity the term ‘mediums’ will be used as a plural, rather than the terminologically vague ‘media’.
The fundamental theoretical structure described in *Camera Lucida* has dominated much of the thinking with regard to photography and film, presenting these mediums in binary opposition; in which photography is defined by its stillness and cinema by its movement. By examining this ‘binary mechanism’ and by questioning the ontological tensions described by the dialectic, we may uncover the essential temporality shared by both photography and film.

### 1.3.5 The Lexis of Photography and Film

Mary Ann Doane provides a succinct definition of the Barthian tense/tension structures that are assumed to contain/constrain photography and film: “In the cinema, photography’s *having-been-there* gives way before a *being-there* of the thing” (2002, p.103). Christian Metz claims that it is the *movement* of the cinematic image that generates this sense of ‘presence’, the *immediacy* of *being-there*:

> The extraordinary affective and perceptual participation of the spectator in a film is linked to its ability to generate belief (the impression of the real) based on its mode of *presence*. And this sense of experiencing the present is due to the representation of movement.

(Doane 2002, p.103)

However, for Mulvey, it is not movement that defines cinema in opposition to photography but rather its ‘temporal dynamic’; the bounded duration that contains/delineates it:

> This is not simply a matter of movement and stillness, but of the single image as opposed to the film strip, the instant rather than the continuum. The reality recorded by the photograph relates exclusively to its moment of registration;
that is, it represents a moment extracted from the continuity of historical time.

However historical the moving image might be, it is bound into an order of continuity and pattern, literally unfolding into an aesthetic structure that (almost always) has a temporal dynamic imposed on it ultimately by editing. The still photograph represents an unattached instant, unequivocally grounded in its indexical relation to the moment of registration. The moving image, on the contrary, cannot escape from duration, or from beginnings and ends, or from the patterns that lie between them.

(2006, p.15)

The moving image is defined and bounded by a fixed duration, “the unfolding of images in time, a time the spectator cannot control” (Bellour 2006, p.122); while the photograph exists as an ‘unattached instant’ unconstrained by a temporal dynamic.

In his essay, *Photography and Fetish* (1985), Christian Metz adapts the term *lexis* from the Danish semiotician Louis Hjelmslev. The lexis is defined as the “socialized unit of reading, of reception: in sculpture, the statue, in music, the ‘piece’” (p.81). Metz defines the photographic lexis as a “silent rectangle of paper” which is necessarily “much smaller than the cinematic lexis. Even when the film is only two minutes long, these two minutes are *enlarged*, so to speak, by sounds, movements, and so forth, to say nothing of the average surface of the screen and the very fact of projection” (1985, p.81). Here Metz is defining the photographic and cinematic lexes, within their traditional, social modes, in relation to their ‘objecthood’ (rectangle of paper, projection screen).
However, more pertinent to this discussion, the photographic and cinematic lexes are defined in opposition with regard to their duration; the photographic lexis has:

No fixed duration (= temporal size): it depends rather, on the spectator who is the master of the look. Whereas the timing of the cinematic lexis is determined in advance by the filmmaker.

(1985, p. 81)

This reveals a deeper reading of the inherent qualities of photography and film; defining them not just as binary opposites through stillness and movement, but rather through their mode of presentation – their lexis. The traditional lexis of the photograph is its existence as a palpable object, unconstrained by a specific duration, while the cinematic lexis - as a film with a beginning and an end - is inherently durational. These lexical structures (always social and cultural) are being questioned through contemporary modes of presentation – including spatial montage.

It is important to clarify that both Bellour and Mulvey are discussing cinema in its traditional, narrative sense, (that is, as a medium concerned with transparency and immediacy) rather than as a moving-image in and of itself. Their discussions with regard to the indexical and temporal attributes of cinema, arise from the photogrammatic substrate of cinema, that is revealed in the freeze-frame of the film:

As soon as you stop the film, you begin to find time to add to the image. You start to reflect differently on film and cinema. You are led towards the photogram – which is itself a step further in the direction of the photograph. In the frozen film (or photogram), the presence of the photograph bursts forth.

(Bellour 2006, p.123)
For Mulvey, the fictional narrative at the heart of cinema is key to understanding its ‘double temporality’:

1 There is the moment of registration, the moment when the image in front of the lens was inscribed by light onto photosensitive material passing behind the lens. This inscription gives the cinematic sign its indexical aspect, which, in turn, draws attention to the sign’s temporal attribute giving it, in common with the still photograph, its characteristic ‘there-and-then-ness’.

2 Just as the still frame is absorbed into the illusion of movement of narrative, so does ‘then-ness’, the presence of the moment of registration associated with the aesthetics of still photography, have to lose itself in the temporality of the narrative and its fictional world. There is a presence, a ‘here-and-now-ness,’ that the cinema asserts through its ‘objective alliance’ with storytelling that downplays even represses, the aesthetic attributes it may share with the photograph.

(2003, p.80)

These two points are intriguing. Both photography and film share the same indexical aspect, a _there-and-then-ness_; however, the ‘presence’, the ‘here-and-now-ness’ of the cinema results from its ‘objective alliance’ with narrative, its desire for transparency, and the temporality that narrative immediacy asserts. The causal, indexical ‘then-ness’ shared by both photography and cinema is subsumed within the time of the (fictional) narrative, associated with the cinematic lexis. Here Mulvey adds another layer of complexity to the theoretical structure – it is not simply movement that defines cinema in opposition to photography but _narrative movement_.

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However, there is a vital point of clarification required: these theories rarely approach photography and film in general but rather these mediums are interpreted through their very specific (and traditional) cultural uses. David Campany succinctly reveals that what are assumed to be ‘essential’ differences between photography and film, are dependent on very specific interpretations of these mediums:

First of all, the comparing of media often lapses into ‘technological determinism’, stressing the mechanical facts over social use. Or more frequently, what may seem like technical thinking often turns out to be thoroughly rooted in our always social understanding of media. For example Christian Metz’ brilliant essay *Photography and Fetish* is an attempt to compare and contrast photography and film. He sees that the two share a technical similarity but each has its own relation to time, framing and the experience of objecthood. But as his argument unfolds it becomes clear that what’s really at stake are not the differences or similarities between film and photography per se, but between film in its popular narrative form and the photograph as domestic snapshot. Film is not inherently narrative or popular, photography is not inherently domestic or a snapshot. Metz’ opposition starts off general and technical but soon becomes a particular contrast between quite specific social uses of the still and moving image.

(Campany 2008, p.98)

Approaching the writings of Barthes in this way, we can realise that he is not in fact talking about *photography* but rather *a photograph*, a very particular iteration of the medium – the familial portrait. Green approaches this point, what we might term a question of essence, questioning whether the traditional definitions of photography can still apply to the dematerialised image post-digitization:
Since it is arguable that a conception of photography in terms of the atomization of time, its freezing of a singular moment, isolated and abstracted from the temporal flow and posited as past, is coincident with the form of the photographic print as palpable object, we might ask what is the effect of this dematerialization of the photograph? Is it that stripped of its tangible material support and its ‘objectness’ as something that can be held in the hand, the photograph as it exists on the monitor screen appears to us as something more animate, more present.

(2006, p.21)

Here Green argues that the ‘fetishistic’ quality of the photograph may be inextricably linked to its materiality as palpable object (its traditional lexis). If, as Campany argues, our cultural assumptions with regard to both photography and film, are based on specific social iterations of those mediums, then removed from their normative lexes (the popular narrative film, the domestic snapshot as object), as they are within a digital spatial montage, both photography and film may be re-examined with regard to their essential temporal attributes.

It is my contention that both photography and film retain (and share) an essential temporality – an inscribed trace of a moment someone chose to capture, a ‘there-and-then-ness’. Free of the confines of their traditional lexes, no longer defined by the ontological determinism of the ‘still or moving’ image, both photography and film reveal that their true relationship to time is a multi-temporal one; an intermingling of the ‘then-ness’ of the moment of capture and the ‘now-ness’ of spectatorship. Essential to my reading of these multiple temporalities is an understanding of the ‘photographic effect’.
1.3.6 The Photographic Effect

No matter how short an interval exists between the moment of capture and the moment of reception, photography inhabits two temporal registers – the now staged in the moment of its making and the now of the moment it is seen. The intermingling of these two nows and the interval between them, shall be referred to here as the photographic effect.

(Phelan 2010, p.51)

In order to answer what temporal attributes of the photographic image (by which I mean both photographic and filmic) remain, when it is removed from its traditional social modes and placed within a spatial montage, it is necessary to discuss the photographic effect. Despite the post-indexicality of the contemporary photographic image, both photography and film may still be understood as a moment of registration, a moment that was captured. The moment of registration of the photographic image becomes a cross-section in time; a moment frozen yet situated within two temporal streams; projecting “beyond the image into the past and into the future in an asymmetric, heterogeneous action” (Sutton 2009, p.143). This photographic effect is brought about by photography’s unique ability to contract “all pertinent images of time: there is the present of the photographic image, the past it represents and the future of the past which becomes the present of the image” (Sutton 2009, p.54). Both the photographic and filmic image, though stripped of their rigid tense structures and free of their traditional social uses (in the absence of narrative or material ‘objectness’) still retain this unique intermingling (as subjective experience) of multiple temporalities. Before continuing the discussion on the temporal possibilities present within the durational lexis of spatial
(digital) montage, I wish to discuss the actions of montage and its temporal consequences in a pre-digital work: Chris Marker’s *La Jetée*.

1.3.7 *La Jetée*

![Ill. 1.20 Chris Marker, La Jetée, 1962 – Frame Still (Burgin 2006, p.103)](image)

Chris Marker’s 1962 film, *La Jetée*, occupies a unique place within the history of 20th century cinema; however, it is not its narrative structure I wish to discuss but rather how *La Jetée*, in embodying attributes of both photography and film, unsettles the definitions of both, revealing the actions of montage outside of the medium-specific referent.

The unique, near-exclusive use of beautifully shot, still photographic images presented as a film defies what is commonly understood to be the cinematic norm – movement, the kiné of kinematography. Yet *La Jetée* cannot be considered only in terms of photography either, as it paradoxically re-affirms the cinematic with its photo-novel technique (montage), as well as through the soundtrack.

(Orlow 2006, p.177)
In his discussion of *La Jetée*, Uriel Orlow avoids defining his position in terms of the “long ontological struggle to define the photographic or cinematic image respectively” (2006, p.177). Instead he attempts to uncover “how *La Jetée* powerfully turns this *quest* for an essence into a *question of* essence, defying the laws and definitions of both photography and film” (Orlow 2006, p.177). He attempts, within his analysis, to free the image from the “ontological constraints of singular and deterministic conceptions”, in order to reveal the dialectical power of *La Jetée’s* imagery (Orlow 2006, p.177).

Orlow briefly summarises the traditional dichotomy between the photographic and cinematic image, where “the perpetually refreshed and ever changing image of film is a *reproduction* of the vitality of the present (even if past events are depicted), the photograph is a *representation* of the past and of mortality (even if the subject is still alive)” (2006, p.179). Orlow quickly asserts that despite (or more problematically because of) the overt ‘photographicity’ of the images, the film (through its use of fades and dissolves) asserts itself as cinematic (2006, p.180). He states that the photographs are not individual images but rather “images-in-sequence, bound in a syntagmatic interrelation that projects them from the two-dimensional plane of photography into a cinematic illusion of a four-dimensional space-time continuum” (2006, p.180).

In a key passage, Orlow attempts to formalise *La Jetée* outside of the conventions of traditional photographic and cinematic theory, emphasising its use of montage:

> In *La Jetée* the cinematic ceases to be identified by movement (and thus in opposition to photography, as defined by lack of movement) and its illusion of a space-time and narrative flow becomes associated with the conventions of montage: rhythm, angles, repeated shots from different points of view, shots and counter-shots, fades and dissolves. This notion of the cinematic is not
threatened by static photographic images, as it no longer relies on the suppression or repression of its own photographic or photogrammatic base (the still image). Moreover, the notion of montage also challenges photography’s association with death – as ultimate ontological horizon or arbiter – and cinema’s consequent identification with life.

(2006, p. 180)

What is of import here is that the operation of montage creates its own temporality (echoing Metz’s ‘second movement’\textsuperscript{16}) that supersedes the ontological constraints of medium-specificity - freeing photography from its association with death. This concept of montage (as an assemblage of images – whether moving or not) opens up a space where the binary opposition of stillness and movement (and its attendant ontological identification) is called into question (Orlow 2006, p.181). Orlow claims that \textit{La Jetée} proclaims a different kind of temporality, no longer reliant on movement or constrained by a rigid tense structure but one that “encompasses all times at once, an image proclaiming \textit{this was, is and will be} at the same time” (2006, p.181). It is interesting to note, that it is this confounding of temporalities that is claimed as the defining action of digitization. Here we are reaching an understanding of the temporal possibilities of the (still and moving) image outside of the referent:

\textit{La Jetée} does not propose a synthesis of the dialectic of photography and cinema but rather, after presenting the ontological, binary mechanism of that

\textsuperscript{16}“Cinema results from an addition of perceptive features to those of photography. In the visual sphere, the important addition is of course, movement and the plurality of images, of shots. The latter is distinct from the former: even if each image is still, switching from one to the next creates a \textit{second movement}, an ideal one, made out of successive and different mobilities. Movement and plurality both imply \textit{time}, as opposed to the timelessness of photography”(1985, p.83).
dialectics, it undoes the opposition itself and stops the dialectic in its tracks, showing time in the image independently of its medium.

(Orlow 2006, p.182)

Irrespective of whether the image is moving or still, the action of montage (the composition of a plurality of shots) implies time, *it creates time* by foregrounding the multiple temporalities that these ‘shots’ represent. This allows us to move away from the strict dichotomy imposed by the conceptualisation of photography as stillness/past/death and cinema as movement/present/life toward an understanding of montage as a unique form of temporality in and of itself.

Orlow makes his final (and grandest) claim for the time produced in the gaps and ruptures between images created by montage:

…It shows all the more strongly how temporality, or indeed any meaning, is produced not *in* the image, but *between* itself and another, i.e. through montage. However, *La Jetée* by the same token warns of a simplistic notion of montage, as merely putting images together and ordering them according to chronology or a-chronology. Beyond the practice of organization or juxtaposition of the visible, the *most powerful aspect of montage is the gap*, whose potential resides in the invisible and its force to transcend the image.

(2006, p.182 – my italics)

It is this concept of the gap or rupture as the dominant temporal action of montage that is applicable to my own work. Although *La Jetée* is fundamentally a narrative work and its montage is essentially temporal rather than ‘within-the-shot’ (i.e. spatial), it
offers a new understanding (in Orlow’s reading) of how meaning is created outside of the medium-specific referent. In this it is key, echoing Manovich, that it does not hide its assemblage but rather foregrounds the seams and ruptures between images. Although La Jetée is pre-digital, in its dialectical confounding of the indexical registers of photography and cinema, it provides a framework for discussing the effects of digitization on the still and moving image. La Jetée accomplishes what is now considered to be the de facto temporal ambiguity of post-indexical imagery, as Thomas Elsaesser states: “The switch from the photographic to the post-photographic or digital mode allows moving images to ‘represent’ time in ways not encompassed by narrative, hitherto the cinema’s most familiar spatio-temporal support and indexical register” (2006, p.23).
1.4 Section Four – The Temporally Fluid Digital Image

1.4.1 The *Photo-filmic* Image

Streitberger and Van Gelder situate the discussion of photography and film firmly outside of their respective ontological underpinnings in our digitized visual landscape:

> Over the last two decades studies on the interaction between the photographic and the filmic image became increasingly popular. This new orientation is partially based on the insight that the ontological difference between film and photography usually claimed by scholars of photography theory and film studies up to 1990’s, no longer holds in the digital era. With the advent of digital technology, the boundaries between the photographic and the filmic image are constantly blurred, both technically – in drawing on the same software and hardware engineering – and perceptively – in leaving the spectator in doubt of the (photographic or filmic) nature of the image.

(2010, p.48)

In their paper, *Photo-filmic Images in Contemporary Visual Culture*, they synopsise the current and traditional theoretical stance, which I have covered in this chapter, with regard to the relationship between the still and moving image. Their discussion concerns an observed “terminological vagueness or ambiguity when hybrid images between photography and cinema, still images and moving images, are discussed” (2010, p. 50).

They argue that traditional and current designations and terminologies with regard to the inter-relationship of photography and cinema still place too much emphasis on medium-specificity, which they consider to be overtly limiting when interacting with “hybrid
images which are structurally both/neither photographic and/nor filmic” (2010, p.51). They consider the term ‘photo-filmic’ to be a more appropriate designation for this new and (ambiguous) digitized media:

In order to focus deliberately on the hybrid character of the image itself and to avoid a hierarchical concept favouring one medium over the other, it seems appropriate to call such hybrid images ‘photo-filmic’ images. Photo-filmic images are not images where photography and film are both present in their own right, mutually reflecting one another, but rather ‘multi-mediating pictures’ in the sense that the shift involved from the one medium to another is not a complete one. They layer, if not amalgamate, structures of existing media (photography and film) in order to provide new images of and on the world.

(2010, p.51)

Here, at last, is a more appropriate terminological and theoretical framework through which to view the still and moving image, placed within a durational montage and displayed on a screen - the spatial montage as hypermediated lexis. Within this new lexis, the photo-filmic image can be understood outside of the rigid confines of the presence of narrative cinema and the fossilised pastness of the photograph. The photo-filmsic image in its hybridity and multi-mediation reveals the intermingling of multiple nows that remains the indexical essence of both photography and film.

Streitberger and Van Gelder end their paper with a plea for a more comprehensive study of the consequences of this new hybrid media:

Even if it is widely accepted that the profound shifts in the complex technology of the visual caused by the digital evolution challenge the traditional distinctions between the filmic and the photographic, there is no comprehensive
study yet on the very consequences of this shift concerning the changed conditions of the production, the presentation, the use and reception of photo-filmic images. Actually most studies on the relationship of photographic and filmic images still stick to a position that, firstly, tackles the photo-filmic as a mere conjuncture of two existing, principally distinguishable mediums (viz. photography and film) and, secondly, stays within the boundaries of disciplinary research.

(2010, p.51)

Having argued for a shared temporal relationship between photography and film outside of their medium-specificity - and in designating the intermingling of these two dematerialized mediums as photo-filmic - we need to define the new lexis of these multi-mediated images. The lexis I am concerned with is digital spatial montage, a durational and hypermediated work constructed from photo-filmic images and displayed on a screen. To ascertain the temporal identity of this lexis, it is necessary to discuss the temporal fluidity engendered by digitization.

1.4.2 Cinema and the Code

Gene Youngblood in his paper Cinema and the Code, originally published in 1989, attempts to categorise the temporal possibilities engendered by film’s decoupling from its mechanical medium. Although still speaking of electronic as well as digital cinema, Youngblood is very prescient in his predictions:
With the arrival of electronic cinema it became apparent that film grammar was limited in what might be called its vocabulary of tenses – for the most part it was “meanwhile” or “after”…. Digital code offers formal solutions to the “tense” limitations of mechanical cinema. Past, present and future can be spoken in the same frame at once.

(2003, p.158)

Although this is perhaps an overly reductive interpretation of cinema’s tenses, it is in Youngblood’s description of these ‘formal solutions’ that I am most interested; he states that there are “at least three possibilities: superimposition (overlay), or simultaneous but spatially separate event streams that are either framed or unframed” (2003, p.158). All three of these solutions may be considered forms of hypermediation. These unframed, parallel event streams are uncannily similar to Manovich’s definition of spatial montage, although I would see my work as being a combination of all three of these formal solutions. Youngblood is even more explicit than Manovich on the temporal possibilities opened up by these multi-layered montages:

Digital video suggests the possibility of establishing one image plane as “present” with other timeframes visible simultaneously within the frame. This would extend the possibility of transfiguration (metamorphosis) into a narrative space composed of layers of time, either as moving or still images.

(2003, p.160)

1.4.3 The Lexis of Spatial Montage

This presents a vital methodological (indeed taxonomical) approach to defining the lexis of spatial montage - a durational work, presented on a screen and potentially composed
of photo-filmic images arranged in superimposition and/or as spatially separated framed/unframed images, seen simultaneously and/or in succession. This is a lexis composed of layers of time; the temporalities engendered by the photographic effect and the time produced by the operations of montage.

1.4.4 Temporal Thickness

How then to conceptualise the temporal fluidity offered by the lexis of spatial montage? I will return to the writing of Manovich as a point of departure, situating spatial montage within the human experience of time:

In spatial montage nothing need be forgotten, nothing is erased. Just as we use computers to accumulate endless texts, messages, notes and data and just as a person, going through life accumulates more and more memories, with the past slowly acquiring more weight than the future, spatial montage can accumulate events and images.

(2001, p.325)

It is my contention that spatial montage is not just a means of producing different representations of time but rather constitutes a subjective, non-linear experience of time, in which time is perceived, not as a sequential teleology, but rather as a series of collapsed superimpositions. Sam Rohdie defines this understanding of time:

Reality however is subject to time, not only in its unending passing, but the multiplicities it creates in memory, imagination and by means of compression, condensation, telescoping and overlap. Time moves along in multiple planes, perspectives and positions.

(2006, p.137)
Spatial montage becomes an ideally suited methodological response to this compressed and condensed, non-linear conceptualisation of time. In its hypermediated capacity to present multiple spatially and temporally fractured moments simultaneously, and in foregrounding the time created in the ruptures and gaps between images, spatial montage may actively produce a non-linear experience of time as well as being a visual metaphor for it.

Timothy Barker elaborates on this conceptualisation of time:

Multi-temporal time is a scalar type of time. It has quantity, thick with multiple temporal episodes overlayed in the present, but not a linear direction; it is an archaeological mode of temporality in which the present moment, the point at which we receive aesthetic information… takes into itself multiple scales of the past.

(2011, p.89)

Barker claims that the “present becomes temporally thick as it draws into itself multiple layers of the past and provides the conditions for us to relive this pastness aesthetically” (2011, p.89). The photo-filmic spatial montage provides a set of unique conditions through which to experience multiple temporal layers aesthetically. Spatial montage offers a conceptualisation of time not as a linear progression but as an endless series of collapsed superimpositions (Patt 2007, p.73).
1.4.5 Bergson’s *Contraction-Image*

We can trace this understanding of non-linear time to Bergson’s concept of the ‘contraction-image’:

> We place ourselves first into the past in general and then into regions of the past, an operation [Bergson] called a contraction-image. The past continues to exist as a virtual image; it continues to grow as change endures. The past thus co-exists virtually with the present that recollects it.

*(Sutton 2009, p.35)*

Mary Ann Doane, discussing the Bergsonian view of perception, states that:

> The human experience of perception hence pivots upon a temporal lag, a superimposition of images, an inextricability of past and present. To that extent it is perverse temporality, a non-linear temporality that cannot be defined as a succession of instants.

*(Doane 2002, p.77)*

Spatial montage becomes a form of contraction-image, the enframed surface of the montage becomes a multi-temporal field, less concerned with the materiality of the image referent than with the processes it embodies. It is necessarily hypermediated, it is anti-transparent – it requires the viewer to be aware of the surface of the work, not to look through the work into an illusionistic, singular ‘reality’, but rather to experience the concatenation of images in simultaneity. The *polysenic* assemblage of images becomes *polychronic* *(Barker 2011, p.89).*
Conclusion

In tracing the representational counterparts of immediacy and hypermediacy (the double logic of remediation), this chapter situates spatial montage as a hypermediated representational strategy within an historical continuum. The prevalence of post-perspectival paradigms, such as Cubism and collage in the twentieth century offers clear examples of methodological approaches to hypermediacy in the past. This thesis and the accompanying body of work is not concerned with the (connotative) meaning of a particular image-referent but the temporal meaning that results from multiple still and moving images placed simultaneously within a single frame. In order to understand what temporalities arise within a photo-filmic spatial montage it is vital to understand the temporal registers of hypermediated montage in general as well as the mediums that are its constituent parts.

In this chapter I have argued that what we traditionally assume to be the essence of the photographic and filmic mediums are in fact inextricably tied to their normative social uses. The Barthian association of the photograph with the past, and by association with death does not relate to photography as a whole, but is rather tied to a particular iteration of the medium, the domestic, familial portrait. Similarly, the definition of the filmic as a medium of movement must be extracted from its role as a vehicle for linear and causal narratives.

I posit that within photo-filmic spatial montages, both still and moving imagery become redefined within a larger temporal and spatial interrelationship, which I have termed the lexis of spatial montage. The lexis of digital spatial montage is dematerialised and
multi-mediated. Spatial montage proclaims a new kind of temporality, no longer constrained by the parsing of photography and film into rigid *tenses*, but instead opening up a space of temporal fluidity. The action of spatial montage as the orchestration of images (simultaneous, overlapping, adjacent) creates its own time, revealing that temporality is not so much produced in the image but between one image and another.

I have attempted to dismantle the traditional binary mechanism defining photography and cinema in opposition. By questioning the ontological tensions described by this dialectic, I define the essential temporality shared by the photographic and filmic image as an inscribed trace of a moment someone chose to capture. Free of their traditional lexes, no longer defined by the ontological determinism of the ‘still or moving’ image, both photography and film reveal that their true relationship to time is a multi-temporal one. This reading of the essential temporal attributes of both photography and film is predicated on an understanding of the photographic effect, the contraction and intermingling of multiple images of time.

*La Jetée*, in its dialectical confounding of the indexical registers of photography and cinema, provides a pre-digital framework for discussing the effects of digitization on the still and moving image. It is argued that the digital and durational lexis of spatial montage allows the still and moving image to constitute an experience of time outside of the medium-specific referent.

The term photo-filmic is adapted as a more appropriate designation for these images, which are structurally both/neither photographic and/nor filmic. Key to this argument is
that within the lexical structure of spatial montage, the photo-filmic image can be understood outside of the rigid confines of the ‘presence’ of narrative cinema and the fossilised ‘pastness’ of the photographic object.

A reading of Youngblood’s *Cinema and the Code*, and its description of the ‘formal solutions’ offered by digital cinema provides a taxonomical framework for a methodological approach to spatial montage. The lexis of spatial montage is defined as a durational work, presented on a screen and potentially composed of photo-filmic images arranged in superimposition and/or as spatially separated framed/unframed images seen simultaneously and/or in succession.

I propose that spatial montage constitutes a subjective, non-linear experience of time, in which time’s multiple planes, perspectives and positions are perceived simultaneously rather than as a sequential teleology. Bergson’s contraction-image is adapted as a metaphor for a visual experience, produced through the unique set of conditions provided by spatial montage, that is temporally thick – a non-linear experience defined by the inextricability of past and present.
CHAPTER TWO

Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodological approaches of three artists through an analysis of their selected works. The three artists are David Claerbout, Christian Boltanski and Robert Rauschenberg. While none of these artists operate within methodologies that could be strictly termed spatial montage (as defined in Chapter One), they are presented here as a series of lenses through which to view the methodological concerns and temporal identities of montage in general. This chapter may be understood as an attempt to examine the theoretical structures presented in Chapter One through their analytical application within a methodological context.

David Claerbout interweaves photographic and filmic elements to create temporally ambiguous artworks. His work is discussed in terms of the temporalities (fluid, multiple) that are engendered within his photo-filmic compositions. Claerbout interrogates the ‘then-ness’ of the photographic still image through the intervention of filmic movement. Taking photography and film and placing them within a semiotically hybrid and temporally ambiguous lexis Claerbout deconstructs their ‘fixed’ relation to time, suggesting the ‘now’ and the ‘then’ continue to co-exist. Within Claerbout’s works it is digitization that allows the co-existence of both photography and film within a single image, encouraging a re-examination of their formerly rigid tense structures (Snauwaert
2008, p.32). His works reveal the essence of the photographic effect: the contraction of multiple images of time – the past anamnetically\(^ {17} \) inscribed in the present.

Christian Boltanski is discussed in relation to his use of anonymous found photographs and the *photographic effect* engendered within his works. I argue that Boltanski’s works are temporally thick, presenting us with an experience of multiple temporalities collapsed within the embodied now of the installation space. The anonymous photographic images (re-photographed, de-contextualised), stripped of their socio-mnemonic function present a rupture – a divergence between image and meaning – revealing the photograph’s temporal significance outside of the referent. Boltanski’s approach to the ‘open’ artwork is discussed in relation to Perec’s *unanimist* project.

The work of Robert Rauschenberg is discussed from an almost exclusively methodological vantage point. Key to the development of my own practice was an examination of what Steinberg terms Rauschenberg’s ‘flatbed method’. The flatbed method decries the possibility that the enframed pictorial space may be read as a transparent *window on the world*. The study of the flatbed method was vital for my own understanding of the screen-space of the media window as a surface that no longer operated as a transparent *windowed* reality, despite the presence of mimetic photographic and filmic imagery.

These three artists offer a set of facets through which to examine the key theoretical and methodological underpinnings of my own practice.

\(^ {17}\) Anamnesis consists of “inscribing past events into the present” (Parfait 2008, p.27)
2.1 David Claerbout

Since 1997 David Claerbout has been interweaving photographic and video material to create temporally ambiguous artworks (Parfait 2008, p.26). His work is concerned with neither “narration nor the representation of reality, but actually the passage of time, the form of time, ‘the shape of time’” (Van Assche 2008, p.9). His work is a form of temporal assemblage, exploring:

The nature of various media, their ability to transmit their memory and that of humans, to experiment with time and duration, through work involving hybridization and grafting that allows for the complete composition of images from scattered fragments: found photographs, personal archives, accumulation of elements, photo shoots in the studio and very complex digital manipulation during post-production. The situation then, its representation as an image, are imagined by the artist before being materially created by assemblage and composition of recycled archival materials and photo sessions with models in the studio- a “real” space – plausible, realistic - then takes form to which an image that has all the appearance of a photograph bears witness.

(Parfait 2008, p.26 – my italics)

Claerbout creates his compositions from multiple image-layers that are both spatially and temporally distinct (using both found and recorded materials), creating a composited image-surface that is technically heterogeneous but visually homogenous (Parfait 2008, p.27). In order to coerce these spatio-temporally disparate elements into sharing a plausible ‘real-world’ space, it is necessary for Claerbout to hide the ruptures between these elements, through the use of subtle digital compositing. Claerbout’s compositions operate in the space between immediacy and hypermediacy, they at once
present a transparent surface, while their temporal ambiguity arises from the subtle but insistent presence of mediation within the works.

2.1.1 Semiotic Hybridity

By placing ontologically disparate elements within the single frame of an image that shares the signifying structures and apparent transparency of a ‘photograph’, Claerbout violates one of the key assumptions we make with regard to photo-chemically based media: “the semiotic homogeneity of their signifying surface” (Levin 2008, p.463). This prompts Levin to describe Claerbout’s work as a particularly efficient exemplar of what “Manovich has called the increasing ‘modularity’ of contemporary media practices i.e. the construction of images out of discrete and semiotically distinct signifying parts or ‘modules’” (2008, p.463). As stated in the first chapter the difference between montage and compositing lies in to what extent the ruptures between the ontologically distinct materials are effaced in the resulting image.

While Claerbout’s work deals almost exclusively with the immateriality of the projected image, he makes numerous references to the surface of his work, stating: “I am motivated by the terrible flatness or ‘surfaceness’ of the still and moving image18” (Van Assche 2008, p.13). Claerbout’s work oscillates between the immediacy of the photo-realistic image and the surfaceness of the work, which is continually foregrounded by the disjuncture between the image’s multi-mediated constructedness and the reality the image purports to represent.

18 I will return to the nature of the surfaceness of the screen, in relation to my own work in Chapter Five.
For Levin, the creation of any media image by virtue of modular compositing is inherently linked with what he calls the condition of semiotic hybridity: “Despite the seeming coherence of [the] visual fields, they are in fact thoroughly fractured both spatially (the constellation of figures that we see never occupied a shared space) and temporally (everyone of the different figures was recorded at a different time)” (2008, p.466).

2.1.2 Ruurlo, Bocurloschweg, 1910

Claerbout’s work *Ruurlo, Bocurloschweg, 1910* (1997), offers a succinct example of the interrelationship between immediacy and hypermediacy in the artist’s methodology. In
this work, we are presented with the projected image of what appears to be a black and white archival photograph. The image, consisting of a large tree standing in a picturesque Dutch landscape, has the qualities of a postcard image; the title, stating (we assume) the place and date of exposure, seeming to reinforce this interpretation. However, something unsettles the *surface* of the photograph, “breaking up the ice formation on the still…image” in Claerbout’s own words (Van Assche 2008, p.9). The leaves of the tree are gently fluttering in a breeze, however *only* the leaves are affected; this is a still photograph with movement rather than an almost-static video (Claerbout 2008, p.46).

Snauwaert argues that it is the movement in Claerbout’s works that engenders their temporal significance: “The animation of the surface renders temporal borders permeable, sensitizing the viewer’s observation to a divergence between image and meaning” (2008, p.31). The isolated movement of the leaves does not allow the image to resolve into either a filmic or a photographic state; this photo-filmic ambiguity engenders the temporal paradox within the image. The image resists transparency, foregrounding the divergence between the image and a medium specific meaning, though the hypermediated animation of part of its surface.

As stated in the first chapter, we now inhabit a world saturated with images that are essentially post-indexical (of which semiotic hybridity is a condition). However, Claerbout provides an example of how, despite this post-indexicality, our basic cultural assumptions with regard to the *temporal* significance of the photographic image are largely unchanged. As Claerbout himself states:
And what becomes of the image as it is processed by one and the same electronic signal from its encoding to its output as a video or data projection? As the flattening through digital media continues the basic concept of photography and film remain valid. In the flattened zone between them I try to do my work.

(Bellour 2008, p.36)

Claerbout explicitly states that it is digitization that engenders this temporal fluidity:

It [digitization] takes away the certainty of moving-image time as a forward moving arrow (for example, the tape or film winding from point A on the cassette to point B). In the concept of time as a forward moving arrow there are always neighbouring moments; before and after. I hope I have made some works where all three points (before, now and after) occupy the same surface, the same picture.

(Van Assche 2008, p.13)

This interpretation of the temporal possibilities presented by the digitized moving-image is strongly reminiscent of Youngblood’s proposed ‘formal solutions’ to the rigid tense structures of mechanical cinema, as discussed in Chapter One. Claerbout’s description is intriguing, directly linking the certainty of time as a ‘forward moving arrow’, with the movement of film through the mechanical apparatus. The digitized image proposes that sequentiality (before and after) may dissolve into simultaneity (before, now and after).
2.1.3 Deconstructing the ‘Conclusiveness of Time’

Snauwaert situates Claerbout’s work within the contested (and now familiar) space linking photography inexorably with death:

It was Roland Barthes’ associative claim that every photographic exposure points to the inalterable finality of the past – death. Claerbout it seems, seeks to refute this claim. His kinetic interventions deconstruct the conclusiveness of time suggesting that the now and the then continue to exist. The irrevocable interrelation between the “photographic still” and time dissolves into ambiguities and becomes the site of a variety of expectations. This “duration” which arises from a development of the photographic still using new technology, also opens up new perspectives on the medium of film.

(2008, p.32)

Examining this argument through the framework presented in Chapter One, reveals that Claerbout has destabilised the photographic lexis. By introducing movement into the still image, by lending duration to the photographic image (i.e. a temporal dynamic), Claerbout questions the ontological structures associated with both the photographic and filmic image. In Ruurlo, Bocurloschweg, 1910, Claerbout creates a work that is neither wholly still nor moving, past nor present.

Claerbout emphasises that it is not simply a matter of animating the still image:

If I merely add movement to the still, the picture will collapse under the pressure of it. Instead I prefer to think of alterations as “caresses” on the surface, in order to stay in contact with both the picture’s past and present.

(Van Assche 2008, p.9)
Claerbout questions the ‘fossilised’ surface of the photograph, which becomes a permeable membrane; revealing the ‘now’ of the present/presence of our spectatorship meeting the moment of the original exposure; “a condensation of time into one image” (Parfait 2008, p.29). In this sense, (using the framework provided by the photo-filmic image) it is necessary that Claerbout’s works become neither wholly filmic nor wholly photographic, but instead float in the ambiguous (and dialectical) no-man’s-land between the two.

2.1.4 Retrospection

The multi-mediated layering of filmic movement and the photographic still is further evidenced in a work such as Retrospection (2000):

A video projection of an anonymous photograph taken in the 1930s shows 44 schoolboys and their teacher (a priest). At regular intervals the camera zoom picks out a child and focuses on his face for a few moments. At this moment an invisible crossover takes place from photographic still to real-time motion, and the face comes to life through subtle digital animation.

(Claerbout 2008, p.58)

Here the cinematic trope of the zoom is employed to facilitate an interrogation of the ‘then-ness’ of the photographic still through the intervention of ‘filmic’ movement. The co-existence of both these temporal registers within a single frame reveals the essence of the ‘photographic effect’: the contraction of multiple images of time. Claerbout opens up an ambiguous space where the semiotic homogeneity of his materials (whether photograph or film) is continually destabilised - “Time passing within frozen
time – this is what the artist weaves together in these photographs that are no more and these films that are not yet” (Parfait 2008, p.29).

Ill. 2.2 Retrospection, 2000 – Frame Stills (Van Assche 2008, p. 59)
2.1.5 Spectatorial Time in Reflecting Sunset

Claerbout’s work also adds another experience of time to the “laminated mass” (Parfait 2008, p.27) of temporalities in his work; that of the lived ‘now’ of spectatorial time. In Reflecting Sunset (2003), we are presented with an unedited, fixed-perspective moving image of a sunset reflected in the windows of an ornate 1930s building (Claerbout 2008, p.98). By presenting an unedited shot in ‘real-time’ (that is the length of the shot is equal to the chronological time it takes the sun to set), Claerbout forces the spectator to become aware of the lived now of spectatorship. Time is not elided (as in much narrative cinema) but foregrounded – the work becomes the experience of time passing; both chronological (the 38 minutes of the video) and subjective time. His works become
a delicately layered matrix of temporalities linking together “[chronological] time, narrative time, the expectations and anticipations of the spectator, memory and the present moment, so many strata of duration that are brought into play in the cross section of the present taken by the installation” (Parfait 2008, p.28.)

This lived time of spectatorship is in marked contrast to the normative cinematic mode, in which the narrative time is privileged to spectatorial time.

It is characteristic of Claerbout’s films that they leave expectations unsatisfied, offering no logical structure or resolution. The inertia of his films which are frontal, silent and seem to feature little action, counteracts the conventions of cinematic perception.

(Parfait 2008, p.31)

Claerbout’s works operate in neither the spectatorship of cinema, where the viewer is subsumed within the temporality of the story-time, nor the non-durational frozen moment of the photographic registration, but a hybrid temporality where the past is continually inscribed within the present of spectatorial duration.

Snauwaert states that, “Claerbout uses animation not for purposes of entertainment but as a punctum, as a significant detail through which the past is rendered present” (2008, p.32). It is interesting to place this statement in contrast to “Barthes’ criticism of film from Camera Lucida – that its relentless motion forecloses pensiveness by leaving no time to derive a personal connection or punctum toward the photograph” (Frey 2007, p.238). Claerbout’s kinetic interventions reveal that one does not step into the past when looking at a photograph but instead experiences the past in the present moment. Claerbout’s work re-examines the assumptive tense structures of the photographic and
filmic image, placing them within a semiotically hybrid photo-filmic lexis in order to explore *anamnesis* - the co-existence of the past in the present.
2.2 Christian Boltanski

While many writers discuss the work of the French artist Christian Boltanski in relation to his indirect exploration of the trauma of the Holocaust, it is with regard to his use of anonymous, found photographs and the *photographic effect* inherent in his works that he appears in the context of this thesis. Boltanski takes found photographs, re-photographs them and places them within monumental or archival structures. By taking these anonymous photographs (almost invariably of faces) and displaying them in this way, I will argue that he reveals the temporality of the photographic image outside of the biographical historicity of the individuals represented. His work decouples the photograph (as object) from its socio-mnemonic function and emphasises its unique temporal qualities outside of the image-referent.

2.2.1 The Re-Photographer

It is telling that Boltanski describes himself as a painter rather than a photographer; his methodology involves taking found photographs and re-photographing them:

They are photographs of previous photographs that he has collected; he then excises and enlarges the individual details of these in his photography, thus, he photographs something evanescent. He paradoxically photographs – the past.

(Assmann 2006, p.89)

In re-photographing these photographs, he re-inscribes the moment of registration in the present, collapsing the historical time between these two moments into a temporal superimposition.
His use of photography is almost anti-photographic; it does not memorialise the individual, the biographic fragment – no socially orientated mnemonic function is served.

These reprints, which are sometimes enlarged, do not necessarily aim to increase the significance of the shot or to heighten the attention of the observer. Instead they seem to stage forgetfulness: Nothingness shimmers through the amorphous black-and-white grains; faces cannot be identified let alone recognised.

(Assmann 2006, p.93)

Ill. 2.4 The Entry of Turks into Van, 1961 – Installation View (Semin 1997, p.83).
2.2.2 Monument: The Children of Dijon

We can see an example of the power of these de-contextualised photographs in his *Monument: The Children of Dijon* installation from 1986 (Ill. 2.5). Multiple photographs of faces have been re-photographed and enlarged until they fill their individual frames. They are photographs from which the socio-communicative function (the narrative of the individual) has been completely excised. In its orchestration of multiple images, *Monument* becomes a form of three-dimensional montage in which the architectural presentational space becomes the hypermediated frame. The space holds this multiplicity\(^{19}\) of moments (of ‘then-ness’), presenting them simultaneously - compressing each ‘individual’ temporality into the embodied now of spectatorship. The architectural space and the arrangement of the photographic images (so reminiscent of church iconography), suggests a process of memorialisation; yet the excess of images and the absence of biographies, captions or other ubiquitous and normalising signifiers, reveals the ambiguity central to Boltanski’s methodology.

This methodology can be understood as a vigorous attempt to remove the “constellation of reference that hangs over [photographs] – a place, a period, a cultural setting – which someone familiar with the material can recognise” (Stan Douglas in conversation with Diana Thater 1998, p.8). The re-photographed and re-framed photographs deny an easy, narrative interpretation, instead drawing attention to the act of interpretation itself:

\(^{19}\) *Multiplicity* was coined by Bergson in *Time and Free Will* (1889), to distinguish between duration and objective time. My use of the term here echoes Friedberg’s adaptation, in order to contrast “two forms of time-based representation: the single-frame image, seen in sequence and the multiply framed image, seen in adjacency and simultaneity” (2006, p.330).
Without text to accompany them, without pages to frame them and most important without other images to nourish them they force us to confront the processes of interpretation. Furthermore they present a glimpse of the structure of interpretation itself.

(Sutton 2009, p.135)

This process of de-contextualisation, proposes a fundamental divergence between image and meaning - between the referent and its representation. It is my contention that this divergence acts as a *rupture*, producing multiple images of time.
Ill. 2.5 Monument: The Children of Dijon, 1986 – Installation View (Garb 1997, p.13).
2.2.3 The Material/Memorial Capacity of Photography

Assmann argues that the memorial capacity of the photograph can only operate when ‘held within the frames of family memory’:

We can only speak of memory and the memorial dimension of photography when it is embedded within a socio-communicative frame. Without such a frame photographs prove and provide evidence for nothing. The photographs which for example may appear on sale at flea markets after the dissolution of a household or an estate provide evidence of only one thing: They show that the family memory which these photographs once framed and supported has been dissolved. To be clear: family memory - as opposed to cultural memory - is not meant to be stabilized and does not promise to be eternal. It is restricted by the temporal limitations of life. The photograph’s material capacity for memory continues to exist: The people photographed are still recognizable as people. However the memorial power of the photograph has been extinguished as no one recognizes these people.

(Assmann 2006, p.92 – my italics)

Assmann’s argument is perhaps overly simplistic, based on a very narrow reading of photography’s memorial capacity as being entirely contingent upon a ‘family frame’. However, I contend that the photographic image, removed from its social/familial frame (the individual memorial capacity removed) precipitates a much deeper (because more complex) reading of our subjective experience of time as essentially non-linear. Boltanski’s installations demonstrate that this ‘material capacity’ of the photograph (what remains) retains its temporal significance.

In Boltanski’s art, the nameless and redundant become the precondition for its effect. The assembly line repetition are among the means he uses to elicit the
effect for which he strives. The faces must not only be anonymous, they must be available in unlimited numbers.

(Spies 2006, p.29)

It is the anonymity of these photographs, once the individual “memorial power of the photograph has been extinguished” (Assmann 2006, p.92), that allows these monuments to re-frame temporality outside of the referent.

2.2.4 The ‘Open Work’

Boltanski, in a telling example, states explicitly the importance of the ‘openness’ inherent in his use of photographs:

I am fundamentally convinced that the observer completes the work of art. I provide the stimulus and the observer reacts in accordance with all of his past, his deepest experiences, turning it into something else. Let’s take as an example a photo of a child playing on the beach. We each see a different child on a different beach. In the end what we see is always extremely personal…. That’s why the message can’t be too precise; otherwise it’s not possible to project.

(in conversation with Beil 2006, p.48)

I regard this concept of the ‘open work’ to be central to my own methodology. It is important to clarify that the ‘open-ness’ in my own work relates to the semantic meaning of the image-fragments (that is, the non-narrative aspect of the spatial montages). This ‘open-ness’ does not alter my intention for the work – the desired spectatorial response - that it should constitute a non-linear experience of time.
2.2.5 Perec’s unanimism

This use of de-contextualised (and biographically redundant) photographs that have the power to evoke subjective responses and memories within the spectator is analogous for me to the memory writings of Georges Perec. Perec attempts to move from his own subjective experiences and memories toward a “collective memory” (Perec 2008, p.128). His writing on memorisation, “the everyday examined from every angle” (2008, p.129), is “very different from autobiography, from the exploration of your own prominent, occluded memories” (2008, p.128). He attempts to excavate memories that belong to everyone but which he presents with the drama removed (2008, p.128). By removing the ‘drama’, the subjective biography of memory, these micro-memories become permeable; access points for our own unique subjective response. These memories become a “conjunctive tissue” in which we might recognise ourselves (Perec 2008, p.133). Perec terms his project unanimist.
We can draw comparisons here between Perec’s unanimist approach and Boltanski’s *Monument* series. Boltanski creates a striking dichotomy between the presentation of the photographs, foregrounding their culturally defined memorial capacity by placing them within these shrine-like structures, while excising all subjective biographical context. We are not even provided with the culturally ubiquitous photographic caption.

### 2.2.6 Reserve: The Dead Swiss

When Boltanski does use a caption it is also in the service of disrupting our assumptive frames. This is evidenced in *Reserve: The Dead Swiss* (1989), which presents a vast wall of faces cut from the obituary sections of Swiss newspapers. Here the artist explains, with a particularly black humour: “Previously my works showed dead Jews but ‘Jew’ and ‘dead’ just go together too well. Swiss people just look perfectly normal. There is really no reason why a Swiss person should die. That’s why all these dead people are so terrifying. They are us” (Spies 2006, p.28). The use of the title here denies the ‘simplistic’ reaction that would allow us to categorise the work as a memorial to the Holocaust, the cultural ‘understanding’ of which allows emotional distance. Instead we are presented not with historicity but with “normal, everyday faces” (Spies 2006, p.31) and, by extension, ourselves. “Again and again, the artist employs an accumulative addition of objects, faces or names. No thing or person is given precedence over any other, no hierarchies are established” (Spies 2006, p.31). Like Perec, it is the insignificant detail, the everyday, that fascinates and that conversely imbues the work with its significance.
Ill. 2.7 Reserve: The Dead Swiss, 1990 - Detail (Garb 1997, p.32)
2.2.7 The Photographic Effect in *These Children are Looking for their Parents*

It is my contention that the works described offer examples of temporal thickness, presenting us with an experience of multiple temporalities collapsed within the hypermediated installation space. The photographic images, stripped of their biographical socio-mnemonic function, present a rupture – a divergence between image and meaning – revealing the photograph’s temporal significance outside of the historicity of the referent. The images operate as non-prescriptive, non-narrative ‘open’ access points to a subjective experience of the photographic effect. The blurred and distorted, re-photographed faces resist immediacy, foregrounding their mediation. They do not operate as transparent windows into a photographic past but rather present themselves both as fragments of a generalised pastness and a remediated presence. These photographs are objects but they are not the original objects of inscription (one time, one space). Their original and palpable objecthood, subsumed within the artistic structure, proposes a more complex temporal reading (multiple times, multiple spaces).

A powerful example of this is found in Boltanski’s work *These Children are Looking for their Parents* (1994) (Ill. 2.8). This work, composed of found photographs depicting children lost or displaced after the Second World War, has no elaborate installation, no monumentalising structure, relying instead on repetition for its impact. Twenty thousand of these off-set prints were given out by the artist at a train station in Cologne. Once again all biography has been removed, the photographs are colourless and functional – government-issued documentation. The images make explicit the power of the photograph to participate simultaneously in past and present. The photograph frames the child forever in the eternal becoming of his present (even the title is in the present
tense), with infinite potential futures (non-teleological possibilities) stretching ahead of him, while within the present moment of our spectatorship we are aware that this future has already occurred.

Ill. 2.8 These Children are Looking for their Parents, 1994 – Detail (Garb 1997, p.38)
There is a tension within this work however. While it succinctly demonstrates the photographic effect, it concomitantly contains a narrative charge. These photographs contain enough signifying material to pull the spectator into imagining a narrative. In the title for this work, Boltanski seems to be providing a straightforward description of the subject matter, yet this title reveals the problematic nature of photography’s ability to show more than it tells.

David Campany makes this point eloquently in relation to Cartier-Bresson’s famous photograph, *A Gestapo informer recognised by a woman she had denounced, deportation camp, Dessau, Germany, 1945* (Ill. 2.9). Campany states that this photograph “demands to be explained, demands that title to account for it” (2008, p.28). This photograph, though compelling in its fragmentary incompleteness, “does not so much narrate as require narration…because facts, however ‘powerful’, cannot speak for themselves” (Campany 2008, p.28). The mute faces of the children in Boltanski’s work seem to “place a demand on the viewer to tell stories or to imagine what one could tell” (Scholz 2007, p.104).
Ill. 2.9 Henri Cartier-Bresson, *A Gestapo informer recognised by a woman she had denounced, deportation camp, Dessau, Germany, 1945* (Campany 2008, p.28).

Aleida Assmann believes that temporal layering is bound into the cultural use of photography, which in her reading is inextricably linked to the *lived-time* of a person:

Photography has been part of cultural practice for circa 150 years and it has, whether consciously or unconsciously been concerned with rescuing the ephemeral individuality of man from the clutches of death. In its capacity to capture the transient, photography represents a mortification and an anticipation of death while simultaneously remaining a trace of the living and bearing the impression of an individually experienced life: It bears witness to the fact that there was once a person who stood in front of the camera who was as lively and as hungry for the future as we are.

(2006, p.97)
In his influential essay *Time Exposure and Snapshot: The Photograph as Paradox* from 1978, Thierry de Duve elaborates on the double nature of the photograph:

> Seen as live evidence the photograph cannot fail to designate outside of itself the death of the referent, the accomplished past, the suspension of time. And seen as deadening artefact the photograph indicates that life outside continues, time flows by and the captured object has slipped away.

(p.52)

Sears also echoes this point: “While photographs have an undeniable power to bear witness, to be a trace of presence, in its ability to represent the past it concomitantly cannot but fail to assert the lack of the thing represented” (2007, p.211).

I am very aware that within the last number of paragraphs the discussion has strayed toward a Barthian conception of photography. I believe this is relevant as it reveals the almost impossible task of separating the image from the referent when the image is a portrait of a person. It influenced my own methodological approach to such an extent that I felt I could no longer use images of people within my compositions. I came to view the portrait photograph (indeed the domestic snapshot in general) as overly loaded – the composition became *about* a person.

When a photographic image portrays a person with sufficient signifying material surrounding it, the ‘lamination’\(^\text{20}\) of the image and referent becomes enforced. An example taken from outside photography, from an auditory perspective, can shed further light on this *lamination*. Truax draws comparisons between the indexicality of human

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\(^{20}\) This term is adapted from Barthes: describing what he termed the "stubbornness of the Referent" (2000, p.6).
speech in sound recordings and our inability to perceive it as being a noise free of external referents. Although playing human speech through a loudspeaker renders it essentially environmental (i.e. not produced by human energy) it still has “vastly different connotations for the mind which, although able to relegate [human speech] to background levels of perception cannot entirely escape understanding [it] as simultaneously environmental and linguistic/musical” (Truax 1994, p.47).
2.3 Robert Rauschenberg

2.3.1 The Flatbed Method

I wish to discuss the work of Rauschenberg with regard to his hypermediated methodological approach and in particular, his development of what came to be termed the ‘flatbed method’. Leo Steinberg coined this term in his influential essay *Reflections on the State of Criticism* (1972):

> When in the early 1960’s [Rauschenberg] worked with photographic transfers, the images – each in itself illusionistic – kept interfering with one another, intimations of spatial meaning forever cancelling out to subside in a kind of optical noise. The waste and detritus of communication – like radio transmission with interference; noise and meaning on the same wavelength, visually on the same flatbed plane.

(2000, p.29)

Steinberg contrasts the flatbed picture plane with the Western tradition, in which:

> Pictures were conceived as representing a world, some sort of worldspace that reads on the picture plane in correspondence with the erect human posture. The top of the picture corresponds to where we hold our heads aloft; its lower edges to where we place our feet. Even in Picasso’s Cubist collages, where the Renaissance worldspace concept almost breaks down, there is still a harking back to implied acts of vision, to something that was once actually seen.

(Steinberg 2000, p.32)
Here Steinberg is situating Rauschenberg within the continuum of Cubist collage, in which the surface of the work is no longer an illusionistic, transparent ‘window’ but a material substrate. Rauschenberg’s works to do not require verticality to simulate a ‘real-world’ experience, but instead, “insist on a radically new orientation, in which the painted surface is no longer the analogue of a visual experience of nature but of operational processes” (Steinberg 2000, p.33). Rauschenberg’s placement of the photographic materials within the flatbed plane decries their connotative ability. The individual elements cannot imply the three-dimensional space of the referent because the hypermediated concatenation of images within Rauschenberg’s collages becomes the ‘interference’ within the mimetic communication. Any element that threatens to evoke spatiality is overprinted with more imagery or daubed and smeared with paint. This ‘optical noise’ is analogous for me with the divergence between image and meaning referenced in relation to both Claerbout and Boltanski. In Claerbout’s work, this was achieved through the seamless interleaving of movement into a photographic still; within Rauschenberg’s work, the ruptures between images are foregrounded, the connotative chaos celebrated. These works celebrate the loss of information inherent in their excessive communication. The flatbed method allowed Rauschenberg to move beyond the enframed pictorial space as ‘window on the world’ (perspectively corresponding to an artificial three-dimensional space) to become an unadulterated surface:

Rauschenberg’s picture plane had to become a surface to which anything reachable – thinkable would adhere. It had to be whatever a billboard or dashboard is, and everything a projection screen is, with further affinities for anything that is flat and worked over – a palimpsest, cancelled plate, printer’s proof, trial blank, chart, map, aerial view. Any flat documentary surface that tabulates information is a relevant analogue of his picture plane – radically
different from the transparent projection plane with its optical correspondence to man’s visual field.

(Steinberg 2000, p.30)

2.3.2 Overdraw

In Rauschenberg’s work *Overdraw* (1963), we see an almost breathless excess of visual imagery. The semiotically distinct source material – photographs, diagrams, charts, wallpaper patterns – are held together within Rauschenberg’s picture plane. Any image
can be forced to share the picture surface, because “it will not work as the glimpse of a world but as a scrap of printed material” (Steinberg 2000, p.45). In this sense, these collaged elements do not point to anything outside of themselves; they are not designed to make sense of the world, but to present some of its random and scattered fragments. This flatbed surface, free of any artificial links to spatial coherence, allowed Rauschenberg to create assemblages of extreme textual richness.

Rauschenberg builds up a picture plane, from whatever image-material he has to hand; silkscreen images, newspaper cuttings, magazine photographs, photographic transfers all *ensurfaced* by gestural paint-marks. No communicative logic governs the composition, the ‘semiotic homogeneity’ of the surface being thoroughly fractured. What we see is the image-encrusted *surface* not the ‘reality’ the photographic material purports to represent.

### 2.3.3 An Extended Temporality

Krauss asserts that in the absence of a communicative logic in Rauschenberg’s collages an altogether different spectatorial temporality develops:

> Though the syntactic connections between Rauschenberg’s images never presupposed the grammatical logic of a known language they implied that the modality of discursiveness was one aspect of the artist’s medium. What Rauschenberg was insisting upon was a model for art that was not involved with what might be called the cognitive moment (as in single image painting).
but instead was tied to the *durée*\(^{21}\) – to the kind of extended temporality that is involved in experiences like memory, reflection, narration.

(Krauss 2002, p.41)

It is the cumulative effect of this glut of images (as opposed to the immediacy of a single image in a single frame), seen sequentially and simultaneously (the spectatorial experience is open-ended), that encourages a temporal reading of the work. Krauss goes on to make the insightful argument that it is Rauschenberg’s approach to the construction of his assemblages that allows their semiotic heterogeneity to be plausible. Though the montaged images are almost aggressively free of any narrative or formal logic “the act of embedding them or layering them into the surface gives to their juxtaposition an astonishing quality of plausibility” (2002, p.52). Alberto Boatto echoes this point stating that the consumption of image-material takes the form of a ‘loan’, where Rauschenberg’s gestural brushstrokes serve to “grasp and hang onto the sordid, worn-out fragments of the world” (Boatto 2007, p.259).

Rauschenberg’s layered surfaces become “the area where cultural fragments are redirected into collision courses in order to precipitate new meanings; and to foreground the process in which we become aware that we are actively giving meaning to what we see and hear” (Feingold 2002, p. 124). It is in the gaps and ruptures between the images – the space of collision – that a new order of meaning is created, outside of each individual image referent. The individual image is stripped of its communicative context and situated in multiplied adjacency drawing attention to the surfaceness of the work.

\(^{21}\) Another term appropriated from Bergson, defining a subjective experience of time: “Bergson always sought to think time in terms of duration (durée), the preservation or prolongation of the past, entailing the co-existence of the past and present” (Pearson 2010, p.62).
2.3.4 Payload

We can see an example of this in Rauschenberg’s work *Payload* (1962) (Ill. 2.11). Here the disparate image material is coerced into sharing the same picture plane through a consistent palette. Yet we quickly become aware of the lack of cohesion between the images. What communicative or narrative logic links a newspaper cutting of a NASA rocket and a triptych of mosquitoes? Any attempt to ‘read’ the work relies solely on one’s own subjective response to this accretionary image-surface. There is no spatial depth to the work; the photographic elements, silkscreened onto the surface are flattened, seeming to be embedded (mosquito-like) within the amber-surface of the picture plane. Rauschenberg even seems to be playing with the spectator’s anticipation of spatiality; the partially shaded cube pointing toward the possibility of a three-dimensional depth, while simultaneously revealing itself to be merely a series of marks on a surface.
Ill. 2.11 *Payload*, 1962 (Celant 2007, p. 327).
Victor Burgin’s discussion of his recollection of cinematic imagery (the sequence-image\textsuperscript{22}), may be adapted to define the effect of Rauschenberg’s embedded imagery:

The elements that constitute the sequence-image, mainly perceptions and recollections, emerge successively but not teleologically. The order in which they appear is insignificant (as in a rebus) and they present a configuration – ‘lexical, sporadic’ – that is more ‘object’ than narrative.

(2006, p.21)

This description is strongly reminiscent of the contraction-image, as a non-linear series of superimpositions, appearing sequentially and as a simultaneous configuration. The elements present within this hypermediated lexical structure become a multiple-image ‘object’, free of a causal narrative. In order to develop a clearer understanding of montage as a methodological approach (a knowing-how-to-do) outside of a purely aesthetic interpretation (a knowing-what-to-do), I will next briefly discuss Aby Warburg’s 	extit{Mnemosyne Atlas}.

2.3.5 Warburg’s 	extit{Mnemosyne Atlas}

We can see one of the grandest examples of this “need to rework existing images” (Campany 2008. p.150), in the 	extit{Mnemosyne Atlas} (1924 – 29), developed by the iconologist Aby Warburg. The Atlas comprises 79 panels of images from a wide variety of sources – photographs, newspaper and magazine cuttings, diagrams, maps and

\textsuperscript{22} Burgin coins this term in opposition to the more familiar image-sequence to denote our interactions with multiple forms of media in our everyday environment: “In its random juxtapositions of diverse elements across unrelated spatial and temporal locations, our everyday encounter with the environment of the media is the formal analogue of such ‘interior’ processes as inner speech and involuntary association” (2006, p.14).
drawings (Campany 2008, p.63). Warburg developed a system of cloth panels onto which he pegged his image-materials (Ill. 2.12). This allowed him to constantly reassemble and reimagine his archive of images; leading to new understandings of the interrelationships between the images: “what mattered were the concepts and associations generated by bringing images together in pursuit of ideas that transcended any one of them” (Campany 2008, p.63).
Although the plates in Warburg’s *Atlas* are not collages in the strict sense of the term, (though I have no hesitation in defining them as montages), they provide a powerful example of images being dismantled, reconfigured and recombined almost infinitely to generate new ‘thought-spaces’ (Didi-Huberman 2010, p.182). Didi-Huberman, in discussing Warburg’s *Atlas* states: “It deconstructs, with its very exuberance, the ideals of uniqueness, of specificity, of purity, of logical exhaustion. It is a tool, not for the logical exhaustion of possibilities given, but for the inexhaustible opening up to possibilities that are not yet given” (2010, p.15). Although the reasons behind the choice of imagery utilised in the *Atlas* (Warburg was an art historian) may be very different from Rauschenberg (who would often re-use the same image rather than go through the tiresome operation of cleaning and re-setting his silk-screen), the results share much in common. It’s the ‘exuberance’, the very excess of imagery and their countless permutations (the radio transmission with interference) that decries a logical understanding; a ‘closed’ reading. Indeed, in Didi-Hubermann’s definition of the *Atlas* as an ‘open form’, we may understand a deeper parallel with Rauschenberg’s methodology:

Neither teleologically closed, nor strictly inductive or deductive – [the *Atlas*] agrees to present a contingent or fragmentary material in which what we lose in precision we gain in *legibility*.

(Didi-Huberman 2010, p.181)

There are obvious connections here between Rauschenberg’s flatbed picture plane (a surface holding information) and the surface of Warburg’s *Atlas*. They are both support structures capable of holding visual information, embedded in their surface, without hierarchy. The surface is a meeting point, an opening of multiple possibilities and
connections free of any overarching didactic logic. Rauschenberg’s works present a hypermediated surface that retains its materiality irrespective of the individual illusionistic perspectives of the photographic elements. The concatenation of images generates meanings (thought-spaces) that are more than the sum of the individual elements.
PART TWO

Introduction

Chapters Three to Five consist of a detailed analysis of the methodological development of my practice. These three chapters outline the practical application of the theoretical structures outlined in part one of the exegesis. They examine the various compositional difficulties exposed and resolved through the analysis of a selection of my compositions.

In order to situate my methodological approach to spatial montage, it is necessary to first briefly discuss the influences on my practice prior to those works discussed in the following chapters. The installation Madeleine, exhibited in September 2010, may be considered emblematic of these concerns.
Madeleine

The installation *Madeleine*, exhibited in September 2010, clearly illustrates my methodological approach at that time. The installation consisted of a series of montaged images back-projected on to a sheet of tracing paper that was suspended from the ceiling of a room. The room was empty apart from a desk upon which a lamp and a suitcase were placed. The projected images consisted of cropped black and white photographs taken from a found photograph album.
The work is heavily influenced by the installations of Boltanski. However, it is based upon a very narrow reading of Boltanski’s work based on a Barthian conception of the photographic image, in which the photographic referent (the person in the photograph) becomes reified as image-object. At the time of Madeleine, I believed that the temporality I sought resided in the photograph – in the historicity of the image and its associative relationship to the death of the referent. The projected photographs within the installation consist almost exclusively of individual (if heavily cropped) portraits of people. They operate as cultural referents, steeped in their historical time.

After Madeleine, I came to realise that using photographs in this way resulted in a closed work. The photographic image, as reified object (laminated to its referent), foreclosed any ambiguity and the overpowering narrativity of the individuals depicted overburdened the work.

It became almost impossible to treat a photograph of a person (especially, it must be noted, if it was in black and white\(^23\)) as an image in and of itself. The ‘constellation of referents’ (connotation) that surround any photograph are most evident when a person is photographed. The inclusion of an image of a person invariably placed the work within a specific historical time and also suggested a narrative - the imagery became about that person.

\(^23\) This was in part influenced by a ‘nostalgic’ attraction to black and white photographs from a particular historical era. Boltanski is well aware of this response in relation to his work *Photo Album of the Family D.*, 1939-1964 (1971), which “was regarded as nostalgic and beautiful because it was black and white”. He goes on to state: “You just need to hang a black-and-white photo on the wall and everyone coos “Oh, how lovely!” And why? Because it’s old and useless! If you show a colour photo, it’s automatically ugly. People only find things beautiful that they can’t use” (Beil 2006, p.78).
Within the subsequent development of spatial montage, as described in the following chapters, I made a conscious decision to exclude portraits of people in order to examine the photographic effect outside of the incessant narrativity prescribed by portraiture. Boltanski’s installations have an undeniable power, but at that time I was unable to separate the temporal qualities related to his particular use of photographic imagery from the Barthian conception of photography’s connection to memory and loss.

While the use of black and white archival photographs did persist in my work for some time, I endeavoured to utilise them as de-contextualised image-fragments. The development of my practice discussed in the following chapters charts a persistent move away from the use of found black and white photographs toward self generated imagery, as I came to realise that the temporal experience I sought to engender did not reside in the historicity of any one image.

**Chapter Synopses**

Chapter Three outlines the development of *Etude No.4*, the last in a series of four studies, which together represent my initial attempts to respond to Manovich’s definition of spatial montage. The chapter describes the three interrelated ‘problems’ within the structure of this work, defined as: 1) The persistence of single-point perspective, 2) the use of compositing rather than montage and 3) a reliance on the use of cross-dissolves to introduce new image-material. *Etude No.4* reveals its methodology to be concerned with compositing layered superimpositions within a single frame; the ruptures between images are supressed, creating an illusionistic (though not photo-
realistic) perspectival picture surface. The influence of the painter Hughie O'Donoghue is described, and *Etude No.4* is ultimately defined as a 'kinetic painting'.

Chapter Four analyses the suite of four durational works composed for the exhibition *Foto-Arbeiten* (February 2012). These four works take as their source material six found photographs, which represent a clearly bounded and finite *database*. The limited source material required that I extract and enlarge particular segments of the photographic image. This resulted in image-fragments that were essentially abstract, stripped of their contextualising surrounds. This abstraction as well as the inclusion of painted elements may be understood as an attempt to destabilise the ‘loaded’ black and white archival photographs. The resulting works may be regarded not as interrogations into the multi-temporal possibilities of spatial montage but rather as a concentrated attempt to reconcile both the photographic and painted elements within a single pictorial space. The works in *Foto-Arbeiten* represent the exploration of specific compositional strategies at the expense of others. In light of the overall methodological development of my work, these chosen strategies now seem ineffective but it was vital to explore them in a systematic manner. Knowledge with regard to the efficacy of any compositional strategy (and its spectatorial consequences) could only be gained through the physical making and presentation of the works.

Chapter Five begins with an analysis of two compositional studies: *Rauschenberg Study One* and *Rauschenberg Study Two*, in an effort to elucidate certain vital methodological developments that occurred within my practice after *Foto-Arbeiten*. 
The main discussion within this chapter concerns the four durational works developed for the exhibition *at once a surface and a frame* (September 2012). These works represent a formal interpretative break with the illusion of the screen as a transparent ‘window on the world’ – as an enframed excision into a three-dimensional perspectival space. The photographic and filmic images, each in itself representing an enframed illusionistic space, are now held within the hypermediated frame of the spatial montage. These works represent a summation of my methodology developed over the previous two years and constitute multiple-image, multi-temporal spatial montage. Key to this development is the conceptualisation of the space of the virtual screen as an infinitely thin membrane – a liminal site – where surface meets depth.
CHAPTER THREE – ETUDE NO. 4

Introduction

This chapter presents an analysis of Etude No. 4, completed in October 2011. It is the final work in a series of four studies. What began as an experimental layering of photographic and video material in April 2011 rapidly became my working methodology for the following two-year period. Etude No.4 is composed from archival photographs, self-generated video material and painted elements.

This sequence of works, culminating with Etude No. 4, reflects a concerted effort to understand how to create a durational work that changed over time and represents my initial attempts to respond to Manovich’s definition of spatial montage. This chapter discusses three interrelated difficulties within my methodological approach to Etude No. 4. These difficulties may be defined as the persistence of a single-point perspective
(pictorial transparency and the illusion of ‘depth’), the use of compositing rather than montage and a reliance on cross-dissolves to introduce new material.

3.1 The Persistence of Compositing

While I considered *Etude No.4* to be a durational form of spatial montage as defined by Manovich; it is in reality an example of compositing (though clearly not photo-realistic). I was attempting to hide the ruptures between images, creating a single, illusionistic and transparent pictorial surface. Although *Etude No.4* is constructed from multiple layers of semiotically distinct material, I was unwilling to foreground semantic dissonance at the expense of legibility and I therefore erased the boundaries between the image material (the essence of compositing). That is, in order to maintain the immediacy of the compositied image, its mode of assemblage (its mediation) was suppressed. In *Etude No. 4*, the frame continues to operate as a ‘window on the world’, in which the compositied imagery presents a virtual reality, following the rules of proportion and perspective. The layers are blended together, the ruptures hidden, in order to represent a pictorial world-space that makes visual ‘sense’. The multi-layered imagery of *Etude No.4* operates within the single-image/single-frame paradigm. Following the taxonomy of spatial montage defined in Chapter One, *Etude No.4* represents a series of *superimpositions* within a single frame rather than parallel event streams.
3.2 Legibility of the Composite

My methodology at this stage was wholly concerned with composing the image-layers in order to maximise the legibility (both visual and sematic) of the amalgamated structure. The still and moving images do not retain their separate identities, but are subsumed within the layered gestalt. *Etude No. 4* is directly in keeping with Claerbout’s methodology, in which all the semiotically hybrid layers form an apparently homogenous image surface.

This desire to retain the legibility of the composited layers came both from a timidity in my handling of the imagery (that it should obey linear perspective, that it should make sense) and from a lack of appreciation for the new forms of meaning that are generated when the dissonance between multiple images is celebrated. Manovich, in his essay *Generation Flash*, makes an interesting argument through which to view this question of legibility:

> Think image. Compare it to sound. It seems possible to layer many many many sounds and tracks together while maintaining legibility. The result just keeps getting more complex, more interesting. Vision seems to work differently…
> When we start mixing arbitrary images together, we quickly destroy any meaning.


At the time of *Etude No.4* I would have agreed with Manovich’s argument, as I struggled to maintain the legibility of a pictorial surface composed of six or more superimposed image ‘tracks’. I now regard it as an overly reductive argument, and one in which Manovich does not compare ‘like with like’. It is possible, with skilful
production, to have hundreds of individual audio tracks sharing the same sound-space, each retaining their legibility; but it is just as possible to have ‘noise’ (as absence of communication) with four audio tracks playing simultaneously. Similarly, if one wishes to compose a single-frame, illusionistic space (as I was attempting with Etude No.4), even four layers of imagery can lead to a loss of legibility, but if one is approaching montage in its modernist sense (where the capacity for an individual image to connote meaning is less important than the meaning that arises between multiple image fragments), then many images can share the same pictorial space.

This is a vital point in the development of my methodological approach to the construction of spatial montages. Indeed, I now appreciate that the construction of single-image/single-frame composites and my reliance on the use of fades and cross-dissolves are inextricably linked. Maintaining the ‘transparent reality’ (its visual sense) of the pictorial world required that I introduce new image material slowly, through the use of fades. I was keenly aware that this reliance on the cross-dissolve as the sole form of editing was problematic for two reasons.

3.3 Cross-dissolves and Rhythmic Homogeneity

Firstly, the use of the fade as an agent of change within the work (the introduction of new material) enforced both a slow development and a rhythmic homogeneity. I had experimented with the cinematic ‘jump cut’ in previous studies as an alternative to the continuous use of the cross-dissolve. At the time I deemed these experiments to be unsuccessful. This is in part because I was cutting from one complete image to another
rather than cutting-in elements or fragments, as I would later adopt. I felt these cuts to be too abrupt, jolting the viewer from the slowly evolving work. I was also concerned that the jump cut (familiar to the spectator from cinema) would enforce a more cinematic interpretation of the work. Jumping rapidly from one image to the next and the implication of continuity editing gave the impression of a sequential narrative, a narrative that was clearly absent. Inability to apply alternate forms of editing forced me to rely (almost exclusively) on the slow cross-dissolve, which would have its own set of consequences within the suite of works composed for the Foto-Arbeiten exhibition, discussed in the next chapter. The rhythm in Etude No.4 is akin to a continuous inhalation/exhalation as the images fade in and out. This steady ‘beat’ elicits a very specific spectatorial response, one in which the predictable rate of change reduces the viewer’s attention.

3.4 Cross-dissolves and Automaticity

The second problem with regard to the use of the cross-dissolve was my perceived reliance on the internal algorithms within the editing software to achieve an effect that was so central to the work. I was concerned that the continuous use of a pre-programmed function removed artistic agency. Takahashi states this concern explicitly:

Within discourse on avant-garde film, the capacity of digital media to edit within the frame (as opposed to between frames), along with its capacity to alter an image seamlessly seems most threatening to artistic intention. The work produced by the digital apparatus is considered too automatic, the options it provides too ‘cookie-cutter’.

(2005, p.168)
Manovich also observes that the “computer’s capacity for ‘automaticity’, its ability to perform previously time-consuming operations such as collaging, animation and the repeating or looping of images at the click of a button, seems to remove human intentionality from the creative process” (2001, p.32).

3.5 The Introduction of Painted Elements

In order to combat this reliance on automation, I introduced hand-painted elements and textures into the work. These consisted of different surfaces and materials, painted in the studio, photographed and layered into the existing photographic materials present within the montage (Ill. 3.2).

This attempt to circumvent the ‘problem’ of cross-dissolves led to unanticipated but positive results in the long term. Within *Etude No. 4* the photographic and filmic material is set against a backdrop of a slowly changing painted surface. However,
within the work this textured background is never treated as a surface – there remains an impression of pictorial depth. The images, filling the frame of the composition, continue to exist in an illusion of three-dimensional space. While this is self-evident when viewing the work, it is this desire to place the photographic imagery within an enframed, perspectival space that was the defining characteristic of my practice at this point. The mimetic imagery stubbornly retains, to paraphrase Leo Steinberg, *intimations of spatial depth*.

### 3.6 The Persistence of Perspectival Space

The presence of perspectival depth in *Etude No.4* is due to the positioning of the imagery in strict relation to the frame. That is, each image, though composed of several layers, operates as a singular transparent image *filling the frame*. Even the pylon structures, cut from a photograph to become disembodied geometry, are still carefully placed so that their leading edges are outside the frame (Ill. 3.3). When the video footage of the yellow bulbs on a string fades in at [5:12], it fills the screen and is
consistent with the sense of real-world space (Ill. 3.4). This filmic material, in meeting the edges of the frame and retaining ‘correct’ linear perspective, represses the gaps between the semiotically heterogenous material, compressing it into a single pictorial-object consistent with the logic of immediacy.

However, there is evidence of my attempt to break away from the strictures of perspectival space and to move towards hypermediacy. The silhouette of the rooftop within a roughly painted square of white, would influence later works in which the placement of imagery within the frame becomes far more compartmentalised or ‘modular’ (Ills. 3.3 and 3.4). It evidenced the possibility of placing a fragment of an image within a larger whole, without regard for the illusionistic sense of space. Similarly, the white strips of painted fabric that fade in and out throughout the length of the etude, display montage-within-the-shot rather than the montage-between-shots consistent with the cross-dissolve from one still image to the next (Ill. 3.5). Most important of all are the red rectangles, the first of which enters at [2:53], the second at [8:57] (Ills. 3.5 and 3.6). They do no operate within the illusionistic space, they operate

The white painted strips of fabric and the red rectangles operate as montaged elements within-the-shot – they do not conform to the sense of perspectival depth but rather foreground the surfaceness of the work.
solely as blocks of colour. Nor do they meet the edges of the frame but float on top of the picture surface. They allow for the possibility that not every element within the work need conform to the virtual space depicted.

3.7 The Cross-dissolve and Duration

The most consistent feature of this work (and the most problematic at the time) is the continuous use of cross-dissolves (images fading in and out). As stated above the cross-dissolve was used to introduce new material, yet I also hoped to lend a sense of movement to the photographic material. I was concerned that the sequence of (largely) still imagery would be perceived by the spectator as a slide-show. However, I was conflating movement with duration - which are patently different. The use of fades did not alter the ontological status of the photograph – it remained a still image. The cross-dissolve did animate the photograph, in that it appeared and disappeared in duration, but this is certainly not movement in the filmic sense.
3.8 Filmic Movement

The video of the smoke stack, gently pluming smoke across the picture surface, has the most obvious impact on the work. It provides a form and a speed of movement that unsettles the otherwise steady and predictable rate of change. It could certainly be argued that the impact of this video comes from the illusion of the ‘here and now’ created by the filmic movement. But beyond the illusion of ‘presentness’, both the photographic and filmic share a similar indexical relationship to time – a moment captured and a moment of capture.

The filmic material is perceptually distinct from the still imagery, but within the accommodating structure of the montage, the apparent differences between the filmic and the photographic (their traditional social uses) are less apparent. Decoupled from their socio-communicative norms and the need to define both mediums in opposition to each other, both the filmic and the photographic can be seen to participate
simultaneously in past and present, their individual temporalities layered together becoming a palimpsest of image events, multiple traces left by different individuals.

### 3.9 Questioning the Photographic Lexis

However, placing a photographic still within a durational work has its own set of consequences, which bring us directly to question the status of the photograph as an “unattached instant”. If, to develop Metz’s terminology, the lexis of the photograph is defined as being unbounded (that is, it has no defined ‘temporal size’), what is the status of a photographic still whose lexis is determined by its presence in a durational work? If, as Mulvey suggests, the filmic can be defined in opposition to the photographic, because of the temporal dynamic imposed upon it (that is, the moving image has duration; it cannot escape a beginning or an end), then neither of these traditional definitions are wholly applicable to the imagery in *Etude No.4*.

To further complicate the issue, much of the ‘photographicity’ of the still images within *Etude No.4*, has been deliberately removed, as a direct result of both the types of imagery chosen and the application of the painted elements. All the photographs within the work originate from a found photo-album, created in the 1950’s. As stated in the introduction to part two of the exegesis, I was conscious of not choosing photographs that overtly announced their historicity; that is, photographs that declared their historical and cultural references. The introduction of the painted elements also helped to remove

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24 As discussed in Chapter One
the tonal qualities of the photographs (which are easily recognised and dateable) and gave the photographs a more ‘graphic’ quality.

In lending duration to the photograph and revealing its dematerialised lack of objecthood through the fades and in presenting filmic elements bereft of a sequential causal narrative, both their normative lexical structures have been removed. These challenges to the traditional modes of thinking with regard to the still and moving image are key concerns within my methodology, which I will return to throughout the analyses of my work. However at the time of *Etude No.4*, I still understood the still and moving image in terms of traditional theoretical structures and understood my practice to be the juncture of two distinct mediums (photography and film) rather than as a potentially hybrid (photo-filmic) form.

### 3.10 The Database

The methodological approach to the structuring of *Etude No.4* was influenced by Manovich’s theories with regard to the database:

> As a cultural form, the database represents the world as a list and it refuses to order this list. In contrast, a narrative creates a cause-and-effect trajectory of seemingly unordered items (events).

(2001, p.225)

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25 The photograph is no longer the ‘silent rectangle of paper’ but is instead a series of shifting ‘values’ presented on a screen.
*Etude No.4* was composed from images grouped thematically, but not ordered by narrative or chronology. Choosing images in this way, from a pool or ‘database’ of possible imagery, placed the emphasis on the interaction of images (as they fade through one another) rather than a sequential (logical) structure that implied narrative causality.

Manovich goes on to state:

> Therefore in contrast to standard film editing that consists of selection and ordering of previously shot material according to a pre-existent script, here the process of relating shots to each other, ordering and reordering them to discover the hidden order of the world, constitutes the film’s method.

(2001, p.240)

Outside of the rather grandiose ambition of discovering the ‘hidden order of the world’, removing narrative and sequentiality did raise the question of how to structure the overall work: a question I was not able to answer satisfactorily at this time. There was no reason to place this image here rather than somewhere else, other than purely aesthetic concerns. In the absence of a pre-existing script, when is a durational work like *Etude No.4* finished? This becomes all the more problematic when a composition can continue to grow indefinitely within the essentially infinite ‘timeline space’ of the editing software.
3.11 Spatial Montage as a Durational Process and the Influence of Hughie O’Donoghue

Despite my concerns that *Etude No.4* should have ‘filmic’ movement, in order to detract from its potentially slide-show-like appearance, I regarded it as a *durational painting* rather than as something cinematic. This was partly influenced by Manovich’s definition of digital cinema, “free of its privileged indexical relationship to prefilmic reality” (2001, p.300), as being more akin to animation or painting: “Given that an artist is easily able to manipulate digitized footage either as a whole or frame by frame, a film…. becomes a series of paintings” (2001, p.304).

Ill. 3.8 Hughie O’ Donoghue, *Unknown Seas I*, 2002 (Hamilton 2003, p.90)
In *Etude No.4* (and indeed in all the studies from that time), I can now clearly see the influence of the paintings of Hughie O’Donoghue. It is telling that the clearest influence upon the work comes in the form of static paintings, for that is how I now view *Etude No.4*: as a series of static paintings montaged together. The constant rhythm of change decries any sense of an overall compositional movement. O’Donoghue’s work involves photographic elements placed onto a canvas and subsumed within a landscape of painted textures. The photographic and the painted elements always interact within a landscape that corresponds to pictorial depth. In O’Donoghue’s paintings (as in *Etude No.4*), the photographic and the painted elements are layers within a composite. I regard *Etude No.4* almost as a record of a painting evolving over time; as layers are continually added and removed, its changing structure feels like a durational *process*.

While in later works I would gain far more control of both rhythm and pacing, there remains this sense of the compositions being a process of ‘emergence and assembly’ – a continuum of changing image-relationships – rather than a teleological trajectory from a beginning towards an end.

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26 “The photographic image, the drawn and painted surfaces and the canvas itself are inseparable, like fresco, where colour and plaster are one. The photographic images in the paintings, inkjet prints on Japanese tissue, are held within the paint film on the canvas and with added layers of paint and varnish, are rubbed down and even in places rubbed or painted out” (Hamilton 2003, p.24).
CHAPTER FOUR – FOTO-ARBEITEN

Introduction

The exhibition that came to be *Foto-Arbeiten* was founded on the desire to limit my image material in order to impose further heterogeneity on the resulting works. Previously, the montages I had created (as discussed in the last chapter) had not been governed by any over-arching logic with regard to what types of material could be used. In the absence of a narrative structure, any image was permissible if it suited my compositional requirements. Indeed, at that time I felt that the more semiotically distinct materials sharing the one pictorial frame, the more ‘successful’ the spatial montage would be.
However, while beginning the preparatory work for *Foto-Arbeiten*, I felt it would be beneficial to limit the breadth of imagery available in favour of greater depth from a clearly bounded set of images; that is, to draw from a specifically delineated database. The use of the term ‘depth’ here implies how much visual material could be mined from a fixed number of source images.

4.1 Methodology

From the outset, *Foto-Arbeiten* was designed as a joint exhibition, in collaboration with the visual artist Mark Halpin. It was decided that the source material would be restricted to the photographs found on a randomly chosen page of a black and white found-photograph album (Ill. 4.1). The chosen page contained six photographs. Although the source material was limited to these six photographs it was decided that the material could be re-interpreted in whatever format or medium was deemed suitable by each artist. As Halpin works within a different visual methodology, it was hoped that this would increase the range of the resulting work. In this sense, the limited source material was not intended to be restrictive or indeed prescriptive, but instead presented a clearly defined point of departure.

My response to the source material led to the creation of four durational works, three of which were presented on flat screen displays in the main exhibition space, while the fourth work was projected in a separate ‘black-box’ space. The titles for the works were derived from information stamped on the back of the photographs, while the title of the exhibition was taken from the envelope which held the original negatives (Ill. 4.2).
Working with these six black and white photographs led to two unanticipated yet inextricably linked results. These results, structurally defining the finished montages, may be defined under the headings of abstraction and slowness, both of which led to specific spectatorial responses.

4.2 Abstraction

I was re-interpreting the photographs through the creation of durational montages: works that developed and changed over time. The limited source material prevented me from continually introducing new photographic material in order to ‘organically grow’ the works, as had been my approach in previous studies. Instead I was required to more closely examine the photographic material, extracting and enlarging particular segments of the overall image, breaking the photograph up into its compositional parts.
This resulted in image fragments that were essentially abstract; stripped of their contextualising surrounds they instead became hints of architectural forms (the angle of a window pane, the porous limestone block of a quay-side) or vaguely organic (the curve of a shoulder, the folds of a coat). This abstraction was also necessitated by the loaded ‘charge’, as discussed previously, of our cultural expectations regarding black and white snapshots. To present an unadulterated version of one of these photographs would have overburdened the entire work with the connotative excess of the photographic (its historicity). There was one deliberate exception to this ‘rule’, which I will return to later in the chapter.

The impression of de-materialised and abstracted image-fragments was further heightened by the use of painted elements within the montages. These painted elements were created in my studio, photographed and then layered into the montages. I felt it necessary to use these painted elements firstly to ‘dilute’ or lessen the overt photographic nature of the works and also to introduce another form of movement through the implementation of opacity changes27 within the painted layers. The combination of image fragments, merged with gestural paint marks, resulted in a pictorial surface that was increasingly difficult to read.

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27 A function of the editing software – in which an image may become more or less transparent over time.
4.3 Durational Paintings

The resulting works may be regarded, not as interrogations into the multi-temporal possibilities of spatial montage, but rather as a concentrated attempt to reconcile both the photographic and painted elements within a single pictorial space. My methodological approach to the works in Foto-Arbeiten can be understood as a logical extension of the problems discussed in the previous chapter. I still viewed these works as durational paintings. The photographic imagery used, although cropped and abstracted, still filled the frame, presenting a single image in a single transparent frame. In order to combat the rhythmic homogeneity, as discussed in relation to Etude No.4, I chose to slow down the use of cross-dissolves to an almost imperceptible rate. This resulted in works that, although durational, appeared static. The static source material (whether photographic or painted), evolving below the level of perception, led many spectators to assume that these works were digital still-images presented on screens. The heavily abstracted images (their indexical ‘photographicity’ occluded) reinforced this impression.

The works in Foto-Arbeiten, represent the exploration of certain compositional strategies - discussed in the previous chapter - at the expense of others. In viewing the work from my current position, these chosen strategies seem the least effective, but it was vital to explore them in a systematic manner. Knowledge with regard to the efficacy of any compositional strategy (and its spectatorial consequences) could only be gained through the physical making and presentation of these works. Abandoning the use of filmic material (there is only one section of video used in the entire exhibition), forced me to rely on the cross-dissolve as the sole source of change. At this time I still
felt the ‘jump-cut’ to be an unworkable editing technique within spatial montage. Similarly, in moving away from the use of modular image-fragments (the antecedents of this compositional approach can be seen in Etude No.4) in favour of the single image/single-frame approach, I was reinforcing the use of compositing rather than montage. There are very few moments within any of the four works comprising Foto-Arbeiten in which there is an impression of multiple layers of imagery sharing the enframed space. The consequence of these compositional choices is to reinforce the interpretation of these works as slowly changing (static) paintings.

4.4 Description of Works

4.4.1 Paul Maizahn (2)

Single channel durational work. Length: [18:23]. Presented in a vertical orientation on a flat screen monitor in HD (720p). The work is played in a continuous loop.

The opening section of the work (approx. four minutes) appears as a static image, becoming almost imperceptibly brighter. At this point a second photograph, consisting of a cropped, slightly out of focus image of trees, is faded in (Ill. 4.3). The blurriness of the photograph in addition to the textured pencil marks layered onto its surface, has the effect of negating the overall ‘photographicity’ of the picture surface. The overall impression is of a single image filling the frame, which becomes slowly occluded by the introduction of more painted textures. This layer is faded in so slowly as to deny the impression of multiple images present within the frame.
At [9:15] the shape of a pylon (a favourite image), slowly fades in over a densely textured surface (Ill. 4.4). This is the first ‘recognisable’ image, yet it is de-contextualised, placed against a surround that is neither foreground nor background – a non-space. Another image-section cropped from a photograph fades in at [11:40], behind the pylon (Ill. 4.5). This is the only image layer that displays multiple photographic images sharing the enframed space. At [12:30] the pylon fades out to reveal another single photographic image, quite clearly intimating a landscape (Ill.4.6). A fourth and final photographic image fades in at [15:30].
The overall impression of this work is of waiting for the photographic images to ‘resolve’ and become visibly opaque. The incredibly slow rate of opacity change, though perhaps contributing to a viewer’s impatience, does allow time to experience the minute changes of tone and density that occur as images fade between and through each other.
4.4.2 *ATLAS – REPHRONT 8/15 66D*

Single channel durational work. Length: [16:44]. Presented in a horizontal orientation on a flat screen (HD 720p) as part of an installation structure. The work is played in a continuous loop.

This work begins with a painted layer consisting of multiple black crosses (Ill.4.7). This is an attempt to introduce signifying material outside of the photographic. This image is not intended to have exclusively religious connotations, but rather provides an ambiguous set of symbols, free of any explanatory context\(^{28}\).

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\(^{28}\) “Signifiers approaching emptiness means merely (!) that the image taken does not have a ready associative analogue, is not a given symbol, or allegory; that which is signified by the signifier, that which is conjured up by the image given, is something formed by past connections but at a very low key, not a determining or over-determining presence, merely a not highly charged moment of meaning” (Gidal 1996, p.153).
This work is best understood as a series of cropped paintings fading in and out. The photographic content is very much a secondary player within the work. This was the first montage to be completed, and displays my reluctance to foreground the problematic (‘loaded’) indexical imagery of the photographic source material. As the photographic imagery is almost completely occluded by the painted materials, this work is the most difficult to ‘read’.

The screen was hung on an installation structure, consisting of a large rectangular blackboard, standing on a raised stage at the back of the gallery. Attached to this surround were 144 straight digital prints of a photograph taken from the found photograph album, arranged in two grids on either side of the screen (Ill. 4.8). These prints were placed inside small bags of greaseproof paper and hand-stamped with a bitumen-brown cross. The semi-transparent bags were intended to reference the bag that held the negatives within the original album and also to reflect analogically the occluded quality of the digitized photographs within the montage (Ill. 4.9 and 4.10).
Detail views of the Atlas installation. Digital prints in semi-transparent bags printed with a bitumen cross. The arrangement of the photographs within the grid is reminiscent of Muybridge’s representational approach.

The hand-printed brown cross on the outside of each bag also made explicit the digital reproductions being occluded by another form of indexical trace (as performative and mediating gesture) – the painterly mark.

This openness in the abstracted work (to echo the discussion of Boltanski) can lead to some fascinating interpretations, as spectators attempt to assemble a narrative from the largely abstract patterns. One viewer wondered whether the large white shape present at [6:00], which grows steadily darker as the piece progresses, represented the European landmass during the dark days of the Second World War, with the crosses symbolising the countless war-dead. This was certainly not my intention with the work but was not an interpretation I was unhappy with (Ill. 4.11).
4.4.3 R. TAUSCH (31)


This work is an attempt to approach the problematic indexicality of a portrait photograph. It is composed from an unchanging still photograph of a man (Ill. 4.12), through which a series of paintings move (Ills. 4.13 and 4.14).

The paintings represent a surface on top of the photograph, at times almost obscuring it entirely. The painted textures serve to de-contextualise the photograph and deny a sense of perspectival depth. The cultural references embedded in the photograph (apart, perhaps, from the man’s clothes), are subsumed within the painted surface of the work.

The fading in and out of the different painted elements is almost entirely imperceptible. All sense of a ‘slide-show’ is entirely absent. Rather it gives the impression of a painting in different stages of completion. The intention behind this composition was to seamlessly interleave change into a still photograph. The essential composition (the placement of the figure) remains unchanged, while the ‘surface’ gradually evolves.
This work most clearly demonstrates the continuing influence of O'Donoghue and my interpretation of these montages as kinetic paintings. Rather than one final, static composition (as in the plastic arts), the time-based nature of this work allowed multiple painterly interventions to be displayed in a single frame. The metaphor of a ‘painting in process’ is a succinct summation of the non-linear development of the work. Aesthetically, this is the work I was most pleased with in the *Foto-Arbeiten* exhibition.

At [12:00] the entire frame becomes black apart from one bright section encompassing the man’s head and shoulders (Ill. 4.15). This is significant firstly, in that it represents the only instance in the exhibition where the image does not fill the frame. And secondly, because the blackness of the screen-space itself becomes an (im)material
support for the image-fragment. This would help provide an alternative to the single-image in a single-frame paradigm in later works.
4.4.4 *Paul Maizahn (Foto-Reg. 54)*

Single channel durational work. Length: [21:02]. Work is projected in a continuous loop with audio.

This projected work is the longest composition in the exhibition. The video footage introduced at the beginning of the work (and again at [3:40] – Ill. 4.17), of flowing water moving left to right across the screen, represents the only filmic movement in the entire exhibition.

Once again the work is a mixture of heavily cropped, photographic sections and painted elements, in which the ambiguous imagery allows an open interpretation of the work (Ill. 4.18). The rate of change in the work is rather more rapid than in the other pieces, this, in tandem with its projection in a ‘black-box’ space and the presence of an audio track, encouraged a very different spectatorial response. In fact, it is impossible to
analyse this work with out first examining the spectatorial expectations with regard to specific presentation environments.

4.5 The Installation Environment

Alexandro Alberro references the need, with regard to the use of multiple mediums within installation art for a:

- Diligent alertness to the specific structural operation of each medium employed and for an increased awareness of how the production of meaning is not only the result of a work’s thematic content but also intricately dependent on the way a particular work comes together in formal terms and dialogically negotiates the site of its display.

  (2008, p.424)

Tanya Leighton echoes this point, stating: “The phenomenological presence of the viewer and the viewing space [has become] crucial to understanding how a work of art communicates” (2008, p.29).
At the time of *Foto-Arbeiten* the thematic and structural content of the compositions was my primary concern, while the equally important considerations concerning their display were neglected. This is all the more worrying because of the varied modes of presentation involved in *Foto-Arbeiten*. While the most obvious contrast is between the three videos presented on flat screens and the projected image; further points of departure with regard to the framing of the work include the mobility of the viewer in the ‘white-cube’ space and the immobility of the viewer in the ‘black-box’ and in a more subtle sense, the vertical orientation of the flat-screens.

Initially my decision to project one of the compositions was influenced by the architectural layout of the exhibition space; there was a separate side room that could be easily blacked-out. The consequences of that decision, though glaringly obvious in hindsight, were genuinely surprising at the time. What I had failed to consider was that projecting one image on a large scale, in a darkened space with seating provided, elicited a spectatorial response within the habitus of cinematic viewing, irrespective of the thematic content of the montage.

Although all of these durational works develop very slowly, at times imperceptibly, the image projected within a space with certain cinematic hallmarks (a darkened proscenium, the largeness of the image, the seating and indeed the audio29) cued the

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29 Michael Chion makes a very interesting point in relation to the unique temporal characteristics of both sight and sound:

*Each kind of perception bears a fundamentally different relationship to motion and stasis, since sound, contrary to sight, presupposes movement from the outset. In a film image that contains movement many other things in the frame may remain fixed. But sound by its very nature necessarily implies a displacement or agitation, however minimal… As the trace of a movement or a trajectory, sound thus has its own temporal dynamic.* (1994, p.10)

Thus the soundscape in the projected space by definition implied movement, cueing the spectator to expect change within the visual imagery.
audience to the necessity of spending time with the work. While the three compositions presented on flat screens in the main exhibition space, with the appearance of static images in a frame, did not encourage the (mobile) spectator to become involved in an immersive experience.

4.6 White-Cube/Black-Box

Jonathon Walley’s summation of the differences between the ‘white-cube’ and the ‘black-box’ can help us make sense of these differing spectatorial responses:

The difference between artists and film-makers is often expressed in terms of the ‘white cube of the gallery’ and the ‘black box of the theatre’ respectively. The white cube-black box dyad organizes a number of oppositions between the art and film worlds: the sculptural space of artists’ film opposes the theatrical film’s two-dimensionality, the gallery’s mobile viewer is distinguished from the seated cinema spectator. The gallery space enables freedom of choice and
movement among viewer’s who come and go on their own time. While the theatrical space of film screenings putatively constricts the viewer’s temporal and spatial experience.

(2008, p.190)

While the projected composition is not a theatrical film and placed no temporal or spatial constrictions on the viewer (the montage is looped - there is no necessity to view it from beginning to end), still there was a marked difference between the time spent by spectators in the darkened projection space as opposed to the main exhibition space.

Thomas Zummer, although discussing cinema in its traditional, indeed theatrical cultural form, argues that the cinematic effect (our identification with the imagery) is underwritten as much by the architecture and apparatus of the cinema as by the narrative content:

Cinema is a complex intertwining of architecture and memory, technology, perception, unconscious habit, and bodily disposition. It is a ‘lived technology’ whose prosthetic perceptions are naturalized as our own and whose aura of objectivity underwrites our investment in its phantasmatic registers. Inside the cinematic proscenium we are linked to a specular machinery where habitual behaviour modifies and is modified by instruments that interactively construct experience, and our perception of the real is grounded in and by historically contingent technical substrates of unconscious memory.

(2003, p.210)

Peter Osborne succinctly summarises this position, stating that although a time-based ‘quasi-cinematic’ artwork has only a short time to engage and immobilise the mobile
spectator, “once captured the cinematic conditions of blackout will help to keep the viewer lingering” (2004, p.73).

There is no attempt to engender a ‘sense of the real’ within Paul Maizahn (Foto-Reg. 54), yet clearly its placement within a space sharing certain cinematic signifiers encouraged a cinematic response, a cinematic habitus within the viewer. The cinematic space then becomes the stimulus for a delineated series of remembered responses and expectations.

4.7 ‘Contemplative Immersion’

Tanya Leighton echoes this point in her discussion of ‘apparatus theory’30: “The classic argument of 70’s ‘apparatus theory’… forcefully contends that the power of illusion in cinema resides less in the content of films than in the instruments and institutions that make and exhibit them” (2008, p.29). Leighton argues that the goal of this ‘suturing’, this masking of the operations of cinematic narration (2008, p.30), is intended to produce a transparent work. Leighton problematizes what may be described as the immersive transparency of moving-image installations that “simulate the slickness of television or film, aestheticising or ‘artifying’ already well-known experiences of the

30 I do not identify with the ideological viewpoint associated with the structuralist/materialist film theory of the 1970’s. However I do agree with Nicky Hamlyn in that their theories may be usefully adapted to: “Sustain a film-making which reinstates to its programme the investing of perception, exploring the peculiarities of the human eye, the experience of time and movement and their complex relationship to film technology” (1996, p.234)
mind-blowing intensities produced by the media culture at large” (2008, p.34). Leighton defines this form of transparent artwork as being anti-reflexive:

This ‘contemplative immersion’ or ‘absorption’ by the artwork or film does not operate reflexively; it draws attention away from its existence as a construct. It avoids laying bare its own ‘discursive conditions of enunciation’. Rather, it rests on cinema’s ‘reality effect’ – the constitutive illusion of presenting the spectator with an unmediated view of the world and projecting him/her in a distracted state to another place and time.

(2008, p.30)

Leighton goes on to state this problem explicitly, situating it within a politicised, anti-spectacle polemic:

The spatio-temporal conditions of film and video in art-spaces raise the problem of distraction and pose a set of questions such as: how can moving-image installations distract from distraction without simply reproducing distraction and how can they retain their criticality by provoking attention to distraction without falling prey to ‘contemplative immersion’.

(2008, p.30)

These questions, though not to the forefront of my mind during the creation of Foto-Arbeiten, do raise two very interesting points of departure: firstly, I felt a degree of immersion was necessary for a viewer to experience the slowly evolving compositions and secondly, if immersion (immediacy) and transparency were linked, how then could I create immersive montages, when montage by definition is reflexive (that is, it draws attention to its surface, its ‘constructedness’)?
4.8 Windows and Mirrors – Dual Metaphors

Bolter and Gromala adopt the dual metaphors of the window and the mirror, to explore the dialectic between transparency and reflectivity, which I have previously discussed in relation to immediacy and hypermediacy. When an artwork is transparent, the interface acts as a window that the viewer looks through, pulling them into an illusionistic, diegetic world - as in cinema. A reflective artwork is one that shatters the transparency of the ‘window on the world’, becoming a mirrored surface displaying the method of its creation (2003, p. 67). In Bolter and Gromala’s definition, montage/collage is inherently reflective, “in suggesting not that we forget the medium, but rather that we enjoy the medium or process as an experience – not that we look through the experience to a world beyond, but rather that we look right at the surface” (2003, p.66).

Rohdie also defines montage (editing) as a key agent in the creation of a reflective artwork/film:

Every shot, sequence of shots, series of sequences and entire films have two directions. One is toward the reality it depicts and the other toward the composition and enunciation of that depiction. In practices of transparency (that Eisenstein loathes), enunciation is masked to the point of effacement.

(2006, p.34)

Here, we have once again returned to the fundamental interrelationship between immediacy and hypermediacy.
The three works displayed on flat screens in the main exhibition space can perhaps be more easily identified as reflective interfaces. Presenting both R. Tausch (31) (Ill. 4.20) and Paul Maizahn (2) (Ill. 4.21) on screens orientated vertically, though a seemingly innocuous display strategy, instantly foregrounds the interface. The cultural norm is that display-screens (whether cinema, television or computer monitors) are orientated horizontally. In placing these screens vertically, I drew attention to the interface as a framing device as well as a method of display. The verticality of the screen causes a (brief) moment of rupture, foregrounding the interface and shattering transparency. The third work, presented on a flat screen as part of an installation structure, similarly emphasised the screen as interface, by creating a dialogical interrelation between the
moving-image and the surrounding space (the larger enframed material support – a frame within a hypermediated frame). In this sense the frame of the screen does not constitute an “ontological cut – between the material surface of the wall and the view contained within its aperture” (Friedberg 2006, p.5); the enframed screen-space does not operate as a transparent ‘window’ on a virtual world, but rather as one image-surface among many (Ill. 4.22).

Ill. 4.22

How then to regard the projected work? Is there a problem in adopting certain aspects of the cinematic apparatus and habitus (refined over the cinematic century to become transparent) in the presentation of montages? Can a work be reflective, drawing attention to its construction and encourage ‘contemplative immersion’? Leighton posits that one “possible site of resistance in our era of fully realized nihilism (the spectacle)” (2008, p.38), can be found in ‘stillness’, she defines these works as:

Static images, yet at the same time they are moving; they create a heightened awareness of time’s passing. In slowing down, halting the image or simply showing it as it is, slowness perhaps becomes a new and vital strategy, one that brings about renewed attention to an ‘archaeology’ of time.

(2008, p.39)
While I am not interested in developing ‘sites of resistance’, the possibility of slowness, as a different temporal register of experience, does intrigue me. I believe it is overly reductive to describe contemplative immersion and reflectivity as a binary dialectic. The projected work, despite its cinematic presentation, operates reflectively in its slowness (the awareness of time’s passing) and in its abstracted, non-illusionistic picture surface. I feel the works in *Foto-Arbeiten* require an element of contemplative immersion, in order for the viewer to get a sense of their development over time. In contrast to the composition projected within the ‘black-box’ space, the works displayed on the flat screens, viewed as a static image (because of their mode of display, the lack of seating etc.), did not receive sufficient time to be perceived as durational and changing works. While slowness and an abstracted surface are anti-transparency it does not follow that any viewer will devote large quantities of time appreciating that reflectivity.

All of these arguments serve to reinforce the initial point of departure, that the presentational intention behind the works (how work is experienced in a space) is as vital as the thematic and compositional concerns governing the work.

4.9 The Audio

There is one final point to discuss and that is in relation to the audio. I prepared one audio track to play in the darkened space of the projected image. The original source of the audio was a recording of a 70’s radio concert, salvaged from an old reel-to-reel analogue device. This was then treated with digital effects to create an off-kilter soundscape that warbled in and out of audibility. The use of audio was problematic,
once again displaying a lack of clarity in the presentational intention. I now view this use of a soundscape as a ‘short-cut’ to creating an atmospheric environment. The audio was chosen without any consideration for its relationship to the visual material other than I felt it ‘suited’. While the creative practice of *bricolage* is one to be celebrated, it does not remove the necessity of weighing each and every compositional part, particularly when using audio, which can so quickly elicit an emotional response and *colour* an environment.

The audio used within the installation space was non-diegetic, that is, it bore no causal relationship to the visual imagery that shared the space, yet it profoundly impacted upon the reception of the visual work. If the audio was deemed to be ‘unsettling’ then the imagery necessarily became dark and sinister. If the audio was considered to be ‘soothing’ or ‘dreamy’, then it followed that the visual element became a dreamscape. There is nothing revelatory here, yet it is amazing that at the time I presumed my emotive response to the soundscape would be shared by everyone, an interpretation which is in marked contrast to the creation of an ‘open’ artwork. It is because of this unpredictability in the use of audio (particularly it must be emphasised, in the use of found audio), that I decided not to use audio in any of my later works.
CHAPTER FIVE – AT ONCE A SURFACE AND A FRAME

5.1 Rauschenberg Studies One and Two

Before I discuss the exhibition at once a surface and a frame, I need to elucidate certain methodological developments that occurred after Foto-Arbeiten. Rauschenberg Studies One and Two book-end a series of experiments, in which I attempted to move beyond the reliance on the use of cross-dissolves (and the attendant slowness of development) and through the adaptation of Rauschenberg’s flatbed method, to create a picture surface that was far more hypermediated.

Aware that I had reached something of a methodological dead-end in Foto-Arbeiten (I felt the works would only continue to grow slower and more abstract), I attempted to discover new forms of movement and alternate methods of introducing new material. Rather than create painted elements separately and then layer them into the montages, I attempted to turn the process of creating a painting into a durational work. These experiments were literally stop-motion animations of a painting in process, with each new painted layer or mark being photographed and then blended (through opacity changes) into the existing surface – a painting in continuum. I attempted to film the act of painting, firstly to move away from the use of fades and secondly, to try and capture the directional movement of each painted gesture. I experimented with extremely slow shutter speeds with the intention of capturing the paint being applied to the surface, while my arm or hand would be sufficiently blurred as to become invisible; unfortunately these experiments met with little success.
5.1.1 The Influence of Static Collage

Ill. 5.1 Karl Blossfeldt, Urformen der Kunst (Plate 10), 1905-25 (Didi-Hubermann 2010, p.288)

Ill. 5.2 Kurt Schwitters, Merzgebeit 1a, 1922-28 (Didi-Hubermann 2010, p.411)
Ill. 5.3 Benjamin Fondane, *Photo Album*, 1930-38 (Didi-Hubermann 2010, p.374)
At this time I began to study the compositional structure of the (invariably static) collages I considered to be most influential upon my practice. I hoped to understand what the essence of their construction was – what drew me to them. These collages, at their most fundamental, were multiple images placed in adjacency (whether ordered or unordered), *on a surface*. This was most evident in the work of Rauschenberg, whose flatbed method has been discussed at length, in which the surface of the work becomes a material support for a non-hierarchical concatenation of image fragments. The intention was clearly not to create a seamless, illusionistic surface but to celebrate the multiplicity of signifiers sharing the planar surface.

I began to visualise what a durational re-interpretation of a Rauschenberg collage might look like. I felt that it certainly would not appear static, rather it would be a surface in motion, with elements jumping in, shouting over one another, multiple and simultaneous. *Rauschenberg Studies One* and *Two* represent my initial attempts to realise this form of durational work.

### 5.1.2 Rauschenberg Study One

I began this work by, quite literally, putting a surface in place. I was determined that the work would be constructed from fragments, placed in relation to each other, upon this surface. I wondered if I could adapt Rauschenberg’s ‘screenwash’ techniques to this digital format. Screenwash is a method of transferring a photographic image to another surface; the image is soaked in screenwash then rubbed onto the intended surface. It allows an amorphous, ‘ghostly’ image to be transferred, free of a surrounding edge (Ill. 5.4). I wanted to find a digital analogue to this method, to select parts of my images and
remove them from the clean hard edge of their photographic frames. At this time I still felt that the clean lines surrounding the photographic or filmic image needed to be hidden or suppressed. Using Photoshop, I extracted parts of the image from the surrounding frame.

Ill. 5.4 Robert Rauschenberg, Canto XXXI: The Central Pit of Malebolge, The Giants, 1960
(Alloway 1986, p. 39)
Throughout the work, I still hesitated to use jump cuts and there is still a reliance on the use of fades to introduce new material. The filmic material at the bottom of the screen (a flickering yellow light) does introduce a ‘real-time’ sense of movement. Also the bitumen dripping down the screen at [1:54] introduces a form of movement outside of any photographic content and it also serves to emphasize the ‘surfaceness’ of the work. The study is very long (far too long in terms of the rate of change employed) and becomes almost wholly static in the middle section. However it does point to the development of certain techniques that would allow me to create far more dynamic montages in the future. Despite the continuing reliance on fades there is a definite move away from any representation of linear perspective toward an amalgamation of image fragments on a surface.
5.1.3 Rauschenberg Study Two

This study follows the same initial approach as the previous one, beginning with a surface, upon which image-fragments are placed. However, Rauschenberg Study Two represents the first real break from the use of fades. All the images are chopped into the work through the use of jump cuts. Overall, the rate of change in this study is far more rapid than any previously achieved. There is also far less visual ‘sense’ in this work. The surface fluctuates with photographic fragments, cut-out shapes, diagrams, text and patterns. This work is quite literally a durational collage. The impression is one of image-fragments being thrown at a surface. Perhaps most crucially, the video of the smoke-stack exists as a framed image inside the frame of the montage (Ill. 5.9). No attempt is made to suppress the ontological cut delineated by the edges of its individual frame – finally the ruptures between images are foregrounded.

Rauschenberg Studies One and Two represent the first genuine application of hypermediated montage rather than compositing. Multiple framed and unframed images are placed in adjacency upon a surface. The frame of the screen does not operate as a transparent ‘window on the world’ – containing a singular image that fills the frame. Rather, the enframed screen-space becomes a post-perspectival surface ‘holding’
multiple images that retain their bounded identity. These two studies propose a method of spatial montage, in which:

Borders between different worlds do not have to be erased; different spaces do not have to be matched in perspective, scale and lighting; individual layers can retain their separate identities rather than being merged into a single space; different worlds can clash semantically rather than form a single universe.

(Manovich 2001, p.158)
The window is an opening, an aperture for light and ventilation. It opens, it closes; it separates the spaces of here and there, inside and outside, in front of and behind. The window opens onto a three-dimensional world beyond: it is a membrane whose surface meets depth, where transparency meets its barriers. The window is also a frame, a proscenium: its edges hold a view in place. The window reduces the outside to a two-dimensional surface; the window becomes a screen. Like the window, the screen is at once a surface and a frame – a reflective plane onto which an image is cast and a frame that limits its view. The screen is a component piece of architecture, rendering a wall permeable to ventilation in new ways: a “virtual window” that changes the materiality of built space, adding new apertures that dramatically alter our conception of space and (even more radically) of time.

(Friedberg 2006, p.1 – my italics)
at once a surface and a frame takes the window as its point of departure both thematically (the images used are almost exclusively of windows or reference windows) and metaphorically (exploring its virtual corollary, the screen, as both an enframed surface and a transparent window). This exhibition is comprised of a suite of four durational works, each treating the surface of the screen as an (im)material substrate in and of itself. These works represent a formal interpretative break with the illusion of the screen as a transparent ‘window on the world’; as an enframed excision into a three-dimensional perspectival space. The multi-windowed, hypermediated surface of the computer desktop becomes the digital locus point for Rauschenberg’s flatbed method and an infinite variety of digitized still and moving imagery. As the computer desktop denies perspectival space, so too can the black, ‘empty’ screen of the media display become the potential site for spatial montage. As Friedberg states:

Perspective may have met its end on the computer desktop. As computing devices added a screen for the display of data, the graphical user interface (GUI) introduced an entirely new visual system – a text or image in one “window” meets other texts other texts or images in other “windows” on the same screen. Above, below, ahead, and behind are simultaneous on the computer display, where each element in composition is seen separately with no systematic spatial relationship between them.

(2006, p.2)

Understanding the multi-windowed computer desktop as a post-perspectival composition of overlapping and adjacent elements led me to view the display screen as an infinitely thin surface, which (irrespective of the illusionistic and perspectival qualities of the photographic and/or filmic images it displayed) could, like the fractured surfaces of Cubism, hold multiple spatial and temporal planes simultaneously. The
frame of the ‘virtual screen’ still demarcates a ‘windowed elsewhere’, but it is no longer an elsewhere that need conform to the temporal and spatial logic prescribed by a linear, single-point perspective.

5.2.1 Description of Works

5.2.1.1 CONTRACTION-IMAGE (WINDOW ONE)

Single-channel durational work. Length: [16:04]. Presented on a flat screen display (720p) in a horizontal orientation.

Ill. 5.11

The opening image in this work, a video of a window placed against the ‘blackness’ of the screen, may be read as a statement of intent (Ill. 5.11). The screen is a surface, a contextual structure, upon which any image may be situated. When the surrounding image (a windowed room evoking its own pictorial depth), fades in at [00:20], its illusionistic perspective is ruptured by the continuing presence of the ‘disembodied’ window (Ill. 5.12). The two images are related thematically but not ontologically. The
moving-image fragment sits within/above the photograph, disrupting the semiotic homogeneity of the picture-surface. This image may be described as the first demonstrable example of the photo-filmic within my work. The picture-surface resists

![Ill. 5.12](image)

definition as wholly one medium or the other – it is neither an animated still photograph nor a moving-image slowed to reveal its photogrammatic base – but instead both the still and moving image coexist within a hybrid structure that is simultaneous (temporal and spatial) rather than sequential.

![Ill. 5.13](image) ![Ill. 5.14](image)

There are still fades employed throughout this work, however they are far more rapid (one might say determined), announcing the introduction of new material rather than
suppressing it. The beginning of this work is a focused attempt to explore the interplay between surface and depth. An image that inhabits a space of pictorial depth suddenly rests on a surface – as the moving-image of the window does when the layer of pattern is introduced behind it at [1:24] (Ill. 5.13). Up until [3:04] the amalgamated images begin to lose their individuality, becoming subsumed within the image surface (Ill. 5.14). At [3:04] a jump cut shatters the surface of the montage.

The ‘view’ of the building through the window (with its intimations of perspective), is flattened by the introduction of a painted shape, the index smothered by the virtual (Ill. 5.15). The image-fragment of the staircase that fades in over the painted shape has clearly delineated borders. There is no attempt to suppress/disguise its edges; this is montage rather than compositing. Displaying the influence of collage, the image is clearly cut-out from its surrounding photographic context.
Another moving-image of a window cuts in, on the left of the composition at [3:56]. Both the staircase fragment and the window video now inhabit a non-space – the post-perspectival and opaque virtual window (III. 5.16).

On top of this picture surface a heavily blurred video of trees moving in the wind is slowly stuttering into focus, foregrounding – ‘diegetising’ – the apparatus of recording. Emphasising the act (performative, indexical, mediated) of capturing the image, further complicates the temporal relationships within the work. This raises questions with regard to whether short, repeating loops of (circulatory) video are perceptually different from ‘developmental’ videos (in which there is a clear movement/progression from point A to point B), I will return to these questions at the end of the chapter.
At [6:08] the composition cuts back to the original moving-image of the window, placed against the black of the screen, drawing attention to the ‘emergence and assembly’ of the montage. This straightforward image is now questioned by drips of blue paint slowly rolling down its surface – as if down the glass – once again depth becomes surface. The video of the smoke-stack (my constant companion), that fades in at [7:25], quite literally changes the view out the window (Ill. 5.17). The ‘bottom-half’ of the smoke stack video enters the composition at [7:28] (Ill. 5.18). The fixed-frame (horizontal) of the window now becomes a vertical; the initial view through the transparent window is now complicated by a lack of certainty as to what we are looking through. The still-image of stained glass that cuts in at [8:30], further questions whether we are inside-looking-out or outside-looking-in (Ill. 5.19).
At [9:20] a montaged image of buildings fades into the left hand side of the composition. There is no attempt to link the image of the stained glass and this new ‘spatial’ image. At [9:40] parts of the building are ‘flattened’ by painted shapes; disrupting linear perspective and simultaneously highlighting certain windows (Ill. 5.20). Multiple elements cut in simultaneously at [10:18], fracturing the picture surface, which now becomes a concatenation of image fragments, arranged in adjacency on the same picture plane. At [10:22] streaks of bitumen flow from bottom to top on the left side of the screen, once again emphasising its surfaceness (Ill. 5.21).
From this point onwards the composition becomes stable, the arrangement of its constituent parts remaining largely unchanged. The overall appearance of the composition at this point reveals a concerted effort to apply the techniques of collage (image-fragments cut out and pasted down) to the durational montage. When the piece grows darker at [12:43], the structure of the picture surface explicitly echoes the delineated sections of the stained glass (Ill. 5.22). The image of stained glass, as an example of hypermediacy, provides a useful visual corollary to the montage as a whole – many images, clearly bounded, sharing the same planar surface.
5.2.1.2 Contraction-Image (Window Two)

Single channel durational work. Length: [14:42]. Presented in horizontal orientation on a flat screen display (720p).

This work begins with a full frame image but one that denies transparency, being literally an opaque window, which moves slowly backwards and forwards (Ill. 5.23). The absence of pictorial depth means the patterns of the frosted glass appear to slide right to left across the screen. At [1:30] a moving-image of a painting is introduced behind the window. The combination of these two images results in a flattened and abstract picture surface (Ill. 5.24).
In terms of its abstracted picture surface and the presence of painted crosses, this composition is most like the works in *Foto-Arbeiten*. However, the use of filmic material results in a montage that is perceptually very different. The hard edges of a window frame can be seen below/through the layers of pattern. The intention here is not abstraction *per se* but a compressed depth of field.

The combination of the rhythmic movement of the window (movement within the frame) and the movement of the painted crosses (movement of the camera), creates an impression of a supple membrane – a surface tension. After [4:00] a red rectangle fades in to sit on the surface of the work (Ill. 5.25). The rectangle’s bright colour and compositional placement is intended to dissociate it from the surrounding imagery. At [5:27] the repeating pattern of a metal window-grille fades in; this operates, like the red rectangle, to deny a sense of pictorial depth (Ill. 5.26).

At [5:36] a moving-image of leaves is introduced, the image is nearly transparent, enough to unsettle the surface of the composition without suggesting a perspectival space. After [5:54] the work darkens considerably and a geometric shape is introduced, dividing the picture surface into sections (Ill. 5.27). The surface of the work is continually in motion but crucially the motion does not lead to change (in the sense of cause and effect), rather it is non-developmental and aleatory.
The movement is evidence of erratic disturbances beneath the surface (membrane), it does not point to linear, progressive change.

An abstract blue shape fades in at [8:41], the picture surface is now wholly fractured; each layer intimating very little (Ill. 5.28). This surface remains, varying in degrees of brightness until [11:06], when it cuts out revealing the window frame, the red rectangle (now a dark ruby-red) and part of the window-grille pattern (Ill. 5.29). These images are joined at [11:53] by a moving-image of rain hitting a windowpane. Using an extremely shallow depth of field, the focus is pulled on to the rain striking the glass, so as to blur the view outside the window – as if the raindrops were landing on the display screen itself (Ill. 5.30).
Ill. 5.30
5.2.1.3 CONTRACTION-IMAGE (WINDOW THREE)


At [6:27] in length this work is the shortest in the exhibition and it also has the most rapid degree of change. It is also the most explicit in its fragmentation of the image material, clearly displaying the influence of Cubism in its fractured picture surface. The compositional structure of the work may be thought of as a parabola, arcing through stages of construction and then deconstruction.

The montage begins with a moving-image of a door opening and closing. A number of coloured layers quickly fill the frame, flattening the sense of depth. A series of white quadrilateral shapes appear sequentially, they are placed in adjacency and overlapping – the ‘Cubist’ planes of the composition (Ill. 5.31). The rapid addition of a series of de-contextualised windows adds to the multi-planar effect (Ill. 5.32).
At [00:50] an interior of a building cuts in, the image suggests multiple view-points – looking through a windowed reflection into a building, through which can be seen the exterior through the absent roof (Ill. 5.33). At [00:58] a moving-image of a train snaps into the work. The frame of the video is exposed, there is no attempt to suppress or hide the sharply delineated edges of its frame (Ill. 5.34). The ‘ontological cut’ of the master frame is echoed in the individual frames of each image fragment - perhaps most noticeably in this video, in which the train continuously disappears ‘off-frame’.

At [1:09] an inverted church dome is introduced, the geometric fracturing of its surface denies spatiality. In a determined attempt to apply the principles of the flatbed method
to the composition, this building is placed upside-down; the composition no longer strictly follows a ‘top-down’ orientation. This allows a fundamental break with linear perspective, shattering any remaining illusion of ‘real-world’ pictorial space.

A stairwell, its orientation flattened and ambiguous, slices off the right quarter of the composition at [1:23]. Its cleanly cut (if jagged) edge allows it to ‘sit’ on the planar surface of the work (Ill. 5.35). At [1:29] two images cut in simultaneously, though not connected thematically or semantically, their joint entry into the work implies a relationship, this is the subtle power of editing – implying cause-and-effect where there is none. At [1:43] image-fragments of rooftops are cut in, implying pictorial depth, a spatiality denied by the fractured planes surrounding them. At [2:00] another video of a train is introduced, this time running vertically, top to bottom along the left hand side of the composition (Ill. 5.36). This is intended to once again unsettle the correct orientation of the work, as is the moving-image of the upside-down smoke-stack that enters the work at [2:58].
If we regard the compositional structure as being parabolic, then this marks the midpoint – the high-water mark, in terms of the amount of imagery present. After a few moments of stability the montage begins to ‘self-destruct’, breaking down into its constituent parts and drawing attention to the method of its construction through its disassembly (Ills. 5.37 and 5.38).
Single channel durational work. Length: [11:02], projected in a continuous loop.

This montage operates differently than the other works in the exhibition. It is composed as a static frame within a frame. An image of a window is placed centrally within the composition surrounded by the blackness of the screen-space. The image surface of the window is continuously in flux through brightness and contrast changes, lighting effects and superimposed (aleatoric) moving-images.

The window image switches fluidly between transparency and reflectivity, between an impression of its material surface (as lights play over the patterns etched in the glass) and a view through its transparent aperture, of curtains moving in the wind. It is,
perhaps, the most literal interpretation of the exhibition title, being both surface and frame.

I decided to project this montage in the exhibition space because I felt the simplicity of the image (and its emblematic quality) would be best served by a largeness of scale. I hoped it would operate as a colour-field, the subtle (but continuous) movement, eliciting a meditative response from the viewer. Indeed I felt some level of ‘contemplative immersion’ was required for this work, particularly as the work does not display any dramatic change over time; the interplay between surface and depth contains no sense of forward momentum.

While the size of the projected image did suit the display, there were however, two unanticipated consequences that had a deleterious impact on the overall appearance of the montage. Firstly, the blackness of the space surrounding the window-image was patently different than the blackness as it was displayed on a screen. Obviously, a projected image (as a cone of light) can never display true black – it is a black made from light. The blackness of a screen (the absence of colour when it is switched off) is both profoundly empty and concomitantly full – there is a depth to the quality of the black, even as it speaks of nothing but the surface of the screen. Conversely the blackness of the projected image always felt like an approximation of the colour black, a thin simulacrum of absence.

Secondly, and this touches on a larger point which will be discussed in a moment, the frame of a display screen and the frame of a projection (though both representing ontological cuts in the materiality of a wall) are perceptually different. The sense of a
frame within a frame, so obvious when the montage was displayed on a screen was greatly lessened in the projection. The black frame surrounding the screen, which echoed the clearly bounded image of the window, has physicality, a material presence that the absence of light at the edges of the projected image did not match.

5.2.2 The Installation Environment

The exhibition space was a large rectangular room. I decided to place two display screens on the left wall and the third display screen and the projection on the right wall. The placement of the montages on the left was intended to mirror those on the right. A sliding partition wall was used to ‘curtain-off’ the quarter containing the projection. The exhibition space was blacked out in order to make it as dark as possible. All hardware (PC towers, cabling, projector etc.) was carefully hidden within the space, though it could be argued that by doing this I was hiding the interface, it was vital for the overall aesthetic effect. Following the lessons of Foto-Arbeiten, a white bench was placed in front of each image in order to encourage the viewers to spend time with the works.

I was initially concerned that the three screens would be lost within such a large space, but it was quite the opposite. In spacing them far apart, their vivid displays in the dark and otherwise empty room drew people to them. Surprisingly, it was the projection (which I was concerned would dominate the exhibition) that appeared rather dull in comparison to the screens.
5.2.3 Choice of Imagery

The imagery utilised in at once a surface and a frame represents a complete departure from my perceived reliance on archival photographs. All the imagery used was entirely self-generated. This facilitated a certain freedom – the referent (its historicity) was now secondary to the image. The imagery of windows was chosen firstly to reflect the exploration of the screen as a liminal site. Windows may be interpreted as inhabiting a liminal space between inside and outside, between surface and depth. They also presented, by their definition, an individually framed image that I could place within the larger frame of a spatial montage.

5.2.4 Genealogy of the Screen

Manovich begins his attempt to chart a genealogy of the screen, by stating that the screen “has been used to present visual information for centuries – from Renaissance painting to twentieth century cinema” (2001, p.94). He goes on to describe the essential paradox embodied by the ‘ontological cut’ of the frame:

The virtual culture of the modern period, from painting to cinema, is characterised by an intriguing phenomenon – the existence of another virtual space, another three-dimensional world enclosed by a frame and situated inside our normal space. The frame separates two absolutely different spaces that somehow coexist.

(2001, p.95)

Manovich defines this type of screen as the ‘classical screen’. He then discusses the development of the ‘dynamic screen’ concomitant with the birth of cinema, this screen
could “display an image changing over time” (2001, p.96). The dynamic screen crystallises the relationship between the embodied spectator and the mimetic world portrayed within the frame:

The dynamic screen also brings with it a certain relationship between the image and the spectator – a certain viewing regime so to speak. This relationship is already implicit in the classical screen, but now it fully surfaces. A screen’s image strives for complete illusion and visual plenitude, while the viewer is asked to suspend disbelief and to identify with the image. Although the screen in reality is only a window of limited dimensions positioned inside the physical space of the viewer, the viewer is expected to concentrate completely on what she sees in this window, focusing her attention on the representation and disregarding the physical space outside. This viewing regime is made possible by the fact that the singular image, whether a painting, movie screen or television screen, completely fills the screen.

(2001, p.96 – my italics)

This is a vital point, the identification with the illusionistic, diegetic world within the frame of the dynamic screen is predicated on a single image that completely fills the screen; immediacy and transparency are inextricably linked. I now understand that the works within Foto-Arbeiten, though not in themselves illusionistic, continued to obey the principle of a single image that treated the frame of the display screen as an excision into a three-dimensional space.

The works within at once a surface and a frame represent an interpretative break with the strictures of the ‘dynamic screen’ and its implicit relationship to a linear, monocular perspective. The frame, of what I will term for the sake of clarity (in opposition to and a
development of the classical and dynamic screens) the *virtual screen*, still demarcates a ‘windowed elsewhere’ but it is no longer an elsewhere that need conform to the temporal and spatial logic prescribed by a linear perspective. As Friedberg states: “A *virtual* window is reliant not on its transparency but on its opacity; its highly mediated modulation of light provides an aperture: not to a reality, but to a delimited *virtuality*” (2006, p.138).

Through the development of the suite of works that comprise *at once a surface and a frame*, I had come to understand the enframed screen space as an infinitely thin surface which irrespective of the illusionistic qualities of the photographic or filmic images it contained, could, like the fractured surfaces of Cubism, hold multiple spatial and temporal planes simultaneously.

Friedberg elaborates on the ‘ontological cut’ presented by the frame:

*As a viewer of *virtual* images, the moving-image spectator has a bodily presence in material architectural space, yet engages with virtually rendered immaterial space framed on the screen… The frame becomes the threshold – the liminal site – of tensions between the immobility of a spectator/viewer/user and the mobility of images seen through the mediated “windows” of film, television, and computer screens. But the frame also separates the *materiality* of spectatorial space from the *virtual immateriality* of spaces seen within its boundaries.*

(2006, p.6)

In developing this point, I would conceptualise the space of the screen as being not just a demarcation between materiality and virtual immateriality but as a liminal space
between surface and depth, between transparency and reflectivity and between immediacy and hypermediacy. I would argue that the construction of spatial montage must necessarily interact with this liminality to achieve its effect.

Following the taxonomy of spatial montage adapted from Youngblood in Chapter One, the works within *at once a surface and a frame* represent a combination of all of these compositional possibilities. The works offer examples of photo-filmic images seen in superimposition, as well as simultaneous framed and unframed images seen both sequentially and in adjacency. These works may be seen to combine both of the representational strategies discussed in relation to Marey and Muybridge, presenting images in superimposition (Marey) and multiple, spatially separated images (Muybridge). Key to this methodological development was an understanding that as well as being a virtual surface, the frame of the spatial montage (like the page on which Muybridge’s studies were printed), need not conform to a representation of a linear reality but could instead hold multiple frames within itself.

Sam Rohdie provides a theoretical structure through which to view these ‘frames within a frame’:

> There is the frame. The frame is usually a cut-out, an extract, an excision from the pro-filmic. The frame establishes a border between what-is-on-screen within the frame and what is off-screen, beyond it. It implies a continuum between the on-screen and off-screen. The one is simply a fragment of the other as a part is to a whole. Every fragment refers back to a unity.

(2006, p.35)
Through the practical development of *at once a surface and a frame*, I came to understand that I had unconsciously conformed all of my previous ‘montages’, to an enframed, transparent space that was an excision from a continuous (if virtual) reality. The photographic and filmic materials were carefully placed so as to maintain the integrity of the frame as a fragment of a pro-filmic whole. In *at once a surface and a frame* the spatial montage itself is understood to be a frame, a membrane that holds fragments of reality – it is *not itself* a fragment of a reality. The spatial montage lexis does not relate to the ‘dynamic screen’ rather it is the virtual screen.

The spatial montages present a new lexical structure to hold the photo-filmic material. The still and moving images are removed from their normative social lexes. The moving images are presented as short, looping sections denying a developmental, causal narrative. The still images are held within a dematerialised structure that lends them duration. The frame of the spatial montage confounds the rigid ‘tense’ structure of these mediums. As Friedberg states:

> A “windowed” multiplicity of perspectives implies new laws of “presence” – not only here and there, but also *then* and *now* – a multiple view – sometimes enhanced, sometimes diminished – out the window.

(2001, p.5)

The spatial montages operate both simultaneously and successively - they change over time. However it is important to clarify that this change does not conform to a causal narrative logic. The development of each spatial montage is aleatoric – a durational process rather than teleological sequentiality.
The photographic and filmic images, each representing an enframed illusionistic space are held within the bounded, finite frame of the spatial montage. This enframed space represents an infinitely thin membrane – a liminal site – where surface meets depth. Paradoxically, this infinitely thin surface is *temporally thick* – a locus point for multiple temporalities, the multiple planes, positions and perspectives of time presented simultaneously and in adjacency. Time is created in the gaps and ruptures *between* the multiple spatially and temporally fractured images.

**5.2.5 A Visual Taxonomy of Spatial Montage**

Following the taxonomical definition of spatial montage discussed in Chapter One - in which a spatial montage may consist of multiple photo-filmic images, arranged in superimposition and/or as spatially separated framed/unframed images, seen simultaneously and/or in succession - the next section details a visual taxonomy of the types of spatial montage (present at different stages to differing degrees) in the works presented in part two of the exegesis.
Etude No. 4 offers an example of superimposition or overlay, in which multiple image materials are composited together to present a visually homogenous (though technically heterogenous) single image in a single frame. The image adheres to a linear perspective.
Paul Maizahn (Foto-Reg. 54) from Foto-Arbeiten also demonstrates superimposition. The abstracted image surface no longer intimates spatial depth. This image does not display compositing but is rather a multiple image montage.

**Spatially Separated Unframed Images**

![Rauschenberg Study Two – Frame Still](image)

In this image multiple unframed image objects are presented in adjacency and overlapping. The images are viewed in simultaneity and sequentially, as new image-material is added to the composition.
SPATIALLY SEPARATED FRAMED IMAGES

In this image from *Contraction-Image (Window One)* we can see multiple framed photo-filmic images placed in superimposition and adjacency on the same picture plane. Each individual frame held within the master-frame of the spatial montage no longer operates as a bounded excision into a three-dimensional pro-filmic reality.
CONCLUSION

This thesis traces both a theoretical and methodological response to Manovich’s spatial montage. It is my contention that digital spatial montage provides a unique set of conditions for the mediation of a non-linear experience of time. In order to clarify the conclusions drawn from both the methodological development of the artefacts and the conceptual framework within the exegesis, it is useful to return to the two conditions Manovich deems necessary for the construction of a spatial montage:

1. Juxtapositions of elements should follow a particular system, and
2. These juxtapositions should play a key role in how the work establishes its meaning.

I will discuss these two conditions individually before describing their interrelationship within my methodology. I will begin with the second condition, which, within my methodology, has been concerned with the temporal meaning produced by digital spatial montage and more specifically relates to whether spatial montage can mediate a non-linear experience of time. To answer this it was necessary to understand the operations of montage in general, as well as the inherent temporalities of its constituent parts – the photographic and filmic image.

Spatial montage, in placing multiple photographic and filmic images in adjacency within a frame celebrates the ruptures between images. These ruptures produce a divergence between image and meaning. Time is not represented by the image-referent, in the individual historicity (as biographical fragment) of the still or moving image.
Rather, the concatenation of image fragments, in resisting a hierarchical or narrative structure, creates time between images. This time is non-linear; it is not a forward moving arrow. Within digital spatial montage the normative social conditions of the photographic and filmic image have been removed – the dematerialised photographic image now exists in duration, the filmic image is no longer a vehicle for sequential narrative, it is non-developmental and aleatory.

In order to understand the altered nature of the photographic image present in a digital spatial montage it was vital that I dismantle the Barthian conception of the photographic image as being inextricably linked to death. This is not only because the Barthian discourse has been the dominant theoretical framework for photography since the latter half of the twentieth century, but more importantly because it dominated my own understanding of the photograph for many years. This conception of photography prevented me from understanding the temporal possibilities of the photograph outside of its associative relationship to absence and loss, and ultimately, the death of the referent. Certainly these are powerful cultural associations with regard to the photograph (which I have no doubt will continue to exist as long as family photograph albums continue to be made), however, viewing the photograph as a lamination of image and referent presented a conceptual (and aesthetic) barrier. The photograph became a form of ‘loaded’ imagery (and still is in relation to the photographic portrait) inhibiting its compositional use.

For spatial montage to create a non-linear experience of time, I believe it must be an open work. It must somehow approach an almost empty signification, to be connotatively insignificant (literally a ‘non-sign’). This requires presenting images that
offer glimpses of reality to the viewer - ‘with the drama removed’ - and yet preventing these images (within the frame of spatial montage) from providing a transparent reproduction of reality.

In order to examine how this has been achieved I will return to the first of Manovich’s conditions, which relates to how a spatial montage is structured. The spatial montage I have developed operates between the double logic of remediation, between immediacy and hypermediacy. To understand this it has been necessary to position spatial montage as one hypermediated representational strategy within an historical continuum. I have argued that immediacy and hypermediacy are cultural counterparts. Although immediacy may be viewed as the dominant form of representation in western visual culture (since the Renaissance), hypermediacy has never been fully suppressed.

Developing a methodological approach to digital spatial montage demanded an understanding of the immediacy of the singular cinematic image. Narrative cinema is the result of a remarkable evolution and development of its visual language over the course of a century. It is necessarily transparent and legible in order to entertain as wide an audience as possible. The single image in a single frame, as well as synced images and sound and careful continuity editing are fundamental components of cinema’s immediacy. I am under no illusions that spatial montage (as I have developed) will challenge that dominance.

But our contemporary visual landscape is being rapidly altered. I question whether the coherent, illusionary single image of cinema remains the most appropriate response to this changing visuality. Our contemporary representational habits are multiple and
fractured, both in the ever growing number of display devices present in the urban environment and the multiple frames within frames present within these devices. Within this altered visual landscape fragmentation and simultaneity would appear as more relevant analogies for human experience than the transparent single image.

While our fundamental mode of perception has not changed, perception may be conditioned by representational habits. The multiple windows of the desktop interface are emblematic of these new representational strategies. As Friedberg eloquently summarises:

As the beholders of multiscreen “windows” we now receive images – still and moving, large and small, artistic and commercial – in spatially and temporally fractured frames. This new space of mediated vision is post-Cartesian, postperspectival, postcinematic and posttelevisual and yet remains within the delimited bounds of a frame and seen on a screen.

(2006, p.7)

The conceptualisation of the media window as a post-perspectival, hypermediated composition of overlapping and adjacent planes was vital to my methodological development of spatial montage. Firstly, hypermediacy - formerly associated with modernist movements and the avant-garde - is now culturally ubiquitous, yet despite this ubiquity it has yet to be fully explored aesthetically or with regard to the spatio-temporal complexities it engenders. Secondly, it allowed me to view the virtual screen as an infinitely thin surface, a liminal site between immediacy and hypermediacy – where surface meets depth. I now understood the screen as an opaque surface rather than as a transparent window on the world.
The development of a methodological approach to spatial montage, which is traced within these chapters may be summarised as the destabilising of the single image within a single frame. For this concept to evolve from theory to practice required that the frame of the screen no longer demarcated a transparent ‘window on the world’ – an enframed excision into a three-dimensional space – but must rather be understood as an infinitely thin surface: a black, ‘empty’ non-space.

Ill. 6.1 Where They Fell, May 2011 – Frame Still
These two illustrations demonstrate the fundamental link between theory and practice within my methodology. Ill. 6.1 is a frame still from the first spatial montage I developed in May 2011, while Ill. 6.2 is taken from *at once a surface and a frame*. Eighteen months separates these two images, yet they are uncannily similar. They both depict windows surrounded by the blackness of the screen. The difference between them lies in how I understood the screen-space in both works. Within the first image the enframed space is a *perspectival space*, though the space surrounding the window is in darkness, I imagined it to conform to an illusion of three-dimensional space. In the second image however, the blackness surrounding the depicted window is an unadulterated surface, the relationship between the enframing blackness and the window is not that of an object in space but rather *a material and its ground* (to adopt the language of painting). While this takes only a paragraph to explain, it took eighteen months of development to turn theory into practice.
The development of the works described in part two traces a deliberate move away from a composites, singular image in a single frame, conforming to linear perspective, toward multiple images within a post-perspectival frame. A visual example taken from Eisenstein provides a clear demonstration of the singular cinematic image (immediacy) versus the multiple-image (hypermediated frames within frames).

**Ill. 6.3 Sergei Eisenstein, ‘Diagram of variable framing of branches’, (Friedberg 2006, p.200).**

Within this instructional diagram each enframed section of the cherry tree branch represents a cinematic ‘shot’, that is, a single image contained within the frame of the screen. The earlier works described in Chapters Three and Four adhere to the single image principle of the dynamic screen, relying on the use of fades to superimpose multiple images, while conforming them to the single image in a single frame paradigm. The works in *at once a surface and a frame* propose another methodology, one that views Eisenstein’s diagram as a montaged composition – multiple frames placed in adjacency within a master frame. While each framed image within the master frame
may act as a fragment of a pro-filmic reality (consistent with a linear perspective) the master frame becomes a post-perspectival surface holding visual information.

Conceptualising the screen as an infinitely thin hypermediated space is inextricably linked, within my methodology, with temporal thickness. A multiplicity of images embodies a temporal multiplicity. The screen becomes a liminal site between surface and depth – immediacy and hypermediacy – but also a site of collapsed spatial and temporal superimpositions, where the then and the now continue to co-exist. The hypermediated lexis of spatial montage, just as it is not a unified, singular image, is also not a singular moment in time; rather it produces multiple images of time experienced in the present (when we take in visual information) as a simultaneity.

The discussions within this thesis may be situated within the wider cultural discourse surrounding what is now termed the *New Aesthetic*, centred around the work of John Bridle. The *New Aesthetic* is concerned with the impact of digital and Internet aesthetics on our representational culture at large. In this context, the thesis and the accompanying artefacts, may be understood as an original contribution to, and an interrogation of, our rapidly evolving contemporary representational strategies.

The question remains as to whether the Sebaldian temporal experience described in the foreword can ever truly be mediated. Can an experience that was entirely subjective and embodied – an experience of a condensation of time *in a place* – ever be mediated or indeed aestheticized? As a subjective experience it is unwise to expect a universal spectatorial response to an artwork, yet I believe that in its hypermediated capacity to present multiple spatially and temporally fractured moments simultaneously, in
destabilising the assumptive social roles of photography and film and in presenting ‘open’ imagery, spatial montage provides a unique set of conditions capable of mediating a non-linear experience of time.
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of Luton.


APPENDIX A: LIST OF ACCOMPANYING ARTEFACTS

There follows a detailed description of the works included in the exegesis. Extracts of these works are available on Vimeo.

ETUDE NO. 4

Single channel durational work
Duration: 11:37
Format: 720p HD in a horizontal orientation.

FOTO-ARBEITEN -

1. PAUL MAIZAHN (2)
   Single channel durational work
   Duration: 18:23
   Format: 720p HD in a vertical orientation

2. ATLAS – REPROPHOT 8/15 66D
   Single channel durational work
   Duration: 16:44
   Format: 720p HD in a horizontal orientation

3. R. TAUSCH (31)
   Single channel durational work
   Duration: 17:04
   Format: 720p HD in a vertical orientation

4. PAUL MAIZAHN (FOTO-REG. 54)
   Single channel durational work
   Duration: 21:02
   Format: 720p HD in a horizontal orientation

Foto-Arbeiten was exhibited at Raggle Taggle, Limerick, February 2012.
RAUSCHENBERG STUDY ONE
Single channel durational work
Duration: 8:35 (Excerpt)
Format: 720p HD in a vertical orientation

RAUSCHENBERG STUDY TWO
Single channel durational work
Duration: 3:23
Format: 720p HD in a horizontal orientation

AT ONCE A SURFACE AND A FRAME
1. CONTRACTION-IMAGE (WINDOW ONE)
   Single-channel durational work
   Duration: 16:04
   Format: 720p HD in a horizontal orientation.

2. CONTRACTION-IMAGE (WINDOW TWO)
   Single channel durational work
   Duration: 14:42
   Format: 720p HD in a horizontal orientation

3. CONTRACTION-IMAGE (WINDOW THREE)
   Single channel durational work
   Duration: 6:27
   Format: 720p HD in a horizontal orientation

4. CONTRACTION-IMAGE (WINDOW FOUR)
   Single channel durational work
   Duration: 11:02
   Format: 720p HD in a horizontal orientation

at once a surface and a frame was exhibited at Steambox Gallery, Dublin, September 2012.