THE CONSEQUENCE OF BEING HERE:

THE PHENOMENON OF PERSONAL EXPRESSION

THROUGH THE LENS

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A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

FOR THE PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF FINE ARTS

GRADUATE PROGRAM IN FILM

YORK UNIVERSITY,

TORONTO, ONTARIO

JULY 2008

Abstract

The primary trajectories of <u>The Consequence of Being Here</u> are twofold:

1. The first trajectory is a body of film work that expands conventional approaches to home movie making by demonstrating the possibilities of a wider creative and critical spectrum in regards to the representation of familial form and content.

2. The second trajectory is a body of writing, in the form of a critical essay, which scrutinizes conceptions of personal expression by examining the film work from within phenomenological discourses, technological transformations, historical lineages that include the work of influential filmmakers, producer/consumer relationships, and challenges to authorship. An argument is formed that considers how processes of emotional, intellectual, and physical attenuation can either inhibit or contribute to a more dynamic and uniquely personal creative voice.

Each trajectory is intended as supplemental to the other, and comprises a parallel exploration into the areas that have been outlined.

Acknowledgements

Above all, I would like to thank my family: Jennifer Egleston, Raven Egleston, Rhaia Egleston, and Ashon Egleston. Your light makes my images dance, gives my work a purpose, and completes my world. I would like to thank my thesis committee: Philip Hoffman, Wyn Geleynse, and Laurence Green. Your friendships, guidance, and commitments to my work are invaluable to me. I would like to thank my fellow students, as well as the staff and faculty in the Graduate Program in Film at York University, whose contributions have enriched my time and experience at York. And finally, I would like to thank my colleagues at the University of Western Ontario, without whose patience and understanding my graduate work would have been much more difficult to realize. Thank you.

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1. Introduction

The Consequence of Being Here is a thesis project unified by the parallel

experiences that have occurred throughout its process of becoming. As both a film project

and a written project, both are intended as a supplement to the other. The film work

encompasses the mode of making with which I have been most concerned in the past five

years; that is the 'home mode' of visual production which coincides with the birth of my

children and my adventure into the world of parenthood.[1] Consequently, this work

reflects deeply on universal issues such as life, death, and personal issues such as those

concerning family. As a reaction against the use of prescriptive modes to articulate our

lives through the images and sounds we record, my filmmaking practice embodies an

open-process way of working which considers the ongoing current of personal experience

as essential to gaining an understanding of how personal expression finds form. The

research work that comprises the written project locates an historical and theoretical

discourse through which the film work should be considered, and it is my intention for

this document to serve as a support base for understanding the ways my filmmaking

process reflects how personal expression through the lens of a camera can be approached.

In forming the support base, this research paper scrutinizes conceptions of personal

expression in the lens-based processes of photography and filmmaking by examining

phenomenological discourses, technological and historical transformations,

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[1] In his book Snapshot Versions of Life, Richard Chalfen describes how home movies, home videos, and amateur snapshots are products of what he calls 'home mode communication'. The home mode designates common attributes among the vast majority of home made visual documents that further comprise Chalfen's understanding of a highly patterned 'Kodak culture' in the home mode of amateur photography. Common attributes include: positive aspects of family life, socially accepted transitions such as weddings, graduations, and vacations. Uncommon attributes include: mundane daily activities, funerals, and any other family crisis (Chalfen).

producer/consumer relationships, and challenges to authorship. Using examples from my

own work integrated with the works of other filmmakers, artists, and writers, an argument

is formed that considers how processes of emotional, intellectual, and physical

attenuation can either inhibit or contribute to a more dynamic and uniquely personal

creative voice.

2. Making Marks

I am about to take a picture of my oldest daughter. She is fussy today and our relationship is a little bit strained right now; her trust in me is wavering. Last week she fell and cut herself badly enough that I had to take her to the hospital. The cut required stitches and the doctor made me pin her down so that he could do his work. So, today she smiles for me, and my story is hidden deep within. I think about how this stage is a misconception and how she will remember this photograph over and over again, just like the scar she will carry from her stitches; both removed from the moment they happened but carrying their stories.

The locus of Being can be understood as a confrontation of the past and the

future; an ebb and flow of memory and anticipation that affects our sensitivity to

phenomena. Edmund Husserl articulates this process by voicing Franz Brentano's

original idea:

> On the basis of the appearance of momentary recollections, phantasy
> forms ideas of the future in a process similar to that through which,
> circumstances permitting, we arrive at ideas of certain new varieties of
> colour and sound while keeping to known forms and relations. In
> phantasy, we can transpose a melody which we have heard in a certain key
> and on the basis of a definite tonal species to different registers. In this
> way it can very well be that, proceeding from known sounds, we can
> arrive at sounds as yet we have never heard. In a similar way – that is to

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say, in expectation – phantasy forms the idea of the future from the past. The notion that phantasy is able to offer nothing new, that it exhausts itself in the repetition of the same elements already given in perception, is one that is completely erroneous. (Husserl 33)

Brentano's thoughts regarding the reworking of known forms in order to arrive at new forms establishes a basic framework through which my filmmaking process can be situated. It is useful then, to scrutinize the placement of creativity within the phenomenological discourse laid out in Brentano's argument wherein the affect of emotional, intellectual, and physical sensitivity contributes to the distinction of a unique voice throughout the creative process. Personal reactions to the risk-potential in sensual engagement should also be considered by how personal expression in the creative process becomes attenuated in varying degrees by the discretion of the individual, their particular history, and their anticipation of the future. As much of this paper will be discussing processes which distinguish the unique signs of authorship – specifically, aspects that signify the authenticity of an individual, their movement, presence, and consequently the marks they make, it will be useful to build upon my arguments by gaining an understanding of how issues surrounding authenticity have surfaced in my own work and more broadly, in contemporary culture.

The Consequence of Being Here is a project that unifies a variety of elements through the expressive characteristics of a creative Being. As the maker of the work my mark is singular, and although my reflections often include those that are close to me, the end results would not be the same in the hands of another. The basic building blocks for

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most of my work can be founded on the types of images and sounds that, in their most conventional forms, are found most commonly in family photo albums and home movies. My process deviates from conventional aspects of these forms, however, by how I choose to interpret these images and sounds and then re-contextualize them. Through the practice of image gathering and editing the creative process becomes a living extension that extends into the world as an active receptor and transmitter; the form of the project fluctuates until it finds cohesion, then further engages as an experience intended as a reflective space for others to relate their own experiences. My role in this process, like the role of my audience, is essential for the realization of the project. Although the formal attributes in most home practices can be located within specific market trends or technological 'gimmicks', in The Consequence of Being Here the aesthetic possibilities and mechanical restrictions of such attributes (for example, lower image resolutions) are often utilized as devices through which the dialogue between personal experience and the effects of a medium are articulated.

The technological shift to digital forms in most media has opened new ways of understanding how such transformations comprise an historical continuity. As a specific example, lens-based media can be viewed from its pre-photographic inception through to its photochemical developments and further to its current evolution in digital technology. Medium specificity in lens-based media distinguishes fundamental differences in how images are recorded yet these differing processes co-exist within the historical continuity of such categories as 'photography' or 'cinema'; even in these categories there is cross-

pollination. For example, as a filmmaker whose work utilizes moving images that are grounded in the discourses of still photography it is not a stretch for me to deduce how the moving image can be understood as a succession of instances. Though the reduction of the moving image to the still image is a broader approach to understanding the cross-pollination of photography and cinema, more direct assessments can be made through the thematic concerns of my work. The Consequence of Being Here raises such concerns, whether addressed through the structure of a slide show or by showing the process of editing photos on the back of a digital camera, photographic discourses are of central concern in the work. In photography, the technological shift from photochemical processes to digital processes has brought about new ways of approaching 'photography.' Even in the history leading up to the inception of photography many of the aesthetic attributes defining contemporary photography are already firmly planted. Continuities also exist in technical advances, where digital photography has awakened awareness to attributes of photography that have always existed but were previously less pronounced. As an example, digital photography has become unhinged from any empirical preconceptions of the referent and, in fact demonstrates that the idea of a photographic referent in photochemical processes has always been a delineated concept.[2] Now, the absence of the referent shifts the conception of the photograph as a process based on the empirical observation of the world to a process heavily saturated in the realization of

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[2] The term 'referent' refers to the actual object or subject recorded. Even as early as the middle of the 20th century, André Bazin asserts in his essay "The Ontology of the Photographic Image" that: "The photographic image is the object itself, the object freed from the conditions of time and space that govern it" (Bazin 14). Ideas that situated the photograph as a referent unto itself, a new referent resulting from its process of becoming, were planted well before digital technology reclaimed this awareness.

conceptual perception. Apart from theoretical discourses that involve a unitary view of the digital apparatus, historical lineages such as 'photography' are influenced foremost by human action and indicate that the evolution of technology is fundamentally motivated by human desire. By knowing that technological developments have at their root an individual whose will brought about the chain of events leading to these developments, the foundation of the argument concerning authenticity and authorship finds form. Although The Consequence of Being Here draws on a variety of discourses, they are unified within broader social/cultural lineages, and ultimately by the characteristics of the creative process.

 As counterintuitive to my filmmaking process, postmodern concepts of authorship consider the recirculation of the past as a significant step towards doing away with the creative impetus that marks a work with the presence of a unique creator. The rhetoric effaces Brentano's argument: there is nothing to be said that has not already been said. Creative practices such as writing move away from a concept that designates the author as the Being through which all interpretations occur, to one which is an amalgam of all writing subject to a reader's interpretation in order to give the text meaning. In his essay, "The Death of the Author", Roland Barthes discredits the validity of assigning a text with a unique author, for "to give a text an Author is to impose a limit on that text, to furnish it with a final signified, to close the writing [...]" (Barthes 147). Yet, if one does not have an insight into the creative context of a given work they also impose a similar limitation on how that work can be interpreted, and the possibilities for enriching their

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interpretation of the work becomes closed off. I can legitimately argue that <u>The Consequence of Being Here</u> can be read and interpreted without a thorough understanding of my personal history, however, if one gains access to such knowledge it can only be seen as enriching the experience of the work. Ultimately, my argument calls for a renewal in the idea of authorship and works against the postmodern rhetoric concerning recirculation, multiplicity, and convention, where familiarity and comfort accompany patterns that replace individuality within the greater schemes of global producer/consumer relationships.

3. Safe Havens

Fredric Jameson has famously argued that through our inability to unify the past or the future we commonly find solace in what is familiar to us (Jameson 502). Consumers and producers alike trust the safety of the familiar, thus consumption and production patterns dwell upon repetition, multiplicity, and convention in objects of commodity. However, Jameson spins the negative emotions of fear and anxiety normally associated with the unfamiliar and the unknown (which he relates with schizophrenia), so that they receive positive uses through our inability to achieve a gestalt in our perception of the past or the future. As a consequence, we seek to counter our fear of the unknown with our most typical, euphoric, and universally accepted narratives. Much of my film work has focused specifically on the 'fear of the unknown', and I have always maintained that if I feel overly comfortable with a given work I begin to question its vitality. In <u>The</u>

<u>Consequence of Being Here</u> I am working to undermine conventional approaches to home movie making, where my concerns belie universally accepted narratives by expanding their representational scope and trajectory. By incorporating content in my work which deals explicitly with aspects of our lives we tend to block out of our representations of experience (I am thinking of such experiences as: mourning the death of a loved one, expanded views of childbirth, and the various anxieties of parenthood), my aim is to create a body of work that presents a more dynamic and subjectively truthful interpretation of personal and familial life. By opening my filmmaking process up to the expanded spectrum of experience, emotions associated with my fears of the unknown continually rub against my instincts to provide a safe environment for my family. The instinct to draw upon positive attributes from past experiences often act against the intentions of my creative judgment, and the danger often arises that the project will materialize through highly sentimentalized forms – all of the 'happy moments' so to speak. But, through consciously working to look beyond the instinctual tendencies to work within the safe strictures of positive influence my filmmaking practice works to expand the creative potential within the full spectrum of an experience.

The yearning for a 'safe haven' in a world that is increasingly at risk is played out in the narrative fabric of most social and economic structures, where nostalgia is generally attached to things that have been previously received into the realm of positive influence. Consumerist activities are invoked by the fear of the unknown and are generated as part of the global continuity with which we are constantly faced. The

emotional texture that enters into such a pattern is inextricably linked to Jameson's

reasoning of the 'joyous intensities' he relates to the affect of familiarity, and which

serves as the dialectical counterpart to the negative attributes of fear. Consumers

adequately and safely fulfill the lack instilled by their desire for the positive attributes of

past experience by re-enacting an experience designed to be profitable. Here, the

producer's measure of profitability directly relates to the uncertainty of the future and

most commonly finds comfort in replaying successful patterns of profitability from the

past. As evidenced, certainly The Consequence of Being Here is not designed for

profitability. The very idea of expanding an impression of an experience by looking

towards its negative emotive qualities sets the work directly against the realm of positive

influence. As the producer of the work, I believe strongly that creative compromises do

not contribute well to a work of art's unique signs of authorship, and instead the

distinction of a creative voice becomes muted and more difficult to decipher through such

compromises. Successful motion picture franchises fully embrace social/economic

patterns in producer/consumer relationships and embody the consequences of utilizing

safe frameworks and their design for profitability substitutes any possible signs of

authorship. Increasingly, individuals are becoming more distanced from the connection

between sensual engagement and the reification of emotion through the creative process,

a phenomenon that will be discussed later through an assessment of Walter Benjamin's

idea that mechanical reproduction diminishes the 'aura' of an original artwork. Still, the

logic of an inauthentic sensual experience seems absurd. We are unique beings despite

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our common and shared experiences, and we have the innate ability to transfer a shared experience to one that is uniquely individual.

4. Living Images

In returning to Husserl's re-articulation of Brentano, Brentano incites the discovery of new forms through familiar forms: "On the basis of the appearance of momentary recollections, phantasy forms ideas of the future in a process similar to that through which, circumstances permitting, we arrive at ideas of certain new varieties of colour and sound while keeping to known forms and relations" (Husserl 33). Husserl continues by criticizing one of Brentano's oversights. If what we conceive of the past is a phantasy formed through the associations of recollection, then a phantasy that forms ideas of the future through the resource of recollection is based upon the emptiness of a phantasy to phantasy conundrum. According to Husserl, "here we run up against an unresolved difficulty with regard to Brentano's which brings the accuracy of his analysis of originary time-consciousness into question" (Husserl 37). Instead, Husserl seeks to provide an absolutely certain ground for perceptual knowledge through a process of reduction, where by bracketing off phenomena from the natural world he can begin the process of uncovering the essence of the particular phenomenon. Modernist conceptions of the relationship of medium specificity to form echo Husserl's intent to uncover the essence of a phenomenon, however such conceptions do not consider the possibility of a more significant essence beyond a specific medium. If in photography, for example, the

inherent qualities of the photochemical medium are compared to those of the digital medium, differences can be determined which distinguish each perceptual phenomenon as unique. In the same comparison, similarities between the properties of each medium indicates that medium specificity misaligns the phenomenological essence of photography, where beyond the medium, the essence of photography is really tied to its uses by an individual. A concern for understanding my filmmaking practice beyond the restrictions and limits of a specific medium are located in Husserl's deductive phenomenology, where my emphasis on the creative force rather than the tools used for its expression helps to root the essence of my creative process. As The Consequence of Being Here demonstrates, a variety of mediums and their affiliated tools (digital and photochemical photos, 16mm film, and digital video) are unified through their use to express the thematic concerns of the work.

Footage that utilizes the formal properties of one medium can be encased in another while preserving the intention of the content. As an example from The Consequence of Being Here, the video transfer of a black and white film sequence depicting a family portrait retains the intended meaning of the sequence despite traversing mediums. As the sequence begins it is difficult to distinguish any concrete content – much of the footage from the first half of this sequence was shot with the lens unseated from the mount of the camera. Consequently, the exposure flares created by light leaking around the lens and the soft focus created by the unstable lens positioning contribute to the impermanent and fleeting quality of the images. Coupled with the sound

of a uterine ultrasound recording of one of my children and further transformed through hand processing and optical printing (a technique that is used to create freeze-frames, slow/fast motion effects, superimpositions, and reframing effects for analogue film), the visuals draw on the sound of the searching ultrasound swirls as the baby's heartbeat is located, then lost, located, then lost, etc. Much like the images, the elusive heartbeat of the baby sets up a contrast to the fallibility of most home movie recordings designed to preserve the most cherished family moments with clarity. As the sequence progresses a sound recording from a childbirth delivery penetrates those of the ultrasound, and the visuals cycle in slow and fast motion 'bursts' to explore the temporal experience of childbirth labour. Although this film sequence needed to be transferred to digital video so that it could be further integrated with other sequences comprising the work, the message it carries unifies the purpose and plurality of mediums.

By maintaining that it is the creative force that is responsible for unifying the representation of experience rather than the tools or medium of choice, it is difficult for me to grasp the possibility of being totally immersed in the essence of an experience while interacting with it through the intermediary position of the camera. While I was working on the birth section of my film, the knowledge of other filmmakers approach to childbirth with a camera troubled me, especially in situations where the camera becomes a mediator between the maker and the immersive experience of childbirth. In Stan Brakhage's Window Water Baby Moving (1959), it is impossible to dismiss the intermediary role of the camera (as an extension of Brakhage's bodily essence) as he

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records the birth of one of his children. His experience of childbirth is one viewed through the lens of the camera, and even though it is a remarkably beautiful portrait of childbirth I cannot help but feel as though he has removed himself from the unmediated experience of the event by his positioning of the camera between his eye (or "I" as he refers) and the life springing forth before him. In some cases I find it necessary to put down the camera, and I strongly believe it is possible to communicate an experience without necessarily using a recording method that mediates the experience while it is occurring. Like Brakhage I have documented the births of all three of my children, but unlike him I have consciously avoided a camera stance that inhibits my immersion and total involvement in the experience. Of the births I have recorded with a camera, the camera was placed on a tripod at the back of the delivery room out of the way and out of mind. In the birth sequence from The Consequence of Being Here, only a sound recording gives a referential cue to the actual experience of childbirth. The use of 'other' images to describe childbirth feeds into my belief that all of my family's experiences are palpable to and within each other. A portrait taken on a sunny afternoon can elicit the experience of childbirth because those experiences reside in each other through the lives of the people involved. The further significance of using a family portrait to accompany the sounds of childbirth extends awareness to the inherent qualities of 'birthing' that reside in other processes of becoming, such as the creation of images I use to represent my family. As the sequence approaches the climax, the intensity of the moment is reflected in the tone of the crying baby and the increasing instability of the family

portrait; it is vulnerable, it flutters and slips, and resists stasis, until finally, all is still…then, the news of a death.

As many of the images and sounds that comprise The Consequence of Being Here indicate, the living process is the central thematic concern of the work. Intimate images associated with pregnancy and birth are entangled with their diametric companions: death and grieving. Artifacts created or uncovered through my personal experiences are the impetus of my work. A phone message from my father about the death of my grandmother, the sounds and images from an ultrasound recording, a self-timer family photograph, childhood photographs, found footage once lost (and given new purposes), and home movies: all of these elements contribute to the work and reference my experiences. The process of gathering the artifacts and bringing them together enables me to create a parallel space for exploring the seemingly simple but infinitely complex aspects of living, where more dramatic juxtapositions between experiences or a more pronounced awareness to life issues can be built in order to help me further understand them. Time can be expanded, contracted, or frozen; time can be multilayered while occupying the same temporal plane; spatial relationships can elicit subjective landscapes promoting inner rather than outer exploration. Evidence of temporal and spatial experimentation can be witnessed throughout The Consequence of Being Here, but it is manifest most intensely in the multi-frame, split-screen sequences in the work. In these sequences, as in many others, an impression of the multidimensional aspects of time and space extracted from everyday home movies helps me to see and feel my experiences in

new ways. In my work the process of reconstructing time and space is life affirming – my marks indicate my presence, and much like the process of human reproduction the creative process incubates the birth of new 'presences' in the world, that for me is largely motivated by the finality of erasure that accompanies dying.

As in human death, the organic nature of photographic media designates the death of the image it carries. The photograph or film will fade and break down through a process of decay. Roland Barthes describes this process eloquently in Camera Lucida:

> The only way I can transform the photograph is into refuse: either the drawer or the wastebasket. Not only does it commonly have the fate of paper (perishable), but even if it is attached to more lasting supports, it is still mortal: like a living organism, it is born on the level of the sprouting silver grains, it flourishes a moment, then ages […] Attacked by light, by humidity, it fades, weakens, vanishes; there is nothing left to do but throw it away. (Barthes 93)

The image is reduced to its inherently predetermined organic demise; it will break down and suffer its own kind of death. For me, the very act of taking a picture or film indicates the passing of a moment and the birth of its remembrance. We become indebted to that photograph or to that strip of film as a reference point and as an aid to our fading memory. Often times, we remember the images in place of the memories they signify. In this way, the photograph or film becomes the actual thing remembered – it becomes the referent – in place of the event, subject, or topic whereupon the image originated. In extending this thought further, preservation practices of photographic images require copies to be made of the original to preserve and perpetuate the integrity of the image. In mechanical terms, the re-photographic process resembles the process of remembering

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because it requires revisiting the image and exploring it as a referent. The new photograph is a remembrance of the old. If one's past is made up of remembrances of photographic images (as is the case of many of the children of the amateur filmmaking/photography boom), then by revisiting the images, whether or not it be with re-photographic intent, new remembrances can be discovered through their viewing.

In much of my film work leading up to The Consequence of Being Here I have relied on re-photographic strategies to revisit images from my past. In my short film Hunter-Gatherer (2002), the process of re-photographing images from my childhood allowed me the opportunity to remember the occurrences surrounding these images on my own terms, distanced from the interpretations of my other family members. As the film begins, a typical family slideshow illustrates many of the images I revisit later in the film with re-photographic interpretations. Commentaries from my father, mother, and brother accompany the images so that an impression is gained of some of the remembrances spawned by the images. As the film progresses, the formal structure of the slide show disintegrates into a more fluid, less linear representation of many of the undertones expressed in the first part of the film. The process of re-photographing the images from the first part of the film allowed me the opportunity to understand the images as artifacts revitalized through remembering with the camera. There may be only a certain toy or a texture, or it could be a gesture or nuance found in the image that triggers memory, so that aspect of the image is re-photographed. Barthes describes the process of viewing a photograph as it relates to the 'punctum' and 'studium' the

photograph contains (Barthes 26). In my work the process of re-photography reacts to the 'punctum' I may find in a particular photograph, as the 'punctum' is the piece of the image that incites a particular thought, memory, or emotion. Re-photography has become a central device for much of my more recent film work, and there is evidence of its use in The Consequence of Being Here. Optical printing is a definitive example of the process of re-photography and its overt use throughout the birth sequence in the film emphasizes how filmed material can be re-recorded frame by frame to manipulate properties such as duration, framing, and superimpositions. The process of revisiting and re-contextualizing images after they have been taken is one of the defining principles of the editing process for me, whereby drawing upon a series of 'punctums' and presenting them in succession, a correlation between images can be made which help to unify my work. Unassociated image elements are used to create new associations and new meanings. For example, early in The Consequence of Being Here a found 'Anatomy of Language' recording is used in association with a family portrait to correlate the visual structure of a family portrait and the origins of the language used to describe family. As the language recording deconstructs word associations, the visuals build in fragmented views towards a unified family portrait. The sequence is intended to reference the constructive and deconstructive processes related to the structure of family, and importantly acts as a point of departure for the rest of the film. New image and sound associations created from unassociated elements spawn the reoccurring idea in this paper that new forms can be created from existing forms.

By emphasizing the birth of new remembrances and experiences founded on the viewing process, a much more optimistic way of understanding image-making processes emerges than that brought forth by many scholars. In <u>Words of Light</u>, Eduardo Cadava writes specifically about Walter Benjamin's position on the subject of death and the photographic image: " […] the photograph, like the souvenir, is the corpse of the experience. A photograph therefore speaks of death, as the trace of what passes into history" (Cadava 128). He continues to unravel photography's affiliation with death by contending that a photograph most immediately announces the absence of the living, and that this absence speaks to our mortality. Though his arguments concerning death and photography are convincing, Cadava's critique of Benjamin weighs heavily on his death stance and avoids a viewpoint that considers its diametric companion; the bringing forth of life through an affinity with birth in the creation or the viewing of the photograph and the ability to promote unique perceptual experiences. As a seeming contradiction to Cadava's reading of Benjamin's work, early in his essay, "A Small History of Photography" Benjamin flirts with the possibility that in the first decade of photography a naivety to the consequences of image reproducibility, one-off originals (daguerreotypes), and longer, more concentrated posing times contributed to the authenticity of a photograph's aura and the uniqueness of its perceptual experience (Benjamin 245). Yet further on, his optimism begins to erode as he elaborates and explains that as industrial and capitol methods fully anchor in photography, concepts associated with such words as 'authenticity' and 'uniqueness' are diminished by arguments concerning the 'democracy

of the image' through mechanical reproduction, an idea that becomes fully realized in his

landmark essay, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction". For

Benjamin, the introduction of machine technology to image making processes widens the

gap of mediation where the historical trace of an image's aura (the quality he associates

with a unique work of art that has been touched by the hand of its creator) is developed

through its passing away, or its distance through subsequent mechanical copies from the

original creative project. Coupled with Cadava's unification of death with photography,

Benjamin's pessimism in the potential of the creative process through mechanical

reproduction neglects the concept that authentic experiences can be formed from images

removed from their referent and that a form of birth can occur through creative processes,

such as those associated with photography and filmmaking.

Considering works that deal deeply with death and mourning, Philip Hoffman's

film, What these ashes wanted (2001) shows how the death of a loved one can nurture the

creation or birth of a work of art as a reconstituted form for the living. Hoffman's film

concerns the death of his partner Marian McMahon, and there is at once a dark and

beautiful intensity that runs through it that encapsulates the very complicated emotions

associated with death and mourning. Early in the film an analogy is made that considers a

custom where the broken pieces of a teacup are repaired with golden solder. Where

normal practice would see the broken cup discarded, here the process of repair is valued

so deeply it is made intentionally visible and accentuated for its beauty in the seams

created with the golden solder. Hoffman has often suggested through similar analogies

that the process of accumulating the broken pieces is akin to collecting an inventory of images where his collection of films and photographs become the elements he can draw on to build his films. In drawing on his collection, the significance of experiences existing within experiences, forms proceeding forms, things broken down and built again; a teacup, then broken, then repaired, or an experience that tries to prepare us for those to come, is considered as a continual flow attuned to the fleeting nature of temporal experiences where, "…past, present, and future are kind of melted within the art; slipping, as if the future is already with us" (Hoffman interview in McSorley 66). By working this way, making a film extends from the living process because it evolves naturally and continually through a spatial and temporal relationship with the filmmaker and the filmmaker's environment. Images and sounds are accumulated without a predetermined script or storyboard and brought together into a film through the filmmaker's creative process. As a result of working this way, the filmmaker's presence can be felt through the various stages of the film and is entwined in its growth, its process of becoming, and its maturation into a finished work. Image and sound artifacts live in the ever-changing present and within the current of life experiences, where in Hoffman's film they combine through his mourning process to give birth to an extraordinary work of art.

With the influence of processes described by artists like Hoffman, in The Consequence of Being Here I am faced with trying to communicate through the passing of my grandmother, my thematic concern for death as my family's ultimate vulnerability.

Consequently, my concern for death resides in my work on two levels: one that is defined

through the physical attributes of the medium, the other which is defined through my own

fate and the fate of my loved ones, that I believe, also explains my drive to collect images

and make films. As futile as it is, my vulnerability to death instigates a reaction to

preserve life through the images I make. The way I use photography and filmmaking as

an aid for memory manifests this physical claim; I can record a detailed visual inventory

of my habitual existence where the processes of editing and organization allows me to

articulate my collected images and seemingly preserve an impression of my life. The

greatest misconception in this process is that the images I make will survive beyond me

indefinitely. In an Eastman Kodak Company publication, Conservation of Photographs,

strategies to preserve deteriorating photographs are presented and studied. Interestingly,

the same company that markets amateur uses of photography and filmmaking as a way of

preserving one's memories, also issues material describing the volatility of the

photographic medium:

> […] the chemicals from which photographic material are derived are unstable by nature. Because of this, photographic artifacts are extremely sensitive to their environment and to the elements of the environment which may have a deteriorating effect. They vary in their resistance to time, temperature, humidity, contamination, handling, even the presence of humans. (Kodak 78)

An advertisement placed by the same company in a 2001 issue of Flare Pregnancy

demonstrates that contemporary attitudes towards the marketing of photographs are

counterintuitive to the earlier publication. A typical 1970's style photograph has the tag

line printed on it, "Store your fashion sense. Forever." The significance of the photograph, even in its contemporary application, is marketed as an image capable of lasting forever. But it now comes equipped with an added convenience, "[…] you can receive, store and share your photos online. It's like your own darkroom, photo album and photography store all in one very accessible place. Now you can share your memories, faster, easier and forever." Again, the misconception that a photograph, now as a digital image, is a permanent record is completely misleading. Archivists agree that the archival integrity of images stored on hard drives are extremely vulnerable to erasure caused by electromagnetic fluxes, mechanical crashes, and the obsolescence of rapidly evolving technologies. In an article written for the CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) called, "Archiving: Preserving Digital Photos for your Grandkids", Rosi Lombardi writes: "Technology obsolescence is a big problem [for image preservation], and archivists bemoan the loss of recent history due to changing storage formats. The software used to open and view image files – hardware, software and the file formats themselves – is unlikely to be around in a few decades" (Lombardi). Despite this evidence, the marketing strategies in many advertisements for digital photo technology mimic the same rhetoric concerning image permanence played out in the advertisements of photochemical processes decades earlier.

5. Photo Continuum

As discussed earlier, The Consequence of Being Here reflects the technological amalgam of cross-medium use. In fact, my work has always been firmly planted in the concurrent mediums of film and video, and before advances in digital technology allowed me to find ways to integrate both mediums the dichotomy between film and analogue video were extremely awkward. Of particular concern is the modernist notion of content reflecting form through a medium's specific formal attributes. The validity of this idea has now become severely questioned by contemporary scholars, giving rise to several discourses that centre on the field of photography as a prominent example. Here, the debate central in the distinction between photochemical and digital processes is whether or not the technological shift has created dramatically new ways of understanding photography.

On one side of the argument, writers such as Martin Lister argue that the shift from photochemical to digital technology is part of a larger historical continuum in photography where, "instead of focusing attention upon the photograph as the product of a specific mechanical and chemical technology, we need to consider its technological, semiotic, and social hybridness; the way in which its meanings and power are the result of a mixture and compound of forces and not a singular, essential and inherent quality" (Lister 221). Although shifts in technology have transformed the specifics of the medium and the mechanics of photography, the purpose of photography has not really altered too much since its inception. This way of looking at photography focuses its essential

qualities in a way that envisions the whole of photography as an uncovering or revealing process, where advancements (technological or otherwise) bring us closer to an essential understanding of photography. For example, one can easily draw comparisons between the immediacy of image-making in digital photography and the Polaroid process. The opposing side of this argument proposes that the shift from analogue to digital technology has fundamentally transformed photography in all aspects, marking the turn to digital as truly revolutionary. William Mitchell argues that there are fundamental differences between a digital image and a photograph that begins at the level of the medium and transcends to how digital images are perceived culturally and socially (Mitchell 8). Intrinsic to the digital image is a new way of looking at images that is unhinged from the weight of the photographic notion of the referent. That is, the misconstrued property of realism and the truth-bearing rhetoric attached to photochemical processes in photography.

As early as 1994, Lev Manovich bridged the fundamental ideas from both of these camps by drawing out the paradoxes inherent in digital photography. Central to his argument is the idea that digital photography has been developed through its mimicry of attributes from photochemical processes and properties. He cites examples from the film industry where the extreme clarity and resolution inherent in the CGI process adopts the imperfections (grain, lower frame-rate) of the film image (Manovich 246). Manovich is right in combining the ideas central to Lister and Mitchell, however his tactical choice to use the medium as a comparative vehicle between photochemical photography and digital

photography is at times awkward. For example, he argues that photography has always been mutable and that straight realist photography has only been one strain throughout the history of photography. It is true that both digital and photochemical forms are mutable, however digital photography deviates because its mutations are capable of mimicking photochemical properties. Whereas the photochemical process carries with it inherent physical qualities defined by the medium and is not capable of mimicking the qualities of any other medium unless it is physically altered (painted on for example). In support of a common thread through the apparatus of both digital and photochemical forms, there is a much more obvious comparison that can be made: both methods of photography are lens-based. It is precisely at the level of the medium that photochemical processes and digital processes become delineated. When we examine the specific differences involved in the process of image creation in both realms, we can further distinguish the similarities and differences between digital and photochemical processes.

The process of digital photography has changed some aspects of how we take pictures, and although taking a photograph of any form is instigated by similar desires and intentions, its contributions to the performance of an experience have been strengthened in the digital realm while its link to memorializing a specific moment in time is stronger in the photochemical process. When we frame a potential image through the viewfinder of a film camera or the screen on the back of a digital camera, we inevitably drop the guillotine and slice off an instant that can only be revisited after the image has been developed, printed, or previewed. It is at once a process of containment

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and the articulation of experience resulting from the mechanical parameters and limits of

the camera and the will of the maker. In most cases, the past displayed on walls, movie-

screens, television sets, and computer screens is a highly selective and idealized

representation. In her book, <u>Home Movies and Other Necessary Fictions</u>, Michelle Citron

addresses her concerns about how her childhood has not been accurately depicted in the

archives of her family's photographs and home movies:

> We film Christmas dinner with family and friends, not the meal eaten
> alone; birthday parties, not the emergency room visits; baby's first step,
> not fighting with the adolescent; vacation, not work; wedding parties, not
> divorce proceedings; births, not funerals. Through our selective filming,
> the "sunny side of life" is preserved and the dark side of life is cast out.
> We record the noteworthy, the celebrated, the remarkable, and the
> extraordinary. Or perhaps their memorialization on film codifies these
> events as such. (Citron 19)

In many cases, there is so much left out in the images with which we choose to represent

our lives and there is a stringent set of culturally imbedded guidelines that often predict

the types of pictures used to represent life experiences. Whether or not a consistency in

following these 'rules' is the result of an instinctual 'reflex' or a more conscious exercise

is a point of inquiry. In looking at how mimetic traits are essential for human beings to

learn (going all the way back to Aristotle), it seems that an answer could incorporate both

partial instinct and conscious exercise. The process of containment can be compared to an

assertion of an instinct to survive, and this is most apparent in things allowing us to

harness representations of our environment – whether it is through the creation of images,

a descriptive passage of text, or the movement of our bodies. All of these processes help

us to learn more about ourselves by enabling a directed observation of the world around us. As Susan Sontag understands it, the desire to snap photographs is an act of gaining knowledge and seeking a privileged place in our environment:

> To photograph is to appropriate the thing photographed. It means putting oneself into a certain relation to the world that feels like knowledge – and, therefore, like power […] [photographs] now provide most of the knowledge people have about the look of the past and the reach of the present. (Sontag 4)

Through successful attempts to adapt to and understand the things around us by perceiving and learning, photographs enable us to correlate and coordinate our relationship to the world. Photographs prove our existence in the world and enable us to record the traces of our perceptual engagement; a way of making marks that say '*I have been there and here is proof*', or *'this is what happened.'* They enable knowledge through the various stories and uses we attach to them, and become a contrived inscription of a certain state of actually being that is determined by our needs, wants, and desires. Digital technology opens to new ways of articulating the process of taking and displaying pictures, but always from within the original discourses laid out in the historical view of photography.

I just took a digital photo of my kids and they want to see it immediately on the camera's screen. "Can I see?" they say collectively. Then, "Ah ha, look at me!" Rhaia says, and "Aw, you edged me out!" Raven says. We keep it, and go for another.

In a short sequence from The Consequence of being Here some of the implications of taking photographs digitally are addressed. By using recorded material

from my daughter's first birthday party, the sequence uncovers how we use the tiny LCD

(Liquid Crystal Display) screens on the back of digital cameras to edit our photographs as

they are taken. As the sequence progresses, a video image (which represents the 'real

time' occurrence of the images we see on the back of the camera) begins to break up

through the familiar signs of digital 'drop out'. The sequence reveals how digital

photography can be used to articulate an experience through the immediacy of keeping or

deleting photographs on the back of the camera and that image deterioration and

impermanence is even more at issue in digital photography. The collective perception of

the party-goers are heard on the soundtrack and demonstrate how the process of taking a

digital photograph has become more intensely integrated into the experience it helps to

define. The influence of the photographer, the subject, and their collective interpretation

of a given experience more easily penetrates the recording process, so that now the

vernacular of picture taking includes the phrase, "Can I see?!"

At first glance, the ability to delete photographs spontaneously and through

collective agreement diminishes the possibility for unwanted images to survive, however,

as I have witnessed in my own home, the opposite effect can take hold. Here, I strongly

believe the fate of digital photographs hinge on the personality traits of their maker; some

people are 'deleters' and some people are 'keepers'. In photochemical processes most of

the pictures taken are at least retained as a photographic negative, and the choice

regarding what photographs can be kept is normally reduced to 'refuse' and not

instantaneous erasure as in digital processes. For artists whose work depends on such

elements as chance and uncertainty to articulate the multidimensional aspects of an experience, images reduced to 'refuse' by others become extremely fertile source material for their work, and although in digital photography the destruction of the potential of chance is promoted by the ability to edit and delete photographs on-the-fly, the ability to record and store a greater quantity of photographs also creates the potential for more chance occurrences to reside in the collected images on one's hard drive. It is my belief that the process of digital photography is adaptable, wherein 'deleters' have greater flexibility in their editing, and where 'keepers' are capable of storing and amassing unimaginable quantities of photographs.

Jennifer took a picture of our baby boy and is showing it to me on the back of the camera. It is a little bit blurry and he isn't smiling so I suggest that she should delete it and try for another. I didn't give it much thought, but my suggestion really bothered her. It was as if deleting this fuzzy moment would be a traumatic experience for her. She keeps all her pictures.

The discovery of chance is an important aspect of my filmmaking process, whether through photochemical means or digital means, it has deep ties to working within the ebb and flow of life experiences. Chance enters through the periphery of control, and it is a quality of my work that I try to bring out through spontaneous shooting habits, handcraft techniques, and by utilizing unintentional mistakes. I then extrude it further through the process of discovery that digital editing allows. After digitizing the image and sound elements that may be used in the project I can search through and revisit the material, seeing it in different ways, working to bring out different qualities through

experimenting with a variety of image and sound combinations. As the storage capacity of hard drives has increased, the ability to digitize and store larger amounts of footage has incrementally increased the potential to discover the connections hidden away in it. The Consequence of Being Here went through drastic revisions before arriving at its finished form. These revisions would not have been possible with analogue editing processes. A section of the film that draws on images from my grandmother's visitation and progresses through to a wintry aurora, offers a good example of how I relied heavily on the process of discovery that is associated with editing. This sequence was originally built with many layers of composited blue screen material, but feeling that something had been lost, I began to peel back layer after layer until I arrived at the base images I was using for background plates. As soon as these base images lay exposed before me, they struck through me and communicated uninhibited from the layers of images that had partially concealed them. For me, chance resides in these images as a discovery excavated through the process of editing. At the base of the visitation sequence are coexisting images that would have been difficult to correlate out of context: the visitation images were taken upon request from a family member to send to others who could not be present; a lo-resolution video clip was taken spur-of-the-moment during a family nature hike; a winter landscape was taken after a bad car accident. Chance resides not only in how these images were recorded but also in how they become unified within the same sequence to articulate a meaning beyond their self-contained boundaries. Digital editing has strengthened my ability to make these correlations.

6. Risk Taking

I proposed earlier that following the cycles and patterns of producer/consumer relationships, the preference for certain images over others is best understood through the fluency of their commonly accepted positive attributes. I also discussed how the concern of my work often focuses on expressing the vulnerabilities associated with the images I use. Like the birth of a human being, the birth of an image through creative processes or otherwise sends it into a world of possibilities where its potentials are accompanied by varying degrees of risk. Here, I believe, is where the unsettled nature of the images and sounds in much of my film work are rooted. In The Consequence of Being Here risk is most clearly exhibited through the exaggeration of an image's vulnerability to erasure. For example, during the section of the film depicting my daughter's first birthday party digital noise suddenly rips through the video images and abruptly ends the section. The unexpected timing of the interruption and the symbolic erasure of the birthday images create an exaggerated awareness of their vulnerability to impermanence. In assessing my other works that draw on similar qualities, it is interesting to note that the most screened (and perhaps most popular) of these works strongly rely on generating the effect of fear, uncertainty, and risk in the images they contain. Risk then, should be considered as something that permeates consciousness through its universally determined attributes as qualities precluding the actions of viewing all forms of images, and in fact, are qualities that are assessed in all facets of daily life. In his essay "Risk Society Revisited", Ulrich Beck writes that, "it is cultural perception and definition that constitutes risk […] [and

that] 'Risk' and the '(public) definition of risk' are one and the same" (Beck 213). Risk can be understood as a collectively determined quality that is formed first through popular opinion, and then assessed in regards to personal assets. In my opinion the success of media that exhibits the exaggerated effect of risk can be attributed to the fact that audiences can observe risk through a mediated interface, at arm's length, as a way of gaining a sense of control or containment of it – a way of looking at it behind a piece of museum glass. This is an extremely important point to distinguish: I believe experiences that embody risk are intentionally sought after only because their experience is safely contained (think of the rides in an amusement park). In much the same way an image succeeds by its universally accepted attributes, the level of risk associated with engaging with specific phenomena increases when others are in agreement of the risk. Here, judgment is affected by the opinions of others and this is particularly relevant when we consider how experience becomes co-determined in social groups.

Erving Goffman has laid out a great deal of interesting work that considers the inter-personal dynamics of experience. In his book <u>Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience</u>, he discusses at length how we consider experiences or 'scenes' against a 'primary framework' we have retained in our memory from previous experiences. In a very simple analogy, we can consider Goffman's idea of primary frameworks as specific genres in cinema. When we begin to watch a film we have never viewed we immediately begin to cross-reference it with other films we have viewed. Our assessments lead us to make judgments about the type of film we are viewing: if it

involves a heterosexual relationship and makes us laugh and cry it could be a romantic comedy, if we are frightened it could be a horror film, and so on. Goffman's understanding is much more thorough though, and involves understanding how our real life experiences can be assessed against such frameworks. In the same way we relate our experiences with our primary frameworks, we assess other people in terms of the type of 'role' they are playing. We, in turn, also play a role or take on a character depending on the social dynamic occurring before us. Goffman's understanding of our social experiences is based fundamentally on the concept of performance, and that given a certain social situation we will assume roles that describe the entire experience as one that registers within one of our primary frameworks. In some ways it seems that Goffman's idea of performance and experience is a mechanism behind which we can disguise our fears, and if we consider how risk affects the dynamic of experience a very strong comparison can be drawn between the study of risk and Goffman's sociological study of experience. It is precisely our fear of the unknown that determines the level of risk in our lives and which causes us to develop social patterns, rituals, and experiences where we can easily identify experiences that are 'safe' or 'dangerous', and what types of characters we can trust.

In a chapter entitled 'The Vulnerabilities of Experience', Goffman discusses some of the dynamics associated with risk in everyday experience. Interestingly, in the majority of the social situations he uses as examples, certain frameworks are being addressed in ways that are deceitful. The vulnerability he associates with experience is not associated

with the defensive mechanism to create a safe experience and instead he is addressing

ways that risk can penetrate a safe framework by people who play roles that initially

register as safe. One such example plays out a parent's absolute nightmare: a child is

persuaded to get into the car of a complete stranger. The stranger has likely performed a

role in which the child trusted whole-heartedly. Role-playing can be a manifestation of

risk that permeates many aspects of family life, and here it is addressed as a force that can

penetrate our safe frameworks.

The measures taken to ensure that we are prepared for whatever risk may be

prescribed by the future are as much a misconception to the essential qualities of our lives

as are the imposters that may penetrate our safe frameworks. Let us take as an example,

the pictures we make of our lives. In the most conventional cases, the images that we

deem as appropriate for representing our lives are highly contrived extensions of our

reaction to the probability of risk. If the photographs that line the walls of most homes are

symbolic of reactionary measures to the probability of risk, the act of taking such a

picture becomes severely attenuated. This is a strange way to encounter the photographs

we take of loved ones or those things that we cherish most in our lives, but we have

become so wrapped up in various prescriptive ways of representing our lives that we do

not consider an experience or a potential experience without first referencing our primary

frameworks. Prescriptive modes of production dominate most facets of daily life,

ensuring that consistency underlies our experience and where experience can be

articulated easily and in a comparative fashion. As discussed earlier, industrial practices

demonstrate prescriptive modes of production most readily and with ease, but we can also

consider how prescriptive modes of production permeate our personal output and enter

into images we articulate our lives with. These images that can be viewed as conforming

to our collective and categorical perception of such things as 'family', 'friendship', and

'love' are precisely where the deviations in my film work are rooted.

In his book There's No Place Like Home Video, James Moran suggests even the

concept of 'home' is an ideal space envisioned by the family or group residing within,

where one of its primary purposes is to preserve the sanctity of its safe frameworks from

misconstrued forces:

> A product of practical and emotional commitment to a given space, home
> is a phenomenological reality produced as the result of productive and
> reproductive work by its members to forge identity and maintain security.
> (Moran 61)

Much like the measures we take to maintain security for our homes, prescriptive modes

of production are comfortable for us and provide a comparative social framework that we

use to articulate our lives. When we move outside of our comparative social frameworks

we become more aware of our vulnerabilities, where ultimately we reach a crossroads:

we can either resort to other prescriptive modes to enhance our safe framework, or we

can embrace the emotions associated with risk and try to articulate them through creative

forms more succinct with their understanding.

My stance in The Consequence of Being Here is to embrace the emotions that I

normally examine at a distance by incorporating them into a creative process that I hope

broadens the base for the content in my creative projects. Beginning with the first challenging film works I watched as an undergraduate student in film studies, I have continually sought out alternative forms of expression in my work and I have never been satisfied with working within the limits and codes of conventional forms. Over the ten years or so that have passed since my undergraduate education my work has become more focused, consequently so has my understanding of its historical placement and major influences. Over the following sections it is my intention to further detail the major pillars in the lineage leading to where my work is currently positioned.

7. Home Made Movies

The Consequence of Being Here is a body of work that has been conceived by working within expanded views of the 'home mode' in filmmaking, and many of the aspects of the project can be traced to the early development of home movies. Early in the evolution of the home movie tradition, the harnessing of the technological knowledge needed to become an amateur filmmaker was instigated by a do-it-yourself marketing approach promoted by the manufacturers of amateur film equipment. Publications such as the Popular Mechanics Photo Guide successfully secured a market for amateur film equipment, solidifying know-how in the average hobbyist. The everyday person could feel confident in their filmmaking endeavors and empowered with all the knowledge to successfully construct a film:

With Popular Mechanics' popular WHAT TO MAKE books to guide you, you will always know what to make and how to make it. (Popular Mechanics 192)

Marketing strategies thrived on the idea of empowering the individual, promoting film as a thing with 'some assembly required', and as a way to potentially preserve personal memories. The medium was described as an easily accessible, ready-canned hobby for people to tackle in their spare time by making the process of selecting and articulating memorable moments simple in the extreme.

In The Consequence of Being Here, the home movies of another filmmaker are exemplary of the historical lineage that concerns my work. In early 2007, I started to work on a film project called Star of the Town, which concerned the films of Reverend Roy Massecar, who in the late 1940's documented most of the small towns in Southwestern Ontario on 8mm black and white film. Amazingly, over the course of two years he amassed over 30,000 feet of footage and returned to each town to project the images he had made there. The project stands as an unprecedented historical record of the area during the transitional years after WWII. While I was working on Star of the Town, I began to feel more and more connected to Roy's story and was driven to learn more about his life. I wondered if he had shot any home movies, and if so, I imagined them as a wonderful insight. During my interview with Marion Massecar, Roy's widow, she expressed to me among many other wonderful insights that he had shot some home movies, but that they were lost. Through further research and my involvement as a technical advisor for the donation of Roy's films to the University of Western Ontario

archives, I was able to finally uncover Roy's lost home movies. In fact, they were easy to spot – they were the only colour films among the masses of others he shot. I transferred the films to video but Marion passed away before I could show them to her. I was anxious to incorporate this wonderful glimpse into Roy's family life into <u>Star of the Town</u>, but the project had already been completed. As I started working on <u>The Consequence of Being Here</u>, Roy's home movies persisted in the back of my mind – I could not help but draw upon the lineage to my own home movies. The films became a reference point for me, so much so that I finally decided I should try to incorporate them somehow into the project. In this project, Roy's home movies open the door from my home movies to the world of others, and his films help to contextualize my work within the rich influences of the history of home movie making. His lovingly shot footage exudes the major thematic concerns of most conventional home movies, revealing a point of departure for efforts in my own work for considering expanded views beyond those holding home movies as propagators of the 'Kodak culture'.

Roy's home movies are a testament to guidebooks from the first half of the twentieth century that targeted the family and the amateur photo-enthusiast. A book entitled <u>How to Make Good Movies</u>, as advertised by Kodak, was a non-technical handbook for those considering ownership of an amateur movie camera. The book follows a husband and wife duo complete with 'He:/She:' captions, as they discover the ease of home filmmaking using their trusty Kodak handbook. The book attempts to dispel many of the unknown myths of 'good' filmmaking by overcoming the technical phobias

associated with the medium. Most of the idealized principles and aesthetic tips that are

encountered in the book are derived directly from the aesthetic that dominated

professional filmmaking. Chapters entitled: 'Composition', 'Continuity', 'Editing', and

'Play Making', all derive their content directly from the aesthetic traits that made up a

good professional film. The amateur filmmaker was told that in order to make good

movies they needed to adhere to a set of rules created by professionals that were designed

to thematize the patriarchal social values of middle-class America. Adhesion to a good

narrative is exemplified in the book as it follows the narrative progression of the husband

and wife team enjoying the successes of their own application of good filmmaking

technique:

> *She:* "There are Billy and his dog out on the lawn now. How about them?
> *He:* "Fine. I'll get the movie camera – you bring along the book, and we'll
> see how much there is to continuity. (Kodak 63)

The strength of any good narrative is its application of continuity, or so we are told. The

continuity of story and the clear communication of a family's memories is indeed a

projection of the values making up an appearance of what the good, stable, nuclear family

stands for. The Kodak handbook is exemplary of how good clean aesthetic principles

could, in fact, aid in propagating an idealized version of family. Unlike Roy's home

movies, the birthday party sequence from The Consequence of Being Here reveals that

beyond the most typical images we associate with such landmark occasions (the happy

child posing with the cake, the happy child eating the cake, etc.), there are other

unforeseen aspects of the experience that can unfold. In this case, my youngest daughter

is confused, afraid, and upset about her first birthday extravaganza – and rather than cut away from the unforeseen situation, they become the focal point of the sequence.

In her book, Reel Families: A Social History of Amateur Film, Patricia Zimmermann explains that the idealized version of family life not only serves as a propagation of the family image, it also preserves the propagation of the family for the future. She quotes an article written by Mervin Delaway for a 1917 issue of Illustrated World:

> The greatest single pleasure that is possible to store up for the days of old age is a wealth of reminiscences of happy hours spent in youth with comrades or people you care for in a sincere and lasting way. The old people of today have only their dimming memories to depend on; those of tomorrow will have libraries of this film. (Delaway quoted in Zimmermann 45)

Even in 1917, people recognized the value of the film image as one that could selectively preserve idealized perceptions of personal life. In this case, a memory of the 'happy hours spent in youth' is possibly at risk unless it is recorded. Not much has changed across the years, and the prescriptive mode for image production in the realm of personal experience has always been one that is accompanied by preconceptions of social conformity. Again, there is evidence of this in our most common shared experiences – the birthday party, graduation, vacationing, marriage, etc. – where in most cases, the images taken from these experiences share common aesthetic traits that are indistinguishable from family to family or peer to peer.

Roy's home movies demonstrate many of the aesthetic traits to which the guidebook do-it-yourselfer was told to adhere. For example, Roy edited his films into sequences that follow the chronology of his family's experiences. Many of the sequences begin with an establishing shot that subsequently moves in to close-up coverage. His footage is dominated by images of the major rituals and 'rights of passage' that comprise most North American family's experiences: graduations, weddings, family reunions, and family vacations (among others). Even though his films radiate warmth and love, the many edits and relatively small amount of home movie footage indicates that the content has gone through a process of selection, where perhaps less desirable takes were edited out. The extension of Roy's control over his family's image also demonstrates the effects patriarchal ideology in North America during the mid-twentieth century. The very first image of The Consequence of Being Here is a self-timer family portrait from one of Roy's home movies – and as the shot progresses, Roy tries desperately to co-ordinate the running of the camera and the staging of the portrait. His kids are restless as he works to line everyone up for the recording but the camera runs out without having staged the portrait as a complete success. This attempt to orchestrate the camera and his family reveals much about patriarchal social values, where, as the father and head of his family he is responsible for its documentation. As a way to explore the power dynamic in patriarchal ordering the sound that plays out with Roy's family portrait is taken from a video portrait of my own family. A discussion unfolds between my wife and I where she accuses that, "you said it was going to be just like any other day", in light of my extended

efforts to stage our own family portrait. Clearly, the juxtaposition of picture and sound raises questions regarding my role as man/father/husband embarking on a project that will create a formal order (albeit an unconventional one) for my family's images. For me, this is a quality of my work that is unavoidable and it is the consequence of my interest in filmmaking and the influence of my life experiences. But rather than resist it and exhaust negative conclusions, my efforts to maintain openness in my process offer a method of enriching creative potential. Despite the similarities I have drawn between my work and Roy's, the distinction of differences can be clarified by following the evolution of the home movie to its hybridized forms after WWII.

Although initially, amateur filmmaking was dominated by the guidebook idealism promoted by the professional aesthetic, individual practices that define the post WWII American avant-garde (around 1945) became predominantly inspired by the independent freedoms of amateur filmmaking and the relative accessibility of 16mm filmmaking equipment. In my view, the evolution of the home movie into avant-garde practices is an essential view that locates my work along with the work of many others to an understanding of lineages that exist outside of industrial production. In comparing thematic and technical concerns across conventional amateur practices and those of the avant-garde, the utilization of similar technical methods and choice of subject matter can be found in both forms of films. The charting of one's personal environment remains, as does the frequent focus on the family unit, although from more wide-ranging viewpoints. For example, many of these films exhibited a more dynamic interpretive range – gone are

the sentiments attached to capturing only the 'Kodak moments'. Importantly, the post

WWII American avant-garde was inspired by the adoption of the amateur filmmaker's

freedoms and the refusal of formal restrictions encouraged in conventional practices such

as those in the professional industry and the guidebook literature for the amateur

filmmaker. Both Patricia Zimmermann and James Moran make convincing arguments

that emphasize both technological developments and social/cultural influences as boons

to personal practices in the 'home mode.'

Zimmermann traces the link between amateur film practices to the avant-garde

thoroughly, though she never quite stresses the linkage to be as direct as it should be. She

does, however, attribute the market entry of affordable 16mm cameras as a significant

push for the avant-garde. Filmmakers such as Maya Deren, Jonas Mekas, Marie Menken,

Gregory Markopolous, Kenneth Anger, James Broughton, and John Whitney were able to

make the types of films that they made because the medium had become so affordable

(Zimmerman 128). On the other hand, Moran criticizes Zimmerman's over determined

historical trace of specific market trends and technologies as the governing force

concerning developments in amateur filmmaking. Instead, he argues that there is a much

larger history at work that needs to be digested in order to properly contextualize the

evolution of amateur filmmaking. In his argument, the evolution of the amateur field into

post WWII avant-garde practices is not rooted to the affordability of certain technologies

or to the technologies themselves, but to larger cultural themes (that have been repeated

throughout history) such as the opposition to authority and the undermining of social

consciousness (Moran 38). Of the filmmakers from the second wave, Zimmermann cites

many of Maya Deren's thoughts and contributions. Interestingly, in a move away from

the over-aestheticized nature of the amateur film up to this point, Deren suggests that,

"the most important part of filmmaking equipment is the 'mobile body' and an

'imaginative mind' rather than a static camera on a tripod, a mind rigidified with rules of

continuity or technical gadgetry" (Zimmermann 129). Deren clearly rejects the

guidebook agenda for making good movies in favour of accepting a practice that

considers her interaction with the world around her. By incorporating a view that partially

endorses Zimmerman's focus on the freedoms associated with technological development

and accessibility, and partially endorsing Moran's argument that larger historical and

cultural lineages are mainly accountable, a well-rounded understanding can be achieved

concerning personal practices in the evolution of the home mode that situates The

Consequence of Being Here in a lineage that encourages deviation from guidebook

instruction and the mirroring of patriarchal ideology.

8. Metaphors for Vision

It is hard to avoid speaking of the modernist state of the avant-garde throughout

the 1950's and 1960's without the inclusion of one of its most significant contributors.

Stan Brakhage's filmmaking career exemplifies the spirit of the individual film

practitioner and rejects the formal constraints imposed by the guidebook mentality. Like

Deren he distinguishes himself as an individual practitioner through the development of

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his own formal approaches to the medium. There is at once a strong bond with the do-it-yourself attitude in amateur filmmaking and a disassociation with the tendency for amateur filmmaking to look towards the aesthetic of the professional industry and the sentiment of home life. There is no model form or instruction set that can describe all of Brakhage's films at once. In one of the first books to have a major formative impact on my work, Metaphors on Vision, Brakhage begins with a phenomenological postulation:

> Imagine an eye unruled by man-made laws of perspective, an eye unprejudiced by compositional logic, an eye which does not respond to the name of everything but which must know each object encountered in life through an adventure of perception. (Brakhage 71)

To further his point and to deepen his call for freedom and adventure in perception he goes on to ask, "How many colours are there in a field of grass to the crawling baby unaware of 'green?'" Brakhage understands that in our most innocent and vulnerable state of being we are as close as our physiology will allow to achieving 'pure perception'. This is the beginning of Brakhage's manifesto on filmmaking, and it resonates not through the reception of a given artwork but through a specific approach to making art that defines Brakhage's oeuvre. As unruly as Brakhage's phenomenological reasoning may sound to some, especially when considering it among the norms of late 1950's and early 1960's industrial production methods in film, his writing finds good company in phenomenological thinking, the major philosophical discourse to have impacted my work.

In binding <u>Metaphors on Vision</u> to such discourses, it can be compared as a filmic companion piece to Maurice Merleau-Ponty's essay on modernist painting, "Eye and Mind". It is not an unusual comparison. Brakhage himself has stated the intense influence of Jackson Pollock, which can also be witnessed through much of his work, but especially his hand-painted films (Brakhage on Brakhage interview 1, from by <u>Brakhage: An Anthology</u>). In "Eye and Mind", Merleau-Ponty works to ground the expansion of his philosophy to:

> […] the soil of the sensible and humanly modified world such as it is in our lives and for our bodies – not that possible body which we may legitimately think of as an information machine but this actual body I call mine, this sentinel standing quietly at command of my words and my acts. (Merleau-Ponty 122)

For Merleau-Ponty, many theoretical, psychological, and scientific discourses operate within their own realm and therefore give up living in things. Such discourses rarely gage the impact of our bodily existence in the physical world and assume that the world exists for or because of the mind. Rather, Merleau-Ponty asserts that our bodily presence in the physical world exists in what he calls, a 'there is' state, a state which precedes concepts of the mind concerning the transcendence of the ego and those concerning the capabilities of scientific reasoning. He understands that experiences in the physical world first touch our senses then move internally through the interpretive actions of the mind. This type of bodily being-in-the-world is happening before it can be internalized and before any learned model (psychological, scientific, or otherwise) can be imposed upon it. This especially resonates in <u>The Consequence of Being Here</u> through the predominance of

images and sounds that are derived from real world experiences, with less emphasis on staged or acted occurrences.

For both Brakhage and Merleau-Ponty, movement is the defining action of the sensuous body engaged with the world. The moving body makes a difference in the world by being a part of it. Merleau-Ponty's understanding of how vision is prefigured by eye movement as a receptor of visual stimuli meeting in the external world, almost seamlessly enters into Brakhage's understanding of the unruled eye (again, "Imagine an eye unruled by man-made laws of perspective […]"). Movement is not a decision made by the mind in a place of subjective reasoning, rather it is directly attuned to our bodily vision that radiates outwards and becomes manifest in things; it becomes visible to *itself* in things and in the sight of all things. The body simultaneously sees and is seen (Merleau-Ponty 124). The projected illusion that defines the motion picture is dependent on machinery that simulates the movement of the body wherein the camera and the projector are both inventions of the body made to emulate a bodily function. In Brakhage's descriptions he grants both the medium and its machinery organic bodily status – his essay is rich with words such as 'bruise', 'bleed', and 'sweat'. But, it is not enough to see the world through the eyes of the "I", and in a synergistic way of interacting with the living world Brakhage wants us to see the inside of the outside – the mind's eye of not just our bodies, but of other bodies (and not just human) connected through a sensual network of Being.

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Finally, in this close reading of Brakhage's text it is extremely important to note that, in my opinion, no other filmmaker throughout the history of film has made such direct claims between the theoretical possibilities and practical application of a phenomenological stance in their filmmaking. Both Brakhage's film work and his writing have had a tremendous impact on my own filmmaking practice. In The Consequence of Being Here the residue of the sensuous body engaged in the world is evidenced through my incorporation of artifacts from almost all aspects of my recording habits. First, as a 'silent sentinel standing quietly' recording seemingly unassociated events, then by trying to thread their common bonds. For example, Roy's story gathered for an entirely different project finds it way into this project and draws out comparisons to other sections of the work. In another example, an old film project that used the 'Anatomy of Language' sound recording to describe the origins of words associated with family is reworked, re-contextualized, and strikes a chord within the new project. Associations like these are founded on my willingness to engage with the multidimensional qualities of perception by opening myself up to the possibilities of chance and discovery. This is most obvious in the direct sound and picture recordings I make, but can also be read, as I have mentioned, through the repercussive effects of encountering a past experience through the interface of a recording (even one made years ago). Metaphors on Vision is central to helping situate such discourses in both my film and this paper.

Brakhage's 8mm Song films (circa 1964) not only exemplify his phenomenology, they embody the evolution of the home movie into more personal, more subjective forms.

The filmmaking process, choice of content, and aesthetic traits such as the closeness to personal subjects ground the films thoroughly as works in which the maker is intensely aware of his physical presence in the perceptual world. A loose shooting style encounters life as-it-is and as-it-comes, rather than encountering the same scenarios with prescriptive intentions. In a comparison analysis with Roy's home movies, the content of both films draw on the immediate environment of the maker, but they differ dramatically in terms of their form. Where Roy's home movies exemplify more objectively accessible and universally accepted attributes of the home movie, the Song films exhibit a personal form that is highly subjective and cannot be read by using the comparative frameworks of guidebook idealism. Instead, the films are a living, organic extension of the filmmaker and carry with them a deeply personal representation of the maker's perceptual world. Brakhage's films demonstrate that the development of a hybridized form of the home movie is a legitimate discourse where the prospect of achieving what he refers to as 'perceptual truth' through personal expression is fundamentally rooted to a more subjective interpretation.

Similarly, personal/experimental filmmaker Richard Hancox states that, "…since all cinema is manipulation, what must first be questioned is not the objective facts, but the truth of the filmmaker's subjectivity" (Hancox 51). For Hancox, the strength of a film is rooted in its subjective contemplation. The very nature of photographing something translates its objective placement in the real world of objects into a subjective representation based upon the interpretation of the object by the maker. Hancox's film

Moose Jaw: There's a Future in Our Past (1990), a major influence during my

undergraduate years, at first seems to be a documentary film about the filmmaker's

hometown. As the film progresses, the truth of his subjective reasoning reveals as much

about his mental space as it does the apocalyptic space of Moose Jaw. The cold, distant

framing of many of the images in the film depict his cautious, standoffish association

with the changed spaces of his childhood haunts. On one level, the film documents the

historical trace of a onetime boomtown, while on another it is a deeply personal journey

into the filmmaker's past experiences, contemplations, and memories. It is Hancox's

emphasis on the personal aspect of the filmmaking journey that makes Moose Jaw such a

potent film, and which has influenced a generation of filmmakers. Through his past

position as a filmmaking instructor at Sheridan College (in Oakville, Ontario), he

nurtured the growth of some of Canada's leading film experimentalists whose common

origins comprise the 'Escarpement School' of film artists; a title which locates the

geographic proximity of most of its filmmakers to the Niagara Escarpment and their

shared concern for personal content in their films. Richard Kerr, Philip Hoffman, and

Michael Hoolboom begin a list of filmmakers whose work has been at least initially

guided by Richard Hancox. Although I am a generation removed from most of these

filmmakers, my childhood in Kitchener, Ontario, and most of my adult life in London,

Ontario, coupled with my rich family life and my interests in experimental film, situates

the proximity of my work within similar boundaries. In expanding on these influences,

the extremely rich arts scene in London, firmly rooted in the regional history of Southwestern Ontario, has influenced my work considerably.

Within London's regional context, the film that has remained my major influence, and which demonstrates a phenomenological stance for the purposes of an intensely personal vision, is Jack Chambers' The Hart of London (1968-70). Described by Stan Brakhage as "among the few great films of all cinema" (Woodman 25), Chambers film infuses the complexities of Brakhage's phenomenology with the insight of a painter's contemplative mind. More famously known for his ultra-realist paintings that are self-described by Chambers as adhering to his concept of perceptual realism, his film oeuvre positions his place in filmmaking as an experimentalist creating what he describes as personal films (Woodman 17). On a first viewing The Hart of London is a difficult film to penetrate, and it is designed in such a way that discourages the viewer from engaging with the film initially, but leaves an extraordinary impression as it progresses and spirals inwards. I clearly remember being one of only a few undergraduate students remaining in the classroom after my first experience with the film, and although I did not completely understand what I had just watched, I knew it was special and it has since taken up permanent residency in me. Divided into two sections, the first section is almost completely comprised of found newsreel footage that documents many aspects of the artist's London, Ontario community. Central to this footage is the narrative of a deer that has lost its way out of the wilderness and into the city. From the images of the deer's majestic leaps over fenced-in backyards and the hauntingly stark images of gun-wielding

police officers, to the inevitable slaughter of the deer, the first section of the film is presented as a series of overexposed black and white superimpositions that roll forward with the rhythmic sound of lapping waves. Up until the end of the first section, the feel of the film is cold and austere, there is very little sentiment attached to the images of the filmmaker's community and instead a convincingly distanced, bleak, and pessimistic emotional tone dominate.

If not for the second section of the film it would be impossible to discuss the entire film within a phenomenological framework. By itself, the distanced and de-personalized content in the first section comes across as a formal experiment – albeit a good one. When personal images begin to enter the fabric of the film at the start of the second section, the audience is entering into an extraordinary juxtaposition laying out the two sections in a concentric spiral that, as it tightens, gets closer to the personal core of the film. Central to the images comprising the second section is an unflinchingly long take in full colour, of the slaughter of a lamb by bleeding. Set within other images that dominantly depict Chambers' family, his children and his wife, the slaughter of the lamb delivers a convincing blow to any of the sentiments expressed in the personal images. Again, the sound of flowing water, this time a river that heaves with the movement of the images, comprises almost the entire length of the second section, but then gives way to perhaps the most essential sequence of the film. Here, the sound of Chambers' and his wife Olga's voice proceed with forewarning and concern for their children as they feed a full-horned buck; both a menacing and serene scene. The sound continues as Olga

whispers, "[…] Diego, you have to be very careful […] you have to be very careful […] you have to be very careful […]" and the camera pans in slow circular movements from the ground, up past the setting sun, to the sky, and back around again. This is where the film ends. Ross Woodman describes that "[…] Chambers finally and fully orchestrates the nightmare vision of his home town that had haunted and pursued him all his life […][in] The Hart of London, it is the city itself seen as the trap which a deer accidentally enters to be captured and killed, a city that finally narrows to the London Zoo at sunset where a child moves unsteadily toward a deer […]" (Woodman 17). Many people have equated the images of the deer in Chambers' film as an allegorical figure. In this way, Chambers enters into his film in such a way that weaves him into the fabric of both public and personal images – even the more objective images become personal. Both personal and public images combine as pieces of a complete sensory experience where the redundancy of temporal and spatial location is key to understanding Chambers process. He describes:

> You are in a room, then in another room where you see an object being held this way, then you see it in motion, a week later a cup is tilting, the next day a finger curves in the air against a background, you hear a little clink, you swallow a cheese sandwich, something fragile, a cup touches its saucer, you see white…a woman rests one leg over the other, pink…the thick rug is buff-orange. Sense combinations complete one another to enrich perception. (Chambers quoted in Woodman 18)

For Chambers, the accumulation of sensory experiences can become manifest in a single representational plane. Whether in the form of a painting (which proves to be a more awkward way of considering Chambers description), or a film, the representation of time,

space and the occurrences that may happen throughout can share the same residual form to enrich an understanding of experience. Although in Chambers quotation he is actually describing the process he contemplated while painting <u>Olga and Mary Visiting</u> (1964-65), it seems more appropriate to inject comparisons to the filmmaking process (in fact, Chambers was actually embarking on his first film project at the time: <u>Mosaic</u> (1965)), where perceptual experiences can be combined as a temporal flow. The variety of images Chambers selected for <u>The Hart of London</u> either personal or public, found or generated by the artist, speaks to his personal experiences, and as a consequence his presence in the film is deeply felt as the experience of his Being.

Evidence of Chambers' influence in <u>The Consequence of Being Here</u> is apparent in many ways, but it is most notable in the broad thematic concerns I have for life and death, and the proximity of these themes to my family life. In speaking of technique, the use of superimpositions and the 'soft' editing of the more intimate domestic scenes in the film also show signs of Chambers' influence. Early into the film, pregnancy images are superimposed with softly focused interiors, later in the film images of my children are superimposed together as they groom each other – brushing hair, applying lotion, loving through the sensation of touch. The multiplicity of temporal experience in such superimpositions combines the flow of past, present, and future. Chambers mastered this technique in <u>The Hart of London</u>, where the most potent superimpositions not only carry an impression of temporal multiplicity, but also the tonal multiplicity in the footage

through its positive and negative attributes (by superimposing and slightly offsetting both negative and positive prints of the film).

As an artist working and living in London, Ontario I am reminded through Chambers' work and spirit of the potentials and possibilities for making art in a community like London. Besides Chambers' legacy, London's rich arts scene has stimulated much of my work. The presence of artists such as Greg Curnoe, Murray Favro, Jamelie Hassan, Patterson Ewan, and Wyn Geleynse are evident when I ride my bike through a park, visit an art gallery, or exchange dialogue in a colleague's studio. These artists' admirable careers and pursuits to put London on the map as a major Canadian arts centre regardless of its close proximity to Toronto have been a lasting support for the regional-centric attitudes which permeate most artists working in the area. Living and working in London has deeply affected my work in many ways, starting with a sense of belonging in an arts community with a deep history that runs parallel to the continuity of my own interests. Working as a filmmaker in London has taught me more than anything that the role of an artist in a community is reciprocal, beginning with the responsibility of an artist to contribute to strengthening a community's cultural and artistic identity. Through sharing my work and my involvement with such events and organizations as the Forest City Gallery, the London Canadian Film Festival, and the London Film and Video Society I have tried to remain actively engaged with community and culture building in London. London has also taught me to be self-sufficient as a filmmaker; for example, London does not have the same filmmaking support services or

communities available in a major centre like Toronto. Consequently, I have incorporated many handcraft techniques (such as hand processing) while also working with a greater reliance on digital technology, both of which developed in my work as a necessity to make my filmmaking process a realistic endeavor for me. Geographic and historical location work like the limitations and potentials of my camera tools, where the community in which I work establishes the boundaries for me to explore and expand my art practice. Just as my limitations and potentials have been established by the many artists before me, the marks I make work reciprocally to expand the limitations and potentials for other artists and community members in London.

9. Phenomenology of Personal Expression

In order to return to the idea of what constitutes personal expression in my work, the process through which I engage with phenomena in everyday experience needs to be reconsidered. Goffman's idea that we address experience through performative relationships by indexically relating roles to primary frameworks is both simplified and distancing in regards to the consideration of a unique and essential Being. We are complicated creatures, especially when considering the incalculable ways we are capable of engaging with the world perceptually. My movement through space distinguishes my time as distinct from another's and I manifest a sense of self through my ability to engage in a temporal relationship with the world of objects. Past, present, and future are non-categorical outside of perception for it is precisely perception that indicates my presence

and aligns my temporal experience of time. In <u>Duration and Simultaneity</u>, Henri Bergson

differentiates the concepts that most typically adhere to the temporal experience of the

world and asserts that it is through our perceptual relationship to the world that we are

able to experience the multiplicity of past, present, and future. At most times in <u>The</u>

<u>Consequence of Being Here</u> temporal location is uncertain, and the fluidity of time is

expressed in this dislocation. It does not matter that a certain image cannot be identified

as a childhood photograph of myself or if it is confused as one of my children, more

importantly, it should be understood that all of these 'instances' coexist. Rather than

following a model that considers the passage of time to be a physical property in and of

the world, Bergson argues that temporal perception is established by the presence of an

individual's consciousness in the world:

> Everyone will surely agree that time cannot be conceived without a *before*
> and *after* – time is succession. Now we have just shown that where there is
> not some memory, some consciousness, real or virtual, established or
> imagined, actually present or ideally introduced, there cannot be a before
> *and* after; there is one *or* the other, not both; and both are needed to
> constitute time. (Bergson 218)

It is my perceptual existence in the world that allows me to perceive the world temporally

through the designations of past, present, and future. Earlier, I considered the idea that

developments in photography have shifted the emphasis of picture taking from a view

that is aligned with memory to one that also considers how we articulate an experience

through the fluctuations of the present as respondent to the future. My thoughts find

support almost a century prior. In Bergson's view the future is partially determined in the

locus of our perception; a potential experience is first encountered through a sensuous

exchange in the world of objects, then we move towards it or make assumptions based

upon it. The receptive process of transforming a potential experience into an actual

experience is governed by instinct and reflex – we are engaged with the world in such a

way that only membranes and groupings of matter separate us from other things. In this

way, we move *with* the world and *we* move the world through the consequences of

connectivity. *I make a film or take a picture and share it with others.* The world as it is

then, is presented to me as a multitude of potentials, and it is in my ability to potentially

engage with the world of objects through experience that aligns my temporal perception

of the world and which further indicates my individual will.

Here it is useful to revisit Merleau-Ponty's quotation that positions his

phenomenological reasoning to "[…] the soil of the sensible and humanly modified

world such as it is in our lives and for our bodies – not that possible body which we may

legitimately think of as an information machine but this actual body I call mine, this

sentinel standing quietly at command of my words and my acts" (Merleau-Ponty 122).

His reduction of the 'humanly modified world' as the outcome of our bodily assertion

posits the individual as containing the potential to act upon the desire and will necessary

for the creative process to begin. This also resonates back through Bergson's Matter and

Memory, where again, the body and its physical connection with the world is stressed:

"Here I am in the presence of images, in the vaguest sense of the word, images perceived

when my senses open up to them, unperceived when they are closed" (Bergson 17). Then

a few pages later, "My body is then, in the aggregate of the material world, an image which acts like other images, receiving and giving back movement […]" (Bergson 19).[3] To distinguish the possibility that authenticity can thrive in the contemporary world, it can be taken from Bergson and Merleau-Ponty that the potential to transform the perceptual world can be aligned with our innate bodily actions. Authenticity exists outside of medium specificity and thrives most fervently in a cycle of continual re-invention that is perpetuated through an individual's actions. In discussing the history of painting, Merleau-Ponty closes "Eye and Mind" as follows:

> If no painting completes painting, if no work is itself ever absolutely completed, still, each creation changes, alters, clarifies, deepens, confirms, exalts, re-creates, or creates by anticipation of all the others. If creations are not permanent acquisitions, it is not just that, like all things, they pass away: it is also that they have almost their entire lives before them. (Merleau-Ponty 149)

Each new work of art can be aligned with an historical lineage that is carved from the succession of those works before it. The mark of my personal vision in The Consequence of Being Here builds on the influences of works before it, such as those mentioned throughout this paper, but these are just the starting points which inevitably become a reference to arrive at forms I can call my own, as an interpretation of my moment in time and the people who share my experiences.

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[3] Bergson's use of the word 'image' equates not to the representational sense of the word, but to how we encounter and interpret the sensory world through sensation and perception.

10. Concluding Remarks

Throughout this paper I have argued that creativity becomes manifest through an individual's unique and multilayered perceptual engagement with the world. Much the same way the perceptual Being casts the temporal ordering of past, present, and future in Bergson's understanding, the perceptual Being is the necessary ingredient which instigates both the will to touch and be touched by the world. As a consequence of altering the perceptual world the creative project remains as evidence that the world has been touched, then remains to touch others. Arguments that support the death of authorship can be attributed to uniform and indistinguishable emotive qualities across most forms of mass communication. As in the process of taking family photographs, prescriptive modes of production ensure that experience can be predictable and consistent. A parent taking pictures of their children can choose to employ various strategies to record the images they want, and more often than not, their extreme level of emotional attenuation deploys a highly prescribed staging of the experience unfolding before them. All of the 'happy' moments found in a family's home, scrapbooks, or storage devices indicate a deep-seated ability to block out the personal flux of emotions (in both subject and photographer) that normally accompany the daily activities of family life.

From the opening image of a family posing for a home movie, The Consequence of Being Here works to uproot and expand the conventional images with which we choose to represent our lives. By working thoroughly through a process that is open to the

full spectrum of my experiences, I am driven to arrive at the conclusion that the consequence of my presence in the world is distinguishable as a unique creative voice. My hope is that it lives as a project that indicates I have been here and left my mark. Although my aims in this project are to call for a renewed interest in the creative force behind unique works of art, I am also very concerned with the negative impacts associated with the singularity of the creative voice. As a way of removing my 'blinders' and as a result of working with potentially volatile personal content in my work, the openness in my process also allows room for the opinions of my family and other participants to contribute to the work – and, in many cases my recording and editing decisions have hinged on the thoughts and concerns of another. For me, communal experiences, even in the creative process require give and take relationships to fully realize a broader emotional, physical, and intellectual experience. Certainly Goffman's sociological studies help to give some perspective to the dynamics of our social interactions, which is useful in considering the extent to which processes associated with digital photography have been integrated into social experience. Such notions of communal experience open the pathway towards the insignificance of authorship, and if we consider Barthes' essay on authorship again, comparative frameworks can be deduced quite quickly. Yet within larger contexts, if all of my work is considered among lineages to which I have referred throughout this paper, I argue that it will stand out with distinct stylistic attributes and thematic concerns which define it as originating from somewhere inside of me, as an impression of my world.

Through a phenomenological discourse I have located the lineages, processes, and influences within which The Consequence of Being Here can be situated. I have argued that along with technological innovation and evolution, throughout history, the ongoing conception of creativity through the lens indicates the presence of individuals who have touched the world and left their mark. Even through using familiar forms an individual is capable of articulating unique experiences, and when we look back again at how this might take shape within the context of the creative process, a refreshed awareness of how we attenuate our emotions and how the consequences of attenuation play out in our sensual engagements need to be addressed. Generally speaking, there has been a heightened sense of anxiety articulated in works of art (certainly in mine) spanning over many different disciplines. The world in which we live has been made smaller by the speed and far reaching abilities that mass media has achieved. At the same time, news media has vehemently perpetuated a relentless swell that disperses the most negative things in the world. Fear mongering has given equal rise to the reactionary measures we take in our lives to ensure our safety. Importantly, emotional attenuation is one of our fundamental reactions to risk and the fear of the unknown. There is risk in our sensuous engagement with the world and it penetrates the views in this paper concerning phenomenology, technological and historical transformation, producer/consumer relationships, creative practice, and challenges to authorship. Risk always accompanies opening oneself fully to the experiences of the perceptual world, and perhaps it is not out of place to assert that by facing the vulnerabilities that distinguish our individuality we

face the greatest risk of all, where the marks we make and which constitute a creative

project risk uncovering the essence of a Being.

I am about to take a picture of my two daughters. We just finished decorating the Christmas tree, so I direct them to stand in front and pose for me. They are excited and anxious about the first signs of Christmas in our house. I tell them to smile for the camera and they flash their most contrived smiles. I tell them to stop being silly, but the last thing they want to do is to stand still for a snapshot. I persevere and prepare to take another; the moment is quickly slipping away and I am fumbling to make it right. They are not paying attention at all anymore, but then it dawns on me, this is the essence of the moment; these silly pictures are the ones that matter…and I just go with it.

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Here we look at three additional purposes of theories: the organization of known phenomena, the prediction of outcomes in new situations, and the generation of new research. Figure 4.1 Representation of the Multistore Model of Human Memory. In the multistore model of human memory, information from the environment passes through a sensory store on its way to a short-term store, where it can be rehearsed, and then to a long-term store, where it can be stored and retrieved much later. This theory has been extremely successful at organizing old phenomena and predicting new ones. Researchers generally consider multiple theories for any set of phenomena. Different theories of the same set of phenomena can be complementary or competing. Exercises.