Australian
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Art

Tacita Dean

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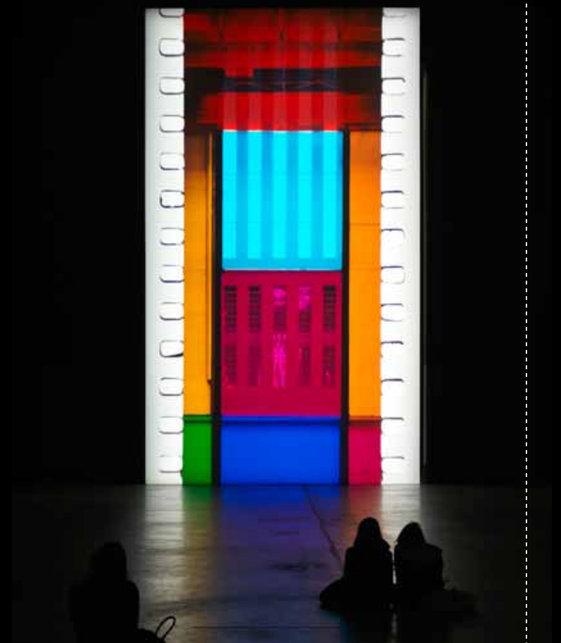
FILM



Tacita Dean FILM

Monika Sosnowska:
Regional Modernities

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Foreword

The Australian Centre for Contemporary Art is proud to continue its artistic relationship with Tacita Dean, and to bring her majestic FILM to audiences in Australia. Seen here for only the second time since its debut as the penultimate Tate Turbine Hall Commission, FILM is a consummate reflection of Tacita's love of the medium with which she has become synonymous. The work leads the viewer through a rediscovery of the special qualities of the film medium, to enjoy its brilliant colour and effects, and its lively and tangible presence. ACCA's uniquely sized commission hall provides the spatial and proportional capacity for this very particular project, which needs a certain grandeur of height and length for impact.

We are also pleased to publish this most recent publication about FILM, which includes writings by Tacita and a new essay by Berlin based cultural historian Gaby Hartel. The catalogue provides wonderful insights into the making of the work and into its context.

Our thanks go to our major partner Audi Australia, for presenting this significant project. Audi's sponsorship of Tacita Dean's exhibition links with its keen interest in bringing the best cultural offerings to Australian audiences. The British Council, celebrating the GREAT campaign, has also generously added its support and ACMI has assisted the realisation of Tacita's public lecture. Our long term partner and collaborator, the Melbourne Festival, has also supported this project, which is part of the Festival's Visual Arts Program for 2013.

Our thanks as ever to Tacita, for working with us again to bring this wonderful project to Melbourne, and for her energetic contributions to this catalogue and our public programs.

Kay Campbell
Executive Director

Introducing Tacita Dean's FILM

The shift from the horizontal to the vertical was unexpected — a literally sublime moment of rupture from the way one usually encounters a film. A massive piece of celluloid, with sprocket holes at its either side, spooling through an inventory of images, scenes, special effects and handmade montages. In the dark, dauntingly large space of the Tate Turbine Hall, the film was captured on a gigantic lozenge of a wall. Like a monolith, its physical presence was impressive and object.

Beyond the first impression gained from its imposing scale, the viewer might do a double-take, and ponder for a moment whether or not they should be able to see the sprocket holes on a film. Would they not be inside the projector guiding the film through its mechanisms? Of course, but *FILM* is its own subject, and its author, Tacita Dean, makes certain its presence as material is always obvious. Inventing a way for this, she has filmed through a mask of sprocket holes. So, improbably, there they are, referencing a piece of film, that colourless piece of celluloid upon which you can print, tint and arrange colour and pictures, and through which light passes to deliver the magic of moving images.

Turning her anamorphic lens sideways, Tacita has also invented a longitudinal format in 35mm to bring grandeur to her project — to create a massive portrait of film itself — which becomes bodily in space.

Mute, without a literary narrative, *FILM* reunites first and foremost with its origins in art and visual experimentation. It asserts its artifice and analogue genesis, which starts with a sketch of found images, postcards and photos, collaged and painted, altered by the hand. Each of these, illustrated in this catalogue, is like a kind of pre-filmic haiku. All become sequences of frames once they are translated from the prompt image to the filmed experience.

A mountain, waterfall, fountain, escalators, stairs, mushroom stalks, flowers: vertical things to emphasise the upright format, they are filmed and then put through a number of montage procedures to add dots of colour, improbable bubbles, mist, lightning, a floating egg — a toe here, an eye there. The Turbine Hall becomes a gridded prop, a kind of armature upon and between which things might happen. Changes of colour, plays of abstraction, it becomes a kind of Mondrian treat of tinted colour sequences. Tacita takes film through its paces, making evident the inventions and illusions that can be achieved in the analogue process. The accidents of film itself — flashes, quivers, wobbles — are all embraced to add to the effect of real film as it passes through the projector mechanism.

FILM is Tacita's epic homage to her much loved medium. She allows us to wonder at and be in awe, for a brief time, of its beauty. In turning it vertical, and making it bodily, she has reinvented film so that we may reconsider it — to relive, perhaps, that first moment of spectacle when we once entered a cinema to find a vast, viscous image before our child eyes.

Juliana Engberg
Director, ACCA

Let's see: some remarks on Tacita Dean's FILM

Gaby Hartel

It all started in a huge space — with a glance, an idea and the word 'portrait'. This is what Tacita Dean tells me in her small, box-like studio in Berlin. It's a winter's day in January 2012, and her work is done, and up and running. On the same occasion, Dean also let slip an interesting piece of information: The word 'portrait' had haunted her since the very moment she looked at Tate Modern's massive Turbine Hall, with the eyes not of a visitor but of someone who has been asked to 'do' the prestigious Unilever commission, in 2011. There she stood on the bridge from where she could assess the whole space, gazing down into the vastness looming below. 'Portrait', she kept thinking (referring to the format as opposed to 'landscape'), and she carried the word around with her — like a magnet, so it seems to me — during her long quest in search of an idea.

The experience of being sure of the format and nothing else was new to Dean, who had until then worked the other way around; so far, content had always suggested its final form. In this case, she knew that the formal framework in which her yet-to-be-chosen theme was to be presented would be seen through a film camera, with an anamorphic lens tilted by 90 degrees. It would stretch the image into a double-sized long strip, from top to bottom of the building's eastern wall, which Matt Mullican had aptly described to her as having 'a big ego'. Format and the type of lens: that was all. Exactly what she would make a portrait *of* lay in total darkness for a long time. From what Dean tells me about how she spent that period of time, she turned into a walking, groping, reading and thinking eye — a transformation that would have made Paul Klee's heart jump with joy. For instance, Dean spent hours wandering through the halls of Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna, looking at what was presented in portrait format. Through careful observation and lucky chance, she found out a thing or two about our neglect of the format's impact on our perceptive and emotive apparatus when it is installed in space. Dean also carried a book with her on her journey: René Daumal's unfinished novel *Mount Analogue*. Like a charm, it was a constant and inspirational reminder of her central motor in art: her believe in the idea of analogue as practice and medium. She also turned to her collection of portrait-format postcards, which she finds at flea markets. She tried things out, made little paper collages, was lost in thought and immersed in moments of deep concentration, hoping to transpose her first-moment intuition into artistic action. But the question remained: what would this portrait be? 'You know', she explains in her box in Berlin, 'the obvious thing for a portrait format is the human form. And I have recently made quite a lot of portraits —.' The timbre of her voice stays in a higher key, as she leaves the sentence unfinished. Clearly, this new work was not meant to stand in a row with her films on Mario Merz, Michael Hamburger, Boots or The Uncles.

While she continued to ponder her central question, Dean's film studio in London, Soho Studios, was forced to stop developing 16mm films within a week, the decision of its new owner, Ron Perelman of 'Deluxe' in New York. It was a severe and frightful blow to Dean and other artists who use film as their medium, just as others use oils or bronze. And then, with all these things colliding, Dean realised her work 'had to be about the threat to film'. Those days of agitation brought with them the magic moment of clarity: as Dean was drawing little film-sprocket holes on the sides of the photo of the Turbine Hall, the solution came: 'Of course, not only is it a portrait of the Turbine Hall, but of film itself!' This said, Dean had to see whether this was possible with old cinema techniques, 'because there was no way I was going to do it digitally', she recalls, laughing. And yes, she did it using old, illusionistic film techniques of glass matte painting and masking. It took a lot of time and creative invention to achieve the final result. But, as Dean says of the way she works: 'My process is one of incomprehensible and anachronistic labour, as is all artistic process'. She needs the material resistance to her ideas, and it is what she is most afraid of losing when analogue filmmaking is totally replaced by digital form.

As painful as this whole artistic process doubtlessly must have been, it strikes me as an interesting coincidence that Dean here lived through one of the medium-specific essentials of film: the process of creating form in time, of giving shape to the ever-flowing stream of time.

The minute I step into the dimly lit colossal space of the Turbine Hall through its western entrance, I am entranced by something glowing and flickering far away on the opposite wall. At first glance it seems as if the sun shines through a huge, oblong coloured-glass window. This is the first of many incidents of illusion in the following 11 minutes, for this is Tacita Dean's *FILM*, of course, that I see. It is a lively collage of shapes and images — ovoids, triangles, circles, lines — dancing in a faked depth of plane in coloured light or in black and white. At times the screen is split into a diptych, and then a triptych, combining dissociated images that spread much energy in their unexpected communion. The building's eastern wall, on which the film is projected, features in many scenes as a backdrop, a fact that may indeed account for my first impression of looking at a window. I'm reminded of Alberti's Renaissance dictum that all painting is a window into reality, linked to the real world by perspective. The notion of a Gothic church window seems somehow appropriate in a structure that, although built in 1952, pays homage to the architecture of high modernity, which celebrated technology by erecting factories as 'industrial cathedrals'. I continue, for a moment, with this train of thought and discover *FILM*'s stunningly multi-layered and overlapping reflections on its medium, on the Turbine Hall's former function (the production of power), on the magic of film in general and on the imagery of early film experiments in particular, by sporting chimneys, ladders, staircases, waterfalls, clouds streaming from factories.

What I see is delicate and monumental at the same time, intimate and universal, agile and dense with media and art-historical connotations. As I gaze fixedly at the huge strip of film, I am all eyes (as is the rest of the audience), gripped by *Schaulust*, an ur-phenomenon of cinema: the pure joy of seeing. Tacita Dean's film celebrates the atmospheric wonders of analogue cinema in a rhythmic optical composition, merging images, movement and abstract play of light and shadows into an *Augenmusik des Films* (the eyes music of film), in Bernhard Diebold's phrase of 1921. Visual echoes of artworks appear on the screen: Mondrian's colourfield grids, the sun in Olafur Eliason's *Weather Project*, his work for the Unilever Series in 2003, Sergei Eisenstein's iconic staircase of Odessa in his film *Battleship Potemkin*. As all sorts of objects flicker or float into sight, Dean tampers with scale and proportion: as I stare, an oversized egg jumps into view, filling most of the visual plane — an aside to Magritte. A bit later, smaller eggs slowly drop into a sea of fog and all this makes me wonder if gravity is still what it was.

A lot in this 11-minute film is reflexive, pointing to what the medium is about. I see movement in different guises: a waterfall, a fountain, escalators, shoes walking, dots flickering, pigeons pecking. And there is light in all kinds of aggregates: a light bulb seemingly exploding into different colours, and then into darkness; a dynamic play of red along the image of the Turbine Hall dissolving into dramatic lightning fit for Dr Frankenstein's laboratory. Here the uncanny creeps in — a theme that kept artists, critics and audiences alike busy in the early days of photography and the moving image. Then again, I experience the playfulness, the lightness, the joy and the wonder of watching a magician's tricks, and I can't wait to see which improbability will happen next. Watch this, *FILM* seems to say, see what else I can do! The tiny is set off from the gigantic, and in proportions that my brain will perhaps never find in real life.

The spiral, too, a seemingly indispensible visual icon of early avant-garde film, is present, if in disguise: I detect it in the image of the snail, which is ironically static and miles away from Duchamp's dizzying rotoreliefs. Be that as it may, the snail is *the* emblem of time turned into matter, as Paul Valéry so beautifully elaborates in his fascinating essay 'Man and the Sea Shell'.

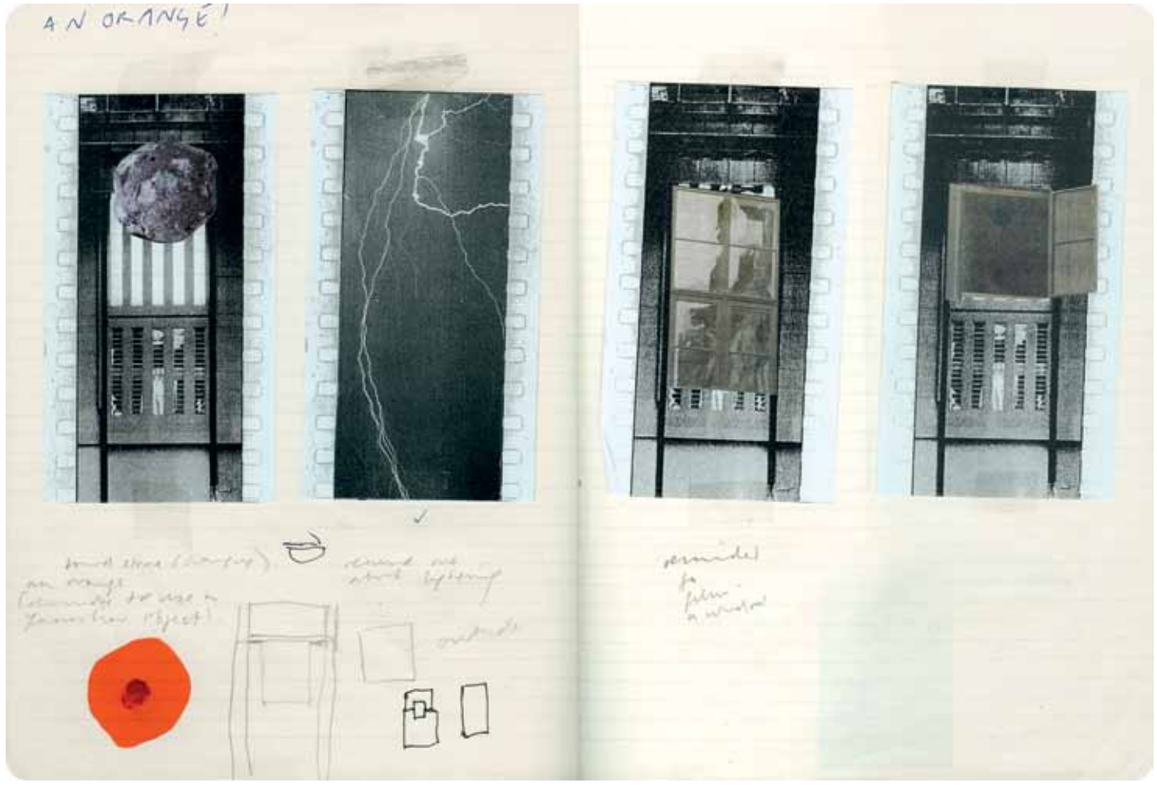
But my staring at the screen is not one way; the screen itself has eyes, which stare at me — two different eyes appear at different moments in the film. I read this as a nod to the one-eyed camera, to early French, Russian and German cinema, and as a tribute to the idea of the portrait itself. It was Fritz Lang who informed us that the first and foremost gift we owe to film is the rediscovery of the human face; that is, the portrait. With that in mind, I see his iconic monocle in the huge bubble that floats down the length of Dean's monumental strip of film.

Why is it so exhilarating to watch all this? Is it because the film is mute, but for the soundtrack of real life ringing through the Turbine Hall, unfolding a truly gripping presence by giving us an active part in this adventure? What Tacita Dean brings to life is the miracle of film itself, which in the early days of avant-garde was called *photogénie*. By 'genius', those pioneers of poetic film meant the aura of technology: the camera, the projector and the screen. Seen from this angle, *FILM* is an 'emotio-aesthetico-physical' force field, an occasion for mental travels into another space, such as personal and cultural memory. But watching *FILM* turns out to be a physical adventure, too. Dean's cinematic space is a suggestive ambience, and not far removed from the Romantics' vision of the forest as a place of magic encounter, discovery and immersion.

Tacita Dean says, 'For me, making a film has to do with the idea of loss and disappearance.' We know her investigative interest in things gone or on the verge of vanishing, and although analogue film is undoubtedly being pushed into media history's dustbin, *FILM*'s visual statement is so fresh and strong that it is anything but a sentimental harking back to times lost. This work demonstrates abounding energy, a palpable delight in working and communing with the actual world in real time. For Dean, film is an alchemical process in the most literal sense of (re)creating the world through light and the exposure of a strip of film. I somehow feel that there is alchemy at work, too, on a metaphoric plane. Watching *FILM* I am involved in an active communicative process, and when it is over some sort of transformation has taken place — I turn away in a completely different state of mind. This may be why Dean's *FILM* has been called a visual poem: Reading and living through good poetry has a similar effect. As a poem, *FILM* does not give us a linear narrative; the work's poetic quality lies in the very same characteristics Italo Calvino, in his *Six Memos for the Next Millennium,* elaborated for all poetic communication: lightness, quickness, exactitude, visibility, multiplicity, consistency.

Maybe all is not yet lost for Tacita Dean's, and our, magic medium of analogue film. Faith moves mountains: isn't that how the saying goes?

Dr Gaby Hartel is known for her discovery of Samuel Beckett as a visual artist and works as a cultural historian and broadcaster in Berlin.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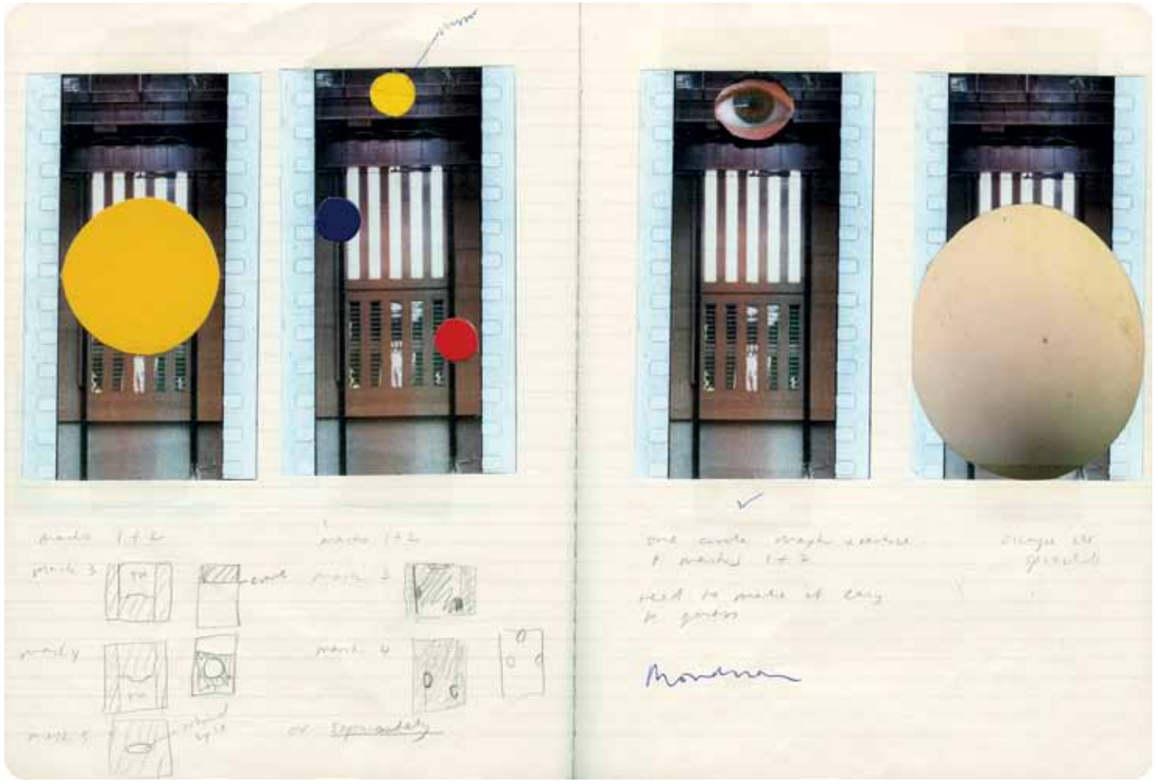
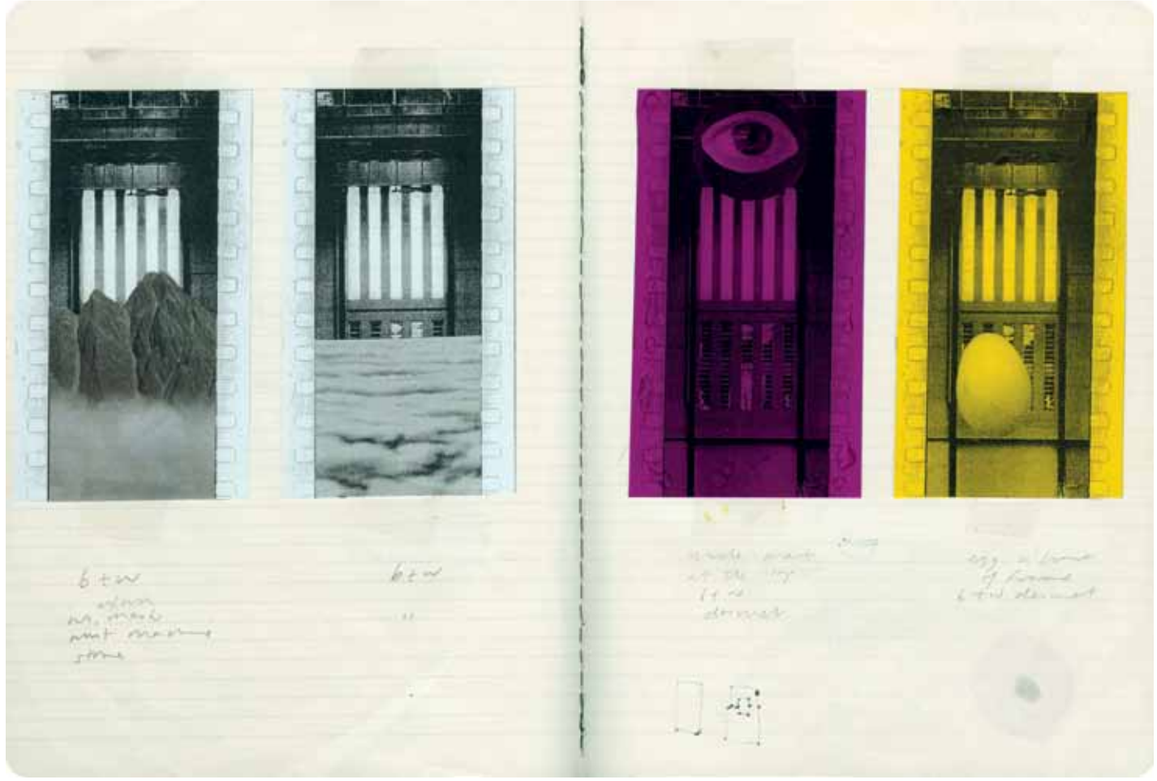
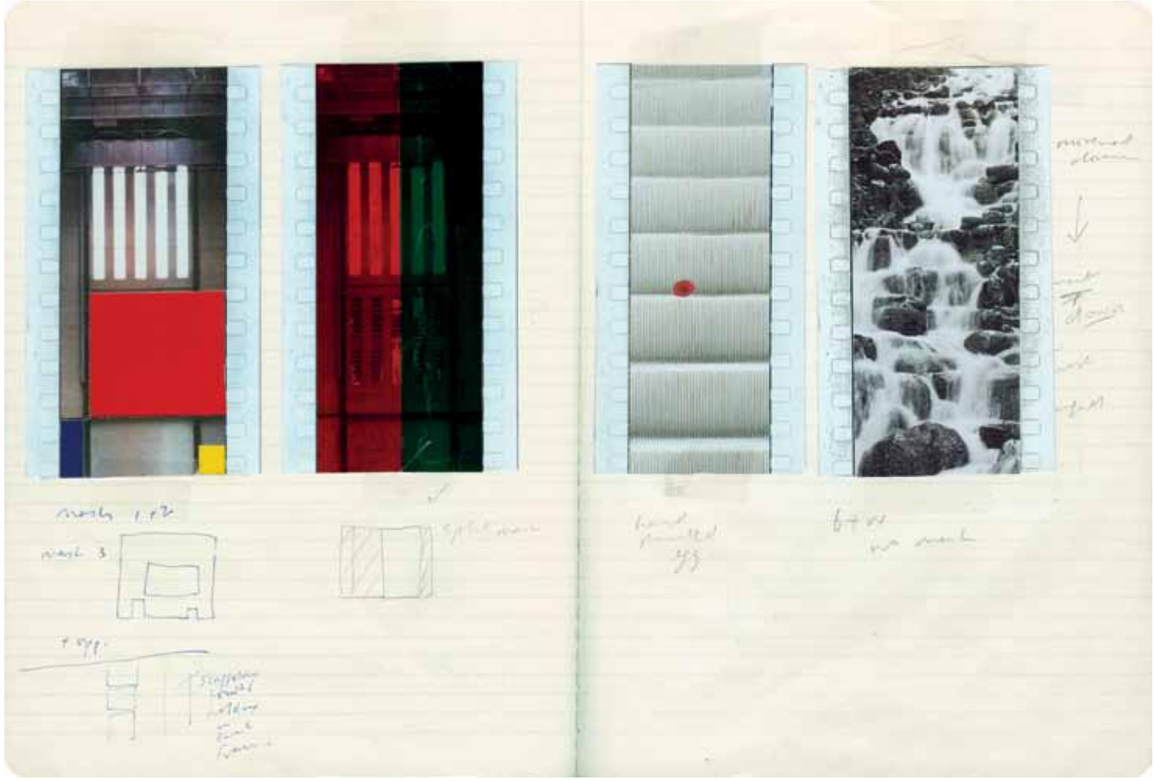
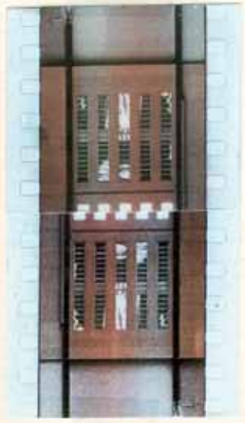
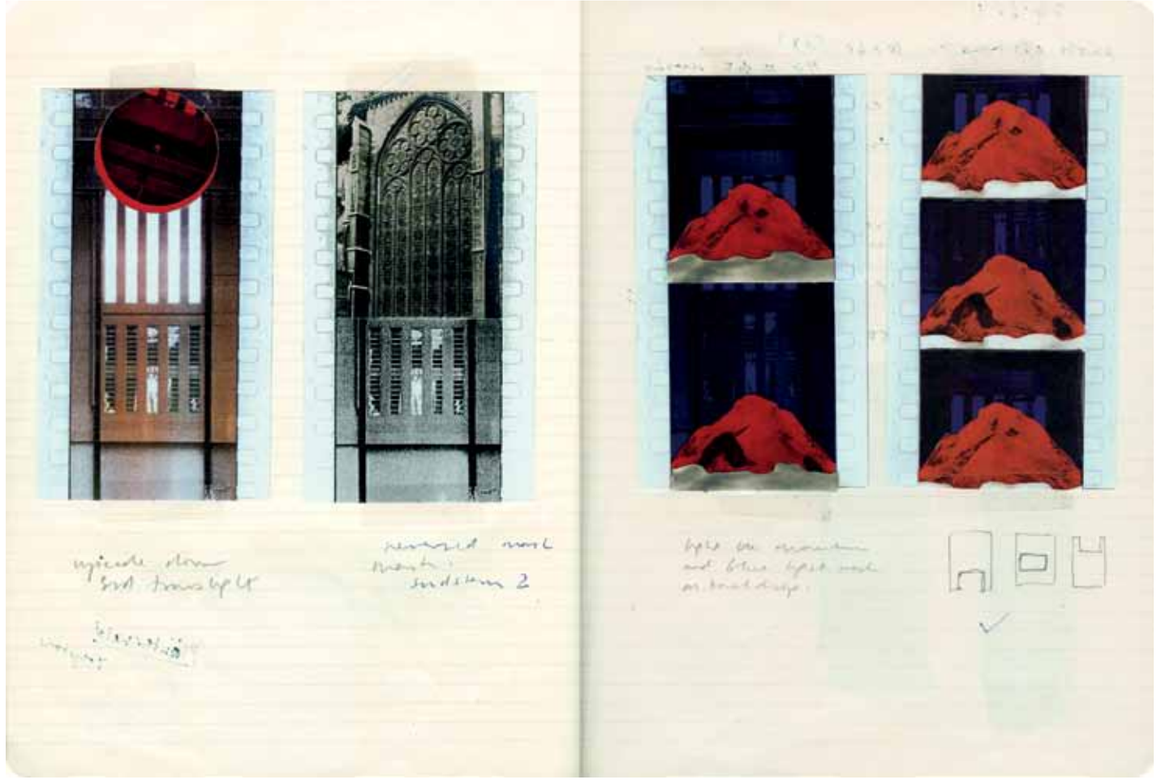
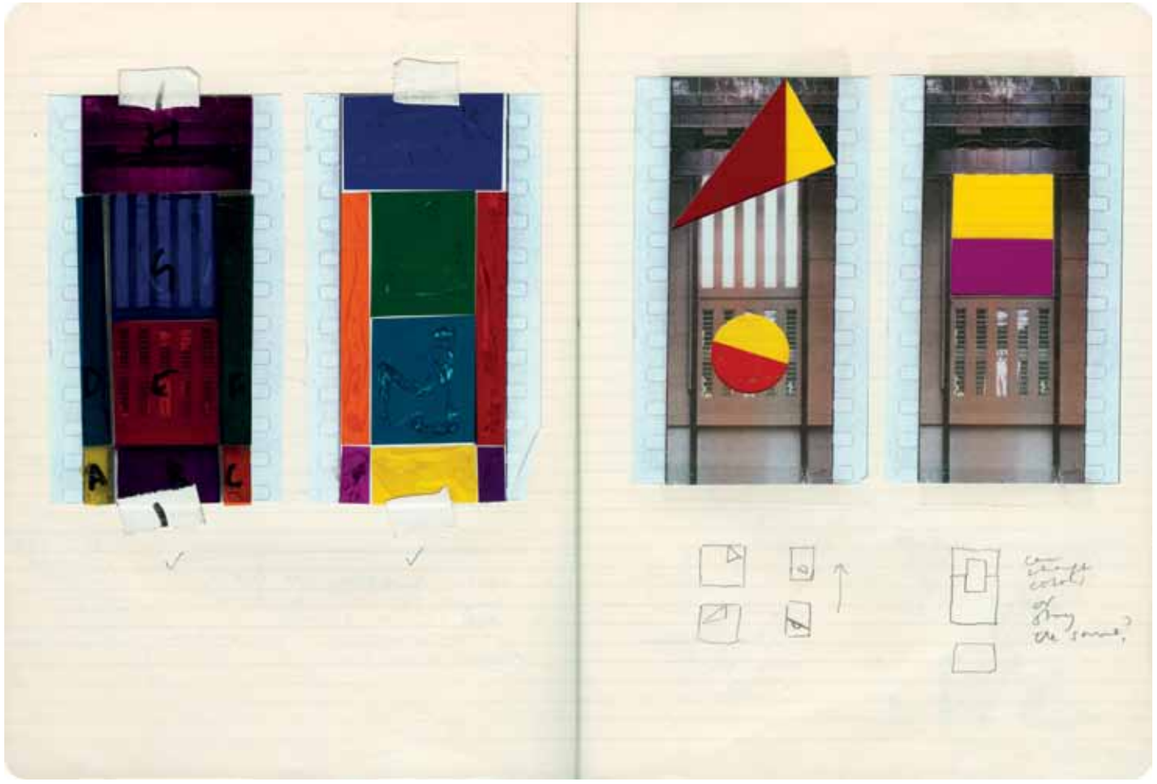


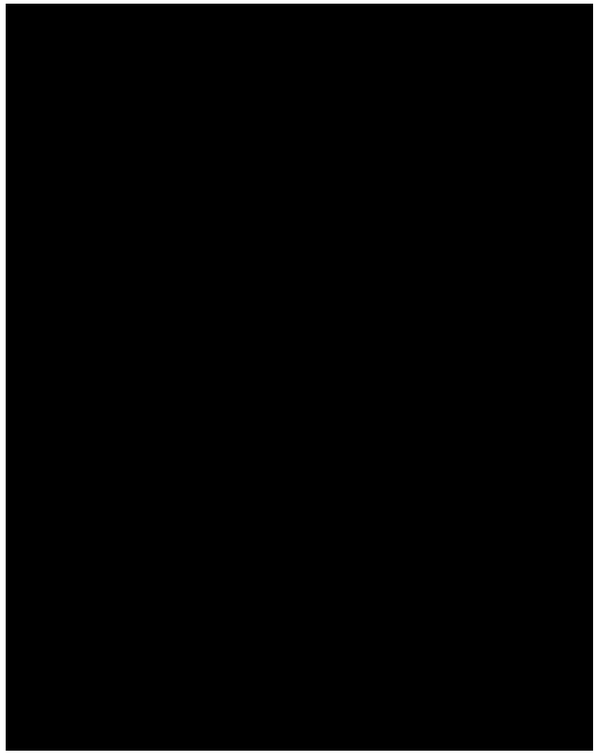












FILM

'On the tenth of the following October we embarked aboard *The Impossible*.'
René Daumal, *Mount Analogue*, 1944

I can date the beginning of my thinking about the Turbine Hall from an anxiety attack in a hotel room in Vienna. It was Oscars night, late February and I had just arrived in the city to install my show at MUMOK, which signalled the end of one project and the inevitable start of the next. I woke up suddenly unable to breathe. Calming myself down, I turned on the Oscars. It was Austrian television: a man and a woman, expert and presenter, were seated watching the event on a screen inside my screen. Between each award, they would discuss it. There was something about the man, the expert, which compelled me to continue watching the ceremony right through to the end, rather than surf the channels to look for it in English. At five in the morning I fell asleep. A day later, I was told I was having lunch with the Director of The Austrian Film Museum, and there, at the reception, was the man from the television, Alexander Horwath. We began a long conversation about film and the danger it was in. Somehow in my late lost sleep, I had recognised a man in sympathy with a common cause, and had unknowingly taken the first step in the journey of the Turbine Hall project.

A week earlier, I had rushed to London to complete post-production on my new films for the MUMOK exhibition. From the underground station at Heathrow Airport, I phoned Len Thornton at Soho Film Lab to tell him I was on my way. He was distraught that morning, and told me that the new administration, Deluxe, had just announced that the lab was to stop printing 16mm film, with immediate effect. It was a corporate nip and tuck that not only laid off considerable skill and expertise, but also devastated the creative lives of a whole community of people working with 16mm, who are now looking to Europe for new labs, if they persevere at all. Britain had probably the most active group of artists and filmmakers using 16mm film worldwide. Entirely because of the commitment of Len Thornton and the other staff at Soho Film Lab, 16mm flourished. He kept prices low to encourage students to try the medium, and it worked: a new generation of artist began working with 16mm print in galleries and museums.

The next day I wrote an article about it in the *Guardian,* and the response was so immediate that a group of us created a digital petition, which, within days, several thousand had signed and shared all over the world. We had it printed out and hand-delivered to the owner of Deluxe, a Mr Ronald Perelman, art collector, address Manhattan. It didn't work. Len managed to get my prints made in time for the exhibition against all odds and then lost his job, as did his colleagues. The lab has continued to process 16mm negative and to print 35mm, which use the same machinery and expertise, but they could not be persuaded to continue printing 16mm for this small but committed market. So why is it the responsibility of a corporate giant like Deluxe to care about 16mm print? Why should anyone?

Sheena Wagstaff invited me to be the next Turbine Hall commission in September last year. It was not something I had ever imagined doing. Somewhat stunned, I accompanied her to the bridge to gaze at the cavernous space, dotted with the large, and as yet unopened, bags containing all the sunflower seeds of Ai Weiwei. The artist Matt Mullican later described the Turbine Hall to me as a space with a big ego, and he was right. But in that instant, I knew immediately that I wanted to try and make a portrait format anamorphic film with the lens I normally use to stretch my films into a double-width landscape format. I wondered what would happen if I turned the lens 90 degrees and stretched the image from top to bottom instead of from left and right: make a portrait format film for a portrait format space?

I realise now that in the period following the end of Soho Film Lab and the anxiety attack in Vienna that I have been grieving the potential loss of my medium. It is clear that 16mm film will not last long in its present form in the current climate, that is, industrially produced in a variety of stocks and with working labs that have a daily turnover. It will become more artisanal, lovingly manufactured by the devoted in non-industrial quantities and extremely expensive. 35mm film is equally threatened. I understand that most cinemas in London have already or will be turning digital by Christmas and 35mm release prints are being phased out worldwide by 2013.

I have heard in these last few months more versions of the 'Get real, darling!' mantra than I care to recount. I know it is inevitable progress and I'm as invested in the digital world as much as the next person. This is not my point: cinema made with film and shown as film is very different from cinema made and shown digitally. Within art this is mostly understood, because the world of art has appreciated medium specificity since before the Renaissance: Giotto's mural is a fresco, conceived, made and seen differently from an oil painting by Leonardo da Vinci; we understand that an etching is not a watercolour and a drawing not a relief; they are made differently and the experience of seeing them and handling them is different. They might share the same content, the same images and even be copies of one another but they are not the same. However they are all still *pictures*. But for some reason there is a cultural blindness towards the difference between film and digital: a blindness with an underbelly of commercial intent that is invested in seeing one replaced by the other so the difference can be quickly forgotten. Both film and digital are *pictures,* perhaps copies of one another, but they are not the same thing – one is light on emulsion and one is light made by pixel, and they are also conceived, made and seen differently.

Digital cinema has not yet come into itself. It will, I am sure, when it becomes less preoccupied with imitating and destroying its antecedent, film and more focused upon innovation and its own potential in hitherto unchartered territory and a hitherto unchartered cinema. But it needs to be wiser to its failings and the lack of rigour that inevitably comes from overwhelming possibility. At the moment, digital cinema is blindly euphoric at all it can achieve and stupid to the tedium that that can create. It is vanquishing analogue cinema while still in its infancy and we are being hoodwinked by the industry into believing it doesn't matter, but it does. Both are important and that is the point of this book: to get film appreciated as film, to understand and preserve it as the independent and irreplaceable medium it is, and has been, and to make clear the incalculable loss to our cultural and social world if we let it, and its analogue counterparts in photography, sound and publishing, just disappear. This book is not about the past but about the future.

When I was a first year postgraduate student at the Slade School of Art, the artist Richard Hamilton was invited to give the William Townsend Memorial Lecture, an annual prestigious event open to the whole school and the university beyond. The lecture was called 'The Hard Copy Problem'. Sitting high in the raked seating of the auditorium, we peered down at the stage where Richard sat next to a man of the boffin type who was introduced as the demonstrator. Under the artist's direction, the demonstrator began showing the audience this new technology for colouring and changing

images called a Quantel Paintbox. I remember Richard Hamilton's enthusiasm as the demonstrator displayed how easy it was to change the background of his dirty protest painting, *The Citizen*, (1981 -3) to various colours. It was 1991, and my first encounter with digital.

Earlier, in 1985, when I was a first year fine art student at Falmouth School of Art, the college staged an all night sit-in to protest against its potential closure at the hands of Mrs Thatcher in her purge of small educational establishments. In the early hours of the morning, I idly turned a bad collaborative drawing into a storyboard for a poem from Ecclesiasticus that, for a reason long forgotten, I had lying 'in my space': 'Wisdom shall praise herself, and shall glory in the midst of her people'. I personified Wisdom as a cartoon-like comely and naked pink woman. The next day, it caught the attention of the artist Annabel Nicolson, who was visiting the school from London. She asked me if I'd like to make it into a film. So over the next months, I animated every verse of the poem, changing the drawing on the same piece of paper so the shadow of the old drawings crept up behind. At the same time I bought my first super 8 camera, projector and portable screen from a man in a bungalow in one of the outlying holiday locations turned all season housing that surround Falmouth, and began working with film.

Everything I learnt technically about film, I did on the hoof. I was an itinerant at the Slade, officially in Painting but moonlighting as much as I could in the Media Department. The artist Jayne Parker taught me how to splice and mark up a film in a short ten minutes in the cutting rooms in the basement, and Lis Rhodes was uncompromising in her criticism of my first attempts in the one or two unofficial meetings I had with her. This was the extent of my education in film and I am grateful to them both. I knew just enough. I had met, in the autumn of my first year there, Derek Jarman on the train from Charing Cross to Ashford. It was just after the resignation of Mrs Thatcher and I sat in the seat down from him overcome with shyness, willing myself to approach him. Fortunately, a Canadian opposite me struck up a conversation on the glories of the Iron Lady, which propelled me into bravery. We talked all the way down to Ashford and I remember Derek saying he didn't even know how to use a light meter. He made his films as a painter: full of exuberance, love and light, and airiness too, for Derek was an alchemist.

I found in 16mm film a medium with which I was immediately comfortable and I have grown with it. Film is time made manifest: time as physical length – 24 frames per second, 40 frames in a 16mm foot. It is still images beguiled into movement by movement and is eternally magic. The time in my films is the time of film itself. Implicit in this is what film continues to hold over digital, and which digital needs to find for itself or be lost in an eternity of options, and that is *decision*. Every element in the making of a film is decisive. Every roll of film has a length: length determined by footage and expense, and finite length makes for decision: two and a half minutes is a 100 feet of 16mm film; 1000 feet is eleven minutes of 35mm: the physical length of time. No film camera can work for itself: light and focus need to be decided. Film is therefore not fast and spontaneous but slow and methodical and mulled over. To show a scene in real time of any length, one must always resort to fiction and illusion, for in film, real time is edited. With digital, of course, one can record continuous time without break. When editing, you cannot repeat a shot or turn it upside down or run it backwards if you do not have the footage. To repeat what you do not have, or to show it doing what it does not do, means making a new negative. There have been myriad occasions where I have wished for a shot to be longer or wished to repeat something, but you can't; you have to resolve it in another way. Much invention and artifice has come from these limitations. For generations, artists, filmmakers, editors and directors have cut different films, often better films, as a result film's discipline.

The artist and filmmaker Harun Farocki made a film in 1988 about the German writer and coppersmith Georg K. Glaser. For many long minutes in his film, you watch the man beating away at a copper bowl and forming it through incomprehensible and anachronistic labour. Farocki once spoke in an interview in 1999 with Rembert Hüser about the difficulties he experienced when first editing with an Avid. He found 'there was hardly any material resistance against the ideas':

I say to my editor: 'shouldn't we…' and before I have finished my sentence he has carried out everything. This can be counterproductive since I make changes to gain time. I want to be able to view everything from a different perspective, again and again, in the way one rephrases an idea after talking to different people, hoping that the idea might increase in depth and form.

I cut my films on a Steenbeck cutting table. I always work alone. I physically splice the print together with tape. My process has no system and changes with each film, but it is these days and weeks of solitary and concentrated labour, which are at the heart of my creative process and how I mould and make the films. One attribute of film that most are happy to lose is its burdensome physicality, but for me that is precisely what is important. I am wedded to the metronome beat of the spool as it turns. I count time in my films from the clicking as the core collects the film. The time it takes to implement an idea: to cut something in or take something out and then spool backwards to the beginning to watch how it has worked, is the time of film and the time of film edited, as well as the time of deep thought, concentration and consideration. I need that material resistance to my ideas and this is what I am most afraid of losing. My process is one of incomprehensible and anachronistic labour, as is all artistic process. Film is my working material and I need the stuff of film like a painter needs the stuff of paint.

Film is mute. To record sound in film, it has to be done separately, on a separate piece of equipment. To keep the sound in sync with the image, a mark needs to be made on both, hence the clapperboard. The aural clap of the board can be synced to the visual moment when the two woods meet. Digital has sound, and it was a revolution and a relief in the industry when early video first appeared with image and sound fused in the fabric of the material. This made our modern world suddenly less subjective. But, for me, it is important that film never loses this original silence. The picture is first seen and remembered mute, and the action is then in adding sound. The inevitable gap allows for artifice, for discontinuity and rupture, and a narration of sound as independent and as fictional as the picture itself. There is much poetry at stake in never first knowing your film mute; it is a much greater challenge to find silence if it's never been there.

Back in Vienna, two months later, I went and sat in the Kunsthistorisches Museum. Having found the form for the Turbine Hall project in that instant on the bridge, I was still utterly lost to its content. Technically I had resolved that turning a lens 90 degrees could make a portrait format image, but of what yet, I still did not know. It was not my normal way of doing things: as an artist I have always found the form from the content and not the other way round. So I wandered from bench to bench in this venerable museum, sitting looking at the *portrait format* of its portraits, or just staring abstractly at the world, hoping or willing for an idea to come.

I began to watch a painter working on her copy of Giorgione's *The Three Philosophers,* (c. 1508/9). She was in late middle age, neat and in a white coat. Both her easel and paints were on castors. She was working in oils with a palette knife and, from her very slow pace, had evidently been there, with permission from the museum, for several months. I sat behind her for some time, my eyes travelling from painting to copy, painting to copy. At first, I thought she'd done quite a good job but gradually, I realised something was clearly wrong. She was correcting Giorgione's darkness, lightening up the painting, as if trying to put detail and elucidation into the painter's preponderance for shadows. She was thinning the foliage and denuding the trees, but then I realised what was also amiss. Her canvas was a different proportion to Giorgione's: whereas his was squarer, hers was more rectangular. It was clearly why her copy looked off: she did not have enough height. I was mystified as to how someone could devote so many months of her life focused on the painting's *picture* and yet be so blind to its proportion. But with the scanning and panning, squashing and stretching of our television and internet pictures, proportion has become lost on us of late, and distortion normal. The precision of the original framing appears increasingly irrelevant

A week later, I was invited to the American Academy in Wannsee in Berlin to hear a lecture given by Google's executive chairman, Eric Schmidt, called 'The Digital Future'. The adjoining rooms of the lakeside villa were filled with IT professionals, and at the back sat the Academy fellows and the guests, a ragtag group of artists and intellectuals. He began by telling us we were only in the early days of terabyte or petabyte potential and that they were digitising the world's best art collections: 'it's the beginning of everything being digital; everything being digitised, everything being virtual':

What are computers really good at? They remember everything. You don't, right, let's start with that: they have infinite memory; they keep stuff forever… So, what does the digital future look like? Well, you can't forget anything, because your computer remembers it for you… they remember everything; they keep memories of what we do. You're never lost … the only way to get lost is to turn off your phone… the reality is your phone knows where you are already… and furthermore there's research that indicates that even if we know a little bit about you, we can sort of predict where you're going to go… again, with your permission. You're never lonely; your friends are always online… we've pretty much eliminated, at least, that kind of loneliness. And there is always somebody to talk with or post about or have an opinion about. You're never bored: I mean instead of wasting time watching television, you can waste time watching the Internet. We're never out of ideas. We can suggest things that are interesting to you, based on your passions, things that you care about, where you're going, that sort of thing. Our suggestions will be pretty good. We have figured out a way to generate serendipity. We actually understand now how we can surface things that are surprising to you, but based on the things that you care about and what other people care about. We can make suggestions… see if you like it.

Artists rely on the physical encounter of viewer and object in a space. Most images get mediated into another form: into magazines, books and billboards, or television and the internet, and so those making them need not be concerned with the image's physicality but only with its content, its picture and its reproducibility. Artists, on the other hand, care about the uniqueness and aura of their objects and their presence in the spaces they are shown in. Whether it is a silver gelatin photograph or a digital print, a 16mm film or a digital video, artists understand and choose the medium carefully. However in the twentieth century, artists began using mediums, which were not solely confined to the making of fine art, but that were being produced industrially. So by choosing film, I wedded my fortunes to a cinema industry that now no longer wants or needs the production of film, and is hastening its demise – a wane in commercial interest that I am powerless to stop.

In 1997, I was invited to the Sundance Screenwriting Lab in Utah to develop an idea for a script in conversation with some of the industry's best cinema professionals. My idea was to stage my film in the non-dramatised part between Sophocles' two plays *Oedipus Rex* and *Oedipus at Colonus*, where Antigone leads her blind and lame father into the wilderness for an undisclosed period of time, so that he can later reappear resolved of his great crime against her, against the city of Thebes and against the gods themselves. One of the advisors, Stewart Stern, who had written the script for *Rebel Without a Cause*, reflected on why he thought they had needed to disappear for this unspecified length of time:

Or the mystery of why it took Moses forty years to get those Jews from the Nile, or the Red Sea to Canaan when you can do it, even in those days at the most in forty weeks. But forty years of not getting there? Because he was waiting for the generations who have been under Pharaoh to die, so there would be no memory of what it was like to be a slave, and they could come in as free people.

A few years later, Annie Chaloyard of Kodak Industrie in Chalon-sur Saône in France gave me the same argument when I asked her why Kodak was giving up so easily on such a historical, beloved and well-tested product in the face of digital competition. She told me that the next generation will not recognise the negative and will have no experience of a photochemical film or photograph. We have lost, she said, in the face of what will soon be forgotten.

I think what chilled many of us in that room in the American Academy that night was not the expression of our future reliance on the internet but the body-less, human-less world it proposes. A world that remembers our lives' algorithms in order to outsmart us with ourselves is a world without pause for thought. Serendipity, coincidence, chance, forgetting, loneliness, solitude, boredom are all part of our human condition and inspiration, and should be left unresolved and un-figured out by software and the people behind software. We need to tread carefully into our digital future. To better the world is not to cram the gaps full. A world that won't forget is a world drowned in its not forgetting. Do we want a world full of unedited memory? To be human is to be finite.

In April, I received a text message from Dale McFarland at Frith Street Gallery asking me if I had ever read *Mount Analogue* by René Daumal, as he had just found a copy in a second-hand bookshop. It is a beautiful work with the subtitle 'A Novel of Symbolically Authentic Non-Euclidean Adventures in Mountain Climbing'. Daumal died of tuberculosis while writing it in occupied Paris in 1944. He stops mid-sentence in chapter five while his characters are still only on the approach slopes to Mount Analogue. And although the book's meaning remains elusive, it became my companion in those lost months of irresolution and helped me past my block.

Mount Analogue exists for those who do not doubt the possibility of its existence, but for those others, it is an impossibility, a fantasy. It is higher than any mountain as yet known on this earth: its snowy peak reaching into the sphere of eternity but its foothills, most necessarily, are accessible to humanity. Its scale and proportion mean its circumference is of several thousand kilometres, but it is hidden from normal observation because of the refraction of light and the curvature of space. However it needs must show itself at a certain point

when the sun sits on the horizon at dawn, or at dusk, at particular coordinates and at a certain time of year. Its probable position can be worked out through logic and pure mathematics:

To find a way of reaching the island, one must assume the possibility and even the necessity of reaching it. The only admissible hypothesis is that the 'shell of curvature' which surrounds the island is not absolutely impenetrable – that is, not always, *not* everywhere, *and not for* everyone. *At a* certain moment *and in a* certain place certain persons *(those who know how and wish to do so) can enter. The privileged moment we're seeking must be determined by a standard unit of time common to Mount Analogue and to the rest of the world – therefore by a natural timepiece, very probably the course of the sun.*

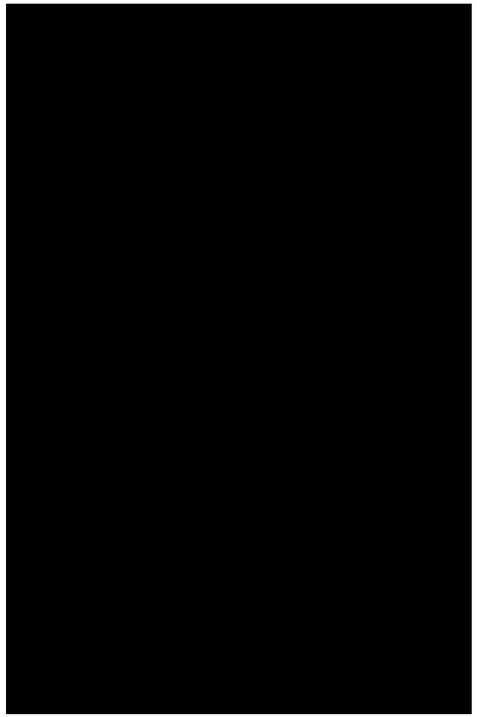
Maya Deren talked about a 'vertical' cinema, a cinema without linear or 'horizontal' narrative but one, which played with the temporal, spatial and symbolic meaning possible in art and poetry, but which used the film camera as its tool. Film has the means to make poetry but it is entering the illusory domain of being there only for those willing to board *The Impossible. Mount Analogue*: analogue, which has now come to mean all that is not digital, proposes a place, a mountain, a realm of the mind that can be reached by those who feel that it is possible, in fact necessary, to do so. Mount Analogue itself, Daumal writes in the summary of the book he knows he will not finish, embodies the 'knowledge to be passed on to other seekers… Before setting out for the next refuge, one must prepare those coming after to occupy the place one is leaving.'

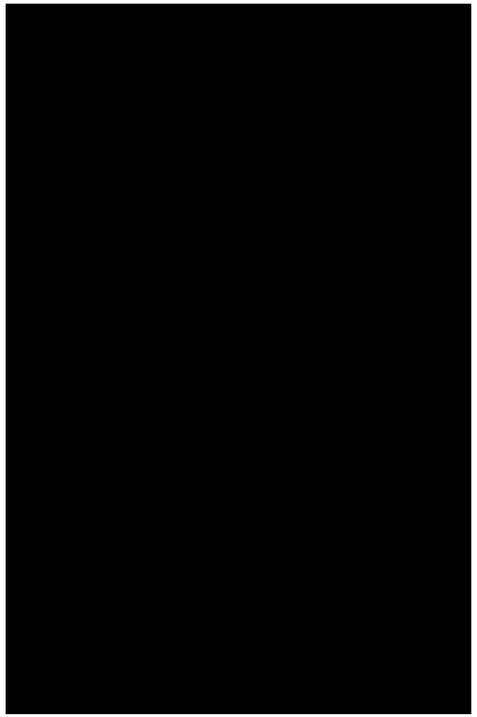
I found my way eventually through collage. I sat at my desk and first made Mount Analogue, using my flea market postcard collection: the Matterhorn and the oily sea around Helgoland. I sorted out the postcards that were portrait in shape: stairs, towers, waterfalls, fountains… I blew up pieces of film and then glued sprocket holes onto the Mount Analogue collage and saw that the anamorphic portrait format I had established at the beginning was, in fact, a strip of film. I realised I was making an ideogram and, unbeknown to me, the portrait I'd been struggling to recognise for so long was a portrait of film itself.

'Fix it in post' is the song of digital. It has been the great advance in image-making in recent years, but it has also created an inert visual tidiness and uniformity. Crews have become less technically invested in a project because the image gets adjusted after the event. The atmosphere of the film shoot has changed. The move from making things in production to making them in post-production has been one of the most underestimated and radical shifts that has happened with the advent of digital cinema. Mistakes were often magical but we no longer see them.

So I chose to make an experimental 35mm film inside the camera, and so revive spontaneity and risk. I wanted to show film as film can be, and use no post-production other than my normal editing process, and the grading that happens in the lab. I chose to have the film happen inside the notional cinematic space of the Turbine Hall itself: Turbine Hall as filmstrip, and conflate the imagined with the real in the wonder space that is experimental film. My plan was to try various disused film techniques, such as glass matte painting-the use of two-dimensional illusionistic painting on glass in front of the camera to embellish or create the fictional realm- and the older method of masking. Masking involves putting a mask, much like a stencil, between the lens and the film, which can expose a shape directly onto the emulsion. Many a keyhole or binocular effect through which we spied in early cinema were made this way, but the edges were never very crisp and the imagery cumbersome. Once solved, masking could allow me to print sprocket holes onto my imaginary filmstrip, but this would mean the multiple exposure of the same roll of film. When several masks were used to expose different parts of the emulsion, then the film would have to run and rewind in the camera many, many times. Any mask would need to be back-to-front, upside down and squashed by half to be correct in my film. It made for the arduous testing of my non-technical mind. I travelled far, and talked to many, and it was universally decided that what I was trying to do was near impossible, at least in achieving acceptable degrees of sharpness and recognisability. But my companion in this was a young architect called Michael Bölling, who knew nothing about film, but approached it like any other technical problem with a resolute and analytical mind. After much trial and error, he invented an aperture gate that worked as a sharp and precise mask, the like of which has probably never been seen before in film. It worked. The advantage he had over the pioneers of early cinema was digital technology. He built the mask on his computer and printed it in three dimensions.

This book and this film are not valedictory; they refuse to be. But they are, nonetheless, a call to arms. Culturally and socially, we are moving too fast and losing too much in our haste. We are also being deceived, silently and conspiratorially. Analogue, the word, means equivalent. Digital is not the analogue of analogue. At the moment we have both, so why deplete our world of this choice? But we must persuade a disheartened industry of film and photo stock manufacturers and those few remaining labs to persevere through this darkest of storms. Increasingly people are returning to non-digital film and photography, as they have been returning to vinyl, because they want the option of using both, despite what is being decided for them. We must fight to keep a foothold on Mount Analogue, or risk a colossal depletion of irretrievable knowledge and skill, as well as the experience and history of over a hundred years of film and photographs made on film. If we do not, we are in danger of losing something of our humanity's heart.





Save celluloid for art's sake

On Tuesday last week, the staff at Soho Film Laboratory were told by their new owners, Deluxe, that they were stopping the printing of 16mm film, effective immediately. Len Thornton, who looks after 16mm, was told he could take no new orders. That was it: medium eviction without notice. This news will devastate my working life and that of many others, and means that I will have to take the production of my work for Tate Modern's Turbine Hall commission out of Britain.

Soho Film Lab was the last professional lab to be printing 16mm in the UK. In recent years, as 16mm has grown as a medium for artists, the lab has been inundated with work, both from this country and abroad. Contrary to what people imagine, it is a growing and captive market, albeit a small one, with a new generation of younger artists turning to analogue technologies to make and show their work: Thornton says he handles work from more than 170 artists. Then there's the effect that this will have on the BFI and their conservation of the many thousands of reels of Movietone news footage, television, documentaries, features and much else.

These last few days have been like having my bag stolen and remembering, bit by bit, what I had inside it. My relationship with the lab is an intimate one; they watch over my work, and are, in a sense, its protectors. I have made more than 40 films, and each one has several internegatives (a copy of the original negative). In the vaults of Soho Film Lab are racks packed high with cans containing my life's work to date, including the negatives of films I never cut. I order countless prints each year, as projecting my films on loop systems in museums and galleries inevitably means that they become scratched and exhausted. Thornton and his colleagues know the titles of all these films, and when I make a new film, I turn up at the lab and grade every colour in every scene. Film is chemistry: chemistry that has produced the miracle of the moving image. Decades of knowledge, skill and experience have gone into my saying, "I think that shot is too green, but the next one is too pink." Deluxe (who responded that they have "nothing to say at this time") are, admittedly, ending only one tiny part of an ongoing process: they will not stop processing 16mm negative, and will continue to process and print 35mm. It is not as though they are giving up the chemicals and going dry. But they are stopping 16mm print because the cinema industry does not need it any more, and it is they who run the labs and are dictating that movies go digital and celluloid be phased out. Printing 16mm is an irritant to them, as it is time away from printing feature films, and features are the industry and all that matters. Pitched against this, art is voiceless and insignificant. My films are depictions of their subject and therefore closer to painting than they are to narrative cinema. I shoot on negative that is then taken to the lab, in much the same way you used to drop your photos off to be developed. The 16mm print I get back is called the rush print.

The negative stays in the lab. Working alone on a cutting table over many weeks, I cut my film out of the rush print. Using tape, I stick the shots together, working as both artist and artisan. It is the heart of my process, and the way I form the film is intrinsically bound up with these solitary hours of watching, spooling and splicing.

When I have finished, I take my reel of taped film, now called my cutting copy, to a negative cutter, who cuts the original negative and delivers it to the lab, which then prints it as a film. My relationship to film begins at that moment of shooting, and ends in the moment of projection. Along the way, there are several stages of magical transformation that imbue the work with varying layers of intensity. This is why the film image is different from the digital image: it is not only emulsion versus pixels, or light versus electronics but something deeper – something to do with poetry.

Many of us are exhausted from grieving over the dismantling of analogue technologies. Digital is not better than analogue, but different. What we are asking for is co-existence: that analogue film might be allowed to remain an option for those who want it, and for the ascendency of one not to have to mean the extinguishing of the other.

The real crux of the difference is that artists exhibit, and so care about the final presentation and presence of the artwork in the space. Other professions have their work mediated into different formats: TV, magazines, billboards, books. It remains only in galleries and museums that the physical encounter is so critical, which is why artists, in the widest sense, are the most distressed by the obsolescence of analogue mediums. But it is also in these spaces that a younger generation born in the digital age are taking up analogue mediums in enormous numbers. At the recent Berlin art fair, 16mm film projections outnumbered digital projections by two to one.

The decision to end 16mm print at Soho Film Lab, newly named Deluxe Soho, seems to be worldwide policy (they have already ended 16mm printing in their labs in New York and Toronto), so it is unlikely we will be able to reverse the decision locally. I spent my weekend writing to Martin Scorsese and Steven Spielberg, who are both understood to care about celluloid film, even 16mm. I am also trying to make contact through the Guggenheim with the US owner of Deluxe, Ron Perelman, who, as a patron of the arts, might not have understood the devastating impact this presumably financially negligible decision might have on a growing group of contemporary artists, the galleries and museums that show them and the national collections that own their work. In the end, the decision is more cultural than fiscal, and needs to be taken away from the cinema industry. What we need in the UK is a specialist laboratory for conservation-quality 16mm and 35mm prints, possibly affiliated to the BFI. This needs to happen quickly, before the equipment, technology and experience is irreparably dismantled, and Deluxe must help with this. In the meantime, I will look to the last remaining labs in Europe to print my 16mm films.

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A Celebration of Film

Speech given on by Tacita Dean on 22 February 2012 at 'A Celebration of Film', a British Film Industry event held in Tate Modern's Turbine Hall during the installation of The Unilever Series: *FILM,* 2011.

Good evening

Thank you all very much for coming to the Turbine Hall, this former power station and power house of the last century. I can't begin to tell you how important it is that this event is happening tonight and how glad I am that it is.

It is one calendar year to the day – February 22nd 2011 - since I published an article in the Guardian newspaper about Deluxe's decision to stop the printing of 16mm film in Soho Film Lab, which in turn resulted in a petition that got an immediate and overwhelming worldwide response.

One calendar year, that has seen the tide turn on film, which began as a threat to 16mm print but which has become the Tsunami to engulf all film.

I am not going to talk about film's qualities tonight. Everyone in this room will know them. Instead, I want to take the opportunity to address you, the industry directly. I am an artist. My world is different but what I share with you, and what I am calling on you to protect, is the medium of film.

Last week, I was at the Berlin Film Festival and attended a screening of Chris Kenneally's documentary 'Side by Side' starring and co-produced by Keanu Reeves. Keanu Reeves interviews directors, cinematographers, technicians, actors etc. about the shift from film to digital. Some of you are here tonight.

It is wonderful, at last, to learn there is some discussion on this issue in Hollywood – and I salute everyone involved – but in the end the documentary was too polarising, too either/or and we need to move the discussion along.

The question is no longer 'is the future of cinema digital?'

Clearly, the future of cinema is digital. Digital is an amazing new medium, versatile, democratic, cheap and with a huge potential to create an exciting new cinema.
But it is NOT film. As everyone in this room knows, digital differs in every aspect: in production, enormously in post-production, in quality, in how it is made, shown, received and experienced.

It is a different medium.

So the question should be: does the future of cinema have to be exclusively digital?

And the industry surely must start answering no. Surely the future of cinema needs to be both?

The other question the documentary asked or Keanu Reeves asked of many people in it was: Is film dead?

No, film is not dead. Film will only die if it is murdered.

It is time for the film industry to move on from this polarised and polarising discussion.

I am an artist. As an artist, I understand medium. If I choose to paint a painting I will. If I choose to draw in chalk on a blackboard I will. If I choose to make a 16mm film, I will…or at least as long as I still can. And I will show my painting as a painting, my blackboard as a blackboard, my 16mm film as a film projected in the museum - again, as long as I can.

Artists like to have a lot of mediums. We use anything we can get our hands on, including film.

I do not understand why the film industry is not rejoicing that now they have two mediums with which to work: two entirely different magical, versatile ways of making moving images.
Why on earth do you want to return to just one?
Why is the industry so invested in destroying film, when there is plenty of room for both and a market for both if there is allowed to be?
Why deplete the world of the medium of film?

FILM is a 35mm portrait format anamorphic film projection, made in the camera without any digital production or post-production.
I rely on you, the viewer, to encounter it in the space – walking up close to it and seeing the grain, walking behind it. Experiencing it.
Thankfully the museum has a responsibility to show the work in the way the artist chooses to show it: medium specificity is fundamental to the preservation and exhibition of art.

But I need film print. I need film print because that is what I show and what I cut. I need negative too and intermediary stocks and labs and equipment but most endangered of all is the film print. Our history of cinema needs the film print too.

I know finance plays a large role in this but it is also an attitude of mind. A decision.

Blanket statements like 'there will be no more 35mm release prints in 2013' send a palsy of fear to many throughout the world:

- independent cinemas who cannot afford or perhaps do not want to pull out their 35mm projectors and replace them with digital ones because their repertoire has always been a mix of the current and the historical.

- the stock manufacturers, Kodak & Fuji, who need to protect their core professional business but are being menaced into thinking there is no future in it.

- labs that are struggling and fighting against the odds, then closing

- archives, who have the responsibility of preserving our film history with dwindling analogue facilities and must work with unstable and unproven digital ones. (It is said the even some directors Titanically invested in digital are still too afraid to rely 100% on the digital archiving of their films. Digital's failure to be a secure archive tool is a massively un-discussed subject).

- the artist, the filmmaker, the director, the cinematographer who all want to make the work they want to make, and who want to be able to choose the way they make it.

- the viewer who wants to watch a hundred years of their beloved cinema projected as it was made to be seen (which, according to a Guardian poll that took place during the opening of *FILM* here at the Turbine Hall, is 78.7% of us).

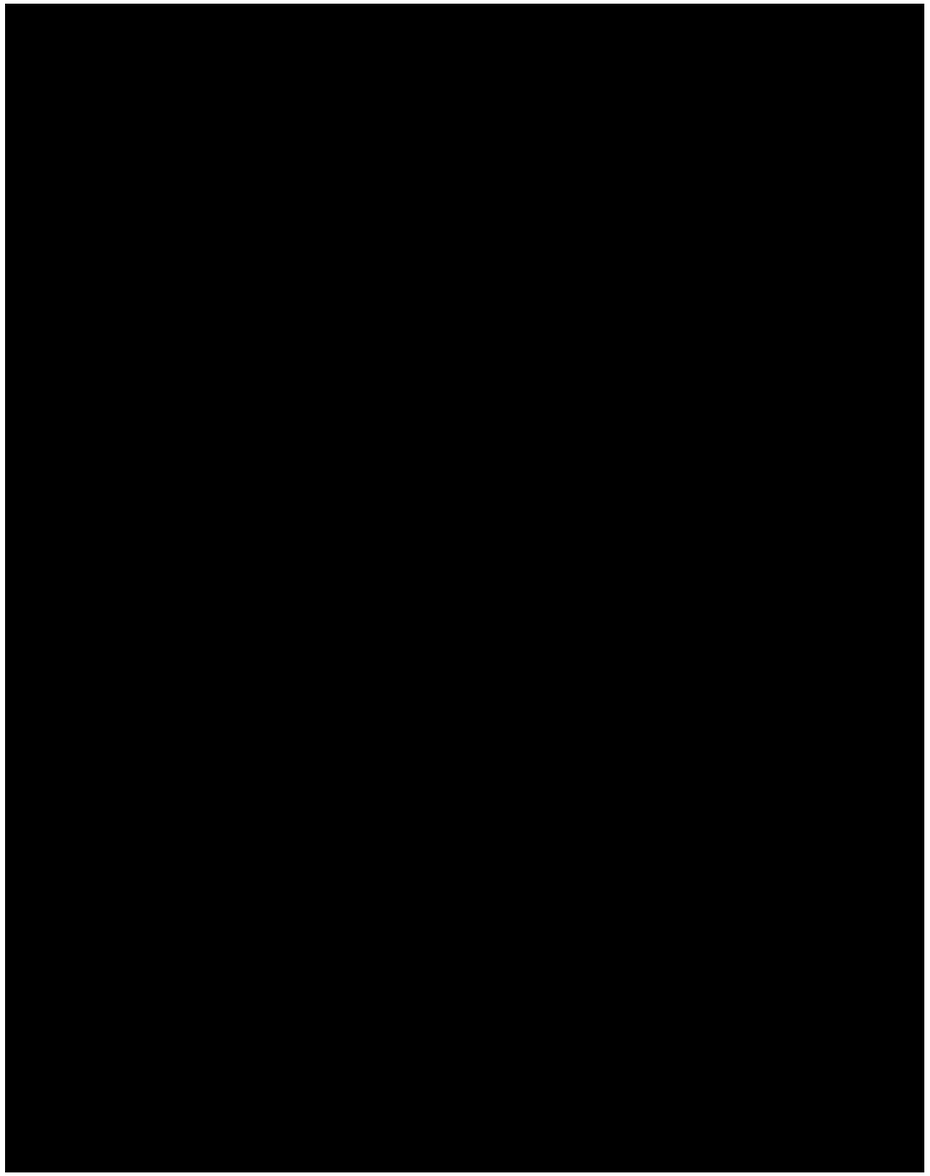
Surely it would be better to be less absolutist about this and say instead that the digital camera package will become the prevalent distribution method in 2013, but prints will also be available on request.

We need to stop the wilful annihilation of film and keep the choice: you are the powerhouse of the film industry: I need you. We all need you. Let's make a market for it. Let's make film survive.

Recognising film as a medium within the cinema industry

The survival of film—photochemical, analogue film—depends on it being understood *as a medium* within the industry that has historically and commercially used it the most: the cinema industry. As long as they continue to see it as part of the cycle of the production of pictures—*the pictures*—and therefore inevitably replaced as technology progresses and changes, then film will not survive. But if the industry (and by industry I do not mean the directors, cinematographers, and those behind the camera, but the mindset and financial psychology of the industry as a whole) can begin to understand film as a medium—as different from digital in the production of images as painting is from inkjet printing—then they will at last realise that they have two mediums with which to make pictures: two entirely different autonomous and functioning mediums whose co-existence can increase the wealth and richness of their art. But this is not understood. Instead they are hell-bent on seeing the annihilation of the one in order to achieve the complete and total accession of the other, and like any monotheistic system or dictatorship, the cinema industry believes it needs to be absolutist to succeed.

First published in *Artforum* September 2012



Shoot film don't kill it

Whether film – photochemical film – will survive the apocalypse wrought upon it will soon be known. So comprehensive has the ascension of digital been, and so rapid, that even the direst predictions for the survival of film now appear to have been optimistic. Fuji is ceasing film stock production in March 2013. Kodak is in Chapter 11. Labs are disappearing almost to extinction and long held knowledge and expertise made redundant or in early retirement. Cinemas that do not have the money or the will to swap analogue projectors for digital ones are being forced to close. If it is a battle to the death, then digital has won. Progress has outwitted its slower moving predecessor and prevailed. The new medium of cinema is indisputably digital, but the speed of the transition, orchestrated by the few on behalf of the many, is indecent and irresponsible, and is happening at an enormous cultural cost, leaving the world intentionally ignorant of all it is about to lose.

Unfortunately the debate has been too polarising and wrongly framed. Inevitably it has been about the technical evolution of the digital medium and the natural obsolescence of film. This is, of course, part of the real story. However to misrepresent the fundamental artistic and cultural differences between making moving images digitally and making them with film has meant not only a failure to acknowledge the potential of the new digital cinema but more seriously has hastened the demise of the other equally valid way to make movies, and that is with camera negative.

Film and digital are different mediums and they make a different cinema. At their best, directors understand this and exploit the intrinsic potential of each medium to the full. Film has time as its internal discipline, and verisimilitude. This means no roll of film lasts longer than 11 minutes and what is filmed is what you get. Digital is a medium of duration, convenience and flexibility, and what is filmed is more often a template for what can be added later in post-production. So film requires rigour and invention at the moment of capture whereas digital has the potential to be more easygoing and portable. Both have very different working practices and differing visual outcomes that permeate through the process to produce distinct types of filmmaking. What directors, cinematographers and artists would like to retain is the freedom to choose their medium in keeping with the project they want to make. The advent of digital should have augmented such versatility and authorship but the purge of film has instead diminished and restricted it: from now on, you can only make cinema the digital way. Rather than rejoice at having two mediums with which to make movies, it seems the industry is happier to have just one again, and the biggest and most astonishing problem of all is that the studios think it doesn't matter, that film and digital are the same and that nobody has noticed. It is, after all, just pictures: *the pictures*. Ironically movies are our cultural memory but the industry needs us forget what film looked like. For purveyors of vision, they are showing a shocking lack of it.

So film has been forced into a defensive position and the argument reduced to one about cost, convenience and an obsession with image resolution. By decreeing that they will no longer release film prints on 35mm of any film current or otherwise, the studios have given cinemas no option but to go digital. For multiplexes and mainstream cinemas showing contemporary releases, this is in keeping with progress but for small repertory and art house cinemas with eclectic and historical programmes, this is existential: go digital or die.

Meanwhile, it is only powerful directors who can still insist on shooting on negative against an enormous tide of fiscal pressure. The studios are cutting off the lifeblood to stock manufacturers who produce both camera negative and print for projection and, along with the labs who do the processing, are left scrambling for any scraps they can get. After Fuji closes, Kodak will be the only colour negative and print stock manufacturer left in production worldwide and the company is in a precarious state. The last European manufacturers, Orwo and Agfa are only producing black and white separation negative for archive purposes. It is as if everyone has already given in.

The question is why the studios needed to be so absolutist in their conversion to digital? Clearly digital projection has saved the studios enormous amounts of money in prints and the shipping of prints, so why are there not adequate profits to allow for some plurality - for some cinemas to continue projecting films as film? There is a consensus among many that to digitally project a classic made on film is a falsification of the original experience, preventing a true encounter with the original work so why is it necessary to stop lending prints to art house cinemas which still have audiences who understand this? Not every film will be popular enough to make the transition to the DCP – Digital Cinema Package. Who is deciding this? How much avant-garde and B movie cinema are we never going to see again as a result? It's like having your accountant choose your music collection – you might trust them with your money but not with your taste. Where is the industry's duty of care to the medium on which it was founded? Lose film now and we will lose it for good. Film is not the industry's alone to throw away but that's what they are doing. Film belongs to us all.

I write this article as an artist. I have no connection to the film industry other than my main medium is film, which I project as film installations in art galleries and museums. I still edit by cutting and splicing the film print, its physicality is my clay and my paint. I am an artist and I need the physical resistance of the material I am working with so I make no apology for the anachronistic quaintness of my process. Sometimes I use chalk on a blackboard or paint on a photograph. I stand to lose my working process and the ability to watch, and have others watch, my films. But this is my anguish and my bad luck. I am 46 but picked a medium at art school that looks unlikely to outlast my career.

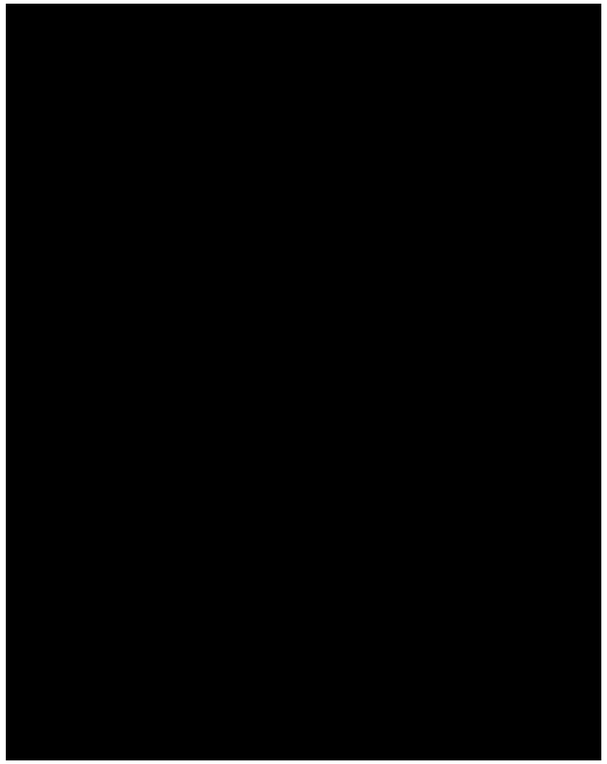
Only I am far from alone. Apart from the artists themselves, the museums and art institutions, which have been collecting artists' film and photography dating back to the beginning of the last century, are also facing a critical loss in their ability to show and preserve this work. Museums have a responsibility to show an artwork in the medium in which it was made. No one would dispute this with an oil painting, and the same applies with works in every medium, which includes film and photography. A museum is a space where one can still physically encounter a work of art. A few months ago, it was believed that museums might become the last places where one could experience film but unless stock production is protected soon, even this is beginning to look fanciful.

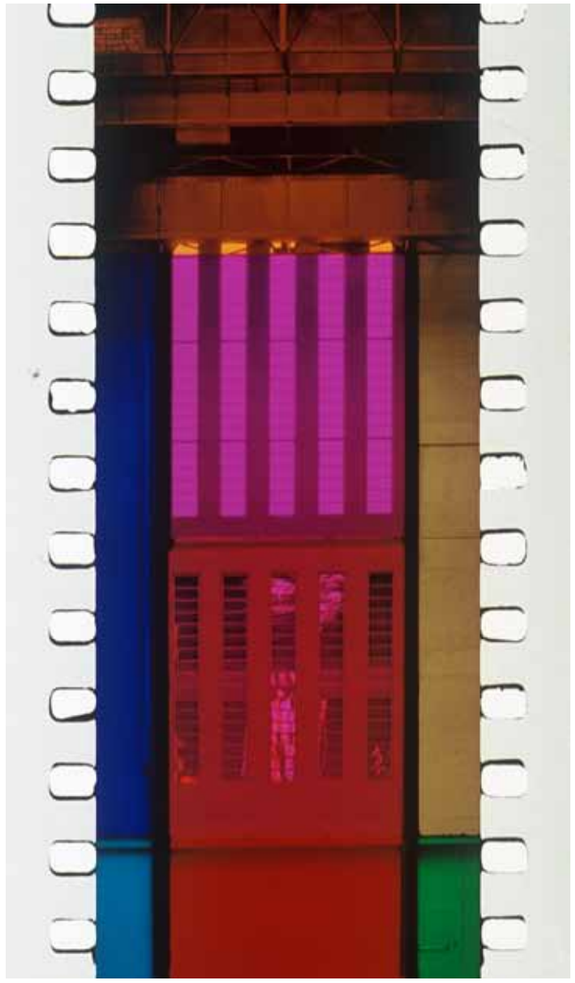
Equally grave is the ability of national archives to preserve and protect over a century of their cinema heritage. Digital is still proving an unreliable and unstable archive material. Continual migration between formats with differing rates of compression, which are endlessly changing and being upgraded has one archivist/filmmaker, Ross Lipman, comparing it to the Tower of Babel: a cacophony of formats as opposed to the one universal language of film. Ironically it is still recommended practice to store even works made digitally on negative.

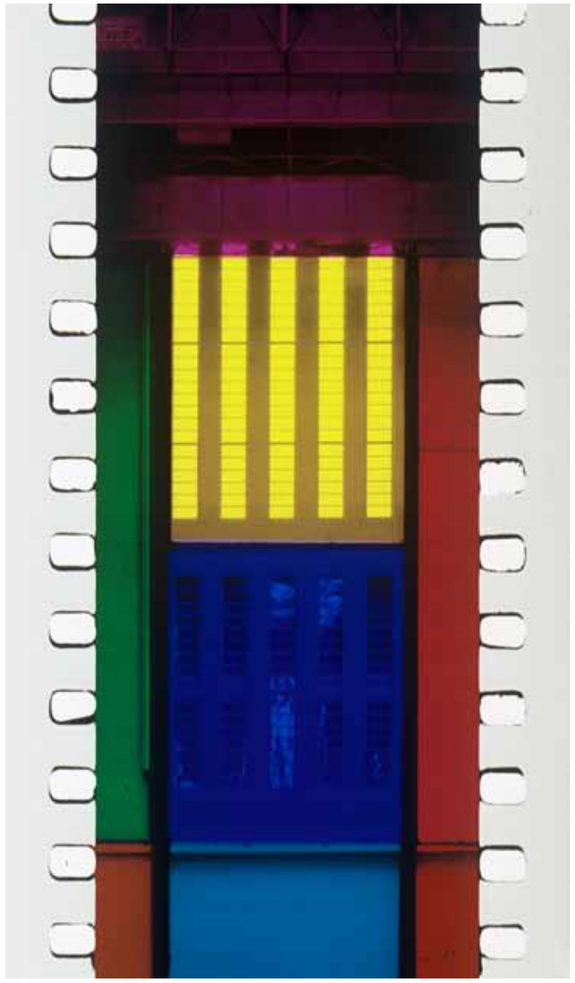
The situation has become so serious that a growing number of individuals, institutions and organisations including the world's top museums and cinema archives have joined the Oscar-winning cinematographer, Guillermo Navarro's 2008 call to have UNESCO recognise and protect the medium of film as an artistic language by declaring it a World Heritage. As Navarro has said, "Film is the Rosetta Stone of our times. Since film was invented a little more than 100 years ago, it has become a universal medium for telling stories that has entertained and enlightened people in every corner of the world."

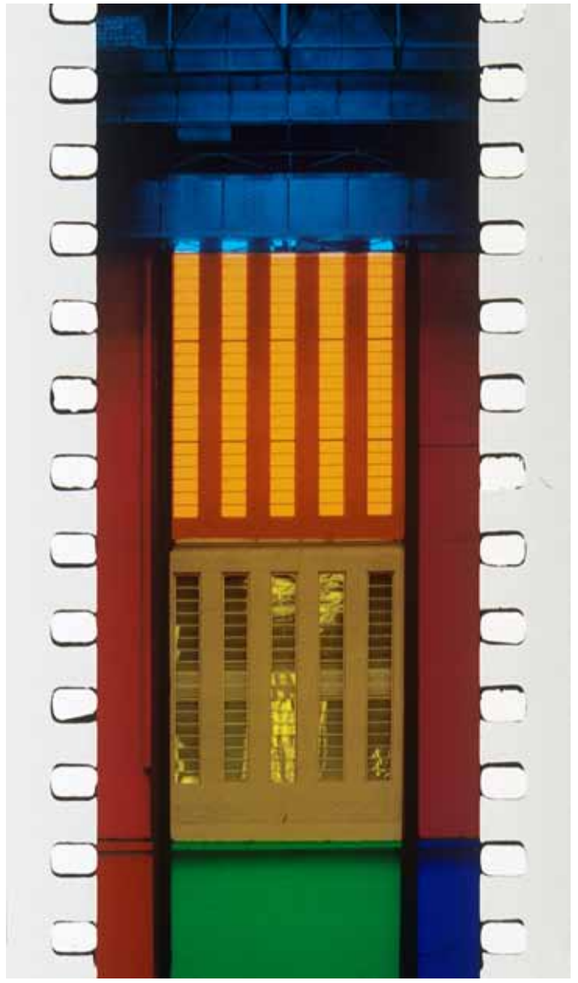
Today (if the article is printed on October 27Th 2012) is UNESCO's World Day for Audiovisual Heritage instituted as a global focus to raise public awareness of the fragility through neglect, decay and obsolescence of our audio-visual heritage. Mankind is on the point of losing one of its most important inventions: the means by which it has depicted itself for over a century with light, optics and chemistry. It has digital, but this is film. We need both; we need co-existence and choice. This is a call to visionaries within the industry to halt the canker and take stock of what they have but are about to lose. Please take effective steps to protect negative and print manufacture now, starting by allowing it to be shot and shown, rather than actively preventing this from happening.

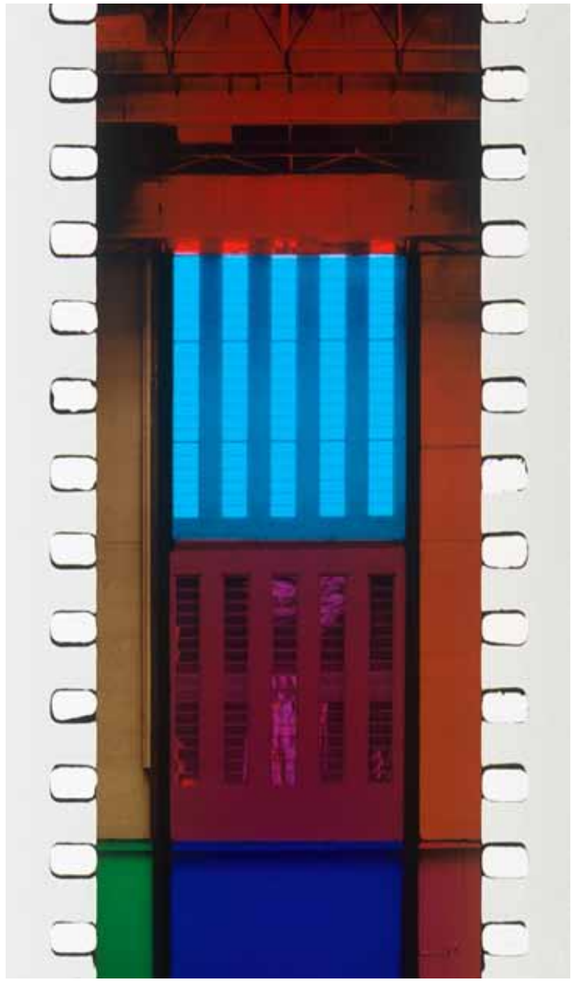
Unpublished article written for the *New York Times*

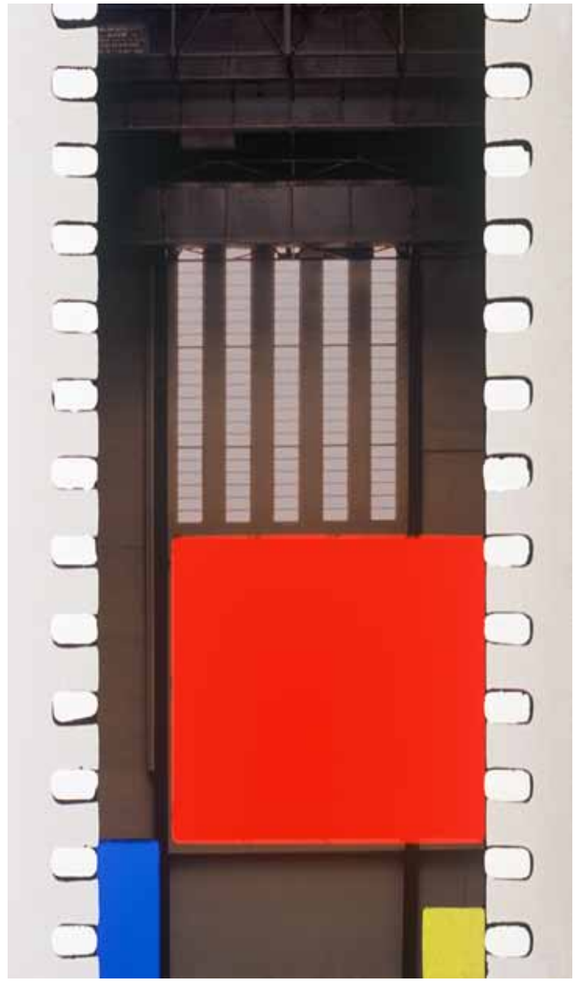


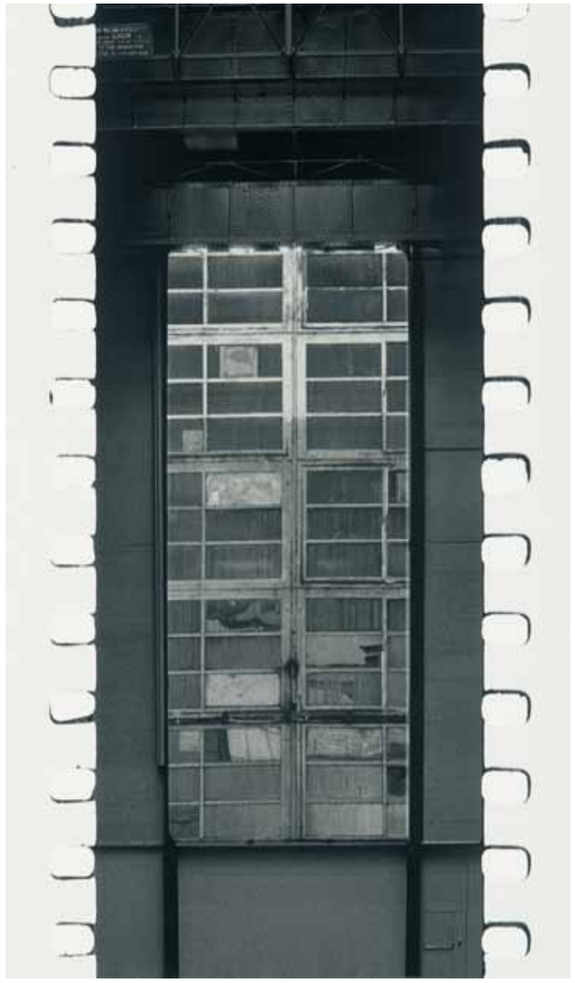


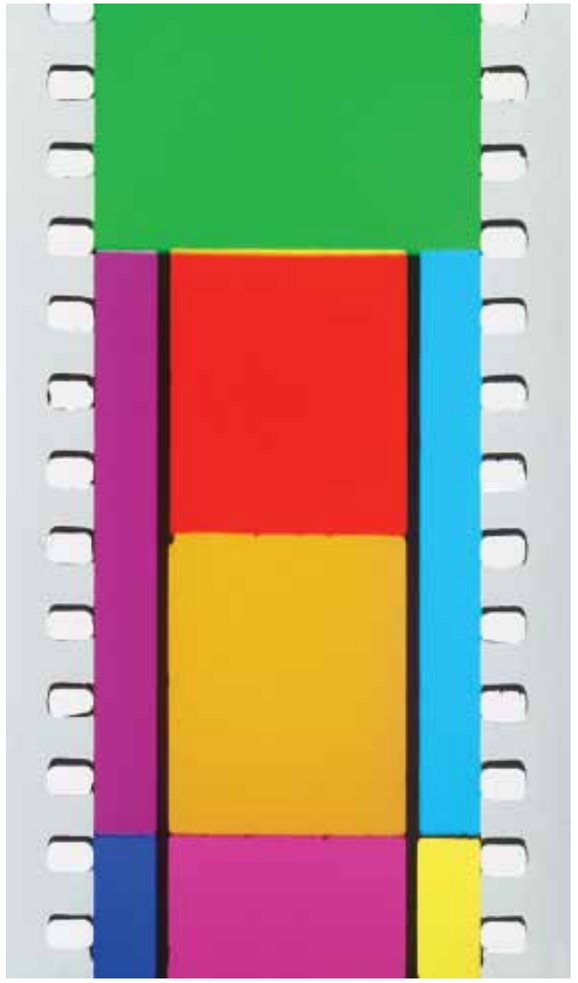












ACCA ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Adam Mickiewicz Institute
CULTURE PL

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