Shrieks fill the air
Image 3 - eurovision
Case Study One - Interview

Video practice: *eurovision*
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Interviewee: Linda Wallace
Interviewer: Seth Keen

LW I was watching when you were talking, this work is what I'm doing now in video, it's really a progression from what I was doing in the mid '90's, which was multiple monitor. It was the only way to get a number of different ... well when I started in analogue, if you look at some of the very early works from 1984; I was already working with multiple narratives there. I had a sound track that was doing one narrative and I was only working on the level that you could present something in the sound and something in the visual that was slightly different and what you'd get in the centre was like a ruptured space that people could go anywhere with. And, they'd get clues presented to them in the sound and in the picture and because they were often disjunctive - sometimes they're parallel, sometimes quite disjunctive - there was this space in between like a crack, a fault line in between those two elements, the sound and the image. And it was in that space or crack that opened up, where everything wasn't just synched - there was a lot of space. In that space it was like what you were reading from the book the other day, opening up kind of cracks in the surface through which other things could move, elements could move.

SK Like you were saying...could enter the screen...with material?

LW I guess - I don't know, a lot of the work from then was, as it is now for people sitting in a theatre space, a big space, with screening they're surrounded by sound - a cinematic experience. Essentially that's what I'm working with even though a lot of the work is installation, but essentially most of this work is still in the film distribution mode and it's shown at festivals and so that's pretty powerful. But, rather than doing what cinema does, which is a synched narrative with the sound track and visual following each other in close parallel, what I'm doing is rupturing that all the time to open potential spaces for people to travel down. And, what I'm trying to do with those ruptures is set up a kind of maximum scenario where everybody who's in the audience, say there's 100 people sitting in that theatre - and that was very much on my mind in my early work - everyone's walking into that space, with a whole different life experience and different set of conditions in their mind and a different set of references. And no two people are going to travel on the same pathway when they see the work. And rather than, say commercial cinema would try to homogenise that audience and make them all travel down ... it would push them in certain directions very clearly through the use of synched sound and synched image or synching those two tracks. What I was really trying to do very early on, was open the space of possibility so that you could get 100 different stories, if 100 different people are in the audience - there are 100 different stories to come out, 100 plus.

SK Hence the kind of overall impression.

LW Yes - however, in fact, it is highly orchestrated and highly nucleated at the same
time as trying to do that, so there's a tension between - but where as commercial cinema might be trying to barrel people down one direction, I'm kind of taking them in a direction but keep on taking them out as well - setting up vectors out and then forward in a kind of classic narrative direction. So, eurovision really comes from that, it's just an elaborate intensification, of what I've always been doing, and when I think about say, the early '80's, I was working in radio and also trained in cinematography and that's when I was 23 - I was already really in the two different head spaces very much ...Like, I wasn't making music, I was making sound radio.

SK Radio leaves room for a kind of impression.

LW …and very much, when you're in the radio station you're aware that there may be thousands of people listening - because this was 4ZZZ up here and I'd done a lot of experimental radio. Late at night there were all sorts of people listening, and they'd ring up and you'd get a sense of you'd played something and it would really affect certain people. People would ring up and say 'I love that, because it reminded me of X - the sound of this ... so it really developed very early on, an idea that different things speak to different people, and there's a huge creative space in that.

SK So that's what you're looking for, a kind of a space that isn't as homogenised, it's much more open to interpretations. But at the same time, I think Anna Munster talks about a lot of work in this area being very disjunctive, which is what's interesting about 'eurovision' it still manages to have some sort of coherence.

LW I'm really interested in that tension.

SK That's where the work goes in - to work in a frame that brings it back to some point.

LW It's always coming back and that may be structurally...well it comes back to a classic narrative in a way, but it's not classic narrative, but it always comes back to a narrative progression of ideas, a linear progression of ideas. In the new work there is a beginning and an end, even though in the new work what I'm doing is really mucking with the idea of climax, because I bring the climax in ... the sound guy, he's done this and I think it really works. We've brought the climax in just after halfway and then it doesn't finish, it just keeps going off - it's more like a multiple orgasm. It's what we've come up with.... a friend of mine looked at it the other day and said 'what's wrong with the sound track, you get the climax here and then you think it's going to end and it just keeps going'. It struck me - well that's what Shane and I have to work on, rather than in the section where it should be ending we'll just make it even bigger - kind of turn it to the side - take it out to the side, which is enhanced through the picture which all goes into that 3D stuff. So, coming back to narrative, I mean there's a lot of different ways you can do linear narrative, you can do beginning and end.

SK Isn't that kind of what you determine as being linear narrative...it is reasonably open?

LW Yes, but it does have a beginning and an end, there is a beginning and an end in this. In eurovision to my mind... essentially I started off with eurovision to make an interactive book, or the idea of an interactive book, interactive video, DVD - that you could see in any order and that was the idea - that you could see it in any order. I really wasn't making it for a single screen work, but in the end it turned out to be a single
screen work and I prefer it to be a single screen work, and, in fact it does have an order, and that's the order we see it in. And there is a resolution and we see it in the last frame where the woman is walking through the streets of Paris saying 'I felt at one with the world' - and then I've added 'and then - and then what?' And that's the conclusion of the work - and it does have a conclusion even though it may not appear to.

The same with the new work entanglements - it's now doing this thing with the climax, really through the sound, but he must have seen it in the image and it's a new challenge because it's an installation loop work. So people are literally entering at any point - but there's going to be a beginning and an end, which is really playing with the idea of ends. You don't get the end when you think you're going to get it. It goes off into another realm and then pulls back and there is quite a clear end - it all goes to black and then there'll be an end.

SK Thinking about the sense of that idea that quite often you'd work to a well developed script for documentary or cinema. How do you actually script this kind of project - like 'eurovision' - particularly thinking about how you used to work with video as well - how you might work with it now in a digital sense?

LW When you say 'you' work with a script, I've never really worked with a script in that sense. I've trained in film, but I was only really marginal to the whole film process........

LW The question about scripting?

SK That's fine - if you haven't worked in that way.

LW Not in the classic industry, I have done a lot of editing and writing and all those works make arguments at some level. When I make them, say with eurovision, well it grew as I worked on it, whereas Love Hotel was more mapped out because I had the book and I had to select pieces from the book - her massive text. So, I selected pieces that would be on the sound track and then I selected pieces that would be as graphic elements, and parallel to that I selected images. And I already had images that I'd shot in Japan - so it's a massive kind of selection process, if anything, that work was really about selection.

SK So when you say - this one grew - how would you describe that - what's 'growing'?

LW First I wasn't even going to use these films, I was just using them for tests. I was going to be shooting all my own stuff and I had a vague idea of what I was going to be doing, and I talk about this in my studio report. I was going to shoot this medieval campsite - someone being taken away from the fire...I talk about the 'stalker', she was really getting to me...I was using this medieval time as our time, making that analogy. I was using these films for tests and it started to get more and more interesting and I started using the Bergman just because it had all the flagellation. And I thought I just wanted to look at that, and then I thought - why go and shoot something when it's all here and I can cut this up and this will be a really interesting exercise just to see at a deeper level how these films are put together, how they did it - what they were doing. And so I got to know these films really well, what Goddard was doing - and that's the digital environment, it really allows that and that's the first time I realised that about the digital environment, about its database aspect as well which Lev talks about. To actually cut
up the films and be able to see them in a different way - deconstruct them live, really see what they're doing - so Goddard's always doing hard cuts, Bergman's doing dissolves between the shots. The Bergman camera moves quite a lot, the Goddard camera doesn't move - and then there are the compositional issues, that the Goddard's rectangular, the Bergman's much more square. And then what do you do with that in the power frame - so that's when the compositional elements become so... how to make the narrative work in the compositional elements and what's inside the shot.

SK So just to recap - you said the database with the digital gave you something different - gave you the chance to play with it as the material is running in front of you.

LW Yes, to pull apart those films into their component pieces and see how they're put together, and then to start in a really manageable and convenient way to put them back together and re-combine them. And then, not only in Media 100 which was what I was working in, pull it all into after effects - it was a really fluid environment for re-combining materials.

SK So, in some ways with 'Love Hotel' and this one, you were working with material that has been taken from a script in a print literacy sense and made into a film or into work from a book, and you're actually taking that work...

LW I don't think the Goddard was ever a book.

SK ...based on a script that was written - then he's filmed it…

LW I wonder.... I wonder....

SK Whether he's kind of worked as he goes.

LW I wonder.... I think the Bergman was definitely scripted, but Love Hotel was transcribed on the internet, most of it except the journal entries - but a lot of it's live internet chat-room so that's actually another dimension.

SK In a way you're working with material that already has a kind of narrative or script - then you're fragmenting, breaking it up and re-positioning it, that's the idea under there isn't it.

LW in the Goddard and the Bergman, yes in eurovision - but in Love Hotel it's the narrative that I started with in Francesca's text. It was very broken up to start with, it was numerous different forms of writing - the live transcript, the email dialogue with the lovers and then there's the journal entries. So three very distinct types of writing and some direct documentary, a real, authentic 'as it happened event', and then this dialogue reflection on what was happening. So, her books certainly are classic narrative - no beginning and end outside of 'the relationship went like this' and 'started like this' and then we'd see it.

SK So rather than trying to make that direct split from pretty much centre, probably something else is going on when you start getting into the fragmenting of the frame - beyond that initial idea you were talking about, how you re-work with the material that exists. Something else happens to it again when you start seeing how you're going to present it in the frame and what's going to go with what.
LW Yes, and it's coming back to what I was talking about before, about the sound track in early work, the sound track and the picture making new lines out, lines of flight - a kind of Deleuzean take. Lines that open up space where people can flee into and take whatever they need in there from their own minds, and take whatever they need from the image of the sound and go on some other path even momentarily. So it tries to set out maximum momentary lines out, in a way coming back to the sound image destruction from 1984. All of that comes into eurovision, with just putting multiple elements in the frame and doing similar things to what I was doing nearly twenty years ago - just in a different way and a more accelerated and intense way. So that you have an image up here say, the coffee scene and the images from the Louvre, the Russian space footage down here and then the sound track which is this music which is a kind of live jazz scene. There's a lot of space in that image to go wherever you want, so that's what I was working with.... to make it compositionally interesting but also set up the maximum amount of pathways.

But the work itself - eurovision, I tried to make it an interactive experience. I don't like it being seen as an interactive, I don't think it works very well because when people see it they're like 'oh, have I seen this one, have I been there' when they hit the interface and see these four 'eurovision' song contestants. They don't know if they've seen France or Germany or what - it fractures the experience too much; I don't actually want them to have that level of consciousness about having to watch it. I want them to just sit back and relax so that they can enter some space and not have to be thinking 'do I go down there' - it's too rationed. I'm trying to operate on a more irrational, surreal, dream kind of level. But they're not random connections that I'm setting up, they are to some extent but they all move the narrative forward in particular ways. It's highly manipulated and controlled actually, even though it doesn't appear to be.

SK Lets look at fragmenting the frame then. Just before that - what about the feeling of actually working in the medium, like actual writing in the medium, finding this kind of aesthetic combination within the frame. I guess you do that in editing - you find how it goes together, but it feels like it's a slightly different process?

LW You mean because it's compositing?

SK Because it's compositing - that idea that you're almost editing within the screen - it's not about the cut, it's about what's the basis of this whole idea of fragmentation on the screen or multiple screens.

LW Inside the screen?

SK There's edits going on in these pieces, but it's kind of a different montage/collage effect when you look at them in unison as a viewer.

LW Yes and this very much comes out... I can look at the early '90's - what I was seeing with multiple monitor installation works. This was what I was investigating then; setting up four VHF tapes and just going 'press/play' and four different ones all come up on different monitors. And, because they're all different lengths - the actual tapes - as they went into repeats you got a totally different story all the time and I was really interested in that. And, you look at these they're like one single stream - these are all streams, they're just in repeat, so I could be pressing 'play' and it's all the same. It's all very similar to those multi monitor installations in fact.
SK.... but you put it into one frame...

LW... and then at a certain point it cuts - I make it cut and there is a cut in the image, not in this sequence because it's all just a copy, but in the other sequences there are standard cuts inside the longer sequences.

SK.... you mean frames within the frame...

LW There's no cut here, but if we move to the next section there are standard cuts, which you do in Media 100. These, are just 'no cuts' this is all after-effect this sequence, but these are built into Media 100, and that's just stills.

SK So did you find it difficult finding the way that that could combine within the one frame? Was that a bit of a journey to go from those multiple screens - get it into one frame and get the effect that you were looking for?

LW I started working with it inside the screen as soon as I could with digital technology, but I didn't have the means to - I had to rely on operators and pay them a fortune, they charged a fortune for the use of their studio and their time. And then you'd set up - spend the whole day setting up, work overnight to do the renders, and there'd be 2 minutes of something - and then if it wasn't right you'd have to do it again that night, and it might take six hours for a 1 minute thing and so I couldn't really get in and do it. I needed my own equipment, which was when I bought the whole Media 100 set up in 1996, but I didn't start using it until '98 when I started my PhD.

SK In essence, because the screen was being broken up in the past - like in the '70's, even in film I think they had multiple screens but...

LW In analogue you can break up the screen through resolves, you can bring up certain things. In four girls, the first work I did in 1984, I had stuff going on all over the place inside the screen.

SK But what you're talking about was the kind of diversity or experimentation of trying things of looking for different combinations - was very difficult?

LW It was limited because I didn't have the technology myself, so soon as I got my own gear and the time, and someone paid me through the PhD scholarship, Love Hotel took one and a half years to make and this took not quite a year - 10 months - so that's a very special time. I was 24 hours on it; I was living in my studio - so I really think they are big factors for very basic research, having money and having the means.

SK But the technology got to the point where you can start...

LW... and the technology was at a level - because then it was all digital, but the Media 100 is of course analogue to digital.

SK So that process of finding the combination between multiple streaming in the one frame, can you talk about that - getting to that point of finding the position that you were satisfied with....

LW Starting with the multiple monitors I was doing the stuff with the operators - all I
could really do was one piece called *Invocation*, it had a lot of nice renders and text running along the bottom, but it was pretty basic and unless you've got an operator who's really good and committed, you're never going to get your real vision. So, it's really important to get the time and space. So, in '98 I didn't know where *Love Hotel* was going. When you see it you can see I started in a really formal way and because I'd done a lot of magazine stuff in between those installations and starting on *Love Hotel*, it was very magazine style because I'd been working in text and magazine production. I'd gone back into that to make money.

*SK* You’re talking print…

*LW* Yes, standard magazines - my headspace was very magazine, but I think it's very print orientated if you look at these works they're actually very print orientated. They look like magazine layouts, to some extent I find *eurovision* has a visual quality that's like a book - like a coffee table book or contemporary magazine that can have a lot of white space around it.

*SK*… you've got one here, and two here and lots of black up here.

*LW* Yes, like a gorgeous, expensive book.

*SK* Like a magazine layout but the images are moving.

*LW* Yes, and that's because between the installation work, I'd done a lot of magazine production, but not as a graphic designer as an editor and a journalist but I'm working with graphic designers all the time. It's almost bringing these other media into what I'm doing however unconsciously, so between doing multiple monitor installation and this work I was in magazine land and I think I brought that graphic quality to *Love Hotel* and *eurovision*. You can see where I started working with these bands and if you look at *Love Hotel* it's cut into four and text is streaming out, and that's a really text heavy work. Whereas what I'm doing now is not very heavy at all and I think it came out of that magazine experience, and I think that continues on to here. So, I'm trying at some level - not really consciously - but I can see the print element.

*SK* So, what do you think having time based or moving image adds to that or extends that?

*LW* Yes, I think that's interesting.

*SK* Or that ability to dissolve or layer - which we wouldn't get in print - you've got another thing going on…

*LW* Yes, say this red band - this is a design trick I learned in high school - my high school art teacher said 'when you're making books maybe you want to have an element that continues like a red line'. I've got a book that I made when I was 16 that's got a line running through it at every page and I've used that here, the same red line runs through it. So *eurovision* is much more coded and formal than *Love Hotel* - *Love Hotel* really broke out of its bonds - or bands - a beginning and an end and it then cuts to full screen. So, I can use all these elements but then I can cut to full screen as well and have nothing, and just have a normal image and screen as well, suddenly when
you do that you get incredible interest. If you think of *Love Hotel*, there's a moment in it where it goes just full screen, very minimal image - and that's like a crescendo.

*SK* *Almost like a close-up…*

*LW* Yes, you use the complexity to absolute minimum for the same kind of impact and narrative progression of ideas.

*SK* *That's interesting - so the magazine idea comes in…*

*LW* Magazine and classic film techniques.

Look at this - this carries on, this element is set up... it's working with red and the blue; she's got a blue bag, and then carrying on there, setting up continuity even though we're changing both elements. But some things stay continuous and that gives us a narrative flow, and then into the next shot - she's still there, the red line's still there - when the boy comes in here, and now there, that's come back, that's what we had before, that elements still there, that makes it flow really smoothly.

*SK* *So rather than a narrative flow in a sense of what your listening to or following in a story sense; it's actually the images as well.*

*LW* All those things are operating together, it's not one or the other, you've got narrative flow inside the semiotic content of the images plus it's being enhanced, or paralleled, or blown apart by the graphic elements and by the way it's been put together. So if you really look at that sequence there, the one we're just on, there's all those elements working together… this guy he comes back in, in the next shot, the flying guy...

*SK* *They're being used to tie it together in order to progress it or to have a thread or threads…*

*LW* … or then blow it apart. Setting up all these threads that then can be manipulated in various ways.

*SK* *So in essence you're using images to do that - using lots of different aspects, but that's where images are being used specifically.*

*LW* Images and classic design elements - like vector lines.

*SK* *Even the red line you're talking about comes back again - it's a kind of familiarity that connects that sequence with the next sequence.*

*LW* Yes and compositional issues - the rectangle being placed at that particular point, you'll find in the last section the rectangular shape is the same throughout because the red line's the same, then when the rectangle comes back it's in the same place so it's familiar. So it's like we're watching, and a template is set-up into which various things come in and out and we're familiar with the template so we don't get shocked and go 'Oh, it's all new', every time'. It lulls you into this place where you can relax and let these things come in and out.
SK So you're looking for a consistency as well - through the piece - by having that.

LW Very consistent. In the various sections of *eurovision* set up here with the bands along the bottom, and that's consistent through a section to a point and then it breaks. You can map this - I can draw it and I do - I draw it and I do time lines.

SK And see what is going to stay and what's going to go, elements start to lose, stay or change…

LW …and then break into full frame…

SK Did you have to do that kind of planning - on paper - little sketches

LW Yes, this is the Christian cross, it's the only time it breaks from a modernist grid and this shot breaks into a Christian grid… and it's very much so - the graphic design is talking about the image we're getting, all the other set ups are a bit off the third.

SK So there's quite a distinct relationship between all the elements in this page, whereas in another page there might be connections, but they're not as literal.

LW… not as literal, yes.

SK…almost like monotone all around - one colour or one concept. Like, this is the same image all fragmented.

LW Very simple - relatively simple. So nice - so dramatic.

SK Do you find with the composition that you're still going to have a central element, because I found watching it there was point you made me watch and then you flipped out to the other stuff - take the eye to the main place like in a painting.

LW Yes, the eye of the mind - because everyone's fine with text, so wherever the text is tends to be the central image that people are watching.

SK So just on that note, you were talking about how you want to create gaps and have different impressions so you know that the audience is always looking for that story - or some sort of understanding.

LW I think they always follow a voice over and they read text. A voice over with one person speaking has an authority that I don't necessarily like, but I realised through *Love Hotel* that people really want to follow the sound and authority of that. I think that's number one - in the last work there are no voices in it, in the new work there's only sound - there's hardly any text, so they're really flung into another world.

SK So you can play with those ideas - that you know what people kind of slip into out of habit.

LW Out of habit - yes - acculturation - because the documentary always would classically have the voice over.
SK So just going back into fragmenting the frame - you commented that not a lot of people are working in that way.

LW If we look at that book Stuff It, and if we look at all the images that are portrayed there - if we assume they are representative of the works, there's only one, Ursula, who's actually doing anything inside a frame, and that's just a line of text over a full frame. I find that really incredible, isn't anybody working in after-effects, haven't they discovered it... And yet we look at television, and we look at so many other things and it's all fractured - there's all this literacy, sophisticated literacy in the community in terms of reading broken-up frame. But very few artists, if that book is representative... are actually working on that. Going to Transmediale, I was nominated for an image award for a reason suppose - out of 600 works - in that I am doing that and a lot of other artists aren't doing that.

SK Can you clarify 'working within the frame'.

LW I mean cutting up the frame, like we've been talking about, most people are just doing full frame cuts, classic film and not really...

SK Fragmenting?

LW I wonder if that's like what I've just talked about - say I was working in print and doing all those things, in Australia you end up doing all sorts of things just to survive because there's so few people, and that multi-skills you. Say - in Europe - I don't think you end up doing so many things. If you're a video artist you can just be a video artist and never have to do magazine production to make a living because it's such a cushy world over there. So in a way, maybe being in Australia enhances our ability to move across media really fluidly.

SK Also like fragmenting the frame - as you say you see it in magazines all the time but in a sense in video or cinema it's not something we see a lot.

LW No, you see it on television and it may be a games thing - it's not very balanced on television either.

SK On that note how do you feel things like the Internet or other media type applications may affect playing with the frame in a linear sense.

LW Well CD-ROMs - we're doing that, I've looked at a lot of those but never made any, but as a curator I spent a lot of time looking at them and playing them.

SK Looking at the frame, like as an interface.

LW Yes, building up the frame, and the Internet of course is all full of interactive possibilities inside the frame. So it's not very like standard television it's probably much more like interactive CD-ROM stuff, hypertext stuff, without being interactive.

SK Can you elaborate on how you connect it to hypertext or its application or interactivity?
LW You know, the classic CD-ROMs where you can button on to various things inside the frame and something happens.

SK Like a menu kind of thing…

LW When you work - there's lots of different ways you can go - all the classic CD-ROMs work where they set out multiple narratives inside the frame, but then you've got to click through to get to somewhere, whereas I'm doing it without the clicks.

SK So in a way when you come to a menu or interface for those works it's very fragmented and there are bits everywhere. So you're kind of taking that similar concept to moving image where you can actually deal with lots of different things going on in the frame and choose where you go.

LW Yes, you choose, as the artist you choose where people go, because no-one gets to choose anything, except…

SK I mean just when you look at the screen as a viewer, when it's dealing with the web or anything, it's constantly moving around all the different elements and deciding where to sit...

LW Yes, it's enhancing it I think even with the web, a lot of classic web people if they saw a web page with a lot of different directions they'd call that bad design. There's a kind of desire on the part of established orthodoxy not to let people have too many choices, not to let them roam, to force them down paths. And I think what I'm trying to do in my work is open up paths, open up as many paths as possible and yet still give a satisfying linear narrative experience. So kind of push the boundaries of opening up paths as much as possible but still give the comfort of the linear narrative, so people get to the end of something and they feel like they've experienced something or seen something.

SK So even though you've got the page, in a sense you're directing the viewer or user to a focal point and the other elements will be influencing that even though they're there, and you could almost consider them a slight distraction they're still integrated toward something that you're aiming for.

LW They're the satellite idea, in the set-up with eurovision there's this space - it sets up things that come in later, so it's setting up narrative trajectories, which the whole piece is working on. So, you've got the coffee scene, I call it 'the coffee cup scene', - you've got the naked women in the Louvre, it's a Turkish bath scene - but they're naked women none the less and it's like 'oh what's going on there', all these beautiful breasts and stuff, because that's classically what's excluded, a bit taboo. We never get to look at that except in fine art render, like the history of fine art in the nude - and women never get to look at that either, they can't look at women. It's not for men exclusively, it's women looking at other women as well.... but, and here's this piece here - the coffee scene's all about men and women and their relation as told through a man. And then there's the science - but it's Russian not American - so immediately we're in another power block, we're in Europe, and even in Europe, Russia was side, they never thought of Russia as part of Europe. Whereas, from Australia, Russia was just part of Europe at some level even though it was communist. It's not America.
SK So that's why you talk about that kind of overall impression, or the idea of the dream - you have this main thing, but other things that are almost subliminal in the sense of how they affect that...

LW It's just like writing an essay. If you're telling the history of something, telling an historic story, you're always bringing in 'and then there was the influence of this' on positive events. Say if you're writing the history of the Islamic world, you could plot the history of how many sultans there were and what chronological order they came in - and then coming up on the side there was the rise of Europe, and here was the changing technology of vote power. And so to tell the story - you're always going off to the side and pulling in elements. There's a main story but there's always ancillary things, I'm choosing certain things - one, because I've got them - and at a certain practical level I look at what I've got and make something out of the images that I've got.

SK But that's quite exciting in a more complex way because with the single screen you don't really get that option so much do you? You don't get that option to have things almost going alongside.

LW Yes, and to shape them through their sizing and their placing, you give them weight.

SK Also what's occurring is you almost get that track idea - you could call them streams coming into a frame, but they could all be different tracks and its sound, and this image is a little bit smaller so that sounds further back, and this one's further forward - so it's like a mix.

LW Yes, it's mixing.

SK...images in the frame - much more like that idea of bringing sounds together and which one...

LW Yes, yes - a perfect analogy. It is like sound mixing - go back to radio, the start of radio and making sound. Not classic radio, because it was always midnight to 3.00a.m. but the sound loop stuff. The guy I'm working with now, doing the sound, is someone who I used to play around with in sound in 1981, and he did the sound for entanglements and eurovision - and that's Shane.

SK So that's where it goes into whole new territory because you do have that opportunity - like you're listening to radio and there's a main narration going on, but there's another sound that's kind of adding to that - the feel of that, that conversation. So now all of sudden more than the one screen as you say, you can have those other elements around that idea - happening simultaneously.

LW Yes, and when you plant into that... the thing with text and voice over - voice in the sound track, if you look into images arranged around the space, round the frame, and sound in a particular mix - just those elements, and then add a text track you suddenly greatly alter the balance because people look to text and they want authority from text. And then if you add a voice-over that's really going all the way it's 'oh, a voice over - I'll just listen to that and it will tell me the truth'. So, when you add those elements into that fine balance you've got to add them really carefully so that they don't over-determine
the work. So you've got to push them back somehow - keep them in their place -
they're really powerful elements. And I'm learning about that more and
more to the point where, in this work there's no voice and so really I want the images
and other things to start speaking.

SK So again that's that kind of mixing idea, you're mixing it together like you would with
sound - but those two things are really powerful.

LW And they are powerful because of the way they've been used in the culture - but
also the voice is very powerful.

SK … and then your sound track on top of that, your music. Then your actual music for
your background sounds is another element again - it has to integrate the whole thing
doesn't it?

LW Yes…. Working out of it but not so consciously, and I just do it unconsciously - it
comes from so many years of working in so many different media. Radio announcing -
the minute as an announcer you'd speak, you knew that everything changed. If you
had a soundscape, you'd set up and then you spoke into that and everything changed
because it's very different - the voice of authority kicks in.

SK Can you talk about the idea of multiple streams into a frame, that's the difference to
a magazine isn't it? It's actually a moving image that's almost streaming - frame within
a frame.

LW Which is a web analogy. As I wrote in the thesis - because I was on a high
bandwidth in Canada, in computer science because of the great conditions at the
network I was working out of I really got into looking into streaming there and thinking
about the multiple streams in the frame - which isn't really able to be done very well
now. But if you look at all of these elements, particularly in this first one, this is like
classic multiple streams - so then it's a composition issue and what you stream down.

SK So like in a browser window - say you had 3 videos to choose from, you can have
pop-ups, you've got different frames appearing with moving images on a website giving
you that idea of fragmenting happening straight away - multiple streaming.

LW Yes ... Yes

SK It's usually singular, due to bandwidth.

LW Exactly - but we're moving towards and era of very high bandwidth, so we need to
develop narrative structures, literacy structures or literacy adaptations and software to
be able to develop and push it. If we could do this as a streaming it would be very
interesting and I'm sure it's possible.

SK When you say develop a new narrative and new literacy do you mean how you deal
with multiple things going on at once?

LW and push that in certain directions, and use it as an artist because it's got so much
potential.
SK Learning the weight that you can integrate that multiplicity, simultaneously running in parallel - lots of different elements beyond just the cinema idea of one image and sound track.

LW It's so full - what you can do. Like just there we had the white woman here and the black woman in the background, just the presence of the black woman only for a second but it suddenly alters everything if you see it, if you're aware of it. It's worth looking at Eurovision very closely like this - it's very nice to see it as a DVD because the minute you see the black woman - like this is Turkey - there's the black woman, there's the Moor - and that's the fear of Europe, always has been - the black.

SK And this one is still - that one's not moving is it?

LW No, just a series of stills that dissolve into each other.

SK And this one's more historical - strong historical things going on here.

LW Using speed as well in the dissolves, this is playing real time, this is a slow set of dissolves, this is whatever it is and it's a repeat - so they're entering the brain in very different ways. This one we see normally, this one is slowed down where each time you glance up there's something changed. What's going on, you hardly even notice, it's like all these are operating at different... well they're playing real time but they're in repeat so that makes them weird. So that's another element - speed, inside those elements. There are so many different things to play with.

SK Not only the combination of the sizing and the composition within the frame, but in a time based sense.

LW But you can slow them down - speed them up.

SK Repetition - looping - this one's running at normal speed, at the speed it was recorded at?

LW We know that - because people are doing things at normal speed.

SK In a temporal sense you've got different time approaches going on in the same frame as well.

LW You can do that to enhance or to work against various elements - this is deep time, 1850 or something, this is 1950 space footage, and this is 1957 film.

SK So you're playing with time again in an historical sense.

LW And you can either enhance that or work against it - but you can play with it.

SK And so do you think that the reason people aren't possibly going for this work within the frame is actually because of trying to find how you combine it - like in a way that's where all the work has gone into this - getting it to work.

LW Yes, and that comes from I really think, 20 years of constant news media...
SK Oh, yes - for you.

LW and there's not that many people who have that kind of experience, I think there's something about Australia that allows that - and that's a real strength.

SK And do you think a lot of people have shied away from it because you've got that pressure of an audience wanting that sort of cinematic experience.

LW Yes, and film festivals, there's more money for film, there's more possibility for film - it can maybe get on television and you'd get money. Whereas there's hardly any money in new media - so you'd have to be mad to go into it.

SK Sometimes you feel like you'll get excited about it going way out here in the sense of difference, and then it goes into a hiatus because they go 'it's all too much - it doesn't make any sense'. So it's kind of like about perseverance and actual openness about finding how it can work. Are you still tapping into those ideas of how 'I'm still very much used to watching television or cinema'? That's still there, isn't it?

LW Because that's what makes it work, to connect to people it has to have some connection to what they're looking at or what they're used to, and then you can take it from that. But, the next work is all television - well everyone's watching television.

SK So you're using those literacies in a sense, those familiarities....

LW And then pushing them, and I think I'd continue that, I'm not really conscious of that - but when I talk about it I realise it's quite important - I'm not so far out of the realm.

SK So you're starting with the essence of 'that's in there somewhere' but then you push it a bit and push it a bit.

LW Yes, and make it unfamiliar.

SK And maybe it's changing - people dealing with browsing and websites.

LW People are so ready for new things, but they never get it - that's just the established order, it doesn't want them to go any further.

SK Is that for the reason that people can't equate it to the familiar.

LW Commercial television treats people like idiots. My brother works on *Hot Property*, I asked why didn't he introduce an architect into it and have the architect talking about a house each week because there's a lot of people like me who end up watching *Hot Property* just because they're watching television and they then follow the emotional stories. But, if you had something a little bit high-ended you'd get more audience - he said 'yes, but the people I work for think everyone's a complete idiot'. Commercial television is always talking right down to people.

SK What do you think about overall impression - I find it really interesting because I think that's where interactivity is really interesting. It's not necessarily about linear narrative, it's about creating - you choose, like you come away with an impression. Like you said with your 'eurovision' piece you didn't like that idea where someone only gets
two pieces. But in an interactive work - I'd get it and I'd go to this corner and you'd get it and you'd go to that corner and that corner. To me it's more about an impression - it's the impression that sits round the theme or concept.

LW Yes, yes. I think what I want to do is work even more at an abstract level. The new work is quite abstract in a way but it really makes an argument, it's making a very strong argument. It's told through quite an abstract mode, but to me it's making a real point - it's making a very highly sophisticated argument but through totally abstract means. That's the direction I want to go in, I want to actually not do just so much impression but do really strong argument, but use really different means to make those strong arguments. Use visual/conceptual means - so it's much more going in the realm of a conceptual artist and abstract art to make those really significant points - like Kasimir Malevich was making the point with white on white/black on black.

SK ... that resistance to doing more work within the frame - or working more in a way that's away from the single frame that's telling you where you're going and what it means.

LW Like commercial television.

SK ...or cinema. People coming back to that idea of actually just taking in an impression, putting it together...It's like you look at a painting - and it's the feeling of the painting or the impression of the painting, it might not necessarily be very concrete.

LW Yes. First of all you have to break the habit of commercial film and commercial television. So immediately you have to break that - when people watch it they have to very quickly get out of their expectations of commercial cinema because they can't see it.

SK Or won't be able to stomach it either...

LW And then through that creating some other level they can sink down into and enter and be enveloped by it, and then maybe you can start a very hardcore logical narrative. But first of all you have to break that expectation, and I think that's where I'm at now and this work stays in the realm of impression. It's very dream like, it's still very complex and it's very politically complex - it's deeply about geo-politics although it's not that on the surface, but to me that's what it's dealing with. It's interesting, that distinction between impression and classic narrative which forms an argument but I guess the essay is very different to the film story because the essay is making an argument, the film story's telling a story at an emotional level.

SK So that's what you're talking about working towards, in an essay sense - where there's an argument in there.

LW I'm really interested that people make an emotional connection - when you see it you'll see it's a very emotional work. But, it appears to be abstract so I'm interested in that...How to get an emotional response through very abstract means.

SK...an argument across, and an emotional response.
LW Yes. Which isn't the classic logical argument, it doesn't have an emotional aspect. But also with the new work it's to do with that thing that all these works are about, particularly the new work, the crisis of representation simulation. And that's what we were talking about last night in terms of television, and you can read this work in that way to.

SK in your thesis you talk about the digital idea that all material becomes data, and how this probably changes the practice.

LW Oh yes - that's the materiality issue.

SK Of the mediums - yes. In a way there are different sort of mediums in here, but I think as you said in your thesis - you can still see the materiality whether it's film or video.

LW Yes, yes...That's one thing I became really aware of, particularly in this work. But I've always worked with different media, like in the thesis I talk about other works that I did, one in 1985 which used Super 8 and video and VHS video, and it used those three different images in three different cities, so the media was talking about the city at some levels. So before I even put it together I was already setting up the differences of the cities through the texture of the images - so Brisbane was shot on VHS and Sydney was on video; and Melbourne was on Super 8 because Melbourne speaks to Super 8 film through the image quality of the city; and Brisbane at that time in the early '80's, spoke to domestic VHS. I was doing that for a long time. I used to work in a colour film laboratory and I was running 35mm sound film through my stills camera and seeing what I got - like using shooting stock and running high contrast timing stock through the stills camera using 35mm film. And so I was really interested very early on in that stuff - the materiality of the media itself and in what you could do to enhance the image through the texture of the media. And that's why I'm interested in Flusser, and in this last work it's a lot to do with the apparatus of capture.

SK So the materiality - even though it becomes visual data, the materiality of the medium is still very evident?

LW And you can work to enhance that or you can work to diminish that - I'm interested in both, and that's another element in this. And we've talked about the composition, the semiotic meaning of each of the images and what referential system it speaks to and calls into being or invokes - and how all those things work together. And the different time scale - the slow down or speed up or whatever of the image. But another thing that's going on is the image texture of these three elements, one's taken off television, a BBC documentary; one's taken off a really old VHS film borrowed from the film library with all its screeches and everything; and one's a digital still, taken in the Louvre and scaled down very small. Each one has its own quality, and each one has its own universe in a way. So the digital image here was taken on the same camera in the Louvre in Paris - of late 19th century paintings - even just there in those images that's a whole story, and then there's a whole story attached to this in its image quality, in the texture and the actual stuff of it. You put that stuff into a digital environment and then it's all data, and then it's already ghosted through with its history, its material history - like archaeology.
SK So in essence, even though it can all become digital data in the same frame, you're still interested in its essence or its materiality within that frame and how it works against each other - alongside each other.

LW And that's another thing you've got to play with in this environment - all that as well - the materiality of the source material.

SK So also the idea that quite often where digital technology is used you might have something that will show on VHS and there's this thing 'let's try to make it look like film', change the materiality of it to meet a high definition or a certain kind of look. Whereas what interests you is the source of it or its materiality in the first place, how it affects the content.

LW Yes to leave it like it is, lots of glitches coming through here. I was sitting with Chris one night in Canberra when "eurovision" came on the television - he said 'let's tape it, here's an old tape' and we just whacked it in and taped it, it was his thing, his words - and suddenly a work gets born that features this material - I'm quite interested in that, working with the means at hand, working with the material that you find at hand and then building something that people like. I'm amazed that through those elements, that combination of elements, I managed to put some kind of story together - and that was the challenge - how could I build a story out of this set of elements that I wanted to work with. And maybe I'd let another element come in or maybe I wouldn't ... abandon some elements, bring in some others and decide those parameters and then construct something which works as some kind of narrative from those elements.

SK So even though that's a really varied mix of things, it can sort of come together - in some sort of form.

LW Yes, because of people's desire to make a narrative as well, everyone will go along with it. So you've got that working on your side as well. People - they sit in the theatre, they see something start and then it ends, and they're happy that it appears to be whole - whether it is or not.

SK So the comment that the 'material becomes data'...

LW It all becomes data - I mean it's digitised isn't it? And that was confronting, that's why a lot of filmmakers don't want to muck with this stuff. They want to hold onto film editing or whatever - people didn't want to go to digital editing initially, you remember all the resistance to it; they didn't want to shoot on digital camera.

SK So what's your response to it becoming data?

LW Work with it. I'm just working with it because it opens up a lot of possibilities.

SK Together?

LW Yes, I can enhance its other materialities while dealing with the fact that it's all just data. It kind of came as a shock, I hadn't quite articulated the fact that it all becomes data - I know it's really obvious, but for somebody who's been working with so many media for so long …
SK It would have been quite separate...

LW And you've seen the progression of all those media - from Super 8 and from 16mm. It's very personal, most people wouldn't find that an issue but for me having been working in video and film, the digital environment is a radical environment to work in - radically new and becoming more so. Like you talked about all the software being integrated into after affects and then DVD software - so they're becoming so much more sophisticated, and that's very exciting.

SK So in a similar way to data, they all kind of integrate or they crossover.

LW More and more, and having now worked with a system that I purchased in '96, and now I'm on this new system, there's a lot of changes just in the systems, well that's 8 years, but what's it going to be like in another 8 years. Imagine.

SK That ease of bringing so many different things together simultaneously.

LW Yes, but still we don't forget history, we don't forget each of these different media that go in - they have their own universe. So eurovision is very much about remembering the universe of the Bergman film, and the Jean Luc Goddard, and the Space footage - and what those were like and these were their records. Because this films made in 1967 and I want it to hold something of 1967 when I bring it into the digital environment, I want to treat it with respect, I don't want to strip it of its historic moment - I'm not trying to do that.

SK So the remediation of all these works for you is about acknowledging their history even though you're re-creating them in your own interpretation.

LW Yes, yes, very much so and that plays out in that all the shots are complete, they're not cut up - they're cut, but I don't cut into these shots, I don't overlay them at all, I don't mess with them. I started to with those big frames because it looked good - when I started off I wasn't going to do that. There's only one point where I cut something together in the Goddard, or maybe it's two or maybe it's only at the end. It looks as if it's a cut from him because I've set up this thing with taking pure shots or sequences out of Goddard and not falsely putting two together that didn't belong together in the original film. I do that at the end, I put two shots together that didn't belong together - and that's my point, I'm making my own... and then, and then... at the end.

SK In your thesis you brought up Clement Greenberg and the idea of...

LW After I read that stuff at your place - it was good - and then I went much further into Greenburg.

SK What was your argument in a digital sense?

LW The same issue remains - that materiality is an issue. Truth to materials is an issue, but where it was for a single media it now is in the digital environment and you can use it or not, like it all becomes data in the digital environment and that's its essential materiality. But you can enhance or not and there's no right or wrong, that's the problem with the Greenbergian modernist material argument - that it's set up a dogma, so that video became all about the essentials of video. That's all very well but
this is video too - I've put it to DVD - but you can keep a contract to truth of materials because that in itself is quite a strong idea, and work with it in this environment. And there’s no contradiction to bring in all the different elements that are in eurovision and enhance their materiality and not try and hide them or play with them, or make fake old film filters or whatever. Whatever you do you’re still working with materiality in the digital environment.

SK So what's your point in the sense of video then?

LW the purists may say video has to be full frame, and you get that feeling from that book that video is full frame. If you look at all the images from that book video is in full frame - you think well that must be a quality of video - but of course it's not a quality of video, you can do all of this, and this is still video.

SK So in a way are we looking at video as data - and then it's the materiality of data, the essence of data as a concept maybe rather than just video.

LW Yes, in this environment because this is all digital video. This data - it's not really video anymore - it's just data.

SK What is the essence of data?

LW In this piece the elements are coming in - it's now just data, but it came in as analogue VHS, and this came in as digital stills - and they have a different look, the colours are different. You'll never get this colour, this is panavision - you could never get these colours, these greens - its film, and clearly film. So I just want to keep that - but it's still data.

SK So there's two things going on - there's the materiality of the source material and also an essence of the concept of data, once it becomes data the two come together - and then playing with those two. Which is why you say you felt as though you had to be kind of pure to the film, but then you started to play with it - broke your rule on that a little bit.

LW A little bit. But that was only a rule for this work, that's where I started out, but then I thought 'Oh maybe I could use these stills' - it was a bit of a wicked idea, cutting up Goddard. But then my rule was 'Oh, I'll just keep them really intact and be really respectful'. But towards the end of the process I was really enjoying doing this kind of thing - but I didn't do much of it.

SK So it's quite strong when it happens?

LW Yes, that makes them strong because they don't happen very often. There's the narrative there; and this is the conclusion; this is the argument; this is stuff, stills that I showed in Paris; this is the French Metro map...

SK You've got the same mood on the small ones as the large one - that's a blown up version of that?
LW Yes the same mood - that's black and white, the colour that it is, is yellow with the colour drained out of it. They're not all the same, they're different sections of the same map.

SK You're playing with the text there, but it's a map?

LW Yes, so this is contemporary Paris with the Metro and she's wandering through Paris, and then this is Brussels - but it's to do with the EU and a lot of things.

SK Working with different compositions, working with different shapes - but that's really based around the freedom of magazine layout?

LW Yes, *eurovision* was very much based on hard lines; it's very modernist, very hard lines - Mondrian. *Love Hotel* is not, it's all blooming out, blooms out of the centre all the time - it started hardline and linear, it started vertical and horizontal, but then it started blooming and bleeding everywhere, which was really nice to work with, all feathered.

SK OK, and pattern and repetition? You talked about Andy Warhol and a Dutch designer, but that's again working in print form and layout form.

LW Yes. Her work was a repeat; she just really did a repeat in a very nice way.

SK Which is sort of very kind of Internet …

LW Yes. Icon based, I'm not interested in icon based repeat I was just interested in video repeat, also video wall stuff. I did all this video wall work - well one big project on a video wall - which was fantastic. And that was a commercial project where I really got into the repeat and understanding what you could do with the repeat. We had a bank of about 20 monitors on the wall, I had a really nice project with Digital Equipment Corporation at Diamond Head, I could do all the work and then just - boomf. And that's like the analogue version of after affects in a way, when you see the new work it's really like a video wall.

SK You're attempting to achieve the same thing but with different technologies?

LW Yes. They kind of melt into each other, I've always really liked video walls and videos in public spaces. I had a video wall at Seibert - a big project - they had control but I could programme it to a certain extent, I could play with it.

SK Could you talk about the idea of the screen as an interface?

LW I haven't really followed that up, I haven't related any of that stuff to Deleuze's work on cinema. It's an interesting thing to do but I haven't thought that through, just the basic lines of flight idea - like cracks in the surface become chasms you can climb into.

SK Just talking about you having been a video practitioner for quite a while - the kinds of shifts that you feel working in video.

LW In the pure essence of it, for me all these other mediums feed into it - like technological development really seeps into video. The next work is a lot to do with the visualisation technology of war, and that's all seeping into video practice - the fact that
we can get images of satellite phones and video phones and those new phones now that take images. They’re going to affect my practice, I’m probably going to want to get one of those phones - just the whole idea of sending pictures is really radical. David Cox had one yesterday, it’s like an alien object, I didn’t want my picture taken I don’t want to be captured by that new technology. However of course I’m fascinated by it, I want to use it, it’s the texture and that type of thing- so I think my next work might feature one of those phones and the images taken on those phones.

SK That’s a stills image?

LW Yes, because they’re low resolution. That whole idea of taking pictures wherever you are, it’s a really interesting idea, and then sending them over the phone line instantly. So for me that will bleed into my practice, as well all those new war based technologies of visualising things - the next work will feature this.

SK In a video sense - a kind of proliferation of the different way it’s being used, the materiality of each of those ways?

LW Yes, each one has its own texture. We begin to recognise those, like we know the Iraq war night vision - it’s that green vision - we all know that now, we see it and it enters our ‘imaginary’, so I’m interested in that. It enters as warfare imagery but we start to see it in our everyday life, so I’m very interested in apparatus of capture - what Flusser would call apparatus of capture.

SK How does that affect practice do you think, are there lots of different forms or sources of material that come under the umbrella of video for a start?

LW What’s video - I don’t know what video is; it’s a kind of outmoded term. Like this is a digital camera I’ve got here, it’s a digital video stream whereas the old style magnetic camera is totally different.

SK That’s one form, any other forms in the sense of change of practice?

LW I think what I said about the conceptual thing is really interesting - about presenting quite hard-core… in a more abstract way.
I don’t know, I just want to go in all different directions; I really want to go into 3D image and maybe virtual space. I want to work on big screens and public space. I might want to work in more documentary style, like do closer adaptations of text works - find a book and adapt it. I’d love to make a feature - I reckon a feature would be great.

SK Within that you’re still very interested in working within a frame in different ways - that’s where you’re heading as well is it? On that note where do you feel you can take that? Obviously, as you said, there are an endless number of options when you do this where you’re heading. What’s dragging you on in that direction - fracturing the frame?

LW Inside the frame?

SK Fragmenting the frame, playing with the way that you deal with moving image inside the frame.
It would be interesting to do that in a feature environment, a longer piece - to see if that's possible. Because when people watch a feature they want to feel that what they're watching is unfolding in real time. So if you start to bring side elements in - there's been a few films that try and deal with that - what happens with time, do you present it as real time or as different time, different parallel time frames. That would be a research challenge.

SK So temporality is quite important?

LW Yes if I was in feature film land - if I went into that and I was working inside the frame in a feature film which was carrying a narrative story. I'd like to make a sci-fi feature film really, and then the genre lends itself to a whole lot of dimensions in time actually inside the frame. Probably it is just a question of choosing the right genre to work with within the habits and expectations of the genre, but move them around quite a lot. I'd really like to do that - I think that creates a lot of possibilities.

SK That's a kind of temporal thing, but what about in a spatial sense - you've done this kind of lineal grid with fragmentation, do you see other forms of multiple streams feeding into a frame?

LW It's a triptych the next work, entanglements, so it's all three. It's installed in a space that's got curtains hanging so that it looks like a window. The projector projects onto the curtains down the side so the frame's cut into two panels and then the exception is in the centre that forms like a window. So it sets up like a room and you don't know whether you're inside or outside - it's about setting up this spatial theme.

SK So you start seeing templates appear - the time consuming nature of dealing with the elements - you'd eventually end up having templates in a way wouldn't you?

LW And devising which one's going to work for which work. Yes, it keeps breaking the template, but it's definitely in the last work - it's a triptych set up.

SK It's almost like magazine layout isn't it, where magazine gets a certain style and sticks with it and it becomes a kind of template or base structure.

LW It's a triptych frame that stays in place throughout all the cuts, so that I break from it and I can come back to it quite easily and I can do dissolves and they're all nicely dissolved. So it's a very practical thing to do to move around a cut and do your dissolves.

SK It's like a framework or structure then?

LW In this work it's really apparent. I don't know whether I'll keep doing that but it works out in this work. I'd like to do more scenes and get more into after affects and build more vectographic scenes and put different elements into the scene. I'm really interested in Indian and Chinese composition, that would have a frame and would have
things that were far away and things that were a bit closer, all at the same level that operate on the vertical - so they have a lot of spatial themes in the same way as Indian miniatures…

SK Like theatre?

LW Yes I want to do more things like that

SK But under all that is always how those elements work together, how do you find that kind of integration - no matter whether you’re playing with space or time?

LW How they resolve - set up your visual challenges and make them resolve, make them work somehow as a pleasurable experience and that tell some kind of story or present some kind of argument. I want to keep changing all the time so none of these works look the same - Love Hotel, eurovision and the latest, entanglements - they’re all different.

SK But that idea of combination of elements obviously runs through all three and that’s where you keep experimenting in slightly different ways in each work - you drop text in or drop narrative in like this last one, just working with fewer elements or in a different way?

LW Yes, it’s gone more into the realm of an abstract. I’m really interested in getting quite abstract too, I want to go in lots of different directions. Real life gets in the way of practice so you’ve got to carve out a space to work in. Think of all the stuff that’s going on just to make the work and then you have to show the work - although it’s great to show the work. But it does take your mind away and it sets up a lot of difficulties - I’ve got to get down there, I can’t take the work I’d really like to because I have to use the money for babysitting - life gets in the way. It would be nice to just have a very settled studio life, but then you get a lot of inspiration through change.

SK And sometimes through the limitations as well, they push you in certain directions.

LW Yes also limited by what I think people will cope with - thinking of the audience.

End.
Case Study Two - Interview

Video practice: Vogs
Date: November 2003
Location: Melbourne
Interviewee: Adrian Miles
Interviewer: Seth Keen

**SK What are vogs?**

AM Vogs are video blogs and when I thought about making vogs I decided that vogs had certain properties and qualities - surreal, time-based, personal, linked to other bits of the network, other writers… I decided that a video blog needed to have some of those properties. Vogs needed to be more than just a blog with embedded video so I started experimenting with the sort of things you can do with video online – adding text tracks, various forms of interactivity etc.

**SK Was there a transition from vogs to blogs?**

AM I started one blog, it died. I didn’t see the relevance in the early days. My reaction was quite biased - thought they were a strange form of vanity publishing. I still probably think that quite a bit actually… But then I realised, because I was very interested in exploring interactive video, that I could actually put the two together. That is where I got the idea of video blogging. Yes, blogging came first, then I thought about what it would mean to put video in a blog.

When I first started I invented a rule, which I broke within a week - any individual vog had to be made in an hour because just like a blog post it can take five minutes or a really impressive one maybe can take a couple of hours… I didn’t want them to take weeks or days or hours of work – they are not supposed to be necessarily a polished or sophisticated object. Vogs were supposed to be from the hip, but still have interactivity. If I stick to a standard template, which I have done every now and then, they are fairly quick to produce and I can make a fairly complex one within two hours. But most times when I try something new it is trial and error, which can take a lot longer.

Basically a vog is a desktop based interactive and is delivered on the network, all the works are short and tend to run for about two minutes - not intended to be essays, all though the form can be used for other sorts of things. The model for vogs, I think, is close to television advertising - there are adverts on TV that do, and can, tell sophisticated narratives in 30 seconds and they are sophisticated narratives often with amazing production values. Most of my works aren’t particularly narrative based but I am interested in what I call micro-narratives, this is one of the ways that I think about bandwidth. Bandwidth online is not just about connection speed it is about time - realistically people who are going to look at your work only have a few minutes. It is about what you can do in 3 minutes rather than in longer durations. One of the reasons blogs work is because generally the entries are short and most people focus on 3-4 blogs that interest them…
SK You spoke earlier about how someone suggested that your vogs are an art form. Did your vogging start off as more of a communication form coming from blogs?

AM These days I am not sure what they are…I quite regularly get asked to submit them for exhibition and they get shown as new media art pieces. But since I came into this as an academic they were theoretical pieces, explorations - proof of concepts of what interactive video might be, then they started becoming more creative or rather more aesthetic. But, at some point somebody said to me ‘no these are artworks’ and I resisted that quite strongly, I am not an artist, I am an academic. But, you know over the course of the last year, I have recognised that some of them are explicitly, aesthetic objects. The works are getting more interesting because the works are about exploring theory and practice, and that theory both is a creative practice as much as a critical practice and practice is as much a pragmatic practice as it is an aesthetic practice.

SK How would you describe them in terms of a video practice?

AM I can tell you how I do them and how they relate to a traditional film practice. All the technology I use is largely domestic so they are shot on a single-chip video camera, these days I would happily update to a 3-chip semi-professional camera because I would appreciate the better content quality I would get in terms of image and sound quality. Everything is captured, edited, compressed on an apple power book, nothing special about that these days. I do use professional compression codecs - traditionally I have been using Sorrenson 3 Pro codec which is around 400US dollars, although I will probably shortly move straight to Mpeg4 because I like that Mpeg4 is an open standard.

SK Does this mean you are more interested in the accessibility of desktop level hardware and software?

AM Not necessarily. The example I often use here is desktop publishing. In 1985 along came the first Apple Mac and all of sudden we had wizzy wig computer design, you could buy a laser printer at an exorbitant cost - but prior to that moment to do your own printing design required an investment of possibly a hundred thousand dollars. It was a revolution in what we understood as getting words onto paper. Now we can do the same with video, with a domestic camera and domestic computer you can shoot, edit, compress and distribute your work - that revolution hasn't happened yet… It is entirely feasible and quite easy to shoot your home movies on your domestic camera… plug it into your computer capture it, do an edit, add titles, add a soundtrack and put it out on tape or on DVD or compress it and put it online… But, at the moment there doesn't appear to be a lot of this going on… or if there is I haven't seen it yet, the possibilities are there for guerrilla filmmaking, independent filmmaking, no-budget filmmaking… It is not just about publishing back onto tape, DVD's or TV. If we add the internet onto this, which is about networks and peer to peer communication, then I think we are sitting on the threshold of a very interesting moment where people could be making their own video-audio based narratives and sending them around the world in the same way that blogs have let people write their own personal narratives and send them all around the world whether it is academic, personal, political, whatever… It is using the network as a distribution space but also as an authorial space with ease of
access if you like… But for me the thing that has to be remembered is I don't want it to just to be about shooting, editing and distributing - I want a little thing added in which is about thinking, about what we can now add with interactivity so that we're making different video objects. I guess creatively and theoretically I am interested in the network side of things, but also I am interested in what it actually means to think of video as an interactive object.

Coming back to your question, there is no reason why I can't scale up to professional level hardware and software in the same way you can run desktop publishing software on your laptop. For example a lot of principles I am exploring I think could translate to DVD and I would quite like to work at a much higher quality level with DVD. There are some interesting things being done in DVD because of the scripting, but it is a little bit like the position with interactive video online. The main model of DVD authoring is largely to disseminate existing content - add a second sound track and chapter markers…It is quite hard to get students just to stop thinking about making a 30-minute movie, which we then put on DVD. Instead let's start from the principle that the medium of publication is DVD, so how are you going to narrate a story that can consist of six different sections - lets call them chapters. We can script it so it can play in any order for example, instead of treating DVD's as a publication medium - what it means is we are now treating DVDs as the original medium of distribution, so chapter markers now become something else… Students and film professionals have trouble with that…

SK Are you suggesting that you start from the distribution end and think about how this is going to effect practice? For example, with vogs you start by thinking about the influences of the network?

AM I don't see it as a distribution end, it is rather that any medium you work in has formal qualities attached to it and they ought to intrinsically affect that medium. The page, for example in hardcopy publishing, has a fixed dimension which is inevitable so you have a beginning, middle and an end… If we still wrote on scrolls that you unrolled in time and were horizontal, we would have quite a different conception of beginning, middle and end. The materiality of the page or what we understand writing to be could be thought of differently depending on the affordances of the medium.

So if we move, for example, to DVD. DVD is a publication medium, the materiality of the DVD - what it affords us as filmmakers is fundamentally different to what TV or cinema affords. So my point is that rather than treating it as a publication or distribution medium - think of it as your authoring medium. What are the material conditions of your DVD? Lets explore those, either formally or creatively, or both or if you like… to put it in a very simple way, what is the grammar of this medium? The example I have used for filmmakers - who just still don't get it because they will get upset because they don't have full screen motion, etc. - I say imagine it is 1919 and you're working with black and white film, no sound, and you come along and say 'well I refuse to work in this medium because it is black and white, it is a rectangle and there is no sound' - well lots of people probably said that but they are all forgotten… It is the people who came along and said 'What can we do with this?' - who invented the grammar of cinema and great artworks and great commercial works. Instead of saying no, it's saying yes. Bandwidth is a constraint, but that doesn't mean we can't work with it… we have to work out what its
affordances are... we can't work with it the same in relation to DVD.

SK With vogs you are experimenting with those limitations...you write about resistance in your blog.

AM Yes, it is the resistance in the medium; you can't have art without resistance. But one of the great myths particularly from students and from lots of other people who don't know much about new media is that they think there is no resistance that you can do anything, but you can't. You know for someone who works in the field, is a theoretician in the field, I am tired of essays or proposals that all start with an apology that one day when we all have instant bandwidth we will be able to do this...

SK That kind of modernist idea that technology is about progress... you mean like in Gene Youngblood's articles on video...?

AM It's just a fantasy. Yes, ok one day we might have better streaming technology for video, but I am quite pragmatic about these things, it is what can we do now... we can actually do a lot now.

SK You write about video being TV on the web. The approach seems to be to look back as a way to determine how to use current media technologies, rather than thinking about the limitations of those new media technologies, as they exist now.

AM I think that is what a lot of other people do – the existing practice, say in film and TV is to look to TV or the cinema - full screen, full motion and absolutely full user control. When you go the cinema you give up 14 dollars and contractually you give yourself over to 90 minutes in a darkened auditorium, and the film, or the company, or the director, assumes ownership of that space or the entire screen for example. They control the values they bring to electronic work and they want to maintain that control. They are really unwilling to let that go - one of the biggest complaints filmmakers will make is about bandwidth, they can't get full screen, full motion. It is the same with creative writers; they just don't understand hypertext because they are extraordinarily unwilling to give away control. They don't like people not being able to get to the end, or for it not to be a fixed ending or all those sorts of things, so what happens is these practitioners are largely defining new media practice. It is a bit like they look backwards and use that to define what they can do in contemporary practice. I am saying we can use some of that sure, but these are the affordances and this is what works on the network, it is peer-to-peer communication. All those websites in the dotcom business where they set up stuff which was not peer to peer they are all gone, the ones that worked really well recognised about distributed ownership, distributed content, distributed processes. That is why google still works well, not because it is a good search engine but because they understand the affordances of the network...

SK Do you see there being any production limitations between the domestic desktop level and higher end equipment?

AM Many of my students use domestic level equipment? I want them to learn that they can make compelling content on a zero budget. I like to remove the mystification of the technology they will be using - iMovie, iDVD for example - the
software that comes with the apple operating system.

People don’t need to learn how to drive Final Cut Pro, what they need to learn is literacies in multimedia narratives, computers, the network - if they learn those literacies then I guess I feel like the rest falls into place. Learning how to use a camera is a generic skill, the problem that happens in a lot of media studies teaching is students are using Canon XLR or whatever they are using, and they learn how to drive that specific camera and as soon as they get a different camera they are looking for the white balance and they can’t find it… But, if they learn the basic principles about white balance on a video camera this means they can work with any model of camera and work towards understanding how to capture data with a video camera… This is one of the things pedagogically we are interested in doing is teaching literacy skills – it is about being literate enough around that technology to know how to find that button or menu item, rather than saying it is a different camera.

SK Do you have the same sort of approach towards software?

AM Yes, which is why in first year we are using domestic software because we want students to learn that under the edit menu is copy/paste, cut works, in every single program in exactly the same way, from the free software to the ten thousand dollar applications … I see those sorts of literacies coming first.

SK What specific social condition instigated your vog practice?

AM The vogs started out as research but an interesting example of what influenced this practice is what I noticed when I taught overseas. I was teaching a lot of students from the developing world, Africa and Latin America, they were all documentary filmmakers and they were in Norway. They loved the fact that downstairs they had access to avid final cut pro-suites and really good quality equipment – they were having a ball. But, one of the things I tried to teach them was to understand that when they went back to their home countries - if they were interested in what I was teaching them, then basically they could go almost anywhere in their country and make content... or let other people make content or distribute it… they didn’t get that. I said to them do you want to walk back to your high school and go guys we need an Avid, a 3-chip camera, a manfrotto tripod - realistically our budget is going to be 50-60,000 US dollars’…or do you want to go back and say I have brought my domestic video camera - or the school has already got one - or I have brought my laptop with me and we are going to use some free domestic software so we can make and distribute your documentaries. Soon as I said this, all these developing world students said we understand it is about accessibility. One of the things I am really interested in is not a million people coming to look at my content, it is about a million people making their own content and putting it up there in the same way that blogs are put up there… You don’t go and read all the blogs that are out there - you find a few that you like, but what I like about blogs is that all these people become writers in quite interesting ways. This is the cultural, social, political, and economic nature behind producing vogs. We have the technology now so what might we do with it? The Russian filmmaker Dziga Vertov had this essay…
SK Is that the idea of publishing news all the time using film…

AM Yes. He wrote that in 1922 - when I first read the essay - this was a year before I was doing vogs… I thought, this guy is amazing, what he is imaging here is CNN - so he invented CNN in the 1920s - but now I realise that what he was imaging is vogs or audio blogs.

SK Is this all in line with what many of your colleagues advocate, the idea of more diversity in media publishing… the ability to publish outside the mainstream media.

AM Yes, but there is a tricky tension with what is just vanity publishing. This is one of the most common critiques of some of the online chats that have gone on about video blogs. People think of the idea of sitting and watching the blogger talking to camera for 30 minutes. Who would want to watch? I agree, but I struggle with the idea that this is the defaultist model or the only model - that this is going to be this amazing form of vanity publishing, we are all going to become news anchors because that is all we want to be… Some blogs are awful I agree, but I am interested in blogging because there are blogs where people develop voices. You may have noticed this in my vogg practice, which is now three years old -- my blogging has changed quite a lot over those three years. I have developed a voice and a way of using this technology that is probably idiosyncratic and distinctive. My work has been largely saying did you know you can do this in QuickTime (QT). Most people don't know, and I am saying if you had these tools what would you make, and I am interested in trying to get people to make their own stuff.

SK It is also about an exposure of the process for me, doing this case study it is one of the few where I have so much access to the process behind the work -- theoretical, practical and technical. Information I would never see in a journal article for example…

SK What is the key differences in your vogg practice compared to more conventional video practices like broadcast TV? What do you see as the major differences or changes occurring in video practice? An example I see in your vogg is the concept of writing or scripting directly in video.

AM The writing I guess for me has two different parts, when I talk about writerly video or if I talk about Roland Barthes. The one very literal way to make interactive works is the level of coding required when you have to script code - you have to embed tags for a web page, that is a form of writing that in any interactive work is fundamental. If you move into DVD authoring in any substantive way there is some basic scripting, or even in flash art it is all about action scripts - it is fundamental to anyone wanting to work in the field. If you are a producer or director you need to be able to talk to a programmer or whoever is doing your scripting, you need some literacy in programming or writing code. I will use a film example, the director may not know how to be a Director of Photography (DOP) they may not know film stocks, lenses, etc. but they are literate enough to talk to the DOP and say this is what I want… The DOP can interpret that and they can have a conversation… they can understand each other there is literacy there… It is the same in interactive work. If you are a director of a project and you are working with the programmer you can't just think 'I don't need to know anything about this', because you need to
collaborate, you need to know it is all scriptable and scriptable means this - so that
is one form of writing.

SK *What has interested me about your vogs is the concept of writing in the medium,
writing in video, or the video camera becomes the pen…*

AM Yes. But I don’t mean like the camera style notion of the 1960s where you just
walk around and use the camera. What I mean is in vogs, if we treat the computer
as a medium of publication. Once we treat the computer and the computer screen
as both our writing and publishing space, in theory the rules change about what
video is as an object. A really simple example is frames per second - fps - these
come from the analogue mechanical world either as tape through video heads or
film through a sprocket head. This has nothing to do with digital video because
once video is on a computer screen it has nothing to do with fps, but we keep fps to
measure all sorts of things to do with digital video. For example, in QuickTime and
probably in some other environments now… if I take a still image and put it over
one minute of sound track and only treat the computer as my authoring and
publishing medium, it will just take that one image and just say hold it on screen for
one minute. But if I was working in a video editing environment it would draw that
image 24 times a second for a minute, a frame for every second. I would end up
with this enormous file that just can’t go on the network unless I compress the file
significantly. For example, working in QT and only QuickTime as my authoring
environment, I can put that still image over one minute of sound - instead of having
to redraw that image 24 frames per second for a minute I just have to hold it there
and play the sound track and that is what it does… so all of a sudden you actually
stream video data over a network simply by using slide shows. A non-linear editing
program will assume that there will be an outcome at the end of the edit which will
require a frame rate, so it will re-draw that image 24 times per second because it is
either going to go to a video tape format or film which is what is required for those
media, but on a computer screen you only have to draw it once and hold it there.

It is a bit like non-linear editing systems still need to assume that the delivery
medium is going to be analogue - video tape/film - which are still the privileged
forms of delivery so they have to work to the fps system. When we edit in a non-
linear system you may have A and B video rolls and several sound tracks and
several other video tracks for compositing and titling … basically this set up is to let
us build a final compile… but when we go to publish this we tend to burn all that
down and we think of it at the end of the day as delivering something with an image
track and soundtrack. But, if we think of the computer again as the publishing
medium we can actually keep the six video tracks and the six soundtracks in the
finished work and they can be simultaneous, they can be all sorts of things. This is
one of things that I think about with soft video. Imagine you are working in Final Cut
Pro (FCP) and if we work in a soft video way, each of those tracks doesn’t have to
be burnt down to an image and sound track… instead they become more like shots,
or we can think about them like shots. That means in the final product all of them
are available, or not available, which means each object can be scripted.

SK *You have identified that software design is also affected by earlier media forms.
Non-linear editing software for video editing is generally shaped from the cinema
film desk and bins model.*
AM The same thing happened in desktop publishing. The web comes along in 1991, the predominate defacto model of publishing web pages pretty much came from print culture. Blogs are pretty much the first native genre on the web that doesn’t use the page as the defacto mode. The page size doesn’t determine a blog page… the blog is based on date, it is the first time that a predominately text based form of publishing on the web, has certainly in the popular domain, moved away from thinking that it is more or less a bit like pages.

Blogs started say five years ago, lets say 1998, so it took seven years of the internet for blogs to arrive on the internet, and that is 12-15 years after the rise of desktop publishing, for our paradigm to be able to shift that way. So, we are doing fantastic stuff with non-linear editing but it will be several years before someone realises that we can do it differently.

SK Putting a broader overview on this are many of these issues arising from the need to move from print, literacies, constructs, towards digital or multi literacies.

AM The same thing does need to happen in audio-visual practice. At the moment even though we are exploring a lot of different approaches we are still very grounded in the very traditional notion of what it means to be literate in the technologies of production and reception. It doesn’t mean they are going to go away we will still have books. It is not an argument to say that we will not have television and cinema anymore, of course we will … but just as we have books, brochures, pamphlets, we also have websites and blogs we are going to have TV, video, DVD, interactive TV, but also some other objects will arise.

SK the concept of thinking in video related to writing in the medium, thinking in the form could be done with the tracks…

AM In each track in QT… say you have a 2 minute movie and it is made up of nine tracks, those 9 video tracks do not have to be 2 minutes - one video track can be there for the first 30 seconds the last video track can be there for last 30 seconds the way I think about each track is as independent objects in the movie. Because it is QT every single track can be scripted so they can be visible, or not visible, they can be transparent, or not transparent. There can be many properties attached to each track so that you can think of your video as not just being an image track and a sound track that goes from A to B but being more like a box. Inside the box we have nine bits of video – it still has a timeline because it is time-based but we have these bits, and all these bits are available to be turned off, to appear in different parts of the screen - then it becomes a writing practice in the same way I might describe I am an editor in film. I have the trim bin, I edit, and I decide that this bit joins that bit… But, once we move into soft video now we can make those edits incredibly variable, subject to whatever you like… what the user does do, what the user doesn’t do. The other way I would refer to this is Lev Manovich’s idea that each QT movie and each track is a database. He thinks quite literally 'this is a database’ - I also think it is about every QT movie being made up for example, of 9 tracks as a database – each track is a database object, it can be queried or called up. When you think of it this way you are writing with those objects - that is what I mean about writing with video, it is not like editing, and I make this fixed thing and then I publish it. It is like I have this database object that may or may not appear,
and the rules I could invent to say it should or should not appear - that is what I mean about writing with the medium…

SK in your vogs you advocate the idea of avoiding menus, buttons or an interface design on the vogs. You seem to look for a more random approach in your authoring.

AM Not so much random from my point of view. In my vogging practice I am not interested in putting in buttons or menus. In the early days of the web links you were always signaled - right click here to go home, probably with an arrow and a picture of a house and it would blink. Where as now we are link literate enough to know that if the mouse changes or it underlines, it is enough that there is a link… it will do something. We don't feel the need to have an icon, a text descriptor; there is an assumption in links in text that we are link literate. I guess part of my dogmatic argument is if we are going to call video interactive you must be able to interact with video...if it calls itself interactive video then moving the mouse around it should achieve something.

SK These things change because literacies start to develop - like web literacies evolve and effect design considerations?

AM Yes, exactly. The number of sites I have seen which call themselves interactive video, which consist of a link to a single linear piece of video - why they call that interactive video is beyond me…

SK You describe new video vernaculars emerging in your blogging, on your vogging.

AM It is a bit like we can have some video with three simultaneous soundtracks for example; they are all available depending on where you mouse. Then what do we narrate with that? That is the question…

SK When you say what would you narrate, what do you mean in a linear narrative sense?

AM When I say this to some filmmakers, they say you can do that in DVD, and I say no you can't do that in DVD. In DVD you decide to listen to soundtrack one and you listen to that soundtrack from start to finish, here, if I mouse over that person I hear something different while it is still, we don’t stop, we don’t pause. Imagine you are filming a cafe scene, when you mouse over that table that is the conversation you hear... imagine if you click on that table you then get taken to a different bit of video but you could also script it so that table could take you to something different again… If you clicked in the first minute you might go to this sequence, if you clicked in the second minute you might go to this sequence. Now what would you narrate? We now have quite genuinely multi-linear, multi-sequential, multi-soundtrack, interactive video works. Which isn't about watching a video to the end, you need to click to go to the next part of the branching tree – mouse around the real-time moving image… there are completely different variations…

When I show the Collins Street vog to people they don't get it. Imagine you have a doctor talking to a patient, you hear what the doctor says - mouse over the patient -
you hear what the patient thinks the doctor is saying. Mouse somewhere else and you hear what the conversation should be, so you can model doctor patient relationships for medical students.

By new vernaculars, I mean in the same way that we have film vernaculars; you know we have POV, we have reverse angles, we have cutaways, an established grammar. Most people when they come to video online they go - it is flat linear, etc., so it's a really simple exercise - and again Chris Marker is good here in Letter From Siberia - he has the same footage with three different commentaries. In a vog we can have the three commentaries available simultaneously depending where you mouse for example - and that is a simple example. The point is that if I say to a student for example - 'we are going to take 30 seconds of image, I want you to work out three different narrative soundtracks that work, and all must work, and must work if you change half way through'. Straight away you have to confront what multi-linearity really means or what multi-sequentially really means, because instead of just breaking up into little nodes and reassembling shot A to shot B, what we are saying is no - it becomes much more pluralist than that...

SK You reference collage and montage in your writing on vogs...

AM Part of that comes I guess from...well Lev Manovich has spoken about the same sort of concepts as well, although I do it slightly differently, I regard vogs as desktop computer practice. I think the native environment of the contemporary computer screen is of multiple windows so that's the collage thing - it is overlapping windows, of course they change in time, the content of each window changes or you close a window. I think of that as multi-linear practice, it is not an aesthetic practice; it is how we use computers. It is a little bit like the native aesthetic that screen space is about overlapping windows - collage that changes in time. In the vogs I have taken that as a formal aesthetic quality. A lot of vogs will fracture the space of the video into multiple panes; all will use multiple panes in one work to load different content because it is about collage and montage. The collage happens on the computer desktop, the montage when it gets closed is usually defined by the user but not always...the system crashes, applications close by themselves, pop-up windows appear and disappear, there is certain randomness or machine instrumentality.

It is the same when I first started titling - it was partly introducing more noise to the image by slicing the video up into nine you are actually artificially introducing noise, it is a way of concealing lack of bandwidth. It is also a deliberate strategy from that point of view, hiding the fact that the vog is running at only one frame a second. Personally I quite like noisy stuff, in some of the vogs I compress stuff very hard deliberately, it is extremely pixilated and has artifacts that are quite a deliberate strategy on my behalf. But there are people who are currently making vogs and they're producing very beautiful images, I look at there work and it just looks awesome. I probably can't do that - just me realising that I don't have that aesthetic.

Fragmenting or fracturing in relation to blogs - blogs have this whole practice, they can be long posts or short posts or posts that don’t make sense by themselves, you have to have been reading what has been going on in that blog for the last week, etc... When we work in network environments there is as much value accrued to
the relationship between parts as the parts themselves, so in a blog the authority of a blog is as much in the links in and out of, as is what is written in the blog.

SK How do the new media technologies that you use shape your practice?

AM The simple answer I would give to that is that what I am interested in is trying to become literate enough in what the technologies allow...and using that to inform what is possible in my own practice. In film and TV they know what their existing technologies allow them to do... they try and bring that to the medium. What I am interested in trying to work out is for example that QT is a fully scriptable environment; I am thinking what are the implications of that... I am quite computer literate and network literate and that this probably is the main thing that informs how I work with vogs. I used Storyspace a lot, a stand alone authoring system. I strongly see my understanding of QT as coming from my experience of story space, story space is a node-based system, the content space may or may not be used, may or may not be read, may not be found by a reader. It is about the literacy of what it means to be multi-linear or hypertextual that is the model that I am bringing to my video practice. I am actually bringing quite a different notion to video practice. It is not like I have come from film first – I have done film studies and media studies and made video, but I am actually coming theoretically I think, in terms of practice from more of a hypertextual model. I am applying these principles onto video practice.

SK As a hypothetical model, say you had a class of students sitting in front of you and a lot had come from film or video practice...what would be the broad strokes you would put down in front of them if they where starting to produce vogs, streaming video, or video for new media environments...

AM I would get them to write a list of what the formal properties of these existing media are for film or video...partly because most people haven’t actually formalised these properties– for example that the image is rectangular, there is an image track and sound track, that editing consists of this sort of practice. With a lens we can do certain things, when we deliver we deliver on when it is broadcast, the delivery formats we use, etc... Then I would make a similar list for what it means to work in a desktop-networked environment. Then, I would get them to think about the list of the video-film formalities...you know, we don’t go around saying ‘it is only a rectangle, I only work in a circle’ - we actually accept those as constraints that enable our art so we have rules of composition that are devised from a rectangular frame...An example I will give to students is that you want to film in my office and you wanted to do a shot but when you get there you realise you can’t do it because the wall is in the way. You don’t all throw up your hands in despair and decide you can’t do it, you know that you need to somehow mediate that and compromise... You treat it as a positive constraint, you realise that you have to adapt to the pragmatic conditions of production. When you move to the network these are the pragmatic conditions of production, so instead of fighting against them... how do we, if you like, endorse them? How do we work with bandwidth constraints?... that you can't have an image this big, but you can have theoretically multiple soundtracks, you can have this, that and the other. So let’s treat those as positives and then think about what sort of objects you could make.
SK In essence you have identified that an understanding in change of practice is very much about identifying the possibilities of what you are working with…it is about understanding specificity of the medium…

AM Yes, utterly. I think in our existing practices of say film, TV, radio, we understand the specificities of the medium, they mature, they have been around a long time we know they are time-based. We know there are certain genres that work, we can still experiment with that but there are all these assumptions we bring to it unconsciously…because we have all grown up listening to the TV, radio, etc. One of things I would do is try to make those explicit, that there are a lot of things that we do in TV or radio that are the product of the constraints of the technology. For example, it is linear and time-based, we have to have intros and outs, we have to have cutaways. Often in my teaching I set really nasty constraints, they have to learn that it is not a free for all… I would largely define creativity as the ability to work successfully within constraints. If you are a painter you have paint and a surface usually and there are all sorts of material aspects that go with that…being a good painter is understanding those constraints. On top of that you get into representation and anti-representation and there all sorts of things that go on but at the end of the day there are fundamental constraints. Instead of thinking it inhibits us, lets think about ways that it might liberate us to use a romantic notion, that is what I would do with students.

I am not into using the Internet to reproduce existing practices. I don’t mind that people do, I do mind when people do and they call it something new and they don’t realise it is not new at all… they are doing the same thing in a new environment. But my particular interest both in hypertext and now in the vogging is that these technological environments have new affordances that allow us to write and make different sorts of objects

AM At the end of the first year they have basic literacies, they know how to shoot video, capture video, edit video, same with sound, same with still image, put it in on CD, put it on the web, put it on DVD. In the first year we want everybody to be able to do that with sound and image - they have these literacies about tracks, layering, compositing in a really fundamental sense. You know in Photoshop we are going to do an exercise with layers and that is where they are going to learn about layers in a digital environment. When they move into after effects they already have the idea of layers, you don’t have to re-teach that, they can composite images out of layers, you can treat each layer as an independent object, we can add noise to this one and clean up this one… Straight away their literacy about what that means is here, and about after effects - here is how it works.

Industry doesn’t really care at the end of the day if you’re an avid expert or after effects expert, what they want to know is that you have got the generic competencies and the ability to teach yourself. They will retrain you if they want more generic skills and that is what we are trying to do here. In the second year we are now introducing a compulsory subject, which I teach, which is based on something like voggs. In first year they do generic stuff then in the second year they say ‘I am doing TV or radio’, then we appoint this other subject that gets rid of the boxes or breaks down the walls around each media type. In this subject you’re going to bring your Radio/TV knowledge, but now we are going to make sure you learn that they are not separate things, we want to make works which are going to
integrate across these different areas. Maybe they will make vogs or something similar.

Convergence has happened even though not in the way it was designed. If you listen to the ABC radio for example, a program on Foreign Correspondent, I heard the voice version on Sunday morning on radio national, then I heard a segment on PM yesterday and it is on the website. So it has turned up in four different formats and it might appear as an ABC educational DVD one day. We want them to understand multi-purposing and have some competencies there but I want them also to learn that there is another side to convergence… I want them to also learn about this…working in an environment where we make new sorts of objects using image/sound/text. So one model is say the ABC/ BBC model - you are a journalist you go and get content, that content produces a text track which becomes a transcript which gets published, we take the image and sound track and that becomes a TV story, we take the soundtrack and that becomes a radio story. The other way we think of convergence is that we now make objects that take text which isn’t necessarily the transcription, it could be other text and we take image and we take vision and sound…and we make something with that which can only be delivered online…

There are two different ways of thinking about what this technology offers – what I want is graduates that think about re-purposing to deliver to existing media forms, and the other is about inventing new objects. Imagine we have journalism in this school; it would be really nice to work with journalism students and staff. They have a web journal and that is conservative, it does not have to be CCN dot online - let’s not see it as a newspaper, let’s invent a new kind of news publication. In terms of pedagogy I believe if we can do something like that well, then industry will come to us and say that is fantastic we want your graduates. Train leadership and innovation and as soon as you suggest that, they say ‘you can’t teach that because industry doesn’t do that’ - I suggest that often industry doesn’t know what they are doing with the technology, or they’re just putting newspapers on the web. Let’s reinvent the wheel and then invite them in and show them…

We did one project years ago in radio in QT. We just used a QT soundtrack and we put a href in there so as it plays it automatically loads web pages. We did this about 4-5 years ago and that was a model of digital radio broadcasting, you listen to the audio stream and these web pages load above ads, visual information, etc. That project got shown at some big radio show in the UK by one of our radio lecturers and some BBC guy came up and said that is fantastic, that is better than the stuff we are doing… If we innovate then industry will come to us, lets invent what industry practice should be, if we do that then jobs will fall out of the trees.

SK in your notes on vogging you discuss the relationship between the text and image, or cablegrams, for example…

AM I am an academic and also work with images. What I am interested in is something that brings the two together. I don’t want the text just to be a mirror of the image, I want some tension or noise between the two because I think text is a discrete object in its own right as is the image. One of the early myths, particularly in pedagogy but in a lot of new media content, is the assumption that because we can now put sound or video inside something that the gap between text and image
can now be dissolved...we can now make a website that actually has the pictures, the paintings, inside the site. Say I am a fine art teacher, look we can now make a website where we have the paintings there and the students can write about it and that is true and that is fantastic...

SK In a comparative sense is that like the idea that you can put a picture into a book...and now with digital technologies you can bring any medium like sound or video into a written document?

AM Yes, and that is really good, I don't have a problem with that but I think, for example in cinema studies, we can now put video inside your essays which is a major paradigm shift potentially yet to be explored properly. You put the video in first you don’t write your essay then put it in as an illustration, you put it in at the start and it is there the whole time you are writing. One of the biggest outcomes, particularly for students when they do this, is to learn that text can never be equated to the image and vice versa. One of the ironic outcomes in bringing the two into the same space is to make visible the difference - as they write to the film they increasingly realise words are different and they can never write enough that is somehow going to make the writing equal to the moving image. All of a sudden they realise they are different things. Then you say 'ok, if they are different things what is the role of writing in relation to image'.

Writing always comes first...let’s reverse it, let’s make an essay, which is only pictures. What I am really interested in, in terms of new media practice and pedagogy is that there is so much stuff, even when we take out multimedia, new media titles. And there are a lot of essays you will read about celebrating this kind of thing, that now we can put images with words, but ninety nine times out of a hundred the text is privileged and the image is used to illustrate the text. They have still kept that very traditional divide between the text and the image.

An example of the possibilities if you work with the image first – imagine the opening of The Searchers and it plays as a movie, but I annotate the image all over the place. It is a vog, it is an essay vog - you might mouse over Ethan, John Wayne is in the distance, you mouse over him and some text appears that is say at 30 seconds, then you mouse over him at 2 minutes and some different text appears...maybe you mouse over him then five images appear with the same character represented but at different points in the film and mousing over those might conceptualise this in relation to the opening. I am writing an essay that is driven by the film image a completely different practice as far as I am concerned but how would you think about that, how would you do it?

End
PROFILE: LINDA WALLACE

Linda Wallace has a diverse background in photography, cinematography, radio, journalism and publishing, experiences she brought together in the media company *machine hunger* formed in 1995. This diversity, in combination with curating a range of international media arts exhibitions, informs her art practice. Consequently, Wallace has embraced the convergence of media and art in the medium of video. Her obsession with the transitive nature of video has successively involved short pieces and multi-monitor installations; large multi-screen public installations produced through *machine hunger*; digitally-composited single-channel video; and is now returning to installation and public space works. The single-channel video works *eurovision* (2001) and *entanglements* (2004) are examples of a video style that explores the narrative territory between interactive video and documentary essay. A broad range of media elements are layered together as multiple tracks of data to investigate a new form. This technique is used to question an era of media saturation and the technological expansion of video.

In *eurovision*, film excerpts from Ingmar Bergman’s *The Seventh Seal* (1957) and Jean-Luc Godard’s *Two or Three Things I Know About Her* (1967) are combined in split-screen format with TV grabs from the ‘Eurovision’ song contest, archival documentary footage and original video-photos recorded by the artist. All these elements are composed into a magazine-style template of separate multiple frames that screen simultaneously. In contrast, the audio is a single computer music track fusing this mix of imagery.

*entanglements* continues this exploration of frame fragmentation, the screen becoming a grid through which multiple streams of mixed images are pushed at the viewer. Television news excerpts from Palestine, Pine Gap, the Iraq War and the Moscow theatre siege are set into multiple frames that consume and slice up the whole of the screen, which becomes a videowall of symmetrically repeated and mirrored television bites occasionally broken with the more familiar full screen image. A singular composed soundtrack silences the television audio, while a cloned newsreader repeated in a bank of frames speaks but is never heard.

In an interview Wallace talks about the way video constantly devours other media and new “technological developments.” It is the porous nature of the medium that prompts her to use video to re-use media. In techniques which hark back to Guy Debord’s ‘detournement’ of the 1960s or the Scratch video of the 1980s, she re-uses and re-mixes images and text to recontextualise the original sources in another form. Interested in the differing tonal qualities of video formats, emerging video technologies are used to explore the “textuality” of the medium, such as the green monochromatic tonal quality of military night vision cameras in *entanglements*. Each type of video image offers differing resonance in terms of narrative construction and the transformation of context.
As a recombinant video practitioner, Wallace also explores with rigour the spatiality of the frame. Splitting the screen into multiple frames instigates an engagement with multi-linear narratives. [1] Described by Wallace as a “linear version of an interactive project”, eurovision emulates the viewer and user experiences on the Internet. Lev Manovich argues that computer operators working with numerous fragments of information are constantly engaging with the concept of multiple simultaneous associations. [2] This notion is translated into eurovision and entanglements. Engaging with new media technologies and cultural paradigms, this video work extends a shift towards the orientation of space as part of converged media and art. Wallace is currently extending these spatial explorations as an artist in residence at Montevideo Time Based Arts in Amsterdam. Living Tomorrow uses multiple streams of video, sourced and compiled from an array of video fragments lodged on a server, and projects these streams into a public space. This work examines rule-based and random narrative construction and the resultant materiality of high-resolution video over networks. The outcome becomes part of what she has called “architectural media space”.

NOTES:

Seth Keen is a lecturer, researcher and artist, based in the Centre for New Media Arts (CNMA) at The Australian National University, Canberra. He is currently completing a Master of Arts (by Thesis), through the University of Technology, Sydney, focusing on the changing conditions of video practice and theory in new media environments.