

The visual differences and comparisons between media have always interested me and particularly the perceptual and experiential differences between the still and moving image and especially between painting, still photography and film/video.

Light, duration, and the representation of landscape and environment have been my main preoccupation and concerns in my film/video practice since 1977. One aspect of this has been my interest in issues about time and it's passing, and especially those situations which require an immediate response to filming changing circumstances. Identifying and anticipating events which are about to unfold or transform in time have evolved to become part of my method of working. To compliment this observational approach, I have mainly used long continuous duration as a representational device, filming in 'real time' within a particular place/space. Apart from the camera being handheld it is not normally moved from a static and fixed frame position throughout the duration of filming.

While working in this way I have always been astonished at how often images of paintings have been instantly recalled from memory when triggered in response to a particular place or space in both rural and urban landscapes. I acknowledge that a likeness or resemblance to a particular painting is my personal opinion and can be an observation which refers in part or to the entirety of a painting. Therefore it has not been my intention in this collection of films/videos to attempt the impossible, of trying to produce a complete 'like for like' appropriation. I guess that years of art history in which the most popular paintings have dominated our cultural landscape through publications and exhibitions, have now become imbedded of our individual and collective memories. In my experience the most common group of painters for these recalls have, unsurprisingly, been the Impressionists, but not exclusively.

In my experience of this kind of incidental memory recall is that it is ephemeral usually lasting for a limited amount of time. Experientially one is only in the right place at the right time for a very short period. Therefore an immediate response to start filming is required in the 'present' of a particular moment and within a particular place.

Although the film/video medium is time based in which images change, reveal or transform in/through time, it is acknowledged that it is a fundamentally different viewing experience when compared to looking at still images. However, an important association and similarity with painting is in the procedure of framing visual content.

Having first recognised and made the connection between a place/space and a painting the next step is in setting the camera frame into position while recalling, as vividly as possible, the content of a particular artwork. All of this procedure happens extremely quickly with the camera placed in a fixed position (usually handheld) and filming undertaken in long and continuous durational takes. This approach also considers and acknowledges the importance of the spectator as a significant and integral part of the cinematic process. providing for the possibility of a reflexive and phenomenological viewing experience.

The unknown aspect in filming in this way has been the unpredictability within the process. Once the view is framed and camera turned on there is often no way to determine the future of what is going to transpire, unfold or transform in time within the 'magic' of those particular moments. It has become one of the most interesting aspects of working in this way. And it is here that the phenomenon of chance enters the frame which applies to the decision made of what and when to start filming and in the duration of the filming process itself. Is this a kind of intentionality which is based on a spiritual and intuitive faculty?

I have chosen a series of films/videos which have been selected from those made over a period of 44 years, which exemplify this process of working, however the majority of these films were made between 2010-21. In selecting these films I have placed them into 2 groups, each with different approaches, under the headings of Part 1: Radical Immediacy and Part 2: Reflexive Considerations

Part 1: Radical Immediacy. In these films, in an incidental way, I have directly observed and recognised a place or view and in my opinion they bear some resemblance or characteristics to a particular painting. The immediacy is evident in two ways, one in the quick speed of intuitively recognising the association of the place/view with a particular painting. Secondly, the rapid speed in which filming needs to start on location.

With my experience of filming the landscape, changes to conditions and circumstances are ephemeral and often happen very quickly especially changes in the quality and intensity of light. Therefore starting to film as near as possible to the first and original realisation has become essential.

Part 2: Reflexive Considerations. These films which have connections or references to painters and specific paintings have been considered sometime prior to the filming process and not all of them are reliant on the same degree of immediacy in response to a place or space. These criteria are different for each of the films selected.

PART 1: Radical Immediacy

1. GREETINGS FROM COLLIOURE
2. AFTER VERMEER
3. THE CAFE (After Renoir)
4. TIME-AFTER CANALETTO
5. TIME AFTER TIME AFTER VAN GOGH

PART 2: Reflexive Considerations

1. TIME FLOW
2. MATISSE'S DOUBT
3. THE ROAD TO PRIORY FARM (After Cezanne)
4. THE GOLDFINCH (After Fabritius)

PART 1: Radical Immediacy

GREETINGS FROM COLLIOURE 2011

<https://vimeo.com/553466516>
password: COLLIOURE



Paintings of boats in the Port of Collioure by Henri Matisse

Left: The Open Window, Collioure, 1905. Right: The Red Beach, Collioure, 1905



Boats in the
Port of Collioure
by Andre Derain

Left: The Port of Collioure, 1905
Centre: Boats at Collioure, 1905
Right: Collioure, Le Port de Peche, 1905

Luminous Light of Collioure

On visiting Collioure in the South of France I was aware of the painters who visited and worked there because of the quality of the light at this small southern coastal town on the Mediterranean Coast. Fauve painters including Matisse, Derain et al all produced colourful and quite remarkable work during their stay. I was aware of a small number of those works before I arrived each of which depicted small boats moored up in the harbour.

The harbour remained crowded and busy with boats coming and going and mooring up on most days during my visit together with some heavy and frequent showers of rain. However it was the day before I was due to return to the UK when from 12.15 in the afternoon when I suddenly noticed, and for just a moment, that the harbour had become quiet and clear of all boats. With the exception of four small colourful boats which were left in clear water moored up along the harbour wall. And fortuitously the sun had just appeared and was illuminating the boats and extenuating the depth and density of their colour.

The moment had to be grasped and I speedily placed myself near to the harbour wall opposite the four boats. Framing the view carefully, recollecting as best I could, some of the paintings of both Matisse and Derain which depicted boats in Collioure Harbour. The camera was started and ran for a continuous take in 'real time' hand held in the same position, fortunately the sun was behind me. A 13' 41 seconds 'slice of life' in observational filmmaking!

The events which transpired were much more than I could have anticipated, and remarkably, the light changed a number of times during the filming period producing subtle shifts of light through slow transitions which provided different qualities of illumination to the surrounding landscape and consequently to the colour shades of the four boats! The sound/image relationships also worked out well. Very soon after my time of shooting the harbour again became quite busy and the view which I had framed became obscured once more by boats which would have made the film impossible to repeat.

The hand held camera and the way in which it registers movement in relation to the movements of the boats and the acknowledgement of the viewers position within the cinematic experience are both important and intrinsic aspects of this work. The openness to the possibility of chance is built into this working process for both image and sound including 'out of frame' sound allowing for unpredictable phenomena and events to occur throughout the duration of recording. The film is presented with the possibility of providing a reflexive and phenomenological experience for viewers.

2. AFTER VERMEER 2012

<https://vimeo.com/553876679>
password: AFTER VERMEER



Painting: The Little Street, 1657-58, Johannes Vermeer

Vermeer's painting 'The Little Street' immediately came to mind when observing this view of a house and passage in a street in Venice. The video is not intended to be anything like a match or photo-digital equivalent to the quality of Vermeer's remarkable painting. However, associations were made at the time with the details and features of the house in Delft, including its colours with its red bricks, grey shutters, brown wooden and arched doorways. The formal way in which the painting was framed, depicting a small segment of the street, I particularly associated with the women sweeping in the passage way of Vermeer's painting with the woman hanging out her washing from her house window down the passage way within the film. This was happening at the same time and in stark contrast with the tourists and wealth of modern-day Venice passing by in the street nearby. Could this also have been happening in a similar way in the Venice of 1657?

Filming handheld and in continuous duration in this direct observational way revealed a number of events which were not predicted and certainly unexpected when the filming was started. Also of interest was the contrast between the surface 'flatness' of the house and street buildings with the perspective and depth depicted in the passageway. The video also makes a contrast between the different kinds of movement and social activity occurring between the main street and within the narrow passageway.

3. THE CAFE (After Renoir) 2018

<https://vimeo.com/553619501>
password: THE CAFE



Left: Luncheon of the Boating Party, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, 1876

Right: Dance at the Moulin de la Galette, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, 1881

I was sitting having coffee in a local cafe in Corfu Town in one of its main streets. A sudden recognition of the association of the view with two of Renoir's famous paintings. At the time I could not single one of them out but I can remember recalling aspects of both paintings. With the images of those paintings in mind, framing the view followed quickly, so that as much of the paintings content association could be retained in memory and included in the video. It was recognised at the time that this process would only provide partial associations, a kind of impression of an impression but in the medium of video.

Filming handheld in continuous duration was used in the direct observation of families of people who turned out to have lunch in the cafe. However, unknown to me at the beginning of filming was the seating of two women who arrived for lunch and sat right in front of me and the camera. I regarded this to be fortuitous and I continued filming the situation without any pause. As it happened, this turned out to provide a very good close up of the movement of the women's head and of the straw hat she was wearing. This further strengthened and added an extra and enhanced association with the two Renoir painting. These kind of magical events sometimes occur when working with time and duration in this way!

4. TIME-AFTER CANALETTO 2020

<https://vimeo.com/519504527>
password: AFTER CANALETTO



Three paintings selected from the many that Giovanni Canaletto painted of the Grand Canal:

Left: The Grand Canal from the Palazzo Dolfin-Marin to the Rialto Bridge, 1740-1750

Centre: The Grand Canal, Venice, looking north west, with the Palazzo Pesaro, 1735-1739

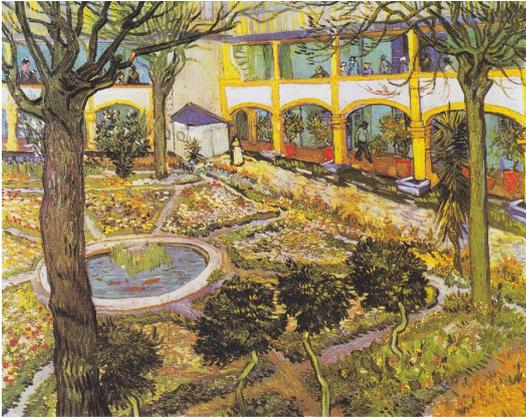
Right: The Grand Canal, Venice, looking north west from Ca' Comer, 1697-1768

It was a hot sunny day in Venice, and I was peering from the Rialto Bridge at a view which must be one of the most commonly shared scene of the local topography. Thinking about colour, light and the beauty of Canaletto's paintings and the way in which he made use of his camera obscurer and wondering how different it would have been in 1730 (note: I first saw Canaletto's original Camera Obscurer in an exhibition of his work in Venice.) And it was for those reasons that I started to frame and film the view. Appropriately slowing the motorway like appearance of the Grand Canal and the leisurely pace and movements of the gondolas even further. And completely excluding the noise and bustle of the tourist activity.

A silent reflection on time, movement, structure/topography, place and Canaletto.

5. TIME AFTER TIME AFTER VAN GOGH 2020

<https://vimeo.com/288441818>
password: TIME AFTER TIME



Painting: The Asylum Garden at Arles,
Vincent Van Gogh, 1889

In visiting Arles and the Espace which was once the Old Hospital where Vincent Van Gogh was admitted after he cut off his ear. I was surprised that this old 16th century building and its gardens, where Van Gogh painted during his stay there, had not visibly changed radically. He stayed there a number of times from December 1888 to May 1889, the year that he painted his 'Garden of the Hospital in Arles'.

I recalled seeing this painting before visiting Arles but never imagined that in 2011 the buildings and garden would not appear so visually different from their representation in 1889. While retaining the old buildings, fountain and gardens, it had now been turned into an arts and cultural centre.

Remembering as much as I could from Van Gogh's painting I swiftly framed the old building with its two floors and yellow framed arches. There was the added opportunity of framing the view in a direct classical and formal way following the structure and layout of the buildings with their foreground of gardens and centrally placed fountain.

The film allows for a reflection on Van Gogh's life and his stay at the Old Hospital during this productive but traumatic period of his stay in Arles. The flowing fountain provided a meditative sound track as well as standing as a metaphor for the flowing continuity and renewal of life force. I found that the fountain's pond movement with its paper debris which flowed in a clockwise direction, provided a visual and cyclic indicator of time, almost like the movements of the minute hand on a clock. Unexpectedly two people enter and leave the frame walking from left to right together with the appearance of a photographer taking photographs on the upper floor opposite. This gave me the idea of using film loops, repetition, duration and the slowing of film time which in one way could be regarded as analogous to the repetitive rhythms and monotony of daily life for a patient confined to stay in the hospital. It also presented the possibility of providing a reflexive and phenomenological experience for the viewer.

PART 2. : Reflexive Considerations

1. TIME FLOW 1977

<https://vimeo.com/553887339>

password: TIME FLOW



Two paintings selected from Monet's numerous Water Lily works:

Left: Water Lilies, 1897-99

Right: Water Lilies, Agapanthus (right panel), 1920-26

TIME FLOW made in 1977 was one of the first films in which I considered the physical/material and philosophical nature of time and duration in relation to movement and its representation on 16mm film. I presented a two screen comparative and observational exploration of film time, over a period of a day, contrasting 'real time' with different time lapse frame rates. With consideration for the spectators position within the cinema. From that time I developed an interest in the perception of viewing durational film/video and in phenomenological and reflexive viewing experiences.

The idea and concept for the film came from the memory of many days contemplating and sitting by rivers observing flowing water and the many different qualities of changing light and wind on the water surface. These I experienced in my childhood and early youth fishing in many different rivers and ponds which was also a good introduction to understanding the language of nature.

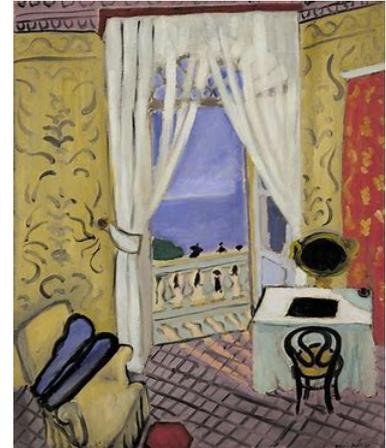
The movement and flow of water therefore became the ideal subject in which to explore film, movement and time. The Suffolk Stour was the river identified as having the water flow and speed of current most suitable for making this film and the sequence of experiments. This river also had a superb abundance of Water Lilies which reminded me of Monet's wonderful series of paintings. This also gave the opportunity of framing the Water Lilies to provide visual continuity between the two screens.

I was aware of Monet's paintings at the time and his astute observations of light changes on the water surface at different times of the day. So Monet would have had a substantial influence over some of the decisions made in making this film. Especially influential was his Orangerie paintings.

However my main reason and motivation for making this work and the choice of river location, was to explore and make a comparative study of film time. This involved light and movement and an investigation of the aesthetic and material qualities of 16mm film.

2. MATISSE'S DOUBT 2013

<https://vimeo.com/553864277>
password: MATISSE



Three of the many interior paintings made by Henri Matisse in Nice:

Left: The Window in Nice, 1919

Centre: Vase of Flowers in Front of the Window, 1919

Right: Interior with a Violin Case, 1919

On visiting Nice and staying on the Promenade des Anglais, my thoughts were of the outstanding quality of light both out and inside of the room, with an awareness that Matisse had stayed near by. Having read Hilary Spurling's superb book 'Matisse the Life' I became aware of what she had said about Matisse's arrival in Nice, drawn by the beauty and light of the Cote d'Azur. Although Nice enjoys some of the best quality of luminous exterior light along the Mediterranean Coast, instead of painting in the exterior space within the light of the landscape, Matisse chose to work from the interior spaces within the rooms in which he stayed. However there was occasionally a view of the Mediterranean visible from a window in his apartment, as part of his interior paintings.

As I was staying in a room which would have been very much like the one where Matisse stayed, with a view out to the Mediterranean, the quality of light would have been similar to that which he would have experienced. I took the opportunity to set up an experimental still life with a vase of flowers and fruit to discover how the light entering the room would affect the illumination of the still life objects and space within the room, and consequently the quality of their representation on video.

The resulting long durational video is a moving 'still' life with an acknowledgement of Matisse's interior paintings. The representation also opens up the possibility for a reflexive meditation on the quality of light entering the room and the perceptual liminality which could be experienced between external and interior light.

3. THE ROAD TO PRIORY FARM 2 (After Cezanne) 2015

<https://vimeo.com/554188715>
password: CEZANNE



Cezanne's paintings in the Courtauld Collection:

Left: The Etang des Soeuvs, Osuy, near Pontoise, c 1875
Centre: Farm in Normandy, Summer (Hattenville) 1882(?)
Right: Tall Trees at the Jas de Bouffan, c1883

While half way through working on this film which depicts the movement of changing light along an avenue of old beech trees on a road leading to a farm near where I live, coincidentally I was to visit the Courtauld Gallery during this filming period. I was immediately amazed to find three of Cezanne's landscape paintings which depicted light through trees which had some resemblance to the film I was working on.

Having stood and looked at those works for some time it became clear to me in the realisation that it was not only the representation the trees within the landscape but also the light Cezanne was painting. To represent the 'whole of the light' which appeared at that place and at that moment in time. It was time-light-space/landscape he was attempting to represent in its totality! A more fragmented approach to representational painting often means building and completing it gradually in stages over a period of time. Those superb, rather unassuming and beautiful paintings took on another dimension of meaning for me and a further realisation of Cezanne's brilliance.

I recognised in those Cezanne paintings certain similarities to what I was attempting to do in this film, where movement and changing light is the subject, depicted through trees. And where the camera through duration records multiple sequences of 'real' and 'present' time moments continuously changing the representation of space and place on video for ever.

The seasonal differences are filmed and presented in four sections to provide a comparative and a more extensive study of this phenomena, and particularly changes in colour and in the density of foliage. It is also one example of my exploration of landscape film and representation which I have been working on over the last 40 years. In the observation of the way in which through time and duration, changes and transformations in light, weather and season affect the way in which we perceive space and place in film.

This film, as with many others I have made, has the viewer in mind with the possibility of providing for a reflexive and phenomenological viewing experience. It is presented as a handheld silent film so that more attention could be given over to the visual and the often subtle changes in light.

4. THE GOLDFINCH (After Fabritius) 2020



The Goldfinch, Carel Fabritius, 1654

<https://vimeo.com/439393212>
password: GOLDFINCH3

THE GOLDFINCH (After Fabritius) is a silent film concerned with representation through the contemplation of life, death, beauty and capture.

The European Goldfinch is a wild bird which from early times has been admired, captured and caged for its beauty. That was also true of Amsterdam and Delft in 1654 when Carel Fabritius, a pupil of Rembrandt, known for his experimentation with perspective and light, made his now famous painting 'The Goldfinch'. Many other artists depicted the Goldfinch in their paintings during that period including 'Madonna of the Goldfinch' by Raphael (c1505-06). Today in the UK the wild Goldfinch can still be found in captivity in small backyard aviaries or as dead specimens represented in taxidermic form in Natural History Museums. Fabritius unfortunately died early at the age of 32 as a result of a gunpowder explosion in Delft which destroyed a large part of the city including Fabritius's studio.

The idea for this film grew from a number of the following events and personal experiences: Having seen Fabritius's wonderful painting on exhibition, as the original, at the Scottish National Gallery; A house painter who arrived to do a job in our house told me that he captured and kept Goldfinches in an aviary in his backyard; A bird loving friend in our village surprised me recently when he told me he also kept Goldfinches in captivity in his aviary; In addition to seeing Goldfinches free and full of life feeding on our bird feeders. One morning I saw one sitting solitary on our garden wall not moving very much. The next day it was sitting stationary above our front door on the lintel. The next day it was sadly found lying dead on our front doorstep; With the Fabritius painting in mind I made a decision to make a film exploring and contemplating beauty, life, death and captivity as both a lament for the dead Goldfinch and as homage to Fabritius. Experimenting with representation and the constructed image in a photo-digital way through video which can be seen in the end result.

The dead Goldfinch was placed on a small table for filming in close up and macro and for the construction of a 3D image which was to bear some association with Fabritius's painting. It was left overnight on the table after filming. On the next morning the third day after finding the Goldfinch dead on our front doorstep. I decided that the bird should be buried in our garden because in a kind of way it had sacrificed its life for art!

However to my astonishment the Goldfinch had completely disappeared and could not be found after searching everywhere over a couple of days. It had vanished and has not been found to this

day! My thoughts could not help but think of the depictions and the reasons for using the Goldfinch in those paintings in the 15th and 16th centuries and why it had grown over time to become a symbol for resurrection?

The complete video in 2 parts:

AFTERIMAGES - Incidental Appropriations 2021 1:42 mins

<https://vimeo.com/556616226>
password: AFTERIMAGES