through a glass darkly

|Reflections On The Affectivity Of Mirrored Composition.

An exegesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Design

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Declaration

I hereby declare that the following Masters by Research (Project) except where due acknowledgement has been made, is my own work and has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award. The content of the thesis is the result of work that has been carried out since the official date of the approved research program – June 2004. Any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged.

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Abstract:

This body of work is the culmination of a part-time five year investigation into the use of mirroring in digital art composition and its potential to generate affective intensity.

The research has occurred through a series of installative works and artefacts produced with digital media in which mirrored operations have been employed in a variety of different ways. The aim of these explorations was to develop and articulate a compositional approach based in acts of mirroring, with the aim of extending affective invitations to the viewer. The process drew from fields across myth and cultural production, cognitive development, design theory and cultural history. The investigation served to articulate the latent flux inferred in mirroring which is fundamental to all transformative processes.
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Introduction

I'm reaching the end of a long journey. As soon as I'm able I leap out and race toward home. The fresh garden air replaces the stale smells of the car; there is still a few dappled hours of the day left before it gets dark, and I can't wait to retreat into the private pre-pubescent world of my bedroom. But, as I rush up toward the corridor leading to my room, standing before the entrance is a strange, eerie figure with my face. This other seems to have been waiting for me and is standing very still, watching me with a terrible smile. I freeze in my tracks, aware on a very basic, visceral level that something is horribly wrong, but am at a complete loss at what to do. The other me continues to smile terribly and begins walking toward me in a very slow, deliberate manner. I'm aware that this is being done with sinister intent, but am paralysed by the situation's escalating, tacit threat and my fear.

I wake up.

This preceding passage describes a recurring nightmare I had as a child around the age of twelve. The experience was a highly evocative one, and still remains a vivid memory today. For me this recollection speaks to many of the ambiguities engaged by the research. The deeply visceral nature of this experience of mirroring haunted this thesis while also acting as the ephemeral ghost that it sought to pin down. In locating my enquiry in terms of digital media this viscerality was precisely what I felt to be absent in so much of what I saw being produced in digital art, and yet it also seemed to haunt this absence in uncanny ways.

My art background had previously been in painting, drawing and sculpture, all mediums with which I could amass some sort of tactile understanding. Digital technology seemed on the surface to be all inaccessible code and incomprehensible wiring. The poignancies I found so affecting in the irregularities of material line and surface seemed incompatible against the ‘exactness’ of digital technology. And yet, the romance of technology’s sci-fi appeal and the possibilities its production offered was eventually too strong a
siren-call from which to completely estrange. So, by 2000, I had enrolled in a degree in Computer Mediated Art\(^1\) and was actively working to reconcile my slightly luddite-esque sensibilities in to finding ways of incorporating digital technology into my practice. Perhaps unsurprisingly this material bias significantly informed how I approached that integration. The method I adopted was to seek out digital forms of production which would reaffirm the experiential aspects I understood from my previous art work and encounters. To this end, I sought out digitally mediated art which communicated some of the related affectivities I felt were engaged by the work of favourite artists such as Francis Bacon, or Mike Nelson; whose work evoked within me a disquieting sense of being at the periphery of experiential boundaries.

Essentially, this reconciliatory investigation served as a way of finding means to generate these intense moments of felt experience through digital production; informed by the tactile understandings I carried across from previous art encounters. However, as this search progressed I experienced a mounting sense of frustration. It became increasingly evident that assumptions I had made about the capacity of digital media were rarely satisfied. While the visual representation, rendering and interactivity in works such as *The Body Malleable* by Philip Brophy, was highly sophisticated, the eerie\(^2\) affectivity and intensity I was compelled by seemed comparatively absent.
Evidence of the intensities I sought to recreate were readily accessible in other forms of art and cultural production, (indeed, related variations of this affect formed the sinew in the production of thrillers or horror genres). However, while the television and screen surfaces through which this affect was transmitted shared equivalencies with the digital monitor, that correspondence, and how those intensities were repositioned within a digital environment, did not largely appear within the examples of work I was encountering.

To illustrate, digital, horror games such as Resident Evil and Silent Hill have so successfully mirrored environments, architectures and the user’s movements with digital rendering that their popularity has lead to filmic retranslations. However, the affective engagement advocated by the works rendering did not produce the same sense of disquiet I experienced when watching the behavioural mirroring of a “Lynchian” character like Killer Bob.3
An unsettling sense of menace became increasingly foregrounded in the way I thought about the approach I would adopt for the investigation. The eerie affectivity bound up in the horror genre (often generated through depictions of intense moments of felt experience), lead me to speculate whether the techniques of the horror genre might help me provide pathways to communicating comparable intensities within digital production, and reconcile some of the dissatisfaction I was encountering. I decided to unpack what was at stake in these intensities, and identify compositional operations that could facilitate the exchange I sought within my work. The focus in this process of unpacking occurred via the act of mirroring. Its affective potential emerged as I made my way through texts on affect attunement and its relationship to mirroring.

*The aim of my research was to develop my art practice by exploring the affective intensities within mirrored compositional operations.*

That objective was addressed through the development of a theoretical framework which worked in conjunction with a series of projects using mirroring as a primary mode of compositional practice. Ultimately, these operations fell within two categories of inquiry:

**Looks like me – but not me. (doppelgangeresque renarration of mirroring)**

**Not like me – but is me. (mimetic renarration of mirroring)**

The theoretical framework is far reaching and complex, referring to a broad range of sources in its search to identify the issues at stake in mirrored operation and how those elements can be applied to inform and develop the outcomes of my art practice. Pertinent, but outside the scope of the current research are psychoanalysis, philosophy, literary studies, theatre, psychology and neuroscience. My research has been contained to issues concerned with empathic response, otherness, the uncanny and menace for reasons which will be
detailed further in this thesis. These concerns have been informed by observations drawn from consistencies in the role of mirroring in myth and cultural production against its role in subjective development and communication to forward a case supporting it as a solid compositional operation through which to explore affective engagement. The projects undertook to promote a mirrored exchange, approaching that encounter as an ambiguous relationship between the site of the physical constituency and the site of the mirrored, represented self.

The former research inquiry, ‘looks like me – but not me’, interrogated this relationship within the context of the “mirror phase”\(^4\), a profound moment in subjective development whereby the infant recognises and integrates the reflected self with their physical sense of identity, while introducing an implicated separation between the physical awareness of self and the represented image within that boundary-formation.

It was within the context of that implication that a series of compositional principles were identified to renarrate relational antecedents within the work. With regard to the latter inquiry, ‘not like me – but is me’, the research explored mirroring by framing the projects within the context of Caillois’ mimetic crisis. Roger Caillois was a French theorist whose work incorporated sociology and philosophy. In 1935 he published an essay called *Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia* which questioned the assumption that mimicry within the animal kingdom is a defence reaction. Caillois instead posited that the protection it offers is questionable and cited a number of examples in which the camouflage used simply set up alternate risks for attack. He forwarded an argument which read mimesis as a disturbance in the perception of space, whereby the perception of distinction between the organism and its environment is “seriously undermined”\(^5\) and attributed the pathology Legendary Psychasthenia to the phenomena. He corresponded this event to examples of mental disorder within schizophrenia in which the sufferer experiences a “depersonalization (through an) assimilation to space”\(^6\), describing the experience as “becoming…dark space, where things cannot be put”\(^7\).
Scope | Approach | Influences:

To realise the research aims four major projects were executed, alongside five incidental research artefacts. Each explored mirrored threats to self-synthesis from an array of compositional platforms, testing the gradients of intensity within each application. That methodology was informed by the singularities of approach in the practice of Francis Bacon and Mike Parr. In each example a singular operation critiquing identity is exhaustively returned to throughout the work. In the case of Bacon, it is the moment of intensity as fluxes in identity spasm through the body.

“Sometimes the human head is replaced by an animal, but it is not the animal as a form but rather the animal as a trait - for example, the quivering trait of a bird spiralling over the scrubbed area, while the simulacra of portrait-faces on either side of it act as "attendants" (as in the 1976 Triptych [79]...In place of formal correspondences, what Bacon's painting constitutes is a zone of indiscernibility or undecidability between man and animal. Man becomes animal, but not without the animal becoming spirit at the same time, the spirit of man, the physical spirit of man presented in the mirror Eumenides or fate [77])”.9

In the work of Mike Parr, identity is likewise mutated and in flux. Parr returns again and again to a singular compositional premise – moments of intensity as
the identity is in flux. Graham Coulter-Smith and Jane Magon in critiquing Parr’s work describe acts of self-representation as producing “trace(s)...(of) self presence”.

Interestingly, Coulter-Smith and Magon also read spectral allusions into the trace of the represented image, an association given similar treatment by the research in chapter 1.

In both Bacon and Parr the identity of the represented subject has not been fully synthesised, it is still shifting and porous; a quantity which finds parallels in both Caillois’ mimetic dilemma, and the dichotomous self developing at Lacan’s ’Mirror Stage’. An array of relations which corroborate the research’s earlier intent to approach mirroring as an ambiguous relationship between the physical constituency and the represented self. As in the subjective development described by Jacques Lacan’s ‘Mirror Stage’, the process of mirroring both aligns the reflected self with physical self, while simultaneously implicating division between reflection and the constituent. This splitting is echoed in the separation that occurs in Caillois’ description of mimesis; a derealization which results as the self disassociates from its specular image, or homeomorphic profile, directing that relation, in this instance, toward space.

With hindsight, the methodology could have been enriched by broadening that observation to include the practice of other well known new media partitioners working with mirroring and reflection, such as Bill Viola, Petra Gemeinboeck and Dan Graham.

With regard to the former, while the context of Viola’s work and use of reflection is quite different in approach, the pieces are still affectively intense (Quintet of the Astonished, Tristan and Isolde), and are valuable exemplars through which to observe the use of reflection as a motif in one’s practice (Migration, The Reflecting Pool).

In reference to Petra Gemeinboeck, her work Impossible Geographies: Memory 1 likewise explores issues that would have resonated strongly with themes the research sought to engage. Specifically, in the paper Gemeinboeck wrote on that work she speaks of “spatial unbelonging and belonging”, “presence and absence”,

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“the familiar and the ‘other’”, and moving “the computed virtual into the space of everyday life.”15 However, this work was framed within the context of memory. While useful as a point of reference to observe how affect and “spatial unbelonging” might be engaged through reflection, my concerns, as stated earlier, were primarily located within mirroring and horror.

To this end, the work of Dan Graham, although tending more toward sociopsychological issues, opens compelling modes of practice through which to unpack various aspects of the research. His use of reflection and mirroring in works such as Present Continuous Past (1974), Performer /Audience /Mirror (1977), Time Delay Room (1974) and Two way mirror hedge labyrinth (1991), oblige acts of self observation subjected to external controls that “simultaneously integrate and exclude”16. A study of which would have been deeply informative in researching ways to approach integration and exclusion in relation to horror and mirroring, (and still may yet prove very valuable with regard to the production of future work in this area).

Overview of the study:

The thesis has been structured into five chapters which consider the relationships between the mirrored self and the represented self. The investigation examines the conditions at stake in those interactions and how they might be engaged through compositional operations.
Chapter one investigates aspects of the uncanny in relation to photographic reproduction. It identifies equivalencies between the represented self in the mirror and the represented self in the lens. It examines historical examples of associations linking emergent photographic technologies with spectral presence, and goes on to explore how this relationship is further manifested by film and television production. The chapter then concludes on observed equivalencies in the representation of self in digital technologies.

Chapter two introduces project one, .@.nimatus, which aimed to produce an open, empathetic interaction between a digitally located entity and the audience engaging with it. It furthers the examination into parallels between the camera lens and the digital monitor, juxtaposing this critique against concepts of affective attunement and identifies a set of compositional propositions to incorporate into the project work. Specifically, it examines the conditions at work in the empathetic mirroring between two subjects and how triggers which invite this state might be integrated within the work's composition. It charts the development of the .@.nimatus project, describing the affective invitations that were explored, with a particular focus on the use of uncanny reflection to engage affective attunement, and how the project outcomes informed further developments in the research.

Chapter three expands the investigation into film, and examines how mirroring is used as both an affective relational dynamic and visual device by referring to examples from the horror genre. In this case the research for the second project, .[un].site, explicitly staged the interactions in order to further articulate the relational dynamics at work in .@.nimatus. .[un].site reviewed ambiguities in the mirrored surface, establishing the foundation for a more in-depth examination which considered the implications of surface ambiguities on the identity. This section also marks a major turning point within the investigation which drove the work toward a resolution of the research aims.
Chapter four documents this development, which extended the investigation to encompass the relationship between mirroring and mimicry. Through this framework the research was able to integrate mirrored operations explored within the first two projects into the visual composition of the ensuing work. Specifically, issues regarding ambiguous surface, identity and affective response were reassigned from the interactive to the visual field. The projects, *labyrinth*, and *enchanted cornfield* also addressed, and largely resolved, issues which had been raised through the curatorial process.

Chapter five reviews the different capabilities of the approaches investigated, identifying the issues each project was obliged to consider. It considers how the outcomes have worked to develop and synthesize the research inquiry, and concludes with suggestions on potential trajectories through which the research could further advanced.

As discussed at the start of this introduction, the purpose of this Masters research was to resolve dissatisfaction I had experienced in previous encounters with digitally mediated art. I sought to identify what was absent in that experience for me, and then find ways to resolve the situation within my practice. I hope to demonstrate with the following chapters how the research process has been able to identify affective mirrored operations and has tested those principals in an informed way throughout the work.
Image references:


Image 6:  Francis Bacon. "Head I", (1948)

Image 7:  Mike Parr. "I-Glueing (Smerdya Moin)", (1983)


1 BA in Computer Mediated Art, Victoria University of Technology (2000-2003)

2 According to the online etymology dictionary, www.etymonline.com, the Old Norse historical meaning attributed to eerie is "unmanly, voluptuous." I think that definition sets up an interesting juxtaposition in relation to the context of the operations in this investigation and what they set out to invoke. The ambiguous nature of the mirroring in the operations, and the asymmetrical compositions produced by their application, I forward, are implicitly bound up in the ambiguity and asymmetry associated with feminine outlines.  

3 It is interesting to note in the review Silent Hill received by David Stratton and Margaret Pomeranz, one of the critiques directed at the film was it’s inability to generate fear or unease despite the repeated depictions of horror and gore. Both speculate whether this is due to a "lack of internal logic". A conjecture which resonates with the research concern to unpack issues at work in affective operations in order to further articulate and communicate them in an informed way.  
A transcript of this review is available here: www.abc.net.au/atthemovies/txt/s1720879.htm  
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4 Lacan, 1977

5 Caillois, 1987

6 Ibid

7 Ibid

8 Nozick, 1981

9 Deleuze, 1981

10Coulter-Smith and Magon, 1988


Chapter 1: The Haunted Screen

“The death of God has left us with a lot of appliances.”
- Avital Ronell, TraumaTV

In this chapter I plot a very brief timeline, spanning across the 1800s to the present day, reviewing the relationships between optical media and uncanny replication, and identify correspondences within the production of digital technology. Chapter 1 advances the investigation’s preliminary stance by training its focus on the transition of the uncanny self in the mirror to the uncanny self in the lens. It then explores how that subject is further developed and recontextualised through digital representation, and forwards a case arguing the legitimacy of locating mirrored composition principles within that technology. The chapter concludes by examining the role mirroring has played in the composition principles used in my research.

Image 1: The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters. Francisco José de Goya y Lucientes, (1797)
Image 2: ‘Siblings’, post mortem photo (date & author unknown)

The focus of much of the discussion in this chapter is on reviewing the profound relationships between the uncanniness of the mirrored self in relation to the represented self in optical technology. Thus its aim is to explore how the issues
of uncanny mirroring are particularized through the representation and relational dynamics inherent to optical media. Further, how those relationships likewise inform digital production.

In addressing the issue of the represented self, the departure from labour-intensive, often allegorical, artistic interpretation to photographic reproduction was a significant one. It provided the possibility of capturing ephemeritas in the human condition with a veracity that previous artistic mediums were unable to corroborate to the same extent. Photography and film established representational shifts in transcription, from the thing itself, once removed, to copies of “the thing itself”. Even when mediating photographic subjects, the mediator must start with “the thing itself” in a manner painting, sculpture and other analogue mediums cannot replicate.

In the examples presented above I position an etching by de Goya (The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters, Image 1) against a post-mortem photograph depicting a young girl posing with her deceased sister (Siblings, Image 2). Juxtapositions of dark, analogue works against, to paraphrase Roland Barthes, the “irrefutable presence” of photography provided useful encounters through which I could begin to trace pathways through this research. To recap, some of the issues I had when commencing was the struggle to reconcile the ‘exactedness’ of technology with the poignancies I found in material line and surface. Yet in the examples I uncovered, (such as memento mori), it was the (representational) ‘exactedness’ of the production which I felt worked so strongly toward communicating the poignancy of the subject matter. In unpacking that response I was able to move the research closer toward an articulation of what was at stake in this encounter.

To return to the representational accuracy of the photo, bound up in that veracity is the implication of projected presence, that as a consequence of the recording process some profound fundament of the subject has been reproduced. The mirrored, represented self was (and still is) a loaded subject within European culture; traditionally it is charged with representing the ‘soul’ of the
individual, while the physical constituency is corresponded with the mortal experiences of existence. Convention holds that this was a widely spread conviction, in a critique on ethnographical accounts of the mid to late nineteenth century cultural historian, Marina Warner recounts European observations alleging indigenous beliefs that photographic documentation would result in the (potentially) fatal annex of the soul. While Warner goes on to query whether or not this documented reaction was a transposition, the accounts remain illustrative of these profound associations.

Image 3: Spirit photograph
Jay. J. Hartman, (1875)

Image 4: Hand mit Ringen (Hand with Rings).
Wilhelm Röntgen, (1895)

This implication of threat is not just phenomena noted by the European ethnographer. Literary theorist and philosopher, Roland Barthes likewise associates the photographic double with death. Its spectral qualities are alluded to in the description he provides of the encounter between himself and photo, “What I see has been here, in this place which extends between infinity and the subject….it has been here, and yet is immediately separated; it has been absolutely, irrefutably present, and yet already deferred”. Slippages are occurring in the act of recording the self. The camera is bringing into being an uncanny register, a
spectral trace which heralds its own mortality. Barthes, again, "...observes with horror an anterior future of which death is the stake. By giving me the absolute past of the pose...the photograph tells me death in the future...Whether or not the subject is already dead, every photograph is this catastrophe". In the above citations Barthes focus is on temporality, and the issues at stake in absence and presence. The observations speak to a represented self lifted from it’s time, a clear and uncanny record which is simultaneously of, and disassociated from, the subjects physical constituency. The photos that fall within these classifications reflect back profound fundaments of the subject’s presence, and the experience of their presence, long after the subject’s absence has been registered. The spectral qualities Barthes observes in his photographic examples recall a practice which emerged around the same time as film and photographic technology: Spirit and physic photography. A custom which developed from the Spiritualist movement established around the mid 1800s. Spirit photography sought to record the presence of deceased subjects through the lens of a camera, (see Image 3). Again, the practice recalls the belief that there is some analogous correspondence between the represented, photographic self and fundaments of presence. Returning to Warner, discussing F.W.H. Myers, “coiner of the word ‘telepathy’ in 1882”, she quotes a definition he gives to this manifestation as the, “visible self...caught in physic photography, [is the]...projection...of the double...namely the spirit of a person”.

In his text, Phantom Images and Modern Manifestations, Professor Tom Gunning likewise addresses these themes, writing on spirit photography he cites the “uncanny ability of photography to produce a double of its subject that gave it its unique ontology”. Gunning discusses the relationship between the uncanny, repetition and photography, relating Freud’s description of the uncanny present in the uneasy loop of scenery and experience to that of the unsettling possibilities within photographic repetition. Explaining that while “the double has a long lineage...that predates photography; nonetheless photography furnished a technology which could summon up an uncanny visual experience of doubling”. Gunning then goes on to explore the simulacra associated with new technologies
like photography, examining how the previously unparalleled sensitivities of new technologies might capture traces of ‘spirit doubles’ unseen by the naked eye.

These observations correspond and resonate with further technological developments in optical media emerging around the turn of the century: X-ray imaging, (see Image 4). A technology which could produce photographic documentation of something beyond direct perception, reinforcing the impression that the physical exterior was porous; a surface that could be penetrated and crossed by various mediums. Likewise the daguerreotype, appearing around 1839, was a photographic process employing mirror-polished surfaces to capture latent imagery. In Kuna’s evaluation it was not just the surface of the daguerreotype which resonated with mirroring, but “...its affinities with spectral doubles: the pictures were often stereoscopic and therefore doubled.” These associative relationships between the photographic lens and the spectral self were anticipated by preceding popular cultural entertainments around the late 1800s known as phantasmagoria shows. Defined by the Merriam-Webster dictionary as, “an exhibition of optical effects and illusions” or “a bizarre or fantastic combination, collection, or assemblage”, the performances created the illusion of spectral presences to titillate the public. The routines utilized smoke, projected imagery and mirrors, to create the impression of a destabilised space in which the barriers that separate the real from the ‘unreal’ have disintegrated.

In reviewing alternate definitions of phantasmagoria pertinent to the research, classifications such as the one ascribed by Walter Benjamin in The Arcades Project provide valuable insights. Benjamin cites Wiesengrund, defining the phenomena as “a consumer item in which there is no longer anything that is supposed to remind us how it came into being. It becomes a magical object, insofar as the labor stored up in it comes to seem supernatural and sacred at the very moment when it can no longer be recognized as labor.”
Correspondences in this description appear in David Nye’s examination of the social construction of American technology; particularly in his account of the emotional configurations woven around these objects.

Nye discusses technology in terms of an American understanding which positions natural phenomena and man-made achievements together within a context of ‘sublime’ that both equally invokes awe and terror. This sensibility toward the technological recalls the associations present in Benjamin’s cited description of phantasmagoria, whereby the machine or labor is phenomena that is ‘no longer recognised as’ inert. A perception that still culturally resonates, and will be addressed in the examination of the doubled/mirror other in digital technology later in this chapter.

The presence of the latent other was likewise explored in literature around the time. First published in 1886, the story of Dr. Jeckyll and Mr. Hyde received popular cultural reception. The narrative recounts the tale of a split in identities/selves within a singular constituent being, whereby the life within increasingly disassociates, and forms an autonomy from, the life without. Other resonant cultural artefacts produced around this time were *Books of the Dead*, photographic records of deceased family members who were often posed as if still living. In considering this form of production, in relation to the previous issues addressed, I return to Warner, as she poses the question, “*When someone kisses a face in a photograph, what kind of materiality does the loved one in the image possess?*”16 Reviewing some of the points raised earlier in relation to doubling and self representation, correlations can be identified in the photographic qualities Barthes writes about, which reproduced fundaments of the subject’s presence, and the material life being kissed in the photo to which Warner refers. The highly charged relationships between photographic manifestations of self and selfhood are reinforced further when positioned against an additional account Warner provides of a famous German actor Albert Bassermann successfully suing a photographer for taking a photo of him without consent. To do so, Bassermann invoked “*das Recht am eigenen Bild*”17; drawing
on an analogy first put forward by jurist and historian Hugo Keyssner, that a person’s image is “an intrinsic and inalienable part of personhood.”18 The connection here is made explicit - the represented self is legally acknowledged as an ‘inalienable part of personhood’. The fundamental associations under discussion, which implicate the subject-ego with its representation, are legitimately recognised within this law. Implicit in this assertion, that the stolen image is equated as a threat to the personhood of the constituent, are resonances with the mimetic threat posited by Caillois, as outlined in the introduction.19 The menace in this case arises from the dissolution of image, or, at least, dissolution in the perception of image, which consequently threaten fundamentals of the organism’s identity. This reading finds correspondences in a statement forward by literary scholar Pamela Thurschwell, upon discussing the “permeable, occulted psyche of the Gothic novel”20, whereby she qualifies “one aspect of the Romantic subjectivizing of experience...(is)...the mind’s...capab(ility) of both inhabiting its surroundings and being inhabited by them”.21 A state that, in and of itself, need not necessarily be considered menacing, but, when read within the context of the Gothic, is a condition bound up within horror. The associations and menace implied in these forms of projection and dissolution will be explored in greater detail later in chapter 4. At this stage this chapter will be contained to a discussion examining how digital technology has picked up on and recontextualised the destabilised space of the mirrored|doubled other.

In 1936, philosopher Alfred Ayer forwarded “the only ground I can have for asserting that an object which appears to be a conscious being is not really a conscious being, but only a dummy or a machine, is that it fails to satisfy one of the empirical tests by which the presence or absence of consciousness is determined”.22 This argument preceded tests conducted by Alan Turing in the 1950s into mechanic intelligence. Turing famously introduced the ‘Turing Test’ which proposed to demonstrate the intelligence of machines through a process which simulated conversational dialogue. While the question of artificial intelligence is well beyond the scope of this investigation, what is pertinent in these examples is
the relationships between these contentions and the notion of machinery that is ‘no longer recognised as' inert, and the association between replication and presence.

In turning once more to literary examples, corresponding associations can be found in the works of Philip K. Dick. Notably in one of his most famous novels, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep*, Dick explores what it is to be human by juxtaposing that understanding against the experience of artificial life. In the narrative this takes the form of androids (both human and animal) which appear real but are, in fact, ‘biological machines’. What resonates within this account is, again, the technological duplication of life which, through the process of this replication, queries perceptions of presence.

The following statements will now focus on particularized states within the mediums of film and television used to suggest destabilised surfaces between the real and the spectral, and how this has been reframed through digital production.

As the veracity of the photographic|filmic self image was increasingly encompassed within the digital monitor of computers, so has the associated relationships of personhood and identity likewise been transferred.
Transferences of the destabilised surface can be observed in the mediating examples of film production, in movies such as *Poltergeist* (see Image 5), whereby visual cues, prompted by the depiction of static, signalled to the audience the destabilisation of the screen surface. The portrayals of a smooth, mirror-like, monitor surface being visually broken down recall the visual obscuration of the phastasmorgia show, where smoke, projected imagery and mirrors were used to confuse audience perception. This mode of trigger is then reiterated in movies such as the Japanese *Ring* series (begun in 1998) whereby broadcasting a ‘cursed’ video through the television transmits an uncanny other into the technology. At the points in the film when the other (*Sadako*) uses the screen as a conduit to pass on either a curse or herself, the screen mists with the pixellated affect of static. This effect has been adopted by more recent examples such as *Fear Dot Com* (2002), a horror movie which relates the tale of a ‘snuff site’ in which the end-users who log on are able to select the method of torture the victim will suffer. Unfortunately for them, this also results in their own death within 48 hours (which, one would assume, might impact on its popularity, but doesn’t appear to be a consideration for its clientele). However, in terms of the research, it is significant to watch how the film visually depicts critical points in the narrative. Firstly, as the scenes move from physical areas to virtual space the resolution of the images changes dramatically; menacing scenes, in which the killer is featured talking to his victim as their interaction is streamed across the internet, are heavily pixellated. The computer monitor, in this case, is the conduit for evil, reinforced by the killer’s dialogue as he informs his victim that the web (like the affective photograph) can “receive energy; store energy and send it out...physic energy...stealing your soul”.23 The spectral associations continue; two detectives following the case come across a video tape featuring a recent victim. Viewing the footage they uncover her last hours, which include her staring intensely into a heavily tarnished mirrored surface; being frightened by a strange sound, turning around and, as the video footage ‘flips’ (signalling the slippage between the real and the supernatural), a blurred, spectral face appears to float in space for a second (see Image 6). As the narrative continues the detectives
discover that the deaths of the people who logged onto the site are caused by vengeful spirits.

The themes of represented self, doubled other and technology are revisited again in the film, *White Noise* (2005). The film opens with a quote it attributes to Thomas Edison (1928), “Nobody knows whether our personalities pass on to another existence or sphere, but if we can evolve an instrument so delicate as to be manipulated by our personality as it survives in the next life such an instrument ought to record something”. Implicit in this citation, again, is the assumption that documentation can capture fundamental traces of the subject’s presence. The film then goes on to establish strong visual associations between uncanny, spectral presences and digital technology. Repeatedly through the narrative, as in the case of *Fear Dot Com*, scenes illustrating ‘real life’ are in high resolution, while slippages between the physical existence and the spectral are signalled by static and/or heavy pixellation. Characters in the film implicate digital technology further by recording spectral voices and images on computer hard drives. The scenes in which the characters witness the recordings reinforce the connections between the uncanny and the reflected self by switching immediately from scenes portraying the digital playback of the spectral activity, to reflections of the protagonists in the computer monitor. Further, relationships between uncanny screen static and pixellation are reinforced throughout the film with recurring scenes featuring the character’s silhouette being fragmented through pixellisation (see Image 7).

The examples throughout the movie are numerous, and perhaps do not bear categorical listing in their entirety to illustrate this association any further: Static
and pixellisation are codified as the electrical slippage between the physical world and the spectral realm.


The following projects, therefore, considered the historical correlations between replications of the self and uncanny presence, as outlined by this chapter. Specifically they explored operations which used static and pixelisation to suggest both spectral activity and to infer a deterioration of surface between the self and its reflected latency. The projects worked to assess how static and pixellization performed within a context that was specifically digital (as opposed to production which switched between film and digital environments); examining how those relationships could further advance the research and be integrated into my practice.
Image references:

Image 1: *Francisco José de Goya y Lucientes*, “The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters”. copperplate etching, (1797)

Image 2: *Antique Photo Album*, “Siblings”, post mortem photo, www.boatswain.nl, (accessed 18.08.08)


Image 4: *Wilhelm Röntgen*, “Hand mit Ringen (Hand with Rings)”, (1895)


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1 Barthes, 1982, pp45 & 76

2 Warner, 2006. pp189-191

*Phantasmagoria: The camera steals the soul*. It should be noted, that Warner does critique the reported ethnographical accounts and suggests these encounters are by no means all-inclusive experiences. She provides alternate examples which suggest apathy toward that exchange and questions how much of this reported fear or awe was provoked or projected.

3 Barthes, 1982, p77

4 Ibid, p96

5 The technology of photography manifesting ‘a clear and uncanny [register]...simultaneously of, and disassociated from, the subjects physical constituency’ resonates with the examination Avital Ronnell conducts into the telephone and the impact of its technology. Ronnell explores the telephone as the marker of absence, and examines, amongst other things, the questions it raises regarding the self, other, and systems of transfer. On this point, it is interesting to note the account Ronnell provides of Alexander Graham Bell and Thomas A. Watson intention to use the telephone as a medium through which to contact the deceased. A correspondence emerging in the perceived power of photographic and telephonic technology to capture ephemeras of presence with the respective ‘sensitivities of [their] new technologies’.

6 Jolly, 2006

7 Warner. 2002. *Fantastic metamorphoses, other worlds – ways of telling the self*. p196

8 Ibid., p196


10 Ibid, p45

11 Warner, 2002. p185

13 Ibid

14 Warner, 2006. p189

15 Walter, The Arcades Project. p. 669

16 Warner, 2006. p198

17 Ibid., p198

18 Ibid., p198

19 Caillois, 1987

20 Thurschwell, 2001. p13

21 Ibid. p13


“A mirror neuron is a neuron which fires both when an animal acts and when the animal observes the same action performed by another (especially conspecific) animal. Thus, the neuron "mirrors" the behavior of another animal, as though the observer were itself acting.”
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mirror_neuron, (accessed 13.08.08)

Looks like me – but not me.

This chapter will review the first attempts to incorporate mirrored operations within my practice, and how that objective was developed and progressed through the project research. The research commenced in June 2004 with a project called .@.nimatus. The .@.nimatus project featured a disembodied, web-based entity which would mirror physical response to interactive stimulus. My concern at this stage was to test the affective capacity of mirrored operation within the context of empathetic response. The research explored this through attempts to elicit the mirroring of internalised states (in the person interacting with the work) through the observation of an other’s experience (the other presence in the work).

This process was begun by downloading various textures from an internet website¹ which were selected based on their capacity to illicit a connection with the body|skin of the viewer. After isolating images to work with the textures were then further mediated, again using operations relating to mirroring. The colour of the flesh texture was inverted from a golden brown shade to electric blue hue as a way of recontextualising the visual characteristics in the image to tones more commonly attributed to a digital environment (see Image 1).

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¹Internet website used for downloading textures.
To reaffirm the impression of a physical or living presence, a series of the stills were animated to simulate movements suggestive of a pulse-rate, which was then augmented with the sound of a heartbeat. That audio was synchronised to phases within the project, alternatively speeding up or slowing down as the .@nimatus entity responded to stimulus. This process was instigated as a means to develop a set of interactive relations which generated a sense of physical connection and empathy. In analysis done on the relationships between the heart-rate and audio stimulation it was observed by the medical research team, L. Bernardi, C. Porta and P. Sleight, that the cardiovascular and respiratory response was influenced by the tempo and rhythm present in music. Studies which are anecdotally reaffirmed by the reliance of horror films on sinister music to cue up threat, or to signal imminent danger with a racing heartbeat. Informed by these relations, the use of complementary audial triggers were incorporated and tested as additional operations to facilitate mirrored attunement between conditions in the work and the spectator’s internalised state.

The work then further augmented that connection with a series of actions that would initiate in ‘response’ to viewer interaction with the mouse. In developing and assessing these empathetic triggers I considered their affective capacity in relation to the eerie intensities and menace framed earlier within the research inquiry. When further situated against the gothic implications historically associated with mirroring and optical technologies, it seemed appropriate to stage the interactive phases of the work within the context of horror. Namely, the ‘tell-tale’ heartbeat, as outlined by the references above, and through the depiction of catharsis. The project moved through three separate phases of interaction: Repeatedly running the mouse across the screen (referred to in the project notes as a ‘membrane’) would produce the ‘stimulation’ response which sped up the heart-rate and tissue pulsation (see Image 2).
If the mouse was clicked prior to the ‘stimulation’ response being activated the next ‘behavioural’ phase launched whereby the tissue would appear to ‘bruise’ in response to mouse activity. Further clicking the mouse on the screen at this juncture would steer the work to its denouement: The heart-rate and pulsation increased again and the tissue would begin to deteriorate, with cavities ulcerating its surface (see Image 3).

I sought to further implicate a sense of the uncanny and horror within the work by signalling the presence and demise of the .@nimatus entity with the appearance of static. As outlined in the preceding chapter, films such as Poltergeist employ static as a visual indication of a disturbance between the real and the spectral (based on the effect a poltergeist entity is alleged to have on electrical appliances).
The inclusion of static within the work was to assess its strength as an affective operation to cue up similar deteriorations in the ‘barrier’ between the viewer and the \textit{@nimatus} entity (see Image 5).

While static in the cited \textit{Poltergeist} example is linked with the television, its pixelation and flickering anticipates the flickering and pixelation associated with digital production and the ‘live’ space of the internet. Literary scholar, Jeffrey Weinstock, in his article \textit{Post Identity – Zombie TV} aligns television static with the graininess present in the film stock of home movies, citing this as suggestive of a destabilizing and disintegrating presence, an “\textit{unhomeliness lurking within the home}”.³ Weinstock goes on to examine the depiction of technology in horror
films, describing the media as “porous barrier(s)...delineating the natural and the “unnatural”⁴ He cites both the Night of the Living Dead and Poltergeist in which technology acts as a destabilising presence breaking the boundaries between “the private and the public sphere”⁵; or, on a more fundamental level, the internal and external space.

Equivalencies in the ‘porous barrier’ Weinstock attributes to flickering static and the grainy pixelation of home film footage can be observed in the flickering of digital space. As discussed in chapter 1, perceived latencies within digital technology are informed by historical precedence which associates spectral otherness with optical production. Weinstock identifies parallels in those relationships when he furthers refers to Poltergeist as an example in which the technology of television functions to not only “symbolically dismantle the inside/outside bipolarity but serves as a literal conduit between worlds as well”⁶; a statement which recalls the role of the spiritualist’s photograph, or the smoke and mirrors in the phantasmagoria show.

Marina Warner, in an examination of Lewis Carroll’s “Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There” and the following series “Sylvie”, “Bruno and Sylvie” and “Bruno Concluded” describes the direction of Carroll’s writing as “swift, abrupt jump-cuts, involving transitions in time which increase the unstable sense of mirror worlds”.⁷
Again, in this description of the fluctuating mirror space are parallels with the site of the flickering digital. As noted earlier, the .@nimatus project was designed as a web entity; this decision was included within the design process as a means of testing the correspondences between the mirror and the digital space. In developing this proposition the research referred to Dollyoko⁹, a collaborative “hauntonology”⁹ by Francesca da Rimini, Ricardo Dominguez, and Michael Grimm, as an illustrative case which engages with the internet’s spectral possibilities. The ‘ghost’¹⁰ space of Dollyoko summons associations between technology and spectral presence through the creation of a hypertext (in combination with ‘refolds’ to three other sites) which emerge as the end-user clicks on links both highlighted and ‘latent’ within the pages of the website. As they do so they’re lead through a meandering and progressively menacing story in which the spectre of death and sexual violence is increasingly invoked. The narrative arcs in the work are not necessarily clear and, significantly, abrupt jumps occur in a manner which finds equivalencies in the sense of destabilisation Warner assigns to Lewis Carroll’s writing. By situating the narrative on the internet the text assumes a sense of spatiality (the story is progressed only by moving through the site), but it is a shifting, unreliable one. The idea of destabilised sites of interaction was an affect I was eager to incorporate in .@nimatus. As previously described, the interactive phases of the work were designed to shift depending on the order of the end-user’s actions. A set up informed by shifting links and narrative running through the Dollyoko site. Again, these operations were explored as a way of reaffirming the uncanny implications in the static opening and closing the project; that is, that the static signalled the disintegration of the barrier separating the real and the ‘unreal’, after which the sites and paths of interaction would no longer be clear.

Image 7: Dollyoko, Da Rimini, Dominguez and Grimm, (1997)
This first investigatory model served as a launching point for the research to establish a project framework that could begin to form mirrored compositional operations which had specific relevancies to optical media.

While the *Dollyoko* site was useful as a site of reference for the *@.nimatus* project, in hindsight researching artists such as Patricia Piccinini and Rafael Lozano-Hemmer might have provided valuable insights into the construction of virtualised entities whose appearance and interactivity extend empathetic and/or affective invitations toward the spectator.

In describing the work of Piccinini, Juliana Edberg applies the term ‘*virtuality*’, stating it “suggests something that exists in its own right which: 1. possesses force or power; 2. is essential nature and being, apart from external form or embodiment; 3. has a potentiality. *The reality of Piccinini’s works are inherent. They are their own life force, but one which we recognise and empathise with*.\(^{11}\)

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In pursuing lines of research which incorporate the replication and mirroring of subjective experience this citation would have been useful to position against the projections of internalised self engaged through the Rorschach series of mirrored inkblots.
To refer to some of the more contemporary thought within this domain, “accordingly, to make an experience creative, one cannot be merely a mirror that reflects the image cast upon it; rather, one’s own experiences must be aroused and then merge with the object of experience. Without this personal, subjective element, the object is reproduced, not experience”.  

The latter part of this citation suggests to me where, perhaps, weak points in the project may have lain. Unintentionally, a large proportion of the work focussed on the reproduction of a life-like object|entity, and allusions to the spectral and horror. The work could have benefited from further research on modes of relational stimuli which encompass (rather than deter). As illustrated by the focus of Edberg's critique on Piccinini’s work, @nimatus required an execution which communicated the entity's ‘potentiality’, and further interactive opportunities to share that capacity with the viewer.

Referring to Lozano-Hemmer’s work ‘Shadow Box’ it is possible to observe examples of how this interactivity might have been executed more successfully. There are a series of eight pieces in total in this work, many of which are triggered by the presence or shadow of the viewer. Importantly, the sort of activity triggered invites a highly personalised and intimate experience of that space. This is manifested variously by: Redirecting the gaze of the viewer back upon themselves, as demonstrated in ‘Eye Contact : Shadow Box 1’; filling the viewer’s silhouette with personalised adjectives in the third person, as
manifested by ‘Third Person : Shadow Box 2’, or, alternatively, imbuing the viewer silhouette with thousands of videos of couples kissing, ’Make Out : Shadow Box 8’. While unable to incorporate more empathetic, subjective elements within the work, .@.nimatus did, however, pursue a range of compositional propositions: As a method of image mediation, as a replication of physical experience, as a condition of interactivity and as a destabilising conduit which disorients ‘inside/outside’ bipolarities. The project was primarily an exploration of ideas in which the investigative process itself was more significant to the research development than a follow-through to completion. It formed an important first step in preparing the substratum through which following project work could be directed.
Image & video references:
Image 8: Patricia Piccinini The Young Family, (2003)

2 Bernardi, Porta, Sleight. 2006
3 Weinstock, 1999 p4
4 Ibid, p17
5 Ibid, p3
6 Ibid, p10
7 Warner, 2006 p207
10 Ibid.
13 As the research began to resolve, a ‘Rorschachian’ approach to producing mirrored composition did begin to (unintentionally) surface within the work (see Chapter 4, pg 59). Perhaps unsurprisingly, this produced the most successful pieces in this series, largely because, in using that approach, a ‘potentiality’ was able to be visually communicated through the composition.
Chapter 3: The Haunted Reflection

“*The new optical means of conjuring up the spirit doubles of someone who was not there, but only appeared to be, informs the imagery of the haunted self in fiction that stages the drama of the doppelgänger, and struggles with its external or internal reality*”

*Marina Warner, Fantastic Metamorphoses, Other Worlds*

“She sometimes the reflection is more present than the thing being reflected”

*Jim Jarmusch, The Limits of Control, (2009)*

**Looks like me – but not me**

Chapter 2 reviewed the first in-roads into the project research largely by examining how the research approached mirroring as an empathetic interaction with an uncanny other. This chapter reviews the second project to emerge from the research, *[un].site*, which picked up on the outcomes generated by *@.nimatus* and further explored and articulated the dynamics at work in those issues, specifically by investigating the interaction as a form of composed exchange between self and the mirror image, both in the work’s content and curation.

With regard to the former, *[un].site’s* narrative tested the spectral associations raised in chapter 1 which implicate the mirrored, represented self with the soul, and the projection of presence, and additionally continued the research’s prior proposition exploring the mirror|screen as a destabilising conduit. These dynamics were tested out in a filmic sequence that played across parallel screens. The narrative opened by depicting a subject (‘Self’) projecting their reflection|shadow onto a second screen, which functioned as the ‘mirrored’ surface (see Image 1).

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As the work progressed changes to the ‘mirrored’ screen (indicated, as with the .@.nimatus project, through its surface disturbance) transform it from ‘mirror’ into uncanny conduit drawing in latencies from the ‘Self’. As a consequence of this altered form of projection, the ‘mirrored self’ is transformed into an ‘uncanny double’, causing a crisis in the synthesis of the ‘Self’.

In relation to the latter, the research conducted through the .[un].site project initiated a series of curatorial prototyping and testing which extended throughout the course of the investigation.

As stated above, chapter 1 forwards a case which implicates the mirrored, represented self with the projection of presence and agency. In the previous .@.nimatus project these uncanny and spectral associations were further extended through mirrored relational dynamics which referenced the gothic and horror. This was continued in the .[un].site project. Pertinent examples in literature appear in Oscar Wilde’s Picture of Dorian Gray, which recounts the tale of a beautiful young man who sells his soul to ensure a portrait of him ages in his place. In discussing this work, academic Dr. Elana Gomel remarks upon the connection between the “Lacanian notion of the mirror stage” and the character ‘Dorian’ that identifies “with his own “ideal self,” presented to him by the painting. That self is both unified and incorporeal, free from the gross materiality of the body and the instability of the human psyche”. What is interesting here is the intertwining of an ‘ideal, incorporeal self’ with gothic horror. In the following production cited, the relationship between the ‘reflected, incorporeal self’ and horror is even more explicit. The examples depict mirrors and reflections in which the qualities of ‘ideality’ and ‘incorporeality’ are inverted; the act of reflection is nighmarish, and either the harbinger or system of transfer for gross materiality.

In series such as the Candyman the idea of a mirrored surface as an uncanny conduit is a key element in its narrative: The ghost|killer appears only if the characters gaze at their mirrored reflection and repeat his name six times (see Image 2).
The mirror is transformed by this invocation and becomes a conduit through which the ghost|killer can cross, a shift signalled by the monster’s appearance in the place of their reflection. A variation of this can be observed in David Lynch’s *Twin Peak* TV series, in which the mirror acts as a divination tool revealing the external agencies possessing other characters’ souls (see Image 3). Likewise, the use of mirroring as an affective trigger, both visually and as an inferred relational dynamic, can be observed in films such as Michael Powell’s *Peeping Tom*, in which the female victims are forced to watch themselves expire as they are murdered, and in the audience implication suggested through subjective camera work used to “establish identification with...(the) killer”\(^5\). These triggers are also apparent in promotional posters such as the example below which depicts a terrified subject directing their gaze squarely at the spectator.
In the example depicted by image 4 the operation works as a two-fold process. The extreme close-up on the expression of the subject encourages an empathetic response to their predicament, while it situates the spectator in the position of ‘monster’, obliging a visual complicity with the horror about to be enacted. The broad range of menacing connotations the horror genre enacts around mirroring|projection (of self) significantly informed how I approached developing the compositional operations within this stage of the research process. Horror and menace were visually integrated into the .[un].site project through the suggestion of blood at the top of the image frame, and through the gore on the face of the 'double|reflected' other, (refer image 6).

The project also sought to replicate framing the ‘viewer-as-monster’ through the direction of the subject’s expression, (refer to images 5 & 7).

Returning to the opening statement, .[un].site was particularly concerned with articulating the uncanny exchange between the self and reflection through the depiction of a self disunified through mirroring processes.
It approached this objective by investigating variations within that relationship through which the project’s mirrored operations were developed in response. As stated, it continued the examinations begun by .@.nimatus exploring the mirrored surface as a destabilised site where perceptions of the internal and the external are ambiguous. This was similarly realised through developments in the work’s visual narrative which depicted disturbances in the ‘mirrored’ surface as a means of suggesting the presence of the uncanny (see Image 8).

Image 8: Stills depicting undulating ‘mirror’ screen from .[un].site footage, 2004

.@.nimatus, explored mirroring and mirrored operation within the context of the digital, as such the presence of the uncanny was signalled by cues specific to that environment (eg., static). In .[un].site. the research more literally sought to diagram uncanny dynamics between the self and the mirrored reflection. Consequently, the approach to the generation of these operations had to consider the disturbances within the context of glass. Therefore, the indicators signalling the slippages between the real and unreal manifested in the work as rippling surface undulations, serving to cue up the next stage in the narrative’s progression: The transformation of the ‘mirrored self’ into uncanny double.

Returning, again, to the discussion in the chapter 1, profound associations still exist in European superstition which link mirroring and replication with the projection of internal agency. Bound up in the act of mirroring (or in any minutely accurate representation of self) is the suggestion of replicated presence. An implication recalled by the narrative of the doppelgänger, or in more contemporary treatments such as the examples cited on page 49. .[un].site sought
to incorporate this implication within the work by approaching the generation of a reflection as an act which produces an other, latent self. In approaching the design of this uncanny reflection the process was initiated with a return to an image I had produced some years back, (refer image 5).

"...the metamorphic beings who issue from you, or whom you project or somehow generate, may be unruly, unbidden, disobedient selves inside you whom you do not know, do not own, and cannot keep in check". Marina Warner, 2002

My intention was to expand this stage of the investigation from the relational tests begun in .@nimatus by examining mirrored interactions in which the reflected subject is more explicitly human in appearance. As in the case of the surface disturbance referred to earlier, the research addressed the composition of this subject considering it from within the context of its glass (mirror) environment and as an evident trace of the ‘Self’. In relation to the former, the concern, (again, as with .@nimatus.), was to engage the uncanny capacities of the media while incorporating characteristics specific to it into the subject. As discussed in chapter 2, the environment .@nimatus was situated in was digital, so characteristics like the subject’s flesh colour were altered to the bluish tones of a digital landscape. I referred back to this compositional process when designing the uncanny ‘mirrored self’ of the .[un].site project so it enfolded qualities within its composition resonant with a mirror-like surface. This was achieved through visual operations which implied a like but deferred double, running the original image of the ‘Self’ through various editing suites until it’s composition connoted qualities of both transparency and obscurity.6
To further implicate difference between the ‘Self’ and its uncanny double the research considered the double as a divergent replication: Like in appearance, but deviating in characteristics and behaviour.

A significant result that emerged as an outcome of the composition process was a decreasing perceptual differentiation between the character and its environment. As the compositional development of the mirrored self advanced it progressively merged within the environment it was situated; recalling the dissolution of spatial conditions Roger Caillois ascribed to mimetic threat, as the vertical and horizontal dihedrals of representation locating the subject at a distinct point in space are perceptually, gradually dissolved.\(^7\)

While the ‘mirrored self’ retained a distinguishable outline its volume was rendered largely ambiguous. A marked development from the early attempts at generating this character (see Image 10). The implied ambiguity in the spatial coordinates occupied by the ‘mirrored self’ in turn fed the narrative arc so that the altered appearance of the ‘mirrored self’ was yet another indication of uncanny transformation. To further promote the suggestion of a destabilised mirrored space the work added scenes in which the altered ‘reflection’ (uncanny double) would cross from the space of the ‘mirror’ to the space of the ‘Self’, (see Image 11). Once again, these operations sought to imply the ‘mirror’ as a conduit to the real and the unreal.
The .[un].site project marked the first of the works to be exhibited, (LOOP bar, Melbourne, November 2004). Various installative possibilities were diagrammed (see image 14) in the attempt to identify a solution which allowed for a paralleled screen to screen interaction to take place within the specific capabilities of the gallery space. The work was eventually exhibited based on proposition a) below as the model which best incorporated these considerations and worked within the capacity of LOOP’s gallery space.

The process of developing this project significantly informed my understanding of the role of relational dynamics, compositional operations and context in my work, by requiring me to ‘stage’ the dynamics between the self and the mirrored other. As such, the .[un].site project played a critical role in advancing the investigation as a whole. At the on-set of the project investigation the initial approach had been to diagram issues in the relational dynamics between the subject and mirrored self. The operations which emerged from that process were increasingly concerned with the conditions at the surface of self representation. Specifically, treatments such as graininess, static, pixellization and undulations
which visually ‘broke up’ the surface suggesting a destabilisation in the reflected\representational plane and the identity therein. Bound up in the destabilisation of the represented self are the implications of derealization and depersonalization as the parameters which visually define the self are perceptually disintegrated. It was largely through staging the interactions between mirror-self and subject in .[un].site, that I came to realise how mirroring was implicit to the relations being enacted in the first project, and identify the issues at stake within that exchange. The process of testing the doppelgänger narrative produced a more resolved compositional approach that considered how mirrored self|selves might work to destabilise the identity. The ‘reflection|doubled other’ in .[un].site tested a proposition first presented in the introduction’s outline discussing the mirror phase. The project considered the simultaneous separation implied as integration occurs between the physical sense of identity with the represented image. Framed within the context of the doppelgänger, .[un].site took the idea of the mirrored self and assigned to it an uncanny autonomy, testing how this might work to destabilise the synthesis of identity. Through the work I did on developing these relationships within .[un].site correspondences began to emerge between the doubled other who destabilises identity and the derealization and depersonalization process enacted through Caillois’ mimetic crisis. To recap, Caillois forwards a case which reads mimesis as a disturbance in the perception of distinction between the organism and its environment. He corresponds this pathology to examples of mental disorder within schizophrenia in which the sufferer experiences a “depersonalization (through an) assimilation to space.”\footnote{The breakdown that occurs in the mimetic’s identity as the perception of it’s distinction is deteriorated is echoed by the drama of the doppelgänger; treated in .[un].site as a force which destabilises the distinct, constituent identity.} The first two projects, .@nimatus. and .[un].site, investigated the affective intensities present in the doubled other that ‘looks like me but is not me’. Inferred in that approach is the recognition of an other external and divergent from the parameters defined as ‘I’. The process of working through those issues
opened the research to consider mirroring as an act which obscures rather than defines. In the case of the mimetic organism, mirroring (of environment, appearance and/or behaviour) is enacted to obscure identity. As the research developed further the investigation into mirrored operations which disintegrate rather than reaffirm the identity advanced from the context of the uncanny double: looks like me but not me; into the next phase of investigation, examining mirroring as an instrument of dissolution (spatial and perceptual): not like me but is me.
Image references:


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1 Warner, 2002. p198
The citation refers to the connection Warner draws between double and shadow in reference to J. G. Frazer’s interest in “magic and demons and altered states of mind” she refers to a questionnaire Frazer published in 1907: “The questions he put, for example, assume that this international survey will discover variations on metamorphosis; they are framed within an episteme that takes soul migration and spirit possession for granted, that presumes the power of objects to trap doubles, the existence of evil shadow selves and doppelgängers. For example, he asked his informants to inquire:

Does [the soul] resemble a shadow, a reflection, a breath or what?
and
....Do human souls transmigrate into animals, plants, etc?”

2 a. Warner, 2002. p166
Warner posits that associations between the ghostly other and mirroring are historically bound up “...in the figure of the double through the deep association of the devil with conjuring illusion”.

b. Warner, 2006. p174
These highly charged superstitions, associating replication and mirroring with projection of internal agency, are reiterated in practices Kuna recounts across counties as diverse as Scotland, Germany and Italy, in which mirrors are still “turned to the wall after a death, [and] window panes draped in mourning cloths” to both protect the “soul of the departed [becoming] trapped” and “so that the survivors might not see themselves reflected so soon [in case] this too [implicates] their souls.”


Chapman. *Peeping Tom: An Introduction*. 2010,  

The research sought to manifest these qualities in the appearance of the mirrored subject as a reference to the connections Vidler makes between transparency, opacity and reflectivity,  
"*For it is in the intimate associations of the two [transparency and obscurity], their uncanny ability to slip from one to the other, that the sublime as instrument of fear retains its hold*".

Caillois, 1987. p70

Ibid, p72
“It is with represented space that the drama becomes specific, since the living creature, the organism, is no longer the origin of the coordinates, but a point among others; it is dispossessed of its privilege and literally no longer knows where to place itself”
Roger Caillois, *Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia*

**Not like me – but is me**

The next project, *labyrinth*, tested another kind of mirroring operation, where I began to consider the perceptual slippages that occur as the mimetic organism ‘mirrors’ its environment, approaching this again by using mirrored operation to generate difference. This method was a continuation of the operational processes initiated and developed through the .@nimatus. and .[un].site projects. In the first instance, the project .@nimatus., mirrored operations were used to generate a ‘like/unlike’ entity. That is, an entity which appeared to share visual characteristics with flesh but from within the disembodied environment of the internet,(see image 1).

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Image 1: .@nimatus project, 2004
In the second case, .[un].site, mirrored operations were used to diagram the relational dynamics between a ‘Self’ and ‘reflection’. Mirrored difference informed how the development of that relationship unfolded, as the ‘reflection’ became an uncanny double (doppelgänger); further shaping how the appearance of the reflection was transformed. To recap, the uncanny double’s composition was achieved by running the original image through editing suites until it took on a ‘like but deferred’ appearance, (see image 2).

In the case of the .labyrinth. project mirrored operation was again used to generate difference, but this time within the context of mimesis. Chapter 1 discussed how destabilised surfaces are commonly invoked to allude to a conduit which permits slippages between the real and the unreal; the spectral and uncanny (see images 3-6).
In .@nimatus. the uncanny presence of a digital entity mirroring flesh was signalled through the appearance of static, (see image 7). In [un].site the presence of the uncanny (reflection to doppelgänger) was inferred by an undulating screen, (see image 8).

In the .labyrinth. project series disparities in the visual fields became the way to imply uncanny presence, in this case one concealed within the composition of the image itself (see images 9 & 10). I explored the use of asymmetries within acts of mirrored operation, developing ways to destabilise the ‘fidelity’ of the mirrored image and introduce an implied ambiguity in a related but different way to .@nimatus. and [un].site.
This form of destabilised surface emerged as I considered Caillois’ mimetic dilemma against an encounter with the *Liquid Green* series of works done by the artist Janet Laurence. Laurence had taken a series of photographs of the *Scented Rose Garden* in Tasmania and transformed the images into labyrinthine structures by printing the photos (on Duraclear), and overlapping them to suggest slippages occurring within the visual depths (see image 11).

In an interview with Denise Salvestro, Laurence spoke of her interest in exploring the “*experiential language of art* (investigating) *how...our whole body experiences a space*”.¹ Likewise, Laurence was interested in engaging with qualities of translucence, transparency and reflectivity. From this point, however, her work departs from the encounters I was seeking to construct. Laurence’s concern was to explore the spatial encounters in her work with a holistic approach, a framework in which distinct parts are defined by their interdependence and
functional relationship to one another. The work then spoke to an integration of discrete parts. By contrast, the research I've conducted has been concerned with fundamental fragmentations in the constituency. Each project has, to varying degrees, explored acts of division in the relationship between the represented and physical self.

Nonetheless, the visual composition and labyrinthine space realised within Laurence's work were valuable points of reference when seeking to create similar senses of spatial ambiguities within the composition of images.

Via deliberating on the methods Laurence adopted the previous process I had assumed as an approach to manifest mirrored relations within the work underwent a significant shift. In both .@nimatus. and .[un].site mirroring is enacted through two interacting parties (subject and mirrored self) within the composition of the work as a whole. By juxtaposing Caillois' mimetic dilemma with Laurence’s Liquid Green series an operation emerged through which mirrored relations could be folded within the image itself.

The project development began with a series of photos shot around the Carlton Gardens. Particularly evocative images within the series were selected and the process of mediation began, taking cues from Laurence’s use of the labyrinthine structure as a way of engaging an affective sense of spatiality, variously testing that principal through a range of operational approaches within the composition (see images 12-14).
The objective at this stage was to test visual and installative operations that inferred a destabilised reflected\representational plane within the work. Again, informed by the perceptual slippages occurring in the *GreenSpace* series, the aim was to realise this within the work by producing a labyrinthine artefact. A series of consultations with professional screen and graphic printer Dale Cornell were conducted, who advised printing the work on semi-translucent cotton-gauze which would both allow scope to experiment with gradients of the image’s opacity|fidelity, and realise a large-scale installation within the project’s budget constraints. Image 12 was selected as the compositional base through which to develop the research. As we began work testing its composition along a length of fabric the first of what became a series of production issues emerged from the process. Through the test prints it became evident that the original image selected would not consistently produce an unbroken visual field because the mirrored operation was not extended across the entire pictorial frame.
To address this issue the operation was extended until it created an image which could be repeated indefinitely (see image 15). This produced a significant change in the original work, advancing the initial mirrored operation into a far more resolved compositional structure.

The next issue to emerge at this stage of the project development related to the scale of the installation. In order to create the illusion of a labyrinthine environment within the gallery space the image had to be repeated across 23 feet of fabric. A work of that size meant it was too big to be run through conventional machinery and therefore had to be produced manually. The physical demands required in getting the ink consistently screened across the material, and thus the rendering of the image’s detail, were logistically difficult and compromised the effect of the compositional operations.
As stated earlier, the suggestion of uncanny presence within the composition relied on evident disparities within the visual field. When the clarity of that was compromised the effect was likewise diminished.

Likewise, the experiments conducted with the opacity/fidelity of the image within the material were largely unsuccessful. My original intention in using a semi-translucent fabric had been to hang the work in a labyrinthine structure so the image was folded back upon itself and lit at various points within the space. The aim was to create shifts occurring within the visual depths, similar to the effects captured by Laurence's *GreenSpace No. 3* (see image 11). However, that decision worked counter again to the clear detection of disparities within the visual field, the operational element which formed the base of the work's composition and its affective capacity (see image 17). The lack of resolution in producing this work as an artefact and identifying a successful installation method lead to a series of tests investigating alternative prototypes (see image 18).
As this stage of the research progressed it became evident that the installation of the work should more rigorously engage with the potential of its composition. I turned back to more closely consider specific elements at work within the ‘mimetic’ approach I had taken to the mirrored operations to see if I could identify and further articulate those elements through the work’s curation. I downloaded a number of textures from the internet, both artificial and organic, as test subjects, and then mediated them using the same compositional process employed in the creation of the *labyrinth* image, using mirroring to create disparities across the visual field to suggest uncanny presence, (see images 19 & 20).

I additionally contrasted the mirrored operation in the images I had generated against mirroring used to create unified symmetries within the design. The latter appeared to generate a more inert patterning and flattening of surface, (see image 21); a distinction that suggested to me that mirrored composition could be approached as either an ‘*active’* or ‘*passive’* operation.
This development led to a deeper investigation of the correspondences between the ambiguous outlines enacted by Caillois’ mimetic organism, as it’s silhouette and the environment are perceptually merged, and the ambiguities suggested through disparities in the visual fields of the *labyrinth*. series of images.

Anthropology scholar, Michael T. Taussig quotes Hegel in *Mimesis and Alterity*, as observing the mimetic surface as a “…sensate skin (which) both actualize(s) and break(s) down”⁴ a description which recalls the destabilisation and "inside/outside bipolarities"⁵ of the mirrored surfaces explored within the previous projects. It is both an actualization of its surrounding (Caillois likens the act to a form of 3D photography⁶) and dissolution of subjective identity. In the mimesis of Taussig and Caillois, as the represented self mirrors its environment internalised fundaments of selfhood are likewise altered. Again, equivalencies of the profound connection between self-hood and self-image can be drawn from the precedence cited in chapter 1 in which Albert Bassermann successfully won a legal case based on the premise that the image is a fundamental part of personhood and should not be ‘taken’ without consent. These issues became significant to the project work in its articulation of relationships between replication and dissolution.

A series of tests run in the months following the exhibition at BUS provided valuable insights in resolving some of the installation issues the projects had encountered to date (see appendix). The images used as test subjects were projected across a range of surfaces, both flat and extruded. The tests reaffirmed that in order to engage latencies within the composition detail the installation had to rigorously maintain the clarity of the visual field, and be installed in a way that assisted the field to merge within that space.

The *labyrinth*. project was then further tested through an additional exhibition of the work in a group show, *Room Service* at the Carlton Hotel galleries|studios in August 2007. In this instance, the approach to the second iteration of the project actively sought to preserve the clarity of the composition by digitally printing the
image across large reams of paper (approximately 15 metres in length and 1.70 cms in height), and did not attempt to materially realise a labyrinthine artefact, instead focussing on preserving an unbroken visual field within the space, by covering the pre-existing dimensions of the room with the print, (see images 22 & 23).

Image 22: Room Service Exhibition, Carlton Hotel Studios, 2007

Image 23: Labyrinth project, promotional still, Carlton Hotel Studios, 2007
This approach realised my aim of suggesting a destabilised surface concealing a latent presence far more successfully. Following this the work was invited to exhibit in a second group show, *Yellow Brick Road* at the Greens-Wood Gallery in South Melbourne (see Image 24).

In this instance, I was commissioned by the gallery to produce two additional pieces for the exhibition. Again, to generate the work mirrored operations were used to create disparities within the visual field which were then produced as large-scale digital prints. The first of these, *the enchanted cornfield*. was 2.30 metres in width and 85 cms in height, (see image 25). The second, *the emerald city* was 1.30 metres in width and 1.90 metres in height, (see image 26).

Being able to produce two subsequent pieces that developed on the *Labyrinth* project helped further refine my initial aim of extending affective invitations through mirrored operation. It was through the reiterations undertaken in these
projects that I felt these aims had been largely reconciled within my practice. As discussed, this was dependant on developing techniques to produce and install the work that worked with rather than against the composition of that image.

By the conclusion of this phase in the research process two chief approaches had been outlined and investigated as affective propositions based within mirrored composition. Importantly, both methods examined mirroring as an act which destabilises rather than affirms identity.

The first, "looks like me but is not me" explored mirrored operations as a way to suggest destabilised surfaces through which derealising latencies are revealed.

The second “not like me but is me” explored mirrored operations as a way to suggest destabilised surfaces through which derealised latencies are concealed.

I’m reaching the end of a long journey. As soon as I’m able I leap out and race toward home. The fresh garden air replaces the stale smells of the car; there is still a few dappled hours of the day left before it gets dark, and I can’t wait to retreat into the private pre-pubescent world of my bedroom. But, as I rush up toward the corridor leading to room, standing before the entrance is a strange, eerie figure
that has my face. This other seems to have been waiting for me and is standing very still, watching me with a terrible smile. I freeze in my tracks, aware on a very basic, visceral level that something is horribly wrong, but am at a complete loss at what to do. The other me continues to smile terribly and begins walking toward me in a very slow, deliberate manner. I'm aware that this is being done with sinister intent, but am paralysed by the situation's escalating, tacit threat and my fear. I wake up.

This juncture it would perhaps be a good point to return to this dream. This nightmare recurred for nearly a year until I was finally able to conquer my fear enough to make it through to the end. I am still stuck in a scenario in which the terrible other comes toward me, but for the first time I notice that as the other approaches she gets smaller and smaller. I watch her get closer and closer until she is finally standing in front of me, but by this time she has shrunk to the size of a Barbie doll. I reach down, barely registering the expression on her now tiny face, and put her safely in my back pocket.

I wake up, and never have the dream again.

In the process of working through some of the cultural associations and renarrations of the relationships between mirroring and menace I was able to identify affective correspondences within my own experience. The project testing, research artefacts and realised works that emerged from this investigation then provided the means to develop compositional operations and curatorial processes through which I could communicate this understanding, and find methods which infused these intense moments of felt experience within digital production.
Image references:

Image 3: Jay. J. Hartman, "Spirit photograph", (1875)
Image 8: Romaine Logere, ".[un].site.", (2004)
Image 9: Romaine Logere, "labyrinth.", (2005)
Image 10: Romaine Logere, "the enchanted cornfield.", (2007)
Image 15: Romaine Logere, "labyrinth.", (2005)
Image 17: Romaine Logere, "labyrinth. documentation” - BUS gallery, (2005)
Image 25: Romaine Logere, "the enchanted cornfield.", (2007)
Image 26: Romaine Logere, "the emerald city.", (2007)

“The more I started playing with glass, the more it started to interest me as a material that would reflect you the viewer into it and the environment in which it was; The fact that it could be translucent, transparent, reflective,... could represent water, solids, liquid. It is also a material that so much of our world has been built in today - an architectural material. I use it as a medium... I can pour substances over it and you can see their passage, their dispersal, their action”. (accessed 09/03/08)

Cornell, Dale. New Model Beauty Queen: www.nmbq.net. The consultations and production took place over a 4 month period from July-October, 2005 at the New Model Beauty Queen production studio, Fitzroy.


Taussig, M. 1993

Weinstock, 1999 p10

Caillou, R. 1987 p65

“Morphological mimicry could then be, after the fashion of chromatic mimicry, an actual photography, but of the form and the relief, a photography on the level of the object and not on that of the image, a reproduction in three-dimensional space with solids and voids: sculpture-photography or better teleplasty, if one strips the word of any metaphysical content”
Chapter 5: Outcomes+Synthesis

This chapter reflects on the two chief approaches I adopted in considering the affective possibilities within mirrored composition. The research identified and critiqued two primary mirrored operations:

- *not like me but is me*: the role of the doubled other
- *not like me – but is me*: the position of mimetic dilemma

This section will now examine the range of mirrored operations explored in the investigation, reviewing those qualities in the order through which they emerged in the work, and in terms of the role their affective associations played in the development of the inquiry.

**Mirroring as a psychological narrative|the role of the doubled other**

This research has explored mirroring as a compositional operation I could incorporate within my practice. Within the first phase of the research the digital was central. Further, the masters positioned the investigation of affective intensities within the context of menace. As such the approach examined the spectral associations of mirroring through the represented other latent within photographic and film technologies. It traced the development of the relationships between this affect and the represented self as it evolved in conjunction with advances in optical media from photographic imagery to the digital monitor. As discussed in Chapter 1, the emergence of photography and film was bound up from its inception with suggestions of the projected double. The productive veracity generated by those media recall the profound associations between reproduction and actualisation. An implication enhanced through the concurrent development of x-ray imaging, a technology which literally manifests artefacts of the imperceptible. These forms of production resonate with the processes at work in archaic Greek principles that align artistic creation with the revelation of presences “*that would otherwise be invisible*”.
Beliefs which reverberate in the spectral latencies that emerge from the relationships between optical media and represented subject, as illustrated by the practice of spirit photography in chapter 1 or the cultural production of films such as *White Noise*. As these forms of representation migrate across to other emerging technologies so too do the gradients of affective intensity in that representation evolve and shift. The project research tested how the suggestions of projected latency associated with both mirroring and representation might be used as compositional operations within the work.

**Mirroring as uncanny conduit |the destabilised|destabilising surface.**

These associations can be observed through compositional operations that suggest a disintegration of the surface separating the real and ‘unreal’. This implication is inferred variously through visual cues specific to the capacities of that media.

In the example above, the conditions are suggested through the doubling of imagery upon a single surface. In examples featuring mirrors in literature and film the surface can either be described as tarnished, or the visual cohesion of the plane is broken down. In filmic instances referred to earlier in Chapter 1, this surface destabilisation is cued through the suggestive flickering of screen static. In later digital production deterioration of surface is intimated through
pixelisation. These antecedents informed the development of the compositional operations tested in the first phase of the project research, .@nimatus. and .[un].site, which respectively employed static and a rolling horizontal screen as compositional operations to suggest a breakdown of the mirrored surface.

**Mirroring as a condition of interactivity|relational dynamics**

Mirrored operations were likewise approached as a form of sensory stimulus which obliges either empathetic or complicit relations. This relationship was explored and tested as an affective device in the development of the initial two projects .@nimatus and .[un].site. In the first project, .@nimatus, empathetic relations were explored through a narrative which depicted a disembodied entity mirroring physical response. In the second project, .[un].site these conditions were further articulated through the staged exchange between a subject and it’s reflection. In addition, .[un].site explored empathic mirroring through implied complicity. The project staged extreme close-ups on the subject to test how an intensified focus on the face and its expression might invite an empathetic response toward the subject’s emotional state (see Image 3).
Mirroring as implication of agency.
The affectivity at work in the destabilisation of mirror (or mirror-like) surfaces implies a latent presence within the interference. As expressed throughout this exegesis, bound up in the replication of self-image is the replication of selfhood, an uncanny double of being; a register which is simultaneously of, and disassociated from, the subjects physical constituency. Breakdowns in the boundaries (mirror|lens|monitor) that distinguish self from replication are suggestive of a deeper dissolution; a potential derealization in which the barrier that distinguishes self from double is no longer assured. The narrative of the doppelgänger reframes that menace; as does cases in both literature and film in which selfhood is threatened with possession by an external agency. All the cited renarrations address the obscuration of boundary formations which cohere identity. In the research these relations were firstly explored within the context of the mirrored other who inhabits a destabilised surface (.@nimatus. and .[un].site), or the mirroring other who becomes a destabilised surface (the .labyrinth. and .enchanted cornfield.).

Mirroring as a spatial consideration.
The investigation included an examination into a number of spatial considerations related to mirroring. It explored the mirror as a conduit between the real and unreal (the natural and the unnatural), using this proposition to inform the narrative driving the projects .@nimatus. and .[un].site. Equally, it was concerned with the implications of fractured identity through which the act of mirroring sets the represented self at a location distinct and separate from the space of the physical self. The research explored that proposition as a condition bound up in the doppelgänger narrative, (many selves present within the one physical constituent), and in accounts of possession (multiple agencies harboured within the one body).
It investigated these multiplicities of self-hood as conditions which fragment the synthesised whole. As the investigation advanced the approach increasingly turned towards mirroring and its relationship with mimesis; specifically, exploring mimesis as a mirrored act which (perceptually) dissolves the self.

The research explored that proposition with compositional operations that used mirroring as a form of obscuration that renders the subject transparent. As that operation was further tested and developed the defined subject prevalent in the first two project works largely disappeared. Presence was instead suggested through asymmetrical elements within the mirrored composition; visual ambiguities which inferred latencies camouflaged within the visual field (see Image 5).

**Installative considerations.**

While the investigation generated four major project works, it also produced a number of research artefacts that played a critical role in developing installative processes as part of the project research. Repeated project testing with research artefacts such as *gargole*, (see appendix, images 11:11.h.) demonstrated that a literal representation of the spatial dynamics at work in mirroring was not necessarily required to invite affective response, and the intensities could be engaged by implicating the issues at stake in compositional operations. That proposition was substantiated through the two different approaches taken toward installing the *labyrinth* piece. In the first attempt the work was produced by screen-printing the image across fabric and constructing a labyrinthine artefact within the gallery space. However, this production method worked counter to the intensities the mirrored operations sought to invoke. The operations within *labyrinth* image relied on the detection of disparities within the composition's visual field. Screen-printing was unable to preserve the fidelity of the image so that effect in that operation was significantly compromised. Likewise, constructing a labyrinthine artefact worked counter the work's
intention of creating an uninterrupted visual plane. The second installation approach was able to resolve this by digitally printing the image, ensuring the detail within the composition was preserved, and hanging the work flat against the existing space so the visual field in the image appeared to merge with the walls, giving the illusion that the destabilised plane within the composition - the barrier between the real and the unreal - was occurring in the space itself.

The importance of the installation rigorously engaging with the issues at stake in the mirrored operation was further affirmed by a round of project testing conducted in February 2007. In this piece, .gargoyle., mirrored operation was not used to create an unbroken visual plane but brought two halves of a textural field together to create a mirrored entity. The work was projected around various points at a test site to assess installation methods that would suggest a sense of latent presence. Through this process I observed that projecting the work flat against the space rendered the composition ‘passive’. However, when the .gargoyle. artefact was positioned against angular extrusions in the space it engaged the centre line in the composition, inferring a skeletal structure and the illusion of ‘liveness’, (see image 4).
As stated in the introduction, the masters research was borne out of a desire to develop affective invitations specifically resonant with digital technology. To do so I chose an operation which held strong affective associations for me: Mirroring. By examining some of the historical and cultural associations bound up in mirroring I was able to construct a framework through which two primary approaches to compositional operations were identified: The mirrored other (looks like me but not me), and the mirroring other (not like me but is me). Both systems renarrate profound moments of lived experience in the development of identity. In relation to the former, the research reinterpreted the mirror stage of infancy in which the mirrored (represented) self is integrated with the physical constituency. The research focused on the implied split between the physical self and the mirrored (represented) self at that stage of development, examining that moment within the context of the doppelgänger and the uncanny other. With regard to the latter, the research explored the mirrored other through speculation on how errors within the mirror stage of infancy might manifest, locating that moment within the drama of Caillois’ mimetic crisis.

**Relevancies**

A well-known professor at RMIT University, when regaled with prospective research inquiries forwarded by post-graduands, would pose the question, ‘so
This seemingly unsympathetic indictment on the investigation was intended to prompt the candidate in question to consider the relevance of their inquiry to the wider community. So, in reflecting on this comment with regard to my own investigation, I forward the following:

As new technologies and transdiciplinarities emerge so do the modes in which affectivities within those media are cultivated. To illustrate by way of recent example, in an exhibition of work installed for the *SPOTS* exhibition run at Postdamer Platz, Berlin, several works were produced to run across a LED media façade spanning the entirety of the building. Recounting how these were received during a visit in October 2008, curator Dr. Andreas Broeckmann identified works which particularly engaged audience response. Of those, he cited Jim Campbell’s *Gait Studies in Low Resolution* (part of the *City Gaze* exhibition) featuring heavily pixelated footage of a figure running as having most intensely engaged audience interest.

In examining the issues at stake behind specific compositional operations, associated cultural connections and the possible moments within lived experience those associations renarrate one can identify affective potentialities which can then be further tested within other alternate media. Through this investigation the research has identified personal moments of affective intensity, developed a resonant compositional approach, investigated historical artefacts that renarrate the affective associations bound up in that operation, then developed a consistent compositional operation which can be used in an informed way in future practice. Through doing so it has demonstrated a means
of approaching that technology and provided a theoretical framework through which further alternate media might be interrogated.
Image references:

Image 5: Romaine Logere, “.the enchanted cornfield.”, (2007)

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1 Potolsky, 2006
Appendices 1.

Artefacts from curatorial project testing

project research artefact 1 |coni.[fur].
This piece was developed around September 2006. The initial image was downloaded from the internet, and mediated using the mirrored operations developed during the latter half of the research. It was run through height-field operations in 3D Studio Max to again explore alternate modes of adapting the image for exhibition. It was run through a series of projection tests on 27 February 2007.
The aim was to work towards modes of installation which would more rigorously engage with the potential of the work’s composition. The following series of curatorial tests reviewed various methods of situating the work within a test site to assess which methods best engaged operations within the composition. It became evident that the projected image worked best when screened against angular or extruding points in the surface, as opposed to the flat or even planes.

3_a. coni.[fur]. 3D image screened along north facing wall of SIAL test space.
3_b. coni.[fur]. 3D image screened along south facing wall of SIAL test space.

4_a. coni.[fur]. 3D image screened along north facing extrusion of SIAL test space.
4_b. coni.[fur]. 3D image screened along north facing extrusion of SIAL test space.

This lead to a series of further tests examining alternate methods of activating operations within the composition. The 3D coni.[fur]. image was screened across an even surface and extruded articles placed at varying points within the composition.
The process was then repeated a number of times with the original 2D *coni.[fur]* image.
The project testing process was then carried across additional research artefacts mediated using the same method.

In the case of *rabbit[fur]*, after the 2D image was run through the 3D height-field operation it was then further mirrored against itself, producing an artefact which went on to become an adjunct piece to the concurrent research projects *labyrinth* and *enchanted cornfield*.
The `.gargoyle.` piece was then likewise run through the same testing process. Firstly projected against the extruded articles; then screened against angular extrusion within the SIAL test space.
Once again it became evident that the image worked best when the centre line of the composition was projected against an angular extrusion.
Shortly after this first series of project tests the work was invited to be included as part of a group exhibition in partnership with a RMIT architecture student, Danny Griffin, who was exhibiting his work the ‘Animal’ pavilion at the 2007 RAIA conference. The pavilion was a deformable structure, made up of a series of converging ‘ribs’ which could be adjusted according to the requirements of the site and/or inhabitants.

12. ‘Animal’ pavilion prototype

The intention was to test potential synergies between the ‘Animal’ pavilion and the .gargoyle. project. The image was projected against the pavilion’s ribs prior to its construction to test the material’s surface, and yielded promising results.

14 .gargoyle. 2D image screened across ‘Animal’ pavilion rib surface.
Unfortunately time constraints in getting the ‘Animal’ pavilion constructed to meet the conference deadlines prevented further testing on-site. This negatively impacted on the work in two ways. Firstly, when the pavilion’s construction was completed the gaps between the intersecting rib infrastructure was considerably increased to evenly distribute the weight of the pavilion as a whole, which meant the surface area to project on was significantly reduced. Secondly, the pavilion was allocated a position in the Melbourne Exhibition Centre which ultimately proved to be too bright to successfully project the work.
Appendices II.

Artefacts from curatorial project testing

Project research artefact 4 | rabbit

15. Both the rabbit and pony artefacts were developed in tandem with the gargoyle image; again using the same mirrored operation to produce the work. The pony artefact was later included as part of the ‘Exquisite Creatures’ exhibition held at the Tape Space Gallery on 05 July 2008.

Project research artefact 5 | pony

16. Again, the work was produced as a large scale digital print, 1.86 metres height and 1.10 metres width.
Glossary of Relevant Terminology

**affect**

/say ə-fēkt'/

v. af-fect-ed, af-fect-ing, af-fects

1. To have an influence on or affect a change in.
2. To attack or infect, as a disease.

n. (āf'ěkt')

1. A feeling or emotion as distinguished from thought, or action.
2. A strong feeling with active consequences.

**agency**

/say ā'jən-sē/

n. pl. a-gen-cies

1. The condition of being in action; operation.
2. The means or mode of acting; instrumentality.
3. A business or service authorized to act for others: an employment agency.
4. An administrative division of a government or international body.

[Medieval Latin agentia, from Latin agēns, agent-, present participle of agere, to do; see agent]

**attunement**

n: being or bringing into harmony; a feeling of being "at one" with another being

**compositional**

/say kŏm'pa-zĭsh'ən/

n.

1. a. The combining of distinct parts or elements to form a whole.
   b. The manner in which such parts are combined or related.
   c. General makeup: the changing composition of the electorate.
   d. The result or product of composing; a mixture or compound.

**conduit**

/say kŏn'dōō-ĭt, -dĭt/

n.
1. A means by which something is transmitted: *an arms dealer who served as a conduit for intelligence data.*

**constituent**

// (say kon-sti-chöö-ant)
adj.

1. Serving as part of a whole; component: *a constituent element.*

**destabilise**

// [say dee-stey-buh-la-hyz]
-verb (used with object), -lized, -liz·ing.
to make unstable; rid of stabilizing attributes

**diagram**

// (say dī'ə-grām‘)
n.

1. A plan, sketch, drawing, or outline designed to demonstrate or explain how something works or to clarify the relationship between the parts of a whole.

**difference**

// (say dif'ə-rənς, dif'ənς) n.

1. The quality or condition of being unlike or dissimilar.
2. 
   a. An instance of disparity or unlikeness.
   b. A degree or amount by which things differ.
   c. A specific point or element that distinguishes one thing from another.

**digital**

// (say dīj'i-tl)

1. *Computer Science* Representing or operating on data or information in numerical form...Modern computers rely on digital processing techniques, in which both data and the instructions for manipulating data are represented as binary numbers.
disembodied

//{(say dīs’ēm-bōd’ē)}

tr.v.

1. To free (the soul or spirit) from the body.
2. To divest of material existence or substance.

dissolution

//{(say dīs’ə-lōō’shən)}
n.

1. Decomposition into fragments or parts; disintegration.
2. Indulgence in sensual pleasures; debauchery.
3. Termination or extinction by disintegration or dispersion: *The dissolution of the empire was remarkably swift.*

dynamic

//{(say dī-nām’ĭk)}
n.

1. An interactive system or process, especially one involving competing or conflicting forces: "the story of a malign dynamic between white prejudice and black autonomy" (Edmund S. Morgan).
2. A force, especially political, social, or psychological: the main dynamic behind the revolution.

demergent

//{(say ĭ-mûr’jənt)}
1. Rising above a surrounding medium, especially a fluid.
2. Arising or occurring unexpectedly: *money laid aside for emergent contingencies.*
3. Demanding prompt action; urgent.
4. Occurring as a consequence; resultant: *economic problems*

dempathy

//{(say ěm’pə-thē)}
n.

1. Identification with and understanding of another's situation, feelings, and motives. See Synonyms at pity.
2. The attribution of one's own feelings to an object.
entity
   //'(say ēn’tē-tē)
 n.  pl. en·ti·ties

1. Something that exists as a particular and discrete unit: Persons and corporations are equivalent entities under the law.

experiential
   //'(say ĭk-spîr’ē-ĕn’shəl)
 adj. Relating to or derived from experience.

felt
   //'(say fělt),
 v.  tr.

1.
   a. To perceive through the sense of touch: feel the velvety smoothness of a peach.
   b. To perceive as a physical sensation: feel a sharp pain; feel the cold.
   c. To touch.
   d. To examine by touching.
   e. To undergo the experience of: felt my interest rising; felt great joy.
   f. To be aware of; sense: felt the anger of the crowd.
   g. To be emotionally affected by: She still feels the loss of her dog.
   h. To be persuaded of (something) on the basis of intuition, emotion, or other indefinite grounds: I feel that what the informant says may well be true.

fidelity
   //'(say fĭ-děl’ĭ-tē, fi-) n.  pl. fi·del·i·ties

1. Exact correspondence with fact or with a given quality, condition, or event; accuracy.
2. The degree to which an electronic system accurately reproduces the sound or image of its input signal.

flux
   //'(say flūks) n.
The lines of force of an electric or magnetic field.

ghost
n.  
1. The spirit of a dead person, especially one believed to appear in bodily likeness to living persons or to haunt former habitats.  
2. The center of spiritual life; the soul.  
3. A demon or spirit.  
4. A returning or haunting memory or image.  
5.  
   a. A slight or faint trace: just a ghost of a smile.  
   b. The tiniest bit: not a ghost of a chance.  
   c. A secondary image on a television or radar screen caused by reflected waves.  
   d. A displaced image in a photograph caused by the optical system of the camera.  
   e. A false spectral line caused by imperfections in the diffraction grating.  
   f. A displaced image in a mirror caused by reflection from the front of the glass.  
   g. A nonexistent publication listed in bibliographies.  
   h. A fictitious employee or business.  
6. A faint, false image, as:  
   a. A secondary image on a television or radar screen caused by reflected waves.  
   b. A displaced image in a photograph caused by the optical system of the camera.  
   c. A false spectral line caused by imperfections in the diffraction grating.  
   d. A displaced image in a mirror caused by reflection from the front of the glass.  

haunt  
//(say hōnt, hŏnt)  
v. tr.  
1. To inhabit, visit, or appear to in the form of a ghost or other supernatural being.  
2. To visit often; frequent: haunted the movie theaters.  
3. To come to the mind of continually; obsess: a riddle that haunted me all morning.  
4. To be continually present in; pervade: the melancholy that haunts the composer’s music.  

ho·lis·tic  
// [ say hō-lis’tik]
1. Of or relating to holism.

   a) Emphasizing the importance of the whole and the interdependence of its parts.
   b) Concerned with wholes rather than analysis or separation into parts: holistic medicine; holistic ecology.

Adjective

emphasizing the organic or functional relation between parts and the whole

identity

// (say ī-dĕn′tĭ-tē)

1. The collective aspect of the set of characteristics by which a thing is definitively recognizable or known: "If the broadcast group is the financial guts of the company, the news division is its public identity" (Bill Powell).
2. The set of behavioral or personal characteristics by which an individual is recognizable as a member of a group.
3. The quality or condition of being the same as something else.
4. The distinct personality of an individual regarded as a persisting entity; individuality.

imitate

// (say ĭm′ĭ-tāt′)

1. To use or follow as a model.
2. a. To copy the actions, appearance, mannerisms, or speech of; mimic: amused friends by imitating the teachers.
   b. To copy or use the style of: brushwork that imitates Rembrandt.
3. To copy exactly; reproduce.
4. To appear like; resemble.

implicate

// (say ĭm′plĬ-kāt′)

1. To involve or connect intimately or incriminatingly: evidence that implicates others in the plot.
2. To have as a consequence or necessary circumstance; imply or entail: His evasiveness implicated complicity.
3. Linguistics To convey, imply, or suggest by implicature.
4. *Archaic* To interweave or entangle; entwine.

**intensity**

\[\text{(say } \text{i}\-\text{n-\text{t}e\text{n}'\text{s-i-t}e}\text{)}\]

n. pl. **intensities**

1. Exceptionally great concentration, power, or force.

**material**

\[\text{(say } \text{m}\-\text{a-ti}\-\text{r-e-}\text{al})\]

n.

1. The substance or substances out of which a thing is or can be made.

**menace**

\[\text{(say } \text{m}\-\text{e-n}i\text{\text{s})}\]

n.

1. a. A possible danger; a threat: the menace of nuclear war.
   b. The act of threatening.

**mimesis**

\[\text{(say } \text{m}\-\text{i-mi}\-\text{s-is, m}\-\text{i-})\]

n.

1. The imitation or representation of aspects of the sensible world, especially human actions, in literature and art.

**mirror**

\[\text{(say } \text{m}\-\text{i-r}\-\text{ar})\]

n.

1. A surface capable of reflecting sufficient undiffused light to form an image of an object placed in front of it. Also called *looking glass*.
2. Something that faithfully reflects or gives a true picture of something else.
3. Something worthy of imitation.

**other**

\[\text{(say } \text{u}\-\text{th}i\text{\text{r}})\]

adj.
1. Different from that or those implied or specified: *Any other person would tell the truth.*
2. Of a different character or quality: "*a strange, other dimension . . . where his powers seemed to fail*" (Lance Morrow).

**porous**

//say pôr'əs, pôr'-

adj.
1. Easily crossed or penetrated.

**presence**

//say prēz'əns

n.
1. The state or fact of being present; current existence or occurrence.
2. Immediate proximity in time or space.
3. A person who is present.
4. A supernatural influence felt to be nearby.

**projection**

//say prə-jēk'shən

n.
1. The act of projecting or the condition of being projected.
2. a. The process of projecting an image onto a screen or other surface for viewing.
   b. An image so projected.
   c. The attribution of one’s own attitudes, feelings, or suppositions to others: "*Even trained anthropologists have been guilty of unconscious projection—of clothing the subjects of their research in theories brought with them into the field*" (Alex Shoumatoff).
   d. The attribution of one’s own attitudes, feelings, or desires to someone or something as a naive or unconscious defense against anxiety or guilt.

**reflection**

//say rĭ-flēk'shən

n.
1. The act of reflecting or the state of being reflected.
2. Something, such as light, radiant heat, sound, or an image, that is reflected.
3. a. Mental concentration; careful consideration.
   b. A thought or an opinion resulting from such consideration.
c. The folding of a membrane from the wall of a cavity over an organ and back to the wall.

d. The folds so made.

4. An indirect expression of censure or discredit: *a reflection on his integrity.*

5. A manifestation or result: *Her achievements are a reflection of her courage.*

**relation**

```plaintext
// (say rĭ-lā′shən)

n.

1. A logical or natural association between two or more things; relevance of one to another;
```

**rep·li·ca·tion**

```plaintext
// (say rěp′lĭ-kā′shən)

1. A fold or a folding back.
2. A reply to an answer; a rejoinder.
3. *Law* The plaintiff's response to the defendant's answer or plea.
4. An echo or reverberation.
5. A copy or reproduction.
6. The act or process of duplicating or reproducing something.
7. *Biology* The process by which genetic material, a single-celled organism, or a virus reproduces or makes a copy of itself: *replication of DNA.*
```

**re·pro·duc·tion**

```plaintext
// (say rē′prŏ-dŭk′shən)

n.

1. The act of reproducing or the condition or process of being reproduced.
2. Something reproduced, especially in the faithfulness of its resemblance to the form and elements of the original: *a fine reproduction of a painting by Matisse.*
```

**representation**

```plaintext
//(say rěp′rĭ-zĕn′-tā′shən, -zən′-)

n.

1. The act of representing or the state of being represented.
2. Something that represents, as an image or likeness of something.
```

**self**

```plaintext
//(say sĕlf)

n.
```
1. The total, essential, or particular being of a person; the individual
2. The essential qualities distinguishing one person from another; individuality
3. One’s consciousness of one’s own being or identity; the ego

**slippage**

// (say slĭp’ĭj)

n.

1. The act or an instance of slipping, especially movement away from an original or secure place.
2. The amount or extent of slipping.
3. A decline in level, performance, or achievement.
4. Loss of motion or power because of slipping.

**spectral**

//(say spēk’trəl)

adj.

1. Of or resembling a specter; ghostly.
2. Of, relating to, or produced by a spectrum.

**synthesis**

//(say sĭn’thî-sîs)

n.  

pl. syn·the·ses (-sēz’)

1.

a. The combining of separate elements or substances to form a coherent whole.

b. The complex whole so formed.

**threat**

//(say thrēt)

n.

1. An expression of an intention to inflict pain, injury, evil, or punishment.
2. An indication of impending danger or harm.
3. One that is regarded as a possible danger; a menace.

**trace**

//(say trās)

n.

1.

a. A visible mark, such as a footprint, made or left by the passage of a person, animal, or thing.
b. Evidence or an indication of the former presence or existence of something; a vestige.

**treatment**  
// (say trē’tmənt)  
n.  
1. The act, manner, or method of handling or dealing with someone or something

**uncanny**  
// (say ŭn-kān’ē)  
adj. un-can·ni·er, un-can·ni·est

1. Peculiarly unsettling, as if of supernatural origin or nature; eerie. See Synonyms at weird.  
2. So keen and perceptive as to seem preternatural.

**unlike**  
// (say ŭn-līk’)  
adj.

1. Not alike; different: For twins, they are very unlike.  
2. Not equal, as in amount.

prep.

1. Different from; not like: She's unlike the rest of her family.  
2. Not typical of: It's unlike him not to call.

**visceral**  
// (say vĭs’ər-əl)  
adj.

1. Relating to, situated in, or affecting the viscera.  
2. Perceived in or as if in the viscera; profound: "The scientific approach to life is not really appropriate to states of visceral anguish" (Anthony Burgess).  
3. Instinctive: visceral needs.
Bibliography


