Mediated Interior: Subjective and Empowering Productions

A project submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Declaration

I certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the author alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the project is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged; and, ethics procedures and guidelines have been followed.

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Complexity And Flux
Abstract

This research investigates interior design through the notion of flux. Rather than considering an interior to be fixed and stable it instead argues that an interior is in continual production through the making of relations the interior co-dependent upon both spatial and temporal conditions encountered.

The term mise-en-scène originating from film and stage disciplines is adopted in relation to interior design. It is understood as a layered and scenic site of material, temporal and virtual conditions. Despite a reliance upon spatial cues and implied narratives the mise-en-scène avoids certain meaning in favour of complexity. Rather than offering up a determined and resolved encounter it instead invites levels of contemplation, speculation and exchange.

This approach emphasises the inhabitant as an involved and performative participant that actively constructs relationships through a process of scenic assemblage. In this way the mediated interior experience is co created by both the spatial and temporal structures of the mise-en-scène and the subjective productions of the participant.

This conceptual framework allows the research to escape the somewhat predictable definition of an interior; i.e. that they reside only within a building or must be spatially constrained or enclosed by walls. Rather more excitingly in this research an interior is understood to potentially occur throughout space flowing into the city as a continuous urban interior.

In this way the urban situation is considered as a broad social and spatial context adopted as a design laboratory for interior investigation. It is accepted as a dense, complex and simultaneous condition, in a way a grand
or continuous mise-en-scène of buildings, programs and events. The inherent idea of mobility becomes a key interest in the work where rational concepts of city space begin to break down at a street level into more fragmented, sequenced and filmic ideas of experience.

The urban situation is recognised as a fascinating collision of the planned institutional structures and the informal lived tactics of the everyday. As the research progresses the interior becomes understood as a critical urban and social tool implicated in the production and exchange of our individual and collective identities.

These ideas upon the interior have been explored through the act of making. Using a method of reflective practice, a series of speculative design projects have been undertaken by the collaborative practice Making Distance consisting of RMIT University academics Roger Kemp and Anthony Fryatt.

The projects have allowed for the exploration of design processes, spatial and temporal conditions, and qualities of experience relevant to interior design. It has enabled the establishment of various design techniques within the work including operative diagrams, fragmented scenography and representational imagery.

These techniques allow the work to simultaneously provide both spatial cues and levels of indeterminacy. Ultimately the PhD argues that these speculative design processes invite a subjective and empowering production of spatial experience. It positions the interior as a critical social tool, a mediator between the self and others.
Openings

The door swung open and revealed the surprisingly obvious: a perfectly empty box. It was a pleasing symmetry of gridded steel section rails overlaid against an odd timber-panelled laminate. Given it was the inside of a truck cargo box, I couldn’t help but think this particular material was rather out of place. 

Anthony Fryatt

The commencement of this research, it could be argued, hinged on this particularly banal, yet oddly significant interior experience. This temporal interior emerged suddenly, the heightened experience lasted but a few seconds, but seven years later I can still recall it clearly. Undoubtedly now, as I reimagine this moment, it has become layered, reassembled and reproduced to suit the present. And yet its qualities seem real enough: framed and now amplified in importance by the circumstances that converged and diverged from this encounter with the back of a three-tonne rental truck.

As it so happened, in that weekend of 2008 the truck was hired to move house. It was a personally significant moment, a happy everyday tale. But the truck was also significant to this research in other ways. That weekend was bracketed by a conversation with Roger Kemp, who is also an interior designer. Late on the Friday afternoon he had suggested we meet the following Monday to discuss a possible project. There was nothing specific, but rather a discussion, a deadline and the idea of collaboration: that we should put together a design proposal for the forthcoming State of Design Festival. Here, a different but also happy tale unfolds. I carried that odd, banal interior experience to that Monday meeting. From the ensuing discussion

1 Anthony Fryatt, Personal notes. (Melbourne: unpublished, 2015)

Image: Empty potential, 3 Tonne 'o' Space
emerged the proposal for the mobile installation 3 Tonne ‘o’ Space the first project of the yet to be formed collaborative practice Making Distance. From these early experiments with the truck and the subsequent projects that unfolded the research trajectories of this work were set.

This briefest of interior experiences could have so easily gone by unnoticed. Surely the pragmatic design process that conceived this truck box could not have anticipated the brief interior experience that surprised me that day? Its everydayness was transformed by its social framing: by everything I carried to it and in turn all that was produced from it.2 I contend that the power of this banal encounter unwittingly encompasses ideas that sit at the heart of this research. Here, I wish to challenge the status of interior design as an activity only concerned with fixed and material space, a situation limited to the inside of things. Further, I argue that an embodied encounter with the material world brings about an interior condition that is equally framed and produced by the social and cultural forces that flow through it.3

This argument is not for a prioritisation of one thing over another, the material over the subjective, but rather a recognition that when both these conditions come together, they actually produce a more useful way of understanding how we perceive and experience interiors: an other place in which the interior plays a mediating role in the production of shared and individual identity.4

This has led to a design approach that is intentionally considered less deterministic and is ultimately more generous. It is a situation which through various disruptions the designer intentionally seeks to activate the inhabitant into the role of the participant: the author of their own performative experience.5 Here, the interior simultaneously becomes both real and fictional, a mediator between the self and others.6

2. See Andrew Blauvelt, Strangely familiar: Design and everyday life. (Minneapolis, MN: Walker Art Center, 2005)


Image left: Abandoned shopping trolley against green screen, The Temperatures Rising 1

Image right: Fragmented ticket counter and urban intersection, The Temperatures Rising 2
Aims, Objectives, Questions

Significantly, this research understands the interior to be in flux, a situation in which an interior experience is co-produced by the inhabitants subjective encounter with the mise-en-scène of actual and virtual conditions. The primary aim of the research is to investigate this understanding of interior through a design and making practice.

In undertaking the research the following objectives were identified:

- Investigate interior design through a material making and drawing practice.
- Consider the role of designer and inhabitant in the production of interior experience.
- Explore how this practice may affect the production of interior experience.
- Consider the potential of interdisciplinary representational methods and techniques to an interior design practice. These include types of drawings, diagrams, graphic systems, models, and still and moving photography.
- Establish and pursue a collaborative interior design practice.

As the research has progressed a number of research questions have persisted:

- How might the adoption of methods from representational disciplines allow for an expanded understanding of interior design as a temporal and mediated condition?
- How might the making of designed artifacts, scenic elements and spatial cues affect an inhabitant’s mediation between the actual and virtual conditions of an interior experience?
- What insights might a collaborative design practice provide to the interests of my individual practice?
- What contribution may the research make to the discipline of interior design?

The Structure Of The Document

This document captures, organises and positions the research undertaken by project during the PhD. Entitled Mediated Interior: Subjective and Empowering Productions it reveals my particular way of thinking about the work of Making Distance. For a different but complementary account of the research read Roger Kemp’s individual document Negotiating Space: a relational approach to interior design.

This document is structured into five parts: The first, Complexity And Flux, situates the research, sets out the methods and introduces the workings of the collaboration. Subsequent chapters then discuss a selection of projects undertaken during the PhD. Each deals with a distinct phase in the research and discusses the development of ideas within the work.

Chapter two Unpacking The Interior, provides account of the projects Tonne ‘o’ Space and Carry On. Both examine the urban condition and are used to establish interior themes and design techniques for the new collaboration.

The third chapter Scenic Productions, discusses the shift of the research into the collaborative film project Motel and the subsequent installation Motel: Time Travel, Distance, Duration. Here the diagram is identified as tool of agency and collaboration. While the film and production studio makes apparent the simultaneous nature of the mise-en-scène and the importance of this term to understanding the production of mediated experience.
The last phase of the projects Performative Participation, Subjective Production is discussed in chapter four. A series of projects Complexity And Fullness, Display Tactics and Quick/Slow Transition are expanded upon to reveal how the technique of diagram and image facilitate performativity and participation in the design process and subsequent reception of the work.

The chapter Closings concludes the document of PhD. It clarifies the interior as a condition of flux brought about through subjective production. The indeterminacy of diagram and image are identified as key design techniques in the collaboration, facilitating exchange and mediation between individuals and the collective other.

In the final conclusions the individual ideas of mediation and negotiation are discussed in relation to the collaborative practice, allowing speculation upon the role and future trajectory of the practice in an international context.

Lastly the appendix provides an illustrated description of the complete list of projects completed during the PhD.
1.2

Backstory
My creative background could be broken down into three discrete but informing phases. First, I studied fine art; second, I practised as a commercial interior designer for several years; and third, I became a lecturer in interior design at RMIT University which is approximately when the work in this PhD commenced. From the first two periods certain themes, methods and techniques emerged that still inform my design practice and contribute to the research.

**Representation**

In the late 1990s I undertook an honours degree in fine art at Staffordshire University. At this time the UK contemporary art context was dominated by the jubilant YBAs: The Young British Artists, a number of whom travelled north from London to lecture or were peers of the academic staff.

The degree provided the freedom to pursue a speculative art practice and it was in these early and formative years that concerns of time and space emerged. This was no doubt fostered by the School of Fine Arts embrace of contemporary media practice and an encouragement to experiment across mediums rather than to commit to specialisms. My focus quickly shifted from painting to print, photography and installation work.

Stoke-on-Trent itself was a proud but dying industrial ceramic city in the north-west of England. This equally shaped the culture of the course, providing a particular and contrasting understanding of place and social narrative compared to London. With the vast number of empty and abandoned sites in the city the potential for working opportunistically within
urban space led me frequently to making in situ. This experience of site and subsequent representation of space became key ideas in the work.

This field of study exposed me to theoretical influences including Jean Baudrillard, Susan Sontag, Roland Barthes and Victor Burgin. It also introduced a diverse array of artists, including those who worked with urban, institutional and political priorities, such as the Situationists, Daniel Buren and Christo and Jean-Claude. Meanwhile, David Hockney’s paintings sparked an interest in photography, which expanded to include the cinematic constructions of Cindy Sherman, Jeff Wall, Thomas Demand and Sam Taylor-Wood. Curiously, I was fascinated with both the almost impenetrable flatness of Bernd and Hilla Becher and the contrasting everyday immersion of William Eggleston’s photographs. Julian Opie and Michael Landy both emphasised duality in their art practice by reinserting abstracted signs from consumer culture back into retail situations; both were key to my recognition that everyday consumer culture could be worked with and destabilised simultaneously. And a series of encounters with the spatial oddness of Richard Wilson’s installations provided experiences that could only be quantified many years later through the lens of my interior practice.

Commercial Interiors

My move into interior design was probably best described as serendipitous; it quickly became obvious that my interests in time and space were well suited to the discipline. To some extent it also acted as an antidote to the rather self-referential and narrow audience of contemporary art. My initial opportunity and grounding came from the store designer Barry Steadham. This quickly led to a period with the opulent interior designer David Collins. He worked for the wealthy and celebrated across hotels, restaurants, luxury retail and residential projects. The wealth was disconcerting at the least, but the work nonetheless was fascinating. Collins’ ideas often drew upon historic references, film and fashion from the 20th century, with a particular attention paid to the arrangement, material, colour and lighting. There was always a very particular crafting to his rooms; to enter one of his interiors was always to have the slightly odd sensation of walking onto a film set, it was a mediated experience, at once both historic and contemporary; real and fictional. It provided me with a particular understanding of how the fantastical and scenic can structure a powerful, mediated experience. There were a number of historical precedents frequently used by Collins that have influenced how I now understand contemporary interior design. I am drawn to the expressed yet refined detailing of furniture by EJ Rhulmen and Eileen Gray and would argue this influence is subtly evident in how certain design elements are resolved by Making Distance. In particular, though I am drawn to the potent stillness of both their illustrations of interiors. They seem loaded with implied narrative, poised for occupation. This is evident in the complexity with which Pierre Chareau interplays spatial activity in the furniture, finishing and layout of his Maison de Verre is compelling.

The houses of Adolf Loos also pick up on many of these ideas. Even today images of these houses, particularly the Moller House still seem both eminently elegant and yet conversely radical in their arrangement and material combination. The theatrical and performative qualities of this
interior is already inspirationally set out by Beatrice Colomina in her book Privacy and Publicity: Modern Architecture as Mass Media.7

My creative practice took a distinct shift in emphasis when I moved to Virgile and Stone Associates, an integrated offering within the brand and communication giant the Imagination Group. My view became more global and the preoccupation of my design practice was now its connection to business through retail, brand and experience.8 Project clients included brands such as Topshop, Volkswagen, L’Oréal and the Dutch supermarket Albert Heijn.

My references became very different, to name a few: The graphic and industrial interiors of Ben Kelly signaled a new visual and spatial language for me. Rem Koolhaas’ research project on retail and the work that his firm OMA has simultaneously undertaking for Prada made evident the evolutionary and contingent relationship of the urban condition, information and the consumer. The continually evolving Dover Street Market by Comme des Garçons’ Rei Kawakubo introduced the speed of fashion media to the physical medium of the store. This issue of speed, change and renewal was a dominate concern within the practice and the trend forecaster WGSN was a daily digest of the new and different. The participatory Camper stores designed by Marti Guixe invited the consumer to activate and contribute to the store environment, this approach signaling a potentially different attitude and aesthetic to the all too serious world of retail.

It was then that I moved in to an academic role at RMIT University. It began to crystallise for me that disbelief in the inhabitant was a crucial contributor to this situation. It was a hope that further investigation into the relationship between an environment and inhabitant might bring understanding to the role of disbelief and the production of experience. That in turn might provide insight into how branded environments operated and from this a wider understanding of how interior design is implicated in the mediation of meaning and the production of the individuals experiential reality.

8. Carlos Virgile and Nigel Stone were undoubtedly interested in design for luxury brands but were equally fascinated with mass market retail. There was a recognition that contemporary life and retail were inseparable. Before establishing their practice within the Imagination Group both had met working for the legendary high street retail designer Rodney Fitch who to give some context was quoted in once saying “The purpose of life is shopping,” quoted by Stephen Bayley; “Rodney Fitch Obituary”, in The Guardian, 10 November 2014. http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2014/nov/10/rodney-fitch.
Situating The Research
Somewhere between a Pound Shop and Prada

This research is interested in how interior design plays a role within our commercialised, branded urban environment. On an individual level this seems to be motivated by the researchers abiding fascination with urban and retail experience.

It is understood as an everyday urban medium activated through performative production. Within the medium the individual and the collective become the performative producers. Comprehension of the city is lost; a rational understanding of buildings, monumentality or civics is discarded for an assembled experience of fragments, non-linear encounters and collisions with programs and events.

Here interior design opportunistically becomes enmeshed into the understanding and design of the urban situation. Within this dense arrangement of buildings, infrastructure and strategic systems there is a rich multiplicity of interior production, mediated through structured encounters and casual everyday action acts. Various social and territorial tactics make this a highly performative situation. Here, the interior becomes understood as a temporal production, a site for social exchange between the individual and the collective.

It seems reasonable to understand interior design to be largely an urban endeavor, its density of provides the social and economic forces required

to sustain an intensity of interior practice that could never be imagined elsewhere. The urban has sustained an ongoing discourse within the discipline both as a site of imagination and interior making. For Making Distance the urban medium becomes an active laboratory that explores the relationship of interior design and everyday urban production.

I use the term urban to refer to a place where the virtual and physical manifestations of design inevitably locate themselves within the ordinary everyday, or perhaps increasingly visa versa. Here, design in its various forms is understood as an enabling infrastructure that supports practical, economic, political, social and cultural activities.

The certain unease about the project gave way to the inevitable, the store was there but already gone, this particular Calvin Klein store, a total minimalist interior crafted by Claudio Silvestrin was about to be trashed. We were his opposite [nemesis], we were taking over and it was not going to be pretty. Anthony Fryatt

That particular Calvin Klein store conceived to invoke a particular and rather monumental brand meaning was being transformed into a whimsical folly without protest or hesitation. In the globalized commercial economies of brand, fashion, design and consumption this all seemed to make perfect sense.

Urban space, reflecting society more broadly, has it seems become everything at once: a relentless mashup of change and flux, divergent meaning and activity. The local city is about the filling in of locations, the layering of the now upon the then, the peeling back of the then to the now, the butting up of one thing against another, the connection and disconnection of sites, buildings, systems, and programs. It’s about performance, occupation, dislodgement, takeover, shift, gain, loss, replacement, disintegration, production, appropriation of intention, the borrowing of meaning, misuse of power, systems and buildings.

It is a game of continual exchange: a social condition that has no real stability in the sense of authorship. Central or systemised logic becoming superseded by a personal knowledge, an assemblage of choices and exchange that traverses multiple channels and networks of information. The notion of the city as a stable and ordered place is overwhelmed in favour of a personal urban experience. Increasingly there is no real expectation of stability; here one expects to find a fake Prada in the pound shop and a temporary Prada store where the pound shop used to be.

Technology has had a profound affect upon the contemporary urban condition, the individual and national states alike outmaneuvered by the massive global forces of commercialism, media and image. Outdated ideas of stability, permanence and monumentality replaced by instability and flux. An urban experience is to now make relationships across massive global networks, to engage simultaneously with others in flow rather than place. This dynamic urban condition of action and exchange occurring simultaneously across distance is referred to by Manuel Castells as the Space of Flows.


3 In 2001 David Collins, based in London was commissioned by the infamous Mazzilli fashion family to design a store in Paris for their brand Voyage. The family was renowned for thumbing its nose at the fashion and celebrity world, including the infamous ‘turning away of Madonna’ and banning of Naomi Campbell. Selling absurdly expensive, whimsical clothes, Voyage was described by Paul Daley in The Age as ‘possibly the world’s most pretentious boutique’. The Paris store was located in the exclusive Avenue Montaigne next door to Louis Vuitton. When leased, the tenancy was already fitted out with an existing white-walled, stone-finished Calvin Klein store by the Italian minimalist Claudio Silvestrin. The new Voyage store was deliberately conceived as a loud and brash insertion completely at odds with the existing aesthetic.

4 See Claudio Marenco Mores, From Fiorucci to the Guerrilla Stores: Shop Displays in Architecture, Marketing and Communications. (Venice: Marsilio, 2007), 141.

In this situation a sense of historical place has become highly contested. For one, Marc Augé sets out an increasingly shallow, technologically mediated and solitary contemporary existence; a non place. The profound affect affect of technology is also taken on by Castells who identifies society as being ‘increasingly structured around the bipolar opposition of the Net and the Self.’

It is in this context that the architect and writer Rem Koolhaas sets out his global urban project in which the monumentality of architecture and public space has becomes undermined by the relentless logic of commerce and the political force of neoliberalism. It is one of globalised commercial excess, hybridized urbanisation and homogenous experience. It is one based on the perverse reality of shopping, of the mall flowing into the street, one that prioritises program and continual change, Junkspace over place. Typically taking an ambiguous stance, he dispassionately observes whilst actively participating as a leading global designer of commercial experience. Because of this the project reveals the pragmatic workings of the retail machine with compelling insight, however the criticism is that Koolhaas consistently and deliberately refuses to judge the designers role in this situation. As Rick Poynor points out Junkspace is one of the few times that Koolhaas chooses to break rank from this apparently dispassionate positon and bring critique to the role of design and architecture has in facilitating the dystopian reality he terms Junkspace.

We are at point, in western society at least, where the designer has taken on a centrally important, yet potentially impotent social status. It is no longer that we just design meaning through sign, we now increasingly design meaning through highly resolved and determined space, a staged marketing experience. Our activities in constructing desire in the world has never been more central to society, but at the same time this expertise has been completely subsumed by commercial agendas. It is a vexed issue and one that has profound implications for the individual, as Hal Foster declares:

Might this ‘designed subject’ be the unintended offspring of the ‘constructed subject’? One thing seems clear: just when you thought the consumerist loop could get no tighter in its narcissistic logic, it did: design produces a near-perfect circuit of production and consumption, without much running-room for anything else.

So where does the individual sit within all this? In putting forward his idea of the ‘liquid turn’ Zygmunt Bauman directly addresses the social implications of our globalised condition upon the individual. He builds a picture of contradictory forces of modernity and postmodernity of ‘order and uncertainty’ that bring flux and instability - fluidity to our social institutions, sense of place, social connections and experience of identity. The individual has become caught up in a continual task of shaping social fluids, largely commercial, in order to experience identity and meaning. The critic Anthony Elliott puts it broadly thus: ‘relationships’ replaced by ‘relating’ and ‘connections’ replaced by ‘connecting’.

Whilst Elliot finds much value in Bauman's liquid modernity and the relentless process of self-transformation he does caution that this is not entirely typical of all cultural life. Liquidity produces a certain type of subjectivity, one that resides external to the individual's situation. Whilst undoubtedly powerful for Elliot there is danger here in considering individuals to be a large homogenised mass. The actions of individuals, no matter how liquid and narcissistic ‘are never the actions of ciphers’ but rather individuals can be understood to co-create their immediate actions through a far wider engagement with their social conditions.

Here Elliot makes a significant point, despite the considerable commercialisation of experience the subject is not being entirely constructed, or indeed designed by their immediate external actions. It is about recognising that within every exchange there is both similarity and difference; That other wider subjectivities, both social and personal that need to be considered and allowed for. It is useful to again briefly return to Foster and his call for more ‘running-room’. By Foster it is a recognition that contemporary design can be so ‘total’ that there is little to no autonomy left for the individual, it is as if design has lost its subject. It seems to me like a call for some level of restraint, for an acknowledgement on some level of the ‘I’ within design.

Some autonomy perhaps offers a way out of the continuous feedback loop that Foster observes design has found itself caught within. And it also reminds us that there is a clear danger in not recognising that like most things in the world design is political. Design essential supports and enables everyday activity as the critic James Hunt clarifies ‘To evoke philosopher-critic Michael Foucault, this is design as a disciplinary practice’. It is acknowledgment that within the urban realm design has long been used to influence, exert and sustain power. The purpose of design is, as Poyner reminds us not just about our own or even our clients relationship to it, but also the relationship of design to the public. It requires not only a reconsideration of design process but also far more attention around the power that design wields.

Urban space is economics, it is politics, is power but it is according to Henri Lefebvre also everyday. As well as recognising the institutional forces that act upon the city he also insists that there is vital human dimension, in this way the urban can be understood as a ‘contradictory mediation between everyday life and the social order’. One of the critiques Lefebvre raised against the post structuralists was to overlook the inability of the everyday to be generalized or codified, it was as he argued a incomprehensible residuum. No doubt designers manage to co-opt signs of the everyday for various purposes but as Hunt explains this is different to the everyday itself which always exists in a temporal category, it resides with the individual and their everyday choices.

In his book The Practice of Everyday Life Michel de Certeau explores the activity of production and consumption through his framework of strategies and tactics. Usefully this allows us to consider the manner in which people carve out everyday minor freedoms through continual acts of consumption. Strategies reside with power, they are about fixing things down controlling.
territory, tactics are improvised, opportunistic and dependent on time. Culture is dependent upon both, a continual process of fixing and improvised remaking of relations. Unsurprisingly then Hunt argues that design can be largely seen a strategic act of structuring relations whilst the improvised use of design as a performative tactic. This tactical performativity resides with the subjective, it is the immediate act of speaking rather than the fixed system of language. In the same way Hunt continues to argue 'the built environment is in a constant state of becoming, or flux'.

For us as designers it is a confirmation that we must avoid bringing interiors into the world that are over resolved and fixed in relations only concerned with experiences that affirm and perpetuate. Rather that we must reconsider interior design more optimistically as a process of engagement with room for the temporal qualities of the everyday to flourish. It is this approach that can allow the interior to be an important social tool in a contemporary global context. Such a key interest for the research is how the interior can through an immediate encounter act in the urban to transform and mediate between the individual and organized systems of a global network.

## Interior in Flux

Given that we exist within a world of bewildering complexity it is not surprising, then, that this PhD moves on from the notion that interior design should be understood an endeavour concerned with fixing and stabilising predetermined relationships. Rather, it adopts the position that an interior is in flux, a dynamic spatial and temporal experience. Here, the interior experience is produced through relations, a complex and simultaneous set of trajectories temporarily brought together through interaction. In this way the interior emerges from a multiplicity, a situation of potential in which both interior and inhabitant are co-dependent, both in flux, and both in a process of production.

The tendency to privilege the physical built environment or the subjects interior as dominant ontologies of interior design must now be expanded to recognise that the process of making relations in the encounter is equally significant to interior experience.

Like the interior, the notion of inhabitant is challenged, it requires a rethinking of the subject (and subjectivity) as something fixed, stable and thus centred. Foucault for one has been a lead theorist in the rejection of the self and subjectivity that has widely dominated much creative practice. However, as the ‘interiorizt’ and writer Suzie Attiwill points out, to challenge the dominant interior concepts of Cartesian, phenomenological and humanist underpinnings is not to entirely deny them:

Their ideas cannot be easily dismissed as abstract philosophical concepts because as ways of thinking they shaped tactics and tools which can [still] be used in practice. The reconceptualization of the concept of interior evident in their practices involve a shift from an essentialist, self-given, a priori position as either inside of a box (architecture) or the inside of a person (subjectivity).

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20 Hunt (2003), 62.
This long standing argument hovers over the research and requires some explanation of how I am defining subjectivity. For me it is not an either or argument, the move away from ideas of the essentialist self and fixed truth, the flawed arguments of phenomenology as a quasi scientific means to understanding self are understood. However, the outright rejection of these ideas by Foucault and others seems to ignore their continued presence in the world through the everyday practices of strategies and tactics. This presence of the subject though will always be contested and partial rather than self given and complete. There is in the work no desire to return to the outright subjectivity of reproduction and total creative authorship, this dictatorial approach would entrench the meaning of experience entirely. Instead through techniques such as diagrams or revealing of the mise-en-scene the work seeks to invite performative participation, to empower the inhabitant to consume and produce experience at least partially on their own terms. It is an acknowledgment that the inhabitant is not passive nor part of a homogenous mass but instead active, decentred and critical; freed up to reconsider the hierarchy of a fixed interior/inhabitant relationship. To recall Elliott’s earlier comments we do co-create in the immediate but bring to this situation a far wider net of individual social relations.

In recognising that both interior and the subject coexist in a process of production that is both spatial and temporal, it allows us to reprioritise the outcomes of an interior design practice. In this situation of interior flux, the inhabitant moves into a participatory role. This performative participation is concerned with the process of experiencing the interior, rather than its process of design; it recognises the inhabitant as interpreting meaning and becoming a producer of ‘a certain subjectivity’. It in turn raises questions around the status and approach of the designer. To take an authoritative or all knowing approach to design is surely one that holds onto the ideal of certainty and fixed interior experience. In this PhD the approach is to strive for levels of indeterminacy, to not prescribe fixed meaning but to work carefully in the middle ground, mediating, negotiating the possibility of encounter, anticipating levels of subjective interpretation and difference in the production of interior experience.

I Surrender (to experience)

mobility denotes a culture of experience, not of knowledge – it is the accumulation of events

‘experience’ is a contested term that has received many different interpretations at the hands of many different philosophers. Yet every theory of experience points to a more fundamental idea: the human being who constitutes the subject of that experience.

As this PhD has progressed it has become clear that interiors construct particular types of experience and in turn produce particular types of subjects. In this sense, the research is largely an attempt to understand this interrelationship between the encountered spatial / temporal conditions and the resulting experience of the inhabitant.

In this age of mobility and endless reconstitution the temporality of an
experience seems to hold particular currency. However there is also an ethical risk to this quality that has been readily and knowingly exploited. It is through extended and complex experience that I would argue that the interior is most powerful in its ability to convey messages. It is because of this that interior design has been so utterly adopted and consumed by commercial imperatives. Interiors have deployed materials, technologies and media in increasingly sophisticated ways to offer up experiences to be consumed as part of a larger network of messages. A precise and detailed interior has the ability to immerse the inhabitant into a multi-sensory set of effects, atmospheres and narratives, offering up experiences that can be very full and complete. Roland Barthes observes:

The dream displeases me because one is entirely absorbed by it: the dream is monological; and the fantasy pleases me because it remains concomitant to the consciousness of reality (that of the place where I am); thus is created a double space, dislocated, spaced out.27

When an interior establishes an absolute determination of experience and spatial narrative, there is every chance that the subject’s consumption becomes far too certain. It reduces their criticality and increasingly centres the subject, reduces their opportunity to take on the role of producer. Because there is little need for interpretation and high levels of certainty are provided, there is every likelihood the experience becomes singular and fixed. It is too close to the monological model that so displease Barthes and the kind of total interior in which Foster urges for more ‘running-room’. Yi-Fu Tuan argues: “To experience is to learn; it means acting on the given and creating out of the given”.28 This is not to argue against the immersive but to rather to argue for a flaw, rupture or oddness to be structured into the experience. If an approach to designing interior experience is more complex, uncertain and unresolved then the inhabitant is forced to take far more responsibility for the interpretation and production of the interior experience. This is, I would argue, an altogether more empowering design philosophy – and one that Making Distance has attempted to pursue throughout the research. More broadly, it allows interior design to play a valuable and critical role within social and cultural production.

Lost in image space

A reason for the inflation of design is the increased centrality of media industries to the economy. This factor is so obvious that it might obscure a more fundamental development: the general ‘mediation’ of the economy. I mean by this more than ‘the culture of marketing’ and ‘the marketing of culture’. I mean a retooling of the economy around computing and digitising, in which the product is no longer thought of as an object to be produced so much as a datum to be manipulated – to be designed and redesigned, consumed and reconsumed. This ‘mediation’ also inflates design, to the point where it can no longer be considered a secondary industry. Perhaps we should speak of a ‘political economy of design’.29

We live in a society inseparable from image; it surrounds us, and we live

28 Yi-Fu Tuan, Space and Place: the perspective of experience (Minneapolis: Univ Of Minnesota Press, 1977), 9.
within it. In our post-industrial, technological condition, images are increasingly the primary means for the exchange of ideas and information. Media networks have accelerated the flow of image to a point where visual culture now dominates how we inhabit and construct experiences.30 Historically the image has been tied up in pictorial and mimic representation: the ability of the image to present the viewer with a recognised or implied reality – or rather, a realism. The emergence of the photograph made this realism even more credible, brought it apparently closer to our physical world. It transformed the role of image in society, blurring the real and the simulated and now the physical and the digital. It became a fragmented resident in our imagination, mediating and becoming a part of our encountered worlds. Our experiences became interconnected to image.31

Through depiction and suggestion the image, and in particular for me the photograph, has the exquisite ability to build atmosphere, imply narrative and draw the viewer into the image space. Hilla Becher, who, ironically, is renowned for her remorselessly flat and anthropological, objective photographic approach, raises this point in relation to the American photographer William Eggleston:

*Everything is rendered very affectionately, it is genuinely grasped. For me, his photos have something that I find ideal in photography: that one actually enters into the object, that one looks at in such a way that afterward one has a genuine love for it.* Hilla Becher 32

Prior to and during the research, both Jeff Wall and Thomas Demand have both allowed me valuable reflection upon the constructed relationship of the viewer, photograph and the photographed. A feature of both their practices is that they make scenic environments in order to make photographs. Another is that I am drawn into them through their quality of stillness. I find the cinematic quality of Wall’s photographs places you into the frame of the image; they are absolutely resolved, compelling and beautiful. As an inhabitant of the photograph, one enters into a pictorial relationship with its production, which reveals itself slowly over time as a complex, highly crafted montage of fragments.

Demand, on the other hand, constructs his painstaking paper environments in the studio as complete and banal sculptural interiors, empty of detail. The camera’s gaze then further mediates and distances these spaces. As images, their proximity to realism becomes indeterminate as flaws of production are revealed. However, it is the actual encounter with Demand’s photographs that is most relevant here. For me they always manage to destabilise the viewer’s relationship to the image through their absolute abstracted banality, which pushes the viewer out of the image, back into the site of encounter. A memorable occasion when this occurred for me was an encounter with his work at the exhibition entitled The Dailies, installed into the bedrooms at Commercial Travellers’ Association (CTA) Building, Martin Place, Sydney. The proximity of the images’ banality to the hotel rooms they were situated in produced an extraordinary encounter in which the relationship and separation of image, site and myself as subject could not be resolved. Situated within the room, I was inhabiting room and image simultaneously. And through this indeterminacy I became an activated and performative producer.

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Within this research I am interested in how processes of image production – both the making of image and the making of meaning – may affect the practice of interior design. My own experience the world could certainly be described as very visual. I find that the environments that I inhabit continually offer up spatial structure and visual cues that I form into temporal scenes. My perception of the spatially determined encounter interplays with memories and references of interior imagery, it becomes an indeterminate and temporal production, a becoming of visual experience.

The work of Making Distance recognizes and anticipates this kind of fixed / temporal interplay and frequently provides a complex materiality of whole and fragmented imagery. To avoid levels of determination is as Jeff Wall discusses not possible: ‘The process of experience of [sic] work, while it must be open to the associations brought to it by different people, is still structured and regulated and contains determinations’. There is however the ability to play with the levels of realism and determination. Fragmentation and incompleteness is one approach, as is the hybridisation of imagery and constructed elements, another is to take images of the work and reinsert them into the mise-en-scène, a process of doubling and disconnection for the inhabitants to identify and ponder. As a design approach it is a strategic use of assemblage that allows running-room for the inhabitant of the work to tactically make interior image and through this internal process engage in new external interior relations. It is a contemplative but also performative participation, one that draws them into the work by suggesting levels of structure and representation whilst at once also destabilising their certainty of what that structure and their relationship is to the co-dependent image and interior experience.

Performative Everyday

The term performative is being used frequently to discuss the manner in which we and others engage with our work and as such it is worth clarifying how it is understood and being used here. As opposed to a predetermined performance which resides in the aesthetic world of theatre and the arts, performativity is understood to be linked to language and the practices of the everyday. The distinction was usefully made by the critic Mieke Bal, who argues that "performativity is doing something; and performance is acting out."33 The two are different, but she argues ultimately inseparable.

This concise explanation summarises broadly how the concept is understood by Richard Schechner, who has through series of texts examined the relationship of theatre to everyday life. The term performativity was adopted from JL Austin which in his seminal text How to do things with words, established that certain linguistic terms are performatives, i.e. do or accomplish things. Schechner updates this thinking in a move away from text to a more pragmatic definition of performativity that includes acts of embodied behavior. This is key in how he connects performativity to ideas of experience and experience behavior. However the term text, in the way that Jacques Derrida theorised it, is essential in understanding that performativity is above everything else about an active practice, it is the act of doing. As

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33 Mieke Bal, “setting the stage: the subject mise-en-scène”. In Art of Projection, Stan Douglas and Christopher Eamon, (Ostfildern, Germany: Hatje Cantz, 2009), 171.
Schechner clarifies ‘The term ‘Performative’ now includes everything from acts of the body, to imaging’s of all kind’ 34

For curators Søren Andreasen and Lars Bang Larsen it is this action of doing that invokes our agency and subjectivity, ‘there is no ontology of the middleman: she is a performative and exemplary agent, acquiring subjectivity in and by the act of mediation’ 35

So whilst performativity thrives in its very immediacy, the act of production still leans heavily on the aesthetic ontology of performance. Drama is of course an intensified type of reality: entirely constructed but simultaneously based daily reality. In the same way Schechner reminds us that the theatrical stage influences our actions in everyday life, we are always structuring our lives as a series of performances. There is an ongoing interchange between aesthetic reality and daily reality, both are different and yet paradoxically informed by the other. It is here that Bal provides the most useful insight to the research in her identification of the mise-en-scène as the performative stage that mediates between everyday social reality and the artificial or fantastical realm: a site for collective exchange. 36

In this way the inhabitant and the work of Making Distance itself can be understood to be performative. There is an emphasis within our projects to use the complexity of the design process as part of the encounter, to be revealed for inclusion into the interior experience. Frequently taking the form of diagram or indeterminate mise-en-scène the work only is work when used. It is performative in that it initiates a set of actions that situate the inhabitant in a process of making relations: a performative interior production.

35 Søren Andreasen and Lars Bang Larsen, Remarks on mediation and production, Curating Now Organised by the MA Program in Curatorial Practice at the California College of Arts and Crafts (San Francisco: CCAC, 2002), 27.
36 Bal, (2009), 171.
1.4
Research Methods
The primary method of research has been to investigate qualities of experience and spatial conditions relevant to interior design through the act of making. This research acknowledges the role of agency and subjective production within the work and aims to make interiors that empower through fostering active engagement and the building of relations.

This design research has been carried out collaboratively through the practice Making Distance, consisting of Roger Kemp and myself. Making Distance is an academic design practice that was established first and foremost to undertake two simultaneous PhDs: Roger Kemp’s project titled Negotiating Space: a relational approach to interior design and mine Mediated Interior: subjective and empowering productions. It has acted as a type of research
laboratory in which both of the research trajectories could coexist and interact. Within this, there is an acknowledgment that the respective PhDs have both individual and overlapping aims and objectives, each undoubtedly learning from, influencing and contributing to the other.

Over a period of six years, Making Distance has produced twelve collaborative projects several of which have included a wider collaborative group of designers and creatives. These projects were driven either by self-directed briefs and provocations or in response to external projects aligned to the interests of the research. We have also conducted a number of collaborative and individually taught design studios, which have played an important role in consolidating and speculating upon the research.

Designed works have included drawings, diagrams, images, models, scenographic sets, exhibitions, events and public installations. It is interior design research through making. The public installations have typically taken the format of large inhabitable spatial experiments sited in various urban situations. These have included streetscapes, city squares and national cultural institutions. Importantly, this public forum of design research has provided opportunities for testing and dissemination of our ideas within a community of peers and a wider audience of designers and the public.

The invitation to collaborate has been used as a means of exploring our interior practice within the conventions of other media-focused disciplines. Rather than being commercial commissions, these projects have been established as academic interdisciplinary collaborations allowing for a focus upon process and design exploration. Working with different practices’ conventions has allowed our practice to borrow, adapt and develop techniques. In particular, scenic and image making techniques have had a strong influence. It has also brought into focus our own particular ways of operating as interior designers and has allowed for critical reflection upon the similarities and differences of practice both between ourselves and also relative to a with a wider set of expertise.
1.5

Collaborative Making, Continuous Process
Roger and I collaborated in order to take on more ambitious projects, produce more creative research outputs, write more papers, and as part of all that, to undertake our respective PhDs. But another simpler explanation is that both of us wanted to design. We are interior designers who make, draw, build and produce in order to test ideas.

Critical reflection is central to this collaborative practice and occurs before, during and after each of the projects: through discussion, writing and, critically, through the act of design itself. The collaboration will often adopt ideas that play out in earlier works, blurring or folding projects into each other is a frequent strategy deployed by Making Distance. Usually this results in the extension or transformation of a particular strategy or tactic; at times it can even lead to a direct reference, through the inclusion of earlier built elements or images of work.

Criticality is brought to bear upon the design process through agreement upon the approach or strategy to be explored. This then provides a reference or framework for each other within the flux of the design process. We do the same when working on projects with others; a trait of the collaboration is the design of the design process. This open structure is put in place by introducing design interventions such as scripts, drawings and diagrams. These help to establish relations, introduce spatial principles and identify potential in the situation. In this way our approach to working is by organising ourselves and others around initial systems or logics that influence but do not absolutely determine the design direction. Each of us responds...
to the design situation with his own thoughts and design tactics; at times we
agree on the approach, and at other points we each work quite independently
or in parallel. It allows for an interplay of ideas, particularly within the
development stages, as we each work on, into, around and against each other’s
design decisions. Our working method allows for our ideas to engage, be
influenced and also at times sit against each other’s.

Each designer contributes equally to the work through a deliberate mixture
of autonomous and joint design production. Often the work is literally
‘passed on’ to the other; at other times, parallel threads or approaches are
brought together for resolution and progression. This flow brings a crucial
momentum to the process where either participant can slow down or
accelerate the decision-making. Invariably the design direction shifts and
adjusts to the separate forces of the other. This is mostly facilitated by an open
dialogue, but also requires a trust in the other’s decisions and a willingness to
work with any given design state – much like a found situation. It becomes
an encounter with the work: a design process that works with an established
project strategy but also, crucially, is in open flux, able to reside in the
immediate moment.

The effect of this is that our work often becomes an interplay of material
elements and images: a visually rich and complex arrangement. Significantly,
it also means that each practitioner can challenge and influence the ideas that
underlie the work. It also means that every work will contain some element of
the unknown or unexplained for both practitioners.

The works in progress become a heightened site for exchange and this
perhaps points to the (performative) act of making to be as significant an
outcome of the research as the material works themselves. If the practice
can be understood as an ongoing performative process, then the material
works arguably could be seen more as tools than resolved propositions. They
become assemblages in time, a particular arrangement of ideas and elements
as much as determined or finished artefacts.

From this practice emerges a dense body of work that deliberately avoids
certainty or conclusion; its resistance to any absolute definition or typology
has led to the observation that the practice is in many ways a form of design
alchemy.1

1. William Fox made this reference to alchemy at the
PRS Presentation in October 2010.
Unpacking The Interior
This early project phase acted as a testing ground to establish collaboration and reveal techniques of production. The first project was situated in the city, the second project then reflected on this. Both had quite different approaches to making using scenic, performative and diagram techniques. Together they set the agenda for an examination of interiors in relation to the urban condition and became the basis for understanding spatial and temporal interior relations that endured throughout the PhD.

It commenced with 3 Tonne ‘o’ Space, a performative and mobile interior that engaged with the public around the city. As a project it offered people an implied experiential narrative and performative encounter with us as designers. Despite the obviously enclosed quality of the truck by considering the project in relation to the urban streetscape it allowed for speculation upon the interior as an extended and continuous experience. Rather than a fixed situation the interior became reconfigurable and in flux.

The subsequent reflective model Carry On consolidated and furthered these ideas through the diagram by explicitly examining encounter and the production of the interior within urban space. The work was used to speculate upon arrangement and relationships of site, object and subject through time and space. As an artifact it had an inherent performative quality.

In this initial phase a number of techniques emerged as being significant to our way of making interiors: ideas of arrangement and scenography, using ourselves performatively and consideration of the image. The diagram also was first used as a reflective and speculative tool.
Further it allowed us to recognise that within the urban environment we were able to produce interiors that could be understood as a site of encounter and exchange for the individual and collective alike. This consideration recognises a contemporary understanding within interior design: that the spatial and temporal flux of the urban environment demands that the urban and the interior be brought together. The interior is no longer bounded by walls but can be understood to continue out into the urban through the act of inhabitation.¹

¹ Suzie Attiwill et al., Urban Interior: Informal Explorations, Interventions and Occupations, (Baunach: Spieurbuch Verlag, 2011).
3 Tonne ‘o’ Space

The 3 Tonne ‘o’ Space project, developed for the 2008 State of Design festival, Melbourne appropriated and occupied a ubiquitous utilitarian mobile environment: the back of a three-tonne truck. It sought to challenge the assumption that an interior space is a fixed and static environment and expand conventional boundaries of interior design by working in urban space.

The mobility of the truck allowed us to take the interior to various locations within the City of Melbourne and act as a ‘pop-up’ event across the design festival program. When parked the open rear box of the truck, usually viewed by the passing general public in the act of loading and unloading goods for delivery, was adopted as an interior space for occupation and inhabitation. This approach situated the work within a shifting urban context and made it visible to a diverse audience of public and peers who were welcome to contribute to the production and performance of the interior through conversation and occupation of the truck installation.
The emphasis of the project was on process rather than product. The brief for the festival was ‘Design for Everyone’ and ‘Design as a Verb’. We set out to communicate a design process by producing the interior over the duration of a week, before which there was also an extended period of testing and experimentation. The two designers of the project were located inside or close to the truck, engaging the public in conversations about design as process. Over the duration of the week-long festival, contents were moved around, within and outside the truck, producing a continued review and change of spatial structure and relationships. This transforming interior also changed through an increasing accumulation of materials, objects, audiences, and contributions including food, drawings and artefacts built on site.

We paid particular attention to the crafting of narrative cues when selecting material and objects. Beyond the truck the primary aesthetic of the installation was the re-use of found objects and furniture that were sourced to sit in a strangely familiar way with the tatty and faux wooden environment of the truck. These props related to a range of different situations including domestic, commercial, industrial and design. Upon closer inspection carefully crafted details, drawings and models were woven through the installation.

It was important to us to preserve a certain ambiguity in the encounter. The combination of material and objects managed to do this by building narrative connections and discrepancies across the installation. Key scenic cues emerged that the installation alluded to: the aesthetic language of a commercial truck; a type of design studio; a site office; the language of installation/event/performance; and borrowed techniques from media and branding to bring authority and visibility to the installation. There was a overall scenic cohesiveness that quickly dispersed into different possible interpretations and deliberately posed questions as to what type of interior space was being experienced.

No Standing

3 Tonne ‘o’ Space literally moved through and located itself within the city, using this approach urban space provided an ideal laboratory of complexity, relationships and activity. Here we could flexibly engage with a variety of spatial scenarios and expose the design work to the unpredictability of the everyday; it was research in the urban interior.

If any comprehension of the city as a whole existed within the work, then it probably did so only at the planning stage, when we were considering various locations to site the truck. Once the project was caught up in production, we became immersed in an overwhelmingly street-level experience; the logic of
the whole city lost to the dense confusion of urban activity.

To think about urban experience is more fine grain than the notion of the city; it recalls Guy Debord's collaged maps, which as Libero Andreotti states 'fragment the totality of the city.' It is about the immediate experience: topographical logic, ideas of distance, direction and layout all become lost, overwhelmed by the layered street-level experience that converges around those in urban space.

In particular, the design strategy of mobility in the project fragmented the urban experience akin to Victor Burgin's critique of the everyday city as part of our wider heterogeneous image-sequenced filmic space. This provided a clarification that the interests of the research lay more in the immediate encounter than in notions of the whole city, which remained incomprehensible and abstract within the interior experience.

We did not perceive wider spatial conditions as a fixed place or space to be navigated, but as something more akin to a convergence of flows or influencing forces upon the immediate experience. Navigation became flow. The relationship and ordering of the urban experience was being constructed from the actions and design operations of the project; the driving, parking, arranging, walking, standing, sitting, looking, discussing and engaging with the events, structures and systems encountered. It was a series of non-linear encounters and colliding events. Time and space became distorted; duration, inhabitation and activity became more useful terms; event and experience was produced in the moment.
Parallel Encounters

The project’s mobility meant that urban space was experienced and contemplated from a variety of speeds and vantages. Once parked these relationships changed again. In each situation designer and truck were acting as objects and subjects simultaneously; together becoming both agents of action and performative objects of spectacle. The project heightened and structured these relationships making apparent the parallel encounters and experiences that occur within the urban interior.

When the truck was packed up and driving from location to location, it was moving through urban space. As the designers drove through the city the truck transformed the urban experience into an unfolding and rapid image-sequenced spatial narrative. Simultaneously, from the curbside others encountered the passing truck as an actor moving through their own particular fragmented narrative: a barely noticed extra. The banal truck became a brief and barely registered encounter: at most a brief source of uncertainty or perhaps amusement directed at the improvised signage overlaid upon the dirty rental graphics.

But as well being an object and subject passing through space the truck was also an indeterminate void, other space: what Ignasi de Sola-Morales calls a “terrain vague”.

The hidden interior of the truck box being so taken for granted that its banality became a form of camouflage. When registering the passing truck an implicit understanding that the truck was a mobile container, yet its internal cargo space so rarely seen to be barely considered. It


Image: Scenic resolution. Photograph Peter Bennett.
is easy to ignore but equally is full of expectancy: “internal to the city yet at the same time external to its everyday use.”

The ubiquity and banality of the appropriated truck were key to the project operations; even with the newly applied signage its presence and carrying capacity were so normal as to go unconsidered. This allowed the scenic installation to be packed into the back, hidden from view and disconnected from the urban context it was moving through, yet paradoxically filled with potential, ready to emerge and be reassembled by the designers upon arrival in the next location.

Funny Tactics

One of the stated aims of 3 Tonne ’o’ Space was to engage people in thinking about definitions of interior design. In this sense the truck was using ambiguity as a provocation to discuss and consider its own status as a design outcome and experience. Essentially the project was a grubby old truck with improvised signage, packed full of an assorted collection of made and found items that we as designers occupied and arranged. How it was deployed and arranged within the urban became critical to how it was encountered and received.

The strategy in the planning stage was to gain access to various sites that would help frame the project with differing levels of exposure, activity and cultural legitimacy, it was a formal and casual making of territory.

Unsurprisingly parking was always the first part of this negotiation. The truck sprang up in a variety of sites which ranged from improvised kerbside one-hour parking bays to formal positioning such as in Melbourne City Square. We used what we had to establish our limits, to make temporal sites for production. At times we played on our legitimacy of being a part of the State of Design festival; at others we improvised and relied on speed and timing to take opportunity. This framing of activity using the truck and its immediate surrounds crucially revealed the speed and lightness with which territories could be made, how the interior could be facilitated within the urban setting.

As Beatriz Colomina argues: “The setting of limits is what allows both survival and knowledge within the urban scene.”

We quickly became aware that the project was continually required to adjust to the immediate forces acting upon the situation. This included the built environment, organisational rules, cultural and social systems, times of day, weather and the people and activity encountered. We used a number of arranging tactics, including awareness of the truck’s performative and cinematic relationship to site; using the form of truck to conceal and frame encounters with the installation in the back of the truck; and internally scenically arranging props and performatively inhabiting the truck by the designers. It became a tactical game of improvisation and rearrangement, in which the project borrowed, occupied, and disrupted conditions to bring about an encounter with others.

It was a strategy of lightness dependent upon the trucks continual movement and rearrangement. The comical difficulty required to continually pack up and drive the truck from location to location without incident made the project in some ways tenuous and marginal, but was also what allowed it to work. The project lived off its absurdity.

3 Tonne ‘o’ Space Conclusions

The encounter with the truck was always intentionally made a little odd. It was a confluence of different things and existed as an indeterminate disruption of the everyday. It played on a subtle contradiction, being both deliberately constructed spectacle and simultaneously an everyday and banal sight. It was an appropriated everyday encounter.

Here, display became a performative act and a key strategy to engage in an exchange of ideas. Partly it was a conventional approach to display to imply a narrative through the arrangement of packing boxes, pieces of furniture and other props. However, it was less than clear what that implied narrative was. As the eye – and perhaps body – was drawn past the layers of packing boxes into the truck, the experience began to resembled something akin to a design office, unsettlingly occupied by the designers who were clearly displaced from their normal situation.

The designers were literally on display and situated for encounter: the act of design and interior production actively occurring within the urban medium. The work and designers equally open to critique, discussion and


8. After several random encounters during the festival, fellow participant Peter Bennett renamed the project 3 Tonne ‘o’ Fun.
participation. Despite or perhaps because of its rather provisional appearance, it was able to direct people’s attention away from the truck as designed artefact and shift the attention onto the performative and participatory design process as the most valuable outcome of the project.

The project was able to tactically respond to the urban medium by adopting a strategy of mobility and improvisation. By moving in and out of the utilitarian flow of goods and transportation, the project was able to intersect the flows of design culture and the everyday.

To encounter *Three Tonne o’space* was not only to experience the truck installation within the cultural system of the festival but also to experience the truck as part of the urban experience. It was an encounter in which implied narrative and performative activity was used to draw people in and destabilise an otherwise normal everyday encounter. It was at once both everyday and structured as an experience.

Surprisingly despite the marginal nature of the truck it still had the ability to transform the urban situation. It was deliberately placed at locations of potential overlap or boundaries of differing activity: a mediator between the various forces, a temporary interior and a site for exchange. It was an intersection at which the flows of everyday activity, events and program collided.

Image: Scenic detail of installation.
Reflective Diagrams: Carry On

Carry On was produced to reflect upon the project 3 Tonnes of Space, it was used as a chance to reflect on and extend emergent ideas from the previous project including mobility, arrangement and performative encounter. The work was conceived as a travel piece for a conference at the University of Brighton in the UK and was understood to be simultaneously both reflective and propositional. It consisted of a model and series of printed images concealed within a valise like wooden carry box that could be transported, unpacked and assembled as an exhibit piece. The name of the work was a reference to the carry on baggage allowance given by airlines, as the intent was for Roger to personally carry the work to the UK in order to set it up in the gallery.

The speculative work was intended as a humorous analogy to the truck, another way of working with mobility and performativity. In Carry On the performative transportation by plane and setting up of the model in location became embodied in its concept as a piece of carry-on luggage. Like the truck the design strategy for the model was to use the urban flows to our advantage.\textsuperscript{10} The size restriction of the carry on luggage became the guidelines for the work; the model a silent travel companion for Roger as he negotiated the flow of international air travel.\textsuperscript{11} The scope of the work extended beyond its presence within the gallery, it was also a device that required actions and operations within the temporal flow of a global urban interior. The very act of ‘carrying-on’ the model enacted its performativity, fulfilled the

9. See Marcel Duchamp, Boîte-En-Valise (Box In A Valve). Cardboard and wooden box containing replicas and reproductions of works by Duchamp edition of 500. (Canberra: National Gallery of Australia, 1942-54)


Image previous: The model draws in the viewer as fragments become assembled urban interior.

Image left: Diagram of truck encounter.
promise in its title. With all the elements hidden and concealed within the anonymous case the work like the packed up truck became a void within the urban medium. It was full of potential, awaiting the next performative act, an opportunity to unpack and reveal itself as the well-travelled international exhibit.

Reflective Diagrams

Once unpacked and set up at the gallery the work performed two roles for the viewer, one was a display of the the 3 Tonne 'o' Space project using wall mounted photographs. The other was a diagrammatic model that reflected upon the interior conditions encountered during the truck project. As well as being reflective the approach of using a diagrammatic model was significant in that it allowed for further speculation upon the interior conditions we had experienced within the previous 3 Tonne 'o' Space project.

Within the Carry On box there was a collection of various elements, mostly cut out images of buildings and different truck models. These could be arranged upon a diagrammatic baseboard, which acted as a street level ground plane upon which was established three different urban scenarios for the model trucks. Considering this diagram from above it resembled a loose plan or topography which was reinforced by use of a regular graphic grid over which the line work of the diagram was suggestive and layered. Cues such as kerbs, boundaries and sightlines were drawn in. The lines of the diagram extended freely across the surface of the grid, the scenarios...
overlapped and intersected one another, the grid broke down. In this way the diagram presented a distorted spatial logic, a complex and fragmented city. It established concepts of mobility and positioning of the trucks relative to the streetscape and potential participants.

The spatial positioning and sequence of encountering the trucks was established via the diagram. Broadly these scaled urban scenarios were the truck positioned in open space formally framed by its surrounds, the truck encountered by chance against the kerb, and the truck approached in a narrow laneway. In turn each of these scenarios could shift in understanding depending on how they were viewed or approached. The three model trucks had each been collaged with photographs taken from the 3 Tonne 'n' Space project. The intention was to use the imagery to work into the diagram and provided the viewer of the model with various scaled encounters that
interplayed scenic layers of trucks and streetscapes. Adopting this scenic approach allowed us to suggest the experiential quality of different site conditions and importantly discuss the role of display in the production of interior experience.

If the viewer was prepared to spend time with the model the temptation to crouch down and then look into the model at street level was almost impossible to resist. As you considered the model relationships inevitably began to be made between the fragments and the trucks. The viewers position and gaze was being structured as they were being drawn into the scaled and abstract streetscape in relation to the truck. It was constructing a scenic experience and shifting the role of the viewer to one of inhabitant. From this crouched vantage the models diagrammatic aspects were superseded by an experience of image.
The photographic elements became intersecting layers, offering up a complex and odd sequence – invoking the experience of display and mobility through urban space. Through the process of assembly, a visual montage of the urban could be made. As inhabitant you could then encounter the truck situated into urban scenario. In this sense the model was beginning to script a performative encounter. The viewer was being structured by the work but also participating in the image and interior production; montaging the urban medium, encountering the trucks and becoming inhabitant of the model interior through their own participation.
Conclusions

The photographic documentation of the project was a simple dissemination of a prior events. The projects value came from the ability to make the performative qualities of the project implicit in the mode of transportation and assembly. More importantly using the technique of the scenic diagram had allowed us to shift from an explanatory reflection upon urban conditions to taking a more propositional and speculative approach to the new work.

The model was the first time in our practice that the diagram and image had been brought together. While the photography and diagrams carried some level of explanation and depiction, *Carry On*’s achievement was not so much how it described or represented as its ability to both structure the inhabitant whilst also facilitate a mediated encounter. As a device it mediated between the gallery, the inhabitant and our making process. It was constructing relations within itself, and between itself and the inhabitant. Discussing interior design processes whilst also through the assemblage of scenic elements inviting inhabitation of an interior experience.
3.0

Scenic Productions
After the two early truck projects we were approached with a welcome, if rather unlikely, invitation to collaborate on an experimental film project under the working title Motel. The project marked the beginning of a new and significant phase in the practice that involved the making of a number of scenographic sets for film, television and installation. It was also during this phase of projects that Roger and I took the decision to formalise the collaboration under the practice name Making Distance.

With no previous experience working in film, this was an intriguing and exciting shift for both of us. There was an element of risk involved; however, there was great also appeal as a number of processes and techniques that we used as inspiration and reference have their origins in film and photography. As well as the opportunity to design and make a number of film sets, Motel provided the opportunity to bring a relational approach to interior design into a project process and test its value alongside other creative disciplines. Ultimately, this venture was to have a considerable affect on our future way of working. The experience generated new influences, priorities, processes and outcomes, while the sustained period of interdisciplinary collaboration helped to cast a critical light upon the interior design methods that we took for granted. As I remarked in an interview with the filmmakers after the project was completed:

'It was a different field, something we hadn’t done before and a way that we hadn’t worked before, so if nothing else it cast light on how we did work.'

From the outset our ideas were challenged by quite different disciplinary priorities and methods. An immediately obvious change was the introduction

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of scripts into the design process. This new convention meant that we were being asked to design in response to established and explicit narratives, relations and atmospheres. Seemingly counterintuitive to the idea of flux these spatial scenarios were far more deliberate, controlled and composed than those we had worked with previously in either commercial or everyday situations. Despite this apparent challenge working with text actually offered up new techniques. It led us to developing operative scripts and diagrams for introducing interior concepts and spatial experience into the design and production process.

In this phase we substantially developed our understanding of scenography that had emerged in the previous two projects, 3 tonne ‘o’ space and Carry on. Motel saw a shift into design of scenic sets constructed within film studios or very specific and planned locations. This was a sharp contrast to the informality of the urban situations that we had previously situated the work in or against. The film sets were conceived as environments to support the narratives set out in the scripts, the specific actions and events were performed out by professional actors and highly choreographed by the the directors. This very deliberate approach was made even more controlled and precise with the introduction of the movie camera and cinematographer.

Unsurprisingly the for the filmmakers the spatial and virtual conditions assembled were a means to producing the linear image narrative and experiential imagery of the film. It was quickly apparent that this required a quite different spatial resolution from more typical resolved everyday arrangements. Whilst the mediated medium of film was quite different to our interest in the direct and immediate interior experience there seemed considerable potential for translating the techniques we were learning to the design of physically inhabitable experiences in the future.

Of particular interest to the question to me was the revelation that the production process contained considerable spatial complexity, uncertainty and simultaneity. In the process of making these highly mediated and linear films a side effect was that we were also simultaneously producing additional, temporal interior conditions that could be experienced immediately within the complex conditions of the studio or film location. This was an idea that we went on to further explore through our subsequent reflective installation at ACMI. In this project there was a shift away from the controlled performances of the film and a move towards offering this complex and simultaneous interior experience to inhabitants as a performative encounter.
In the latter part of this phase we were invited to design the sets for the 
Channel 31 television series The Temperature’s Rising, of which two series 
were produced. We became increasingly concerned with the production of 
sets that resisted any kind of complete or contained interior room, instead 
building a series of relationships between props and furniture that actors 
could occupy and respond to. We also had a more heightened awareness of 
how the gaze could be manipulated by the actors, directors and of course 
the camera and audience. This approach was an attempt to move away from 
strict notions of realism and towards a deliberate inclusion of the production 
mise-en scène for the audiences or inhabitants. It demanded the resolution 
of the final interior by the audience through selection and inclusion of 
elements necessary to the immediate scene, and for the practice it marked 
the emergence of a more confident move towards the participatory and 
subjective production of interiors seen in our later work.
Our invitation to join the Motel project was somewhat serendipitous. The project was initially established by three Media and Communication academics: David Carlin, Paul Ritchard and Christine Rogers. As a starting point, they had each set out to write three short screenplays using a set of pre-established rules to disrupt typical writing conventions. The somewhat unorthodox outcomes of this exercise meant that funding of the film production through commercial or independent avenues was unlikely. Instead, it was decided that the project should be positioned within the context of academic research with funding subsequently sought to progress the project to the next phase of filming and post-production. Repeated references to the motel room within the scripts revealed the need to build a studio-based set of a motel room. The limited budget and the funding requirement that the work be produced in an interdisciplinary manner, led the group to seek out collaborators who were academic interior designers. It was at this point that we entered into the project, first through discussions around our respective backgrounds, and then subsequently in a more meaningful way, having read through the initial drafts of the three screenplays.
1. INT MOTEL OFFICE

An infinite spiral.

Camera pulls back to reveal the spiral is the pattern in the centre of a vinyl record on a turntable playing on a motel office counter. Music playing: some old sixties bossanova or similar. Motel décor might also hail from the early sixties.

Beyond the open door, a car appears along the road, pulls in and parks.

JANICE, the thirty-something (on a good day) driver sits a moment in the car, continuing an animated mobile phone conversation.

She gets out, still on the phone, clutching a laptop bag and kicking the door shut with her foot.

JANICE  ...yeah, well, whatever! Its just supposed to be kooky interesting like, y’know, David Byrne kooky interesting. If I get jackshit then go with Jane’s puffthing on the Dalai Lama and fucking happiness, alright? bye.

She shoves the phone in her pocket and walks into the office.

The young guy, JULIE, working behind the counter has obviously been listening. With wild black hair, looking like a geek on holiday, he’s the dude who runs the turntable.

JANICE  I had a booking, name of Freoli.

She hands him her credit card. He looks at it and breaks into a broad grin.

JULIE

Hi.

His enthusiasm is somewhat wasted on her. She looks at the row of keys waving in the breeze.

JANICE

It is fucking hot, isn’t it.

Sousé my French. Do you sell beer?

JULIE

Gotta kettle in the room.

This compensation is small indeed.

JANICE

You heard anything about a conference out here somewhere?

JULIE

Time travel theme?

JULIE

(grins) Nope.

No, playing the computer keyboard as if it is a musical instrument, can barely maintain a smirk. She looks like she wants to punch him.

Janice is unimpressed - the guy is unsettling her. She takes a key from the row and turns for the door. She starts to feel like she has forgotten something important - she can’t think straight.

JULIE

(staring a fact)

You like muesli!

JANICE

(paying no attention)

Yea, I like muesli.
“All of a sudden we were confronted by the scripts...saying this is where [the project] starts, whereas in other design projects we might think about what is the overall image for a brief...”  
Roger Kemp

At this early point in the now expanded collaboration, the three screenwriter/directors had fairly pragmatic expectations that as interior designers we would follow film and design orthodoxies and quickly move into designing and visually representing our proposals for the motel rooms and other internal locations outlined in the script. Whilst we recognised the need for material outcomes, we also aimed to explore how a relational understanding of interior design could impact upon a filmmaking process. It was agreed that the traditional hierarchical assumptions, roles and techniques of film production would be set aside; instead a slowing down of the process would occur in order to consider the potential of the interior concerns we were raising. We were complicating the process in order to challenge the established conventions.

By delaying the aesthetic resolution of the sets, the three scripts became the decisive tool for exploring interior thinking. The linear, scripted text was for us a very different way of initiating a project. Upon receiving them from the writers, we effectively considered the screenplays almost as found objects. In an attempt to avoid a potentially prescriptive outcome, rather than interpret...
the scripts we began to textually deconstruct them. We moved through the text, highlighting words that we thought important to time, space, interior and exterior:

“The concentration and consideration of these ideas led to a negotiation of spatial relations presented through the scripts. Descriptions of locations in the scripts such as the motel room, inside the car, the highway, the motel office offered up the opportunities to draw out more detailed relationships occurring in those spaces that presented conditions of interiority and indeed exteriority. Critical spatial relationships between objects or between the actors were understood through ideas of proximity and intensities.”

This process deliberately ignored ideas of narrative or flow. Indeed, the deconstruction process hindered our comprehension of the individual scripts as they became increasingly hybridised in our minds. This was not an attempt at interpretation as fictional considerations were at this point being overlooked. It was instead a process of identification, separation and sorting of the different spatial conditions, scenarios and relationships. Words, actions and descriptions which we felt offered some future spatial or temporal potential were placed into different spatial categories: over, behind, above, across, out, through, intimate, distant, an eternity, a while, a beat. There was little attempt to build an understanding of the sequence or narrative of the scenes. Instead, we attempted to force a way into the screenwriters’ process: to ‘blow it up’ in Roger’s words. Seeing the dialogue and descriptions broken down, words crudely underscored, circled and occasionally linked, signified an almost tempestuous act upon the crisp, double-spaced, typed A4 page.


Rotations, Transformations And Plottings

The deconstruction seemed a useful provocation by the designers to the writing process. However, as an exercise it was now spread across multiple versions of the scripts and the overall value of the added notations were impossible to comprehend in the multipage A4 format. In an attempt to overcome the rather alien small page we took the decision to change the format of the three scripts into something more familiar to us as designers: an oversized page layout that was nearly three metres across. By doing this we now had the opportunity to spread out across the page, to lay out, arrange and draw.

Having made page space, the next move was a graphic transformation: the text was rotated and pages turned into a continuous length. The three scripts now ran left to right across the page, laid out one above the other for comparison. We could now plot our spatial deconstruction across one page. It allowed us to annotate over the top and to mark comparisons, densities and relationships across the three movies. A secondary diagram we produced at the time shows that we and the three filmmakers could begin to gain a sense of the whole: the deconstruction was beginning to be reassembled and potential new or previously hidden relations between the films or narrative structures were considered. We could contemplate scenes, cuts and breaks according to potential interiors that were temporal or virtual, such as the edge of the bed or a switch from 'time travel' to 'present time'. Multiple interiors were being proposed within the filmic time and space of any given scene.

Importantly, these moves shifted the scripts away from the personal single-page experience to something more closely resembling a large-format drawing. It changed the document into something more open and shared across the group: a collaborative tool that filmmakers and interior designers could now simultaneously mark up, work upon and exchange ideas.
Diagrammatic Reconstruction/Production

In actuality the rotated script probably performed three significant roles for the project. Firstly was the disruption of the writers through the reformatting of the page. second was the deconstruction of narrative through the textual analysis that allowed interior ideas to be introduced. And thirdly was the introduction of a more active and constructive production process that transposed spatial and interior relationships within individual films and mapped these across the three short films as a whole.

Turning the scripts into a drawing was a relatively simple yet destabilising move in that it turned the scripts back upon the filmmakers in a new and unfamiliar way.

Text became drawing. But it was also powerful in that it opened up the pre-production process. It allowed the filmmakers to identify and introduce further considerations of the interior into the making of the films, as they later reflected:

The wall-mounted ‘rotated script’ forced, in turn, the filmmakers to encounter their own scripts as unfamiliar artefacts. The most immediate result was to suggest new forms of narrative and thematic mapping that may occur within and across the three scripts during the pre-production phase of the project. Hitherto unseen patterns of repetition—of motifs, images and movements—and rhythms of density—for instance, of dialogue versus screen directions—were revealed which fed in, through annotation and discussion, to approaches to production design but also to cinematography and actor direction.⁵

This term ‘rotated script’ had been adopted by the group as a way of referring to the large scripted drawing. Whilst ‘rotated script’ describes well enough it is worth considering the status of the graphic layout of text and the activities being produced from it. I would rather argue that the status of the rotated script was that of a diagram. It was as Stan Allen might say an ‘instruction for action.’⁶ Words were being selected, extracted and highlighted; connections and relationships made across the three scripts. It was less a mapping and more an operative and diagrammatic activity. Rather than representing or establishing that which was already known this was a making of new relationships, an exercise in speculation and new production. As Stan Allen writes of diagrams:


Image left: On location, exterior of motel room.
Physical space of the room and exterior landscape.
Unlike classical theories based on imitation, diagrams do not map or represent already existing objects or systems but anticipate new organizations and specify yet to be realized relationships...Diagrams are not schema...They work as abstract machines and do not resemble what they produce.⁷

In itself the rotated script did not present any certainty or determination, rather the contrary its indeterminacy required speculation. It was a generative device (or machine), only once used did it become purposeful. Through consideration it provoked thought and then action in the production process. It identified interior and spatial possibilities that resided within the scripts and then in turn asked what you might do with these, how might you produce, transpose these potentials from script to film.

The diagrammatic approach was not only useful in the move between mediums but also became a crucial collaborative tool. As a device it was very adept at dealing with difference, allowing each of us to map out our own ideas, superimpose them upon each other, see the overlap and the in-between before the process of production occurred.⁸ Situated in the between space of the collaboration, it allowed the different practitioners to interface and negotiate their different approaches and expertise.

Scenic Drawing as Diagrammatic Devices

The counterpoint to the abstract graphic text of the rotated script were two figurative drawings, which also continued to explore ideas of interior, exterior, intimacy and distance. Using diagrammatic line drawings we began to overlay these abstract spatial concepts upon the two most commonly used locations within the script: the motel room and car.

The introduction of these images seemed to immediately delight the filmmakers. They were on first impressions a less abstract and thus problematic proposition than the scripts; these were comprehensible drawings of space and perhaps signaled a speeding back up of the process.

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⁸. ibid. 16.
However, I think they quickly came to realise that this was not the reassuring move towards a proposed design for the film sets that they were now beginning to push for.

The abstract textual diagrams had been very useful in introducing concepts and generating potential relationships, these new drawings whilst not strictly representational of proposed sets were an attempt by us to shift the project closer to a filmic outcome. They were intended as an aid in the process of transposition from text to image: a means of arranging identified conceptual terms within the anticipated material and virtual conditions of the sets.

Ideas that had been identified in the scripts were transposed onto the two situations scenes. But whilst these these drawings took on the representational mode of a more conventional storyboard they remained generalised rather than specific. This was not one scene in the film but all scenes. If we return to briefly to Vellodi he reminds us that the Deleuzian model of the diagram is never specific but rather ‘the concept of the diagram marks a zone of abstraction in which concrete systems shed their specificity and interact on the level of pure function.’⁹ The medium had changed but the abstract diagram was still in operation, still asking for relationships to be made, still operative and still instigating a performative response from the collaborators.

The drawings importantly, resisted absolute meaning. Rather than explain or represent the proposed conditions of the film the drawings acted as a device for organising how the dynamic conditions of interior, exterior, intimacy

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Images right: Screen shots, Agency Time
and distance might play off the more established material conditions of any potential set. It asked for determination rather than provide it, demanding a plurality from the filmmakers that a more directive storyboarding technique would not necessarily provide.

On our part this approach was more collaborative and generous than an assertion of authorship. Critically it allowed the filmmakers to incorporate interior thinking into their methods for the duration of the project. These diagrams consolidated the thinking behind the rotated script and provided the filmmakers with a visual tool for moving the project from the system of text to the system of image. For each of the film makers the rotated script and the scenic overlays were diagrammatic devices that allowed for the development of an individual and shared interior framework: a reference for directing how interiority could be implied and produced for the viewer through the development of the cinematic mise-en-scène.

It could be argued that the diagrams explicitly demanded a performative response by the filmmakers, actors and cinematographer. The filmic notion of interior was performatively constructed for each of the collaborators through the process of engaging with the diagrams.

Rather than placing emphasis upon the design details within the motel room – which, because of the themes within the film, was almost inevitably going to follow established formulas of a banal or ubiquitous motel, car or highway locations – the diagrammatic devices were more concerned with directing particular performative events and actions in relation to environment and

Images right: Screen shots, Papin Sisters
objects. As each of the filmmakers considered the direction of their particular film within the triptych these performative aspects took on subtle differences in the use of spatial positioning, movement, actions and gestures both of actors and camera alike.

In reviewing the finished films these emerged as quite different spatial and interior relationships that were being explored and portrayed:

- Rogers – Highly internalised, exclusively within the room, with the bed as a significant intimate interior and threshold. Exterior existed as a vague imaginative realm

- Carlin – Interior and exterior punctuated by the use of CCTV and media, strong exterior established through fixed and slow tableau shots, themes of past events entering into present (the long walk, ex boyfriend)

- Ritchard – Wide shots of the motel room and landscapes portraying relational distance that were intercut with highly internalised and claustrophobic shots of the car.
As the ‘rotated script’ began to layer up with more detailed overlays, obvious narrative settings such as a room, a car, a highway, and even virtual spaces of media were all being subjected to the same textual analysis of space, object relations and interiority. By deconstructing the script, new emphasis was placed on things and events. In turn, this forced a heightened consideration of how thresholds between these could be used to establish and depict narrative relations through the films.

In relation to inside and outside locations, no absolute distinctions were being made across the rotated script. Within any given location there would frequently be a number of temporarily formed interiors to be identified. Equally, interior experience could extend across apparently certain and physical thresholds. The interior was being adopted as a temporary condition that was occurring through a building of relations, rather than a narrow focus upon the materialisation of enclosed interior architecture.

Thresholds were in flux. This became significant to how interior and durational qualities were portrayed through the fictional portrayal of the characters and their occupation of space. It was a revelation to the filmmakers that consideration of the interior could be used to help translate the themes of emotional intimacy and distance emerging from within the scripts into the cinematic mise-en-scène.

These drawings allowed the filmmakers, cinematographer and actors to establish a set of emphases, priorities and uncertainties that they could then negotiate through the next phases of the films’ production. For example, the conventional boundary of the motel room became challenged within the drawing. Passing right through the external wall to incorporate the space of the car park and highway, the drawing reflected the continuous interior across car and motel room as experienced by characters in the script. Conversely, the party walls to adjacent rooms were left blank and solid, these more conventional ‘interiors’ so external to the fictional space of the script as to not even be considered.

With these spatial thresholds, differing scales of distance were proposed in an attempt to anticipate how director and camera could supplement dialogue and actions with temporal qualities of interiority and exteriority. In this way, thresholds became liminal and in flux - the codified intimacy of the bed or the car seat being portrayed as contracting inward or expanding out through a liminal middle ground to include the other side of the room or even the remote horizon of the landscape. During the subsequent shift in the production process from scripts to film, this approach was adopted by the filmmakers as a means of portraying a character’s desire to be either included or excluded from other narrative events that were occurring around them.

10. See Lois Weinthal, Toward a New Interior: An Anthology of Interior Design Theory. (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2011). Weinthal conceives the organisation of this book through a diagram that moves interior theory from the intimacy of the body to the threshold between internal and external conditions of the city.
Scenic Environments, Simultaneous Experience

The inevitable requirements of production demanded that we address the pragmatic issues of building sets and adapting existing locations. The plan was to build a motel room in a studio that could then be adapted for each of the three short films, while a number of location shoots would occur at a regional Victorian motel where we would adapt some of the external and reception spaces. There would also be a number of car scenes shot on various surrounding highways and some close-up car dialogue filmed within the car against a studio cyclorama backdrop.

We now needed to determine the arrangement of space, materials, finishes and props, including sourcing a number of cars. This marked a new phase within the project. As interior designers we willingly assumed this role; however, there was a realisation that to some extent everyone involved was beginning to slip back into conventional modes of operation. Despite these concerns, we sensed that slowing down the process through the rotated script and diagrams had sufficiently disrupted the screenwriters, and that the interior was now persisting as an active concept within the project.

On reflection, it is possible to reflect on the production phase as being equally important to the research as the preproduction scripting process. However, there were significant differences. During the scripting process, we as interior designers were able to slow the momentum of the project and provoke interior thinking through our interventions into the process. During the production phase, the availability of locations and crew dictated that the
process moved far more quickly. The experience of building sets and working within the production space of studio and locations meant that we were suddenly far more reliant upon the expertise of the three filmmakers and the cinematographer, Robin Blunkett.

In this filming and editing stage we identified two significant issues that are worth discussing here. The first relates to the constructing of sets and the direct experience we had of the filming process. The second involves a consideration of the role of representation and encounter in the different experiences produced by the screen based filmic interiors and physical interiors encountered more usually in the everyday.

In The Studio

Interior design’s ability to tightly control and compose atmospheres and spatial scenarios in a very deliberate manner has led a history of designers and theorists to make connections between the everyday conditions of architecture and interiors and the far more aesthetic mediums of film, photography and other theatrical media. As such, entering into the production phase of the project, we expected the process to be very controlled and deliberate. Our observations of the filmmakers and cinematographer discussing potential scenes certainly confirmed this and the resultant films were ultimately very precise. We were surprised to discover, however, that the process of producing the film revealed considerable spatial complexity, uncertainty and simultaneity.
Reflecting on the production experience, I was able to identify four distinct types of spatial and temporal conditions within the project: an imaginative space, set space, camera space and image space. While frequently blurred and simultaneous, these four conditions will be discussed separately. For the purposes of discussion these conditions have been explained separately, despite the fact that they were frequently blurred and simultaneous during the course of the project.

**Imagination Space**

In the early pre-production phase there was considerable discussion as to how we might portray the motel and cars, a situation perhaps exaggerated by our slowing down of the process via the rotated script. Each of the collaborators brought to the project their own particular understanding of the motel typology, which was communicated to the others through spoken descriptions, images and filmic references. As this collection grew, it became an assemblage of references that allowed potential interior atmospheres to remain in flux, usefully elusive. In this way, the group was able to form a shared understanding through the exchange and development of conceptual ideas whilst also beginning to establish individual approaches to interior atmospheres for each of the films. It was akin to the heterotopic space discussed by Foucault - space set apart but with multiple connections to other spaces. 12

Broadly, the motel was universally understood by the collaborative group as an everyday typology, something banal, clichéd and rather faded. Despite this collective understanding, improbable desires bled out from the media references imbuing the motel with contradictory qualities of glamour, romance, humour and science fiction. The group willingly accepted these contradictions, and the emerging proposals for the sets existed in the gap somewhere between realism, fiction and imagination.

For us as collaborators, it was an imaginative multiple space that connected the film project to all of our other disconnected spaces, or as Victor Burgin would describe as the ‘space beyond the frame – not the ‘off screen space’...of past, but a space formed from all the many places between cinema and other images in and of everyday life.’ 13

**Set Space**

Once into the production phase, we built a set within the film studio that effectively functioned as a full size motel room. There were walls, windows, most of a bathroom, furniture and props. It was a strange and paradoxical situation. From the back side, the set was revealed as a rough plywood and timber frame construction, the studio equipment, lighting, and tools all fighting for space. Yet within lay an almost complete other world. Stepping into the room through the dutifully realistic door, complete with surrounds, architraves and a ‘Do Not Disturb’ card hanging from the cheap, round door handle, was for a brief moment to believe that you were stepping into a ‘real’ motel room. The arrangement of space, materials and props drew you in. However, closer inspection revealed there was a slight oddness to the detail – close, but not ‘real’. 14 As your gaze was drawn to the periphery, the edges of...
the interior became absolute as the finished set ran out. Here, random equipment rudely ruptured the fabrication, and even more tellingly, the absence of a ceiling revealed the lighting rig of the studio above.

It was an intriguing and finely balanced spatial situation in which physical and representational space were collapsing in upon each other, beyond even the Baudrillardian simulacra representational and physical space were directly present. The set emerged from the heterotopic imaginative space as an undeniable representation of a room. It was a believable yet clearly fictional experience; almost whole yet of another space. The experience was at once distant yet simultaneously functioned as a physical space of occupation, a temporal experience of built set and pragmatic studio. The set of the motel room was built for the camera, while the experience of actually encountering the studio itself was never considered. Yet as Lisa Moran and Sophie Byrne insightfully point out in their discussion of installation art, the very actuality of inhabiting the work ‘highlights how temporal experiences call attention to the precariousness of systems of representation.’

Camera Space

From our discussions we knew that the camera was going to affect the arrangement of the set and the way the set was viewed. For instance, we had scaled up the size of the room to accommodate the focal length of the camera. However, even with a reasonable understanding of still photography, we did not entirely anticipate how absolutely the camera was to occupy and control space during the filming process.

Naively, we took on the task of building a physical set of the motel room which formed a near complete, material whole room. As previously discussed, the set was compelling as it offered the occupant a convincing level of realism; however, it is also not something that we have attempted since. Immediately upon commencement of filming, the room began a continual process of deconstruction and reassembly to accommodate the needs and desires of the camera. Walls, furniture and props were removed and shifted in an endless response to the camera’s blind gaze. Initially a frustrating process, it quickly became exciting to work with the camera and realise we could be light and temporary with the construction of the set and still achieve a highly convincing onscreen reality through constant attention to the position of the camera and framing of the set.
The camera’s ever-present monitor had quite a different transformational effect upon the set. Connected directly to the camera, it provided a live feed of the cinematographer’s view to the rest of the crew. It had a compelling visual presence as the mediated transformation by the camera was immediately revealed and displayed.

For the production crew this was an important and typical piece of equipment, and their interest seemed to lie exclusively in evaluating the quality of the produced image. It enabled the director and cinematographer to technically manipulate the colour, focal length, depth of field, aspect ratio, height angle and movement with exquisite control of the camera. The atmosphere of the interior could be distorted, compressed and expanded at will, manipulating the relationship between set, actors and viewers.

Yet for us as interior designers, to witness the filming process was almost to experience a spatial epiphany. As the monitor resided within the studio, it provided us with a direct comparison between the mediated, highly resolved interior captured onscreen and the somewhat provisional and deconstructed set space that we could see before us. (I think the filmmakers probably overlooked this comparison in their pursuit of the resolved image.)

It was an indeterminate condition, in which neither fictional image space nor immediate studio and set space could be ignored. The terms ‘offscreen’ or ‘out of frame’ are frequently raised within the discourse that surrounds film and image. The space beyond the construct of the frame is frequently talked of as a continuum on which the fictional space of the image exists. Yet here, the image was being inserted back into its production space to form part of the immediate spatial condition and experience. The immediate production space off-screen was actually not so much a hidden extension of fictional space as it was a revelation of the production process and the complexity of mise-en-scène.

A key example of this was a particular shot that required the viewer to look over the shoulder of one of the actors as she examined herself in the bathroom mirror. It was a highly intimate scene within the film and technically a very difficult shot to achieve due to the need to avoid revealing the camera within the reflection of the mirror. It required substantial consideration from designers, filmmakers and cinematographer to achieve the final shot. The bathroom set was increasingly pulled apart to the point that the ‘wall’ mirror was positioned back beyond the walls of the set and fixed to...
a tripod. Meanwhile the camera was pushed back away from the mirror until it also left the set in the opposite direction. The lens selection allowed this physical distance of perhaps ten metres to appear visually close in the final shot, and the peripheral space to be so carefully cropped as to position the viewer in close proximity to the actor. Through experimentation all external intrusion of studio and camera was positioned out of frame. It seemed to work on screen, but physically on set the subsequent angles of reflection meant that the actors, mirror, camera and reflected set had to be repositioned until they ultimately sat in an extremely abstract relation to each other. Within the studio there was no apparent logic to their positioning in space – the arrangement only made sense by viewing the cohesive and resolved spatial image on the monitor.

Screen Space

After the post-production editing process, the Motel project culminated in a 30-minute film triptych. After the post-production editing process, the Motel project culminated in a 30-minute film triptych. The issues of interior and exterior brought to the surface through the scripting process seemed to have had a significant effect upon the filmmakers’ decision-making process, and the group agreed that this quality found expression in the final films. The...
filmmakers had rearranged space and time, and precisely controlled interior and exterior conditions, each with quite different emphasis.

It could be accessed only through the fully mediated space of the screen: composed, resolved and complete. The screen space was far more convincing than the quite provisional nature of the sets, allowing the viewer to suspend belief in the ‘real’ and enter into an absorbing hyperreal space of fiction. In screen space, the layered, uncertain and fragmented nature of the pre-filmic space of studio and location had now been overcome and resolved by the camera.

Cues and Implied Narratives

Much like in the project 3 tonne 'o' space, working in the medium of film required careful and precise crafting of the spatial and temporal narrative in order to build a purposeful interior experience. In both projects we constructed these narratives through the assemblage of various cues and prompts. In the Motel project; however, as soon as we began working in the film studio, the portrayed scenes became considerably more detailed and complete than in our earlier truck installation. Increasingly aware of the revealing scrutiny of the camera and subsequent viewer, we began to pay much closer attention to the props, costumes, finishing of the set and all other aspects of the filmic mise-en-scène. Wherever possible in the film, we attempted to lessen the demands on the viewer to fill in the blanks. This hadn’t been of great concern in the previous truck installation as significant
gaps in the mise-en-scène did not seem to greatly affect the overall experience. Given our interest in how subjective reality is produced both within the ‘real’ everyday and ‘fantastical’ imagination, it is worthwhile considering the differences between the two projects.

The Motel films were trying to offer the viewer a realistic encounter with the motel, cars and highway. Indeed, realism was adopted as a stylistic approach to varying degrees within the films. As well as intercutting studio scenes with location shots, the filmmakers also pushed strongly to achieve as much realism as possible in the materialisation and arrangement of sets, props and costumes. Continuity became an obsession; so much so that one member of the crew was tasked with tracking the continuity of time and space and preventing slips in front of the camera that could prove disruptive for the viewer in the final film. This desire for continuity emerged in spite of the fact that the films were dealing explicitly with themes of time travel, surrealism and humour. It is important to note that here, realism was being used as a creative device. This film was not a realistic portrayal of the everyday, any more than the truck was a real ‘office’.

I would argue that both projects were ultimately about building fiction. Within Motel the role of the interior was to support a fictional narrative, both scripted and implied. But as Tom Gunning argues, we must remember that while film resembles the world, it is only an impression of reality: ‘we are dealing with realism, not reality.’ Filling in the gaps was thus about building a cohesive and purposeful interior experience. It marked an attempt to avoid unintended ruptures in the spatial sequence and temporal duration of the
fictional reality. By carefully building realism through scenic assemblage, it provided atmospheric texture, avoided distraction and ultimately underwrote the fictional. The constructed realism was also convincing enough so as to be adopted by the viewer as ‘real’ therefore allowing a conscious but acceptable shift into an imaginative and fictional space.

Yet despite the viewer or inhabitant’s awareness that both the film and installation are fictional constructions, there is also the intention that they be affected in someway - to be convinced of the experience in the immediate moment while simultaneously relying on reference to something else distant and prior. Again Gunning provides some illumination, reminding us that while representation is about a connection to a recognizable, even prior reality, it is also as much a production of something new: ‘It would be foolish to claim that a photograph cannot be a sign for something …[yet] realism depends on a more complex (and less logical) process of spectator involvement.’18 Involvement on the part of the spectator is key here. For Gunning, film invokes this participation through the quality of movement, which he argues cannot be represented but only directly experienced.

The distinction between reality and realism has proved to be most useful in considering the role of narrative in our own work and interior design more broadly. It has provided an insight into how interiors use narrative, both deliberately and unintentionally, to affect the inhabitant’s experience and how both the actual and the fictional conditions that flow through an interior become entangled.

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Firstly, what seems important is that realism acts as an underwriter of fiction. It engenders disbelief, allowing a convincing enough reality to be produced in the gap between the physical and the imaginative. In this respect, I would argue that an interior can and does act in a similar way to other forms of aesthetic representation; it is convincingly able to sign one thing whilst simultaneously being a quite different other thing in itself. Secondly, it is also important to note that different to many forms of representation an interior requires levels of inhabitation that brings about a bodily participation or involvement. Here, participation has a quality similar in effect to Gunning’s reference to movement in film - it cannot be represented but only directly experienced. The participatory quality of an interior resides with the inhabitant directly; it exists in the moment and is highly performative. Finally, it appears that this contradictory convergence has real emotive effects for the inhabitant even when they are aware of its constructed origins.

This last point is usefully illuminated by Richard Schechner in his broad discussions around performance and performativity. As he points out, our emotional responses to any fictional drama, performance or the like are very much playing out in our physical everyday domain. This is despite our self-awareness and our knowing dis-belief of the construction:

"...the causes issue from one domain of reality – that of artistic production – while the effects happen in another domain, that of emotional response. Spectators are carried away only so far. People allow a watchdog with half an open eye to drowse in the corner of their minds, barely growling that what they are laughing at, or frightened by, or weeping over is "only a play." The situation is paradoxical."

Working on the Motel project provided us with a new and (relatively) heightened awareness of the role of narrative one’s experience of both physical built space and film. Narrative was continually playing with a line between the everyday and fictional reality, which as Schechner points out is never going to be resolved: ‘aesthetic reality’ and ‘daily reality’ coexist, both are different and yet also inevitably informed by the other.

This interplay of different realities was made all the more apparent in production by the simultaneous quality of the built set and the presence of the monitor displaying a live output of the camera view of the set, all which combined to offer up a paradox of physical and representational experience.
The production not only directly immersed the inhabitant within a convincing interior experience but also revealed its contradictions, constructions and limits. It was asking the inhabitant to work for their experience and was the first indication for me as to how the inhabitant might usefully shift their role in the experience from one of passive consumption to active participation.

Conclusion

The Motel project was in many ways a pivotal moment in the research, not least the intensity of the project allowing Roger and I to engage in a consolidating of our practice. It also raised a number of key concerns for the research, including the diagram as an interior design tool that proved to be operative, performative and openly collaborative. Working on a film project allowed for speculation on the relationship between scenographic and image space, both in film and interiors. This brought to the fore an appreciation of the role of narrative, realism and a coexistence of the actual and the fictional in our subjective experiences.

Scripting and Diagrams

The script emerged as a significant tool for slowing down conventional production processes. By destabilising the conventional A4 written page, the script took on a diagrammatic status and became an operative and generative tool. Within the interdisciplinary project, the script activated a process in which spatial and temporal qualities were performatively mapped across the page with interior thinking performatively introduced into the film project. Critically, this allowed narrative complexity to develop and new spatial relationships to form that could then actively be carried into the filmmaking process. Further, through the scenic diagrams we were able to introduce the notion that interior and exterior thresholds are in continual flux and new production. As an approach this was a disrupting tactic, but it was also a way of opening up the design process for the filmmakers. Rather than prescribing fixed interior conditions, we instead used these diagrams to activate an ongoing performative consideration of interior events and actions between filmmakers, cinematographer and actors. We were being empowering rather than controlling in our role as designers. As well as allowing us to test out new collaborative approaches, the use of the diagram forced upon our own practice the need for careful and refined unpacking of interior conditions in order to be able to articulate their role and value to others.

Viewers, Inhabitants and Participants

With hindsight, the compelling atmospheres and evident control of interior conditions that the filmmakers presented in the final films could have become a potential distraction to the primary aims of the research as making practice. The project raised questions for us as interior designers about the static state of much constructed built space, given the dynamic and transformative
ability of film. If the moving image is so successful in manifesting controlled and specific interior conditions, should we as interior designers not start making films? Is film not the absolute mediated interior?

Despite these concerns, we needed to remind ourselves that to directly compare a finished film with the material qualities of a built interior would be to ignore the temporal qualities that flow through any built space. Whilst the finished films told us much about how we as designers worked by allowing us to directly contrast the virtual and the physical mediums, ultimately they were less interesting to us than the actual process of production. It was clear that we were compelled by the simultaneous conditions of studio, set, crew, actors, camera and image, and saw this as a far more interesting avenue to pursue – not least because its complexity and messiness appealed to us much like the equally constructed and informal situation of the street.

Nonetheless, working with the discipline of film did allow us to consider issues of image and representation in relation to interior design. The Motel project revealed how careful manipulation of the mise-en scène could lead to highly composed visual and narrative scenes for the viewer. With reflection, there is an obvious difference here in relation to how we make and think about interior experience. Whilst our work involves similar crafting of the mise-en scène through careful manipulation of scenic cues and devices, the viewer is always an inhabitant; bodily present within the work and participating in the process of positioning, framing and the production of meaning.

An interior brings about a different type of subjectivity from that of the film viewer. Firstly, within an interior there is far less established structure than within a composed film and therefore much more opportunity for decision-making and self-determined experience. Secondly, there is a difference in the means of visual resolution. In films and photographs, the positioning and framing process has taken place with directors and cameras performing a large role in the mediation. The viewer is then left to determine their willingness, or not, to be drawn into the image. In an interior, on the other hand, you are in ‘it’. The process for the inhabitant dependent upon their willingness to be the mediator; to move past the actuality of the mise-en scène they encounter and resolve the visual and narrative scenes of experience for themselves.

Realism

Despite our acknowledgement that the screen-based outcomes of the film were not our main priority, it was nonetheless compelling to witness the transformative affect of camera and post-production on the scenic sets we were making. Working within the studio of the Motel project, it became clear that we were particularly interested in the experience of transitioning between the actual and the virtual interior conditions that were simultaneously occurring on set. This was made present through the controlled construction of the camera, but was also occurring for us as a mediating inhabitant of the sets, studio and general filmic mise-en-scène.

The narrative process, made evident our ability as both viewers and
inhabitants to work as subjective producers in the gap between the actual and the fictional that exist in both our filmic and interior experience. Considering how the direction of props, sets, lighting, camera and performance could be used to build levels of realism and an implied spatial and filmic narrative, led me to speculate on how films can draw a viewer into a credible onscreen experience.

This also allowed for reflection upon the extent to which ideas of narrative and realism play a role in the experience of interiors. I discovered that from the complexity of the interior mise-en-scène, the inhabitant is able to construct an experience that is temporally more compelling and convincing than the actual materiality of the situation. Here, the inhabitant’s active participation engenders disbelief. In this way, I began to consider interiors as a representational medium that can bring about a willing acceptance of fictional scenarios. The key to this seemed to be the interplay of actual and aesthetic realities which, whilst clearly both different, are interconnected and informed by each other.

Simultaneous Production

The production process provided high levels of control over space and atmosphere and thus allowed the screen experience to be deliberate and carefully crafted. Once viewed onscreen, the interior conditions were often compelling and highly resolved.

However, the complexity and temporary nature of the production space was a stark contrast to the subsequent screen space. Within this production space, the monitor was identified as a pivotal tool of comparison between the screen and the studio. It immediately placed the filmic space within the studio and revealed the spatial construction taking place. We were encountering an image while simultaneously being bodily immersed in the production space of that same image. It was an unintentional byproduct of the creative process. In effect, it turned the production space into an immediate performative experience providing an even more compelling simultaneous interior condition than the one encountered singularly, through the screen alone.

This project allowed us to understand the camera’s ability to deconstruct space through its dominant physical occupation of site and carefully selection and framing of various fragments to create a new, cohesive, virtual time and
and space. Significantly for subsequent projects, it encouraged us to construct and make with a new lightness and speed, knowing that the camera was still able to select convincing interiors through clever framing and composition.

While this spatial transformation was greatly heightened by the camera, it was not exclusively dependent upon it. Significantly, this transformation brought to the fore our own individual encounters with the set and studio. Within the studio, we were able to experience our own ability to select and exclude various material and virtual conditions through temporary, internalised processes of assembly. This was occurring in three ways: through a visual framing that was strongly connected to the gaze; through negotiation with the physical and virtual conditions, such as arrangement, cues and atmospheres; and lastly, by interiorising the situation, placing oneself into the scene.

This project was a reminder that we, too, could mediate. Proof that we could build sufficient spatial realism from the temporarily constructed set and willingly enter into an interior condition; an acceptance of the fiction, an experience reliant upon a knowing disbelief. What was also important to note was that as inhabitants we were made aware of this process through the simultaneous conditions of the mise-en-scène. It revealed that a direct bodily encounter brings about a different level of actuality to that encountered on screen. I would argue that there is more opportunity here to reveal the means of scenic production and include the inhabitant in the determination of experience. It was an early indication of how an internalised and subjective process of visual assembly can occur from the shared and collective space that is actually encountered. This level of subjectivity has an affect on the production of interior experience: a process of becoming that mediates between material and virtual conditions.
This installation, located at studio 1 Australian Centre for the Moving Image, Melbourne, explored the time/space relations depicted in the project titled Motel: a triptych of short films by the interdisciplinary team David Carlin, Paul Ritchard, Christine Rogers, Anthony Fryatt and Roger Kemp.

One of the aims of the Motel project has been to explore the creative potential of interdisciplinary collaboration; for the film-makers, working with interior designers rather than a specialist film production designer, as would usually be the case, has provoked a challenge to the way the film scripts have been developed and interpreted before the film triptych was shot, and enabled fresh perspectives on key aesthetic and stylistic production issues.

The distinct conceptual approach the interior designers bring to the concept of interior, in particular, has meant that the process of visualizing the film’s settings has expanded into a dialogue as to how this idea of interior can be brought to bear on the narrative themes of intimate connection and distance that run through the triptych.

For the interior designers, working in the hitherto unfamiliar realm of film production has prompted new perspectives on the idea of interior that is by definition central to their practice and research. These are; the use and production of narrative in forming interiors, the camera as a spatial mediator, the relation between interior and image, and the implication of time, duration and distance in interior environments.
Reflective speculations

Following on from the production and post-production phases of the Motel we again embarked on a process of critical reflection through a process of further making. This was a similar response to the earlier reflective Carry-on project; projects were folding into each other with clear starts and ends becoming blurred in a continuous process of making. While we were reflecting upon the previous project we were equally trying to resist an approach that simply documented or re-presented conclusions in a new format. Rather, the approach was to actively work with ideas in a more speculative way: to consolidate but also progress the thinking through the production of new work.

As interior designers, we were very interested in the project’s ability to generate a research outcome – probably more so than the filmic outcomes that would be produced. The group agreed to consider both the conventional post-production of the films and other more speculative reflections upon the project. Our interest in what arose from Motel focused on two primary areas: the strategy of the ‘rotated script’ and the unpacking of the spatial conditions within the production space.

Throughout this period of critical reflection, our conversations took place through an exchange of drawings and models. The work included reworkings of the rotated script and graphic assemblages of the storyboard; both of which adopted the media of print and moving image. There were also small scenic models as well as the subsequent built scenic installation itself. All the work used quite different techniques and media, but could arguably be tied together by discussing them through the concept of the diagram.
Diagrammatic speculation

Having recognised the diagrammatic qualities of our work, Roger and I were yet to identify its role or status in our collaborative practice. However, the concept of the diagram emerged early in our collaboration through Carry-on and was again employed as a key tool for exploring and representing interior thinking. This shared concern with the diagram seemed to stem from both of our previous interests in drawing and making. We valued it as a technique for fast and productive exchanges of ideas and used the diagram to tease out and capture our understanding of interior conditions within our work. Through a process of abstraction, the diagram allowed us to reveal spatial qualities and organising forces, to establish relationships and reveal hidden systems or logics. The diagram is understood as a speculative device a

But we also must remember that the diagram is a propositional tool, and argue that the diagrams that we produce do not simply aim to simplify and transcribe earlier learning – a kind of prior truth – but in fact attempt to provoke speculation and production of the new.

I have identified a few distinct types of diagrams, all of which play a prominent role in the project at ACMI:

Firstly, there are the hybrid diagrammatic drawings and models that originally emerged in Carry-on. These seemed to be largely concerned with the arrangement of spatial relationships through abstracted spatial representation.

In this project two key examples are discussed:
1. A small-scale scenic model that becomes activated through bodily participation; and
2. The large-scale installation as a performative inhabitable experience.

The second type of diagram is quite different: the rotated script, a text-based deconstruction that attempts to activate new relationships. In this phase of work I propose that the newly revised rotated script was used and experienced in three different ways:

- The complete rotated script as a printed artefact: the diagram becomes a textually deconstructed image, a visually layered surface, which through contemplation by its users performatively activates an interiorised mapping of relationships.

- Fragmented storyboards of script and film events: the diagram is used to bring together the scripted relations with the perceived space of the filmic mise-en-scène. Text, image and drawing techniques become layered to build complexity. Importantly, attention was directed towards particular interior events within the films.

- Fragmented moving images overlaid on spatial installation: occupying the diagram as inhabitable space. The diagram is actively producing and becoming part of the immediate spatial experience.

Layers, surface, densities
Although everyone involved showed considerable interest in the rotated script, we shared a certain frustration that time constraints had not allowed the working concept to properly develop. We decided to continue reworking earlier versions, and to transform the working drawing into something more polished and resolved. We built up the layers of text to resemble a more complex graphic assembly. Once identified as significant, words were then scaled and transformed according to their importance.

This new version of the rotated script was a deconstruction: a separation of the original A4 script into individual layers of text that each had their own particular priority or logic, based on distance, time, action, object or narrative theme. When collated together in a dense layering of text, the spatial complexities and potential relationships within the triptych were revealed.

While our work had quite different outcomes, clear references can be traced to the work that John Warwicker, and the visual design collective Tomato, undertook for the electronic band Underworld. Here, Warwicker sought to break down modernist conventions through the creation of dense, semi-legible textual narratives, the visual complexity of which challenged the authority of textual meaning and linear flow.

The effect of this deconstructive approach upon our own work was that the script, now visually much denser, no longer relied on the use of drawn linear connections, as seen within the previous edition. The rotated script now existed as a highly layered, complex surface that
was performing as a propositional diagram. In the script’s first iteration, the participatory and performative qualities had complicated and activated the filmmaking process. The script had demanded new decisions and reorganisation from the filmmakers. It prompted a mapping activity by the group that was drawn directly onto the page as an overlay. In this newer version, previously explicit relationships were now left implied. The viewer was left to fully resolve the implications of these coalesced layers, and to individually interpret the densities that formed across the surface of the page. This diagram encouraged the viewer to assume a participatory role, in which they were asked to make various narrative and editorial readings of the script – just as we had asked of the filmmakers when challenging them with the initial rotated script.

Diagramming Event

The project team was excited about the visual quality of the script, particularly the manner in which it produced textual density. Roger began to extend this through a series of further diagrams in which he isolated sections of the script and then combined them with the corresponding film stills. Text and image were overlaid and spatial relations traversed the page between scenes and isolated snippets of text. Again, the work prioritised the building of complexity through layering. It strongly recalls the fascination we both shared with the highly layered maps of James Corner.

We were using the diagram to bring together the scripted spatial and temporal relations with the perceived space of the filmic mise-en-scène. It became a kind of fragmented storyboard of script and film, which was attempting to break down ideas of space, duration and continuity. Importantly, we were attentive to the identification and representation of encounter and event. We recognised that the interior conditions were emerging and receding, either subtly or abruptly, from the events taking place within the screen. We frequently referred to storyboarding when discussing our work and within our teaching. Another key reference here was Bernard Tschumi’s The Manhattan Transcripts in terms of how these attempted to represent the complex relationship between the space of the city and its inhabitation and use.

Partly, these new diagrams were an analysis of filmic outcomes. We certainly found the extent to which the filmmakers were actively using ideas of interiority within their films to be very exciting. While these drawn diagrams
JULIE is watching keenly. Scarcely looking away, he puts on a headset and taps on the computer keyboard. He is streaming the video images live onto the web, with himself in the low-res image. 

On the black and white screen, the jug is plugged in and ready to go. The man is sitting in the chair, with a pair of cotton trousers on his lap. One half of it is held by the woman's hand, which is resting on the bed. She is smiling down at her knickers. 

The camera continues to pull back and slowly moves around and small models are arranged in the background. 

The screen on the laptop in the room is turned off, with the red light flashing. 

JULIE is emphasizing heavily with his black and white eyes. He seems to be have an awkward smile.
allowed us to unpack and explain the ideas of interior production that we were identifying in the films, we also sensed that they were not just explanatory but also new and propositional. It was about producing new filmic events to be encountered through still image. Importantly for us, the drawings became a bridge from the scripted diagram – which existed as a printed, text-based graphic artefact – to the layered mixed media experience of the diagram as inhabitable installation.

Fixed representations, mobile potential

At an early stage in the reflective making process, we made a number of small-scale diagrammatic models to examine the complexity of the relationships identified within the studio, which I have previously defined as imagination space, set space, camera space and screen space.

One of these models was an examination of the mirror shot in Motel, as previously discussed. The group referred to it as the ‘triple mirror reflection’ because of the complexity and highly fragmented relationships that it produced in the studio. This small model became the basis for the primary arrangement of the scenic installation at ACMI.

The model was essentially a small-scaled abstraction of the set and attempted to explain the complexity of the triple mirror reflection. Simply made, it was understood as a sketch to capture our thinking around the experience of production. As in the studio, the walls of the model became fragmented through the careful introduction of relevant parts of the set. Equally, the
mirror was pushed back beyond its perceived location. The dominance of the camera was established: positions, lens angle, depth of field and framing lines were overlaid as drawings, and the monitor was referenced in proximity. The image space became a materialised frame behind and to the left of the camera. It revealed the reflected depth of the shot and established the extent of the set captured by the image. Locations of actors were alluded to through drawn lines of reflection that the mirror offered up between camera and actor.

As a diagram it was considerably more representational than the approach taken in the script. On initial examination, the diagram appeared as a simplified approximation: a schema of the spatial relations between set, camera and image. It was a substantiation of the camera’s control. However, if you persisted and picked up the small model, then this physical manipulation allowed you to position yourself in relation to the modeled space. Now if you moved around the diagram as a viewer and positioned yourself in the plane of the camera’s view, and then with some careful adjustment registered your gaze upon the frame, then the model revealed itself by offering up a resolved and complete ‘image’ of the mirror located in the correct plane of the wall.

It became clear that the model was no longer simply representing the arrangement in the production space. Despite the compelling resolution of view from the fixed point in space, this diagram was less interested in resolving views than in revealing the incongruous condition of the set when viewed from other positions in space. Its diagrammatic potential became activated through the viewer’s bodily participation, revealing the potency of mobility through the production of a vantage point. Here, image and body become interconnected with the production and disintegration of image occurring via a form of bodily engagement. While this model was indisputably using techniques of representation, it was not attempting to represent a priori, but rather was more concerned with the production of new and immediate relations. The indeterminacy of the model overcame ideas of logic, it became a performative model that made evident the embodied the experience of the complex and dualistic production space.

Inhabitable diagram, indeterminate atmospheres

The camera dominated the approach, cinematographer absorbed in the machine. To his right a small monitor displayed an unusually sharp image of a couple talking on a bed, some indeterminate objects framing them. Following the gaze of the camera through a crisp timber frame the space seemed to start disintegrating into a complex layered confusion until my eye arrived at an image emerging out of the darkness. It was the same film of the couple talking but now they seemed distant and faded.

In its rich documentation of the Motel project, the reflective project at ACMI embodied exhibition-like qualities. The group certainly wanted to disseminate the Motel project to a wider audience; however, as interior designers our overriding motivation was to further explore the experience of the production space. In doing so, Motel elevated the processes of production to a position deserving of attention. Placing significance on these processes as research outcomes, this represented a firm departure from the conventional
emphasis on filmic outcomes.

We immediately discussed the project in terms of an experiential installation. It was our attempt to offer the inhabitant an experience of the uncertainty and simultaneity that we had encountered within the production space. Essentially, the first design move was to upscale the original diagrammatic model to a 1:1 inhabitable size. We immediately began to refer to it as a kind of inhabitable diagram.

The installation sat within a larger conference, whose conveners had managed to secure the studio for a very limited time to host a plenary session. Opportunistically, we proposed to run a public talk, with the ambitious promise that we could also build an accompanying exhibition/installation. The response had been positive but the caveat of the single-day timeframe remained. On reflection, these restrictions were conceptually perfectly suited the emerging mobility and lightness of our practice.

The installation also seemed to act as a catalyst for developing the conceptual and material strategy for the project. Another key decision was to embrace the studio environment. Strategically, our approach was to incorporate the aesthetic of the studio. Materially, we borrowed from the language of the film sets. All the large elements were constructed using a lightweight timber frame and ply skin. This material combination emerged from the lightness of construction that we had increasingly embraced during production. Easy to transport and fast to install, it was perfectly suited to the speed of the installation. Rather than bracing from the back, we decided to partially
suspend the frame from the ceiling grid, which conveniently would also handle the theatrical lighting. Additionally, we introduced multiple pieces of AV equipment including cameras, tripods and stands, which would be playing an active role in the arrangement.

Upon entering the studio, visitors found a camera arranged in relationship to a large timber frame. The camera was set up, fixed and locked off in the ‘key vantage’ point with the image feeding into an adjacent monitor. It immediately presented visitors with a resolved and framed view deep into the installation arrangement. The camera looked through to the ply ‘mirror’ which now had cuts of the final film projected onto it, and effectively flattened the layered space. The monitor presented the installation to visitors as a resolved image and firmly positioned them in the role of viewer.

As the visitors moved into the installation beyond; however, the experience shifted almost immediately. The installation was a complex, layered arrangement of film sets, which in turn were overlaid with prints, photographs, drawings, text, props and process models. Throughout the installation they encountered multiple screens, either projected right onto the sets or in banks of monitors. They played a slow, mesmerising sequence of edited film and moving graphics; fragmented and fleeting, the images fading in and out in a continuous loop.

In terms of the arrangement, the inhabitant was deliberately exposed to both the front and back of the scenic sets. The direction of the finished or unfinished face varied; once visitors were within the installation there was no clear orientation or obviously correct sequence to seek direction from.

We also played upon the temporary aspects of the installation in building the atmospheric experience. Our decision to borrow the studio aesthetic meant that no absolute boundaries existed between the work and the studio. While the installation was carefully crafted and considered, there was a sense of the work as being in progress; painting left unfinished, drawing marks from construction and tape on the floor. Adding to the indeterminate state of the installation was the impression that the makers seemed to be in a process of production; ongoing adjustments to sets and cameras were all part of the experiment. It provided the installation with a curiously provisional atmosphere.

The rotated script was also a significant aspect of the installation. Projected directly onto select parts of the set, fragments of the layered graphic could be seen moving across scenes taken from the films; the scripted text converged with image. In another part of the installation, a large-scale print of the complete rotated script was used as a visual backdrop to a multi-track audio work, in which cut-up dialogue from the films could be heard through several speakers. It provided no clear linear narrative; instead the fragmentation invited participatory speculations and narrative assemblies.

To follow the trajectory of the script’s development is revealing. In the context of a public installation, the script assumes new significance and departs from its earlier screen-based filmic priorities. In Motel the script is understood as a tool that activates a collaborative mapping process,
introducing performative methods to the development of a performance-based production. In ACMI the role of the script expands; as we reveal the production space to the viewer, we capitalise on the script’s increased participatory qualities to draw in the inhabitant and ask that they participate in the production of experiential and narrative meaning through the layering of the script over the images, films and built scenic elements of the installation.

Crucially the script become integral to the experience of the installation both as a visual artifact for consideration but also a generator for the manner in which information layers and arranged through the installation. It engendered a diagrammatic approach to the curation of the documented work as a means of fostering complexity of narrative structure and open meaning within the experience.

ACMI Conclusion

A significant development within this project was the intentional production of simultaneous and indeterminate interior conditions using techniques of image and diagram. Both are contributing to a performative condition in which the viewer or inhabitant must shift into the role of participant.

Within the work, images are being simultaneously produced from the installation while also forming an integral part of the experiential encounter. This awareness of the interior as a producer of image – not only through media tools such as the camera but also through immediate subjective production – is increasingly being understood as a central concern to the research.

A key technique in the production of images is an accumulation of complexity through the introduction of fragments and layers, using a variety of different material and mediums. This complexity then invites the viewer to resolve the image through ideas of framing and assemblage, which in this case was occurring in a structured way via the camera and subjectively by the participant.

Increasingly, we recognised the diagram as a significant technique of the practice. We identified various modes and scales of work as having
a diagrammatic aspect, from drawing to installation. Not only does the
diagram act as a critical design tool but it is also a generative producer of
the new. Through building layered, complex graphic surfaces and spatial
arrangements, the diagram avoids prior determination and instead allows
participants to produce new convergences.

Central to both the issue of the image and the diagram is the inhabitant’s
performative and bodily involvement through an open, layered arrangement.
By giving attention to positioning and framing, the participant is physically
drawn from the periphery into the experience. This activates their spatial
relationship to the installation while also implicating their body in the overall
experience for others.

Lastly, the speed of the installation project also saw us deliberately adopt
scenic approaches. Not only does this approach allow us to work in a light
and temporary way within existing locations, it also allows us to imply
narrative references to other spaces through materiality and visual signs.
Performative Participation,
Subjective Production
Having undertaken the design of a number of full size scenic sets for film and TV we were keen to progress the research agenda through a different type of project. There was some concern that the manner in which we were responding to these film and TV projects was becoming repetitious, that despite a greater refinement of the outcomes there was now less insight being brought to the research. In addition it was felt we should move away from projects that were responding to other researchers motivations, to reduce external influences and consider what form the research might take in response to more esoteric, self set project briefs.

This third phase consisted of three self reflective projects. Two of which, Complexity and Fullness and Fast/Slow Transition were smaller scenographic models – these both can be understood as iterations of similar techniques and ideas, and will be discussed as such – the other project was an intermediary scenic installation, Display Tactic which took the form of a larger 1:1 inhabitable built work. As an outcome it was perhaps less successful and such is only briefly discussed as a contrast to the other models.

Despite a desire to change up the nature of our work the design projects in this phase intentionally still took on a scenographic approach, there were though some differences to the film and TV sets. We were now far more intent on examining the design processes of our collaboration, in this sense the projects became a place within the design process to converse between ourselves and were reflective upon how our practice of interior making had developed. Equally it became apparent that this new work was destined for gallery environments and thus needed to anticipate a direct and physical...
encounter rather than being primarily experienced via a camera and screen.
This led us to shift to a smaller and more controllable scale of work in
Complexity and Fullness and Fast/Slow Transition in order to raise the level
of material complexity and gain more control over the finishing of the work.

In the work a consistent technique was to bring together a number of implied
urban scenarios, images and built elements. The urban scenarios became
highly abstracted in arrangement and form, as various different spatial
scenarios were brought together through an underlying diagrammatic logic.
Further, the building of complexity through scenic elements resulted in a
heavy layering of images, frames and mirrors. The material resolution shifted
from the carefully refined to the apparently in process or unfinished, while
fragmented scenic elements implied a potentially imminent rearrangement
was possible if desired.

Complexity, layering and lack of clear resolution meant that the work resisted
didactic or absolute meaning. Instead it attempted to draw inhabitants into
an intimate encounter, inviting them to resolve their own relationship with
the work through bodily and imaginative negotiation. The aim was to unpack
our collaborative design process both for ourselves and also for others who
encountered the work, to engage and implicate them as inhabitants in the
production of interior experience. In this way the work shifted their role to
one of active participant, their interior an act of becoming.2

The term becoming here refers to the
interior as being in flux, becoming through a continual
process of making relations. It was adopted by us in
response to the exhibition An Interior Affair: A
State of Becoming which brought together a number
of interior designers and artists from around the
world. It was a component of the conference Interior:
A State of Becoming IDEA Symposium hosted by
Curtin University’s Interior Architecture program.

2
Urban Medium

As well as being interested in exploring interior making through diagrammatic and scenographic techniques we were also keen to further consider the production of interior experience within an urban context. Both of us had observed how retail experience seemed to be blurring with the wider urban surrounds. In writing the proposal for Complexity and Fullness, Roger and I had decided to go for a walk through the Melbourne Central shopping complex and surrounding areas. What we observed was the distinct porosity of the complex. This permeability, combined with the way people were occupying space, certainly made for a clear interchange between the deliberately constructed space of retail and the often improvised realm of everyday urban space.

Cues and references were layering up: escalators, the archetypal sign of the mall, landed on the street pavement, seamlessly connecting flows. Materially, thresholds became deep, pavement became mall became pavement. Signage, advertising and media were everywhere; a public transport tram cut through the scene, momentarily framing a group of skaters with an advert. A food court was cantilevered out over the street, beneath which a street trader was cooking up a roaring trade from an improvised stall.

Rather than enforcing a strong commercial / public divide, both had effectively become a continuation of the other. We became taken by Rem Koolhaas statement “everything is melting into shopping”3 It seemed to capture our own thoughts upon the commercial permeability of the urban where inevitably all space, activity and meaning seemed to be co-opted and geared towards forms of shopping. What resonated with me about this statement was the clarity of the metaphor, everything is to be melted, design included. Society consumed was already an inevitability and so now the question posed was how as designers could we operate within this contradiction; are we corporate consultants, critics or cultural surfers?4 I am not convinced that claiming to be external to the system, working from within or perhaps in the flow is going to fundamentally change much with this situation, the inevitability could indeed be just that. There is however some reason for optimism that with a more critical approach to the situation of mediation design could begin to empower the individual a level of ‘semi-autonomy’5 That by offering some limit to the totality of interior experience we can at least allow an opening for tactical opportunity, for everyday creative production, an interior becoming and a momentary and delicious degree of subjectivity.

It had become apparent to us in 3 Tonne ‘o’ Space that we were effectively experiencing the city as a series of encounters. It was a situation in which the physical and the temporal coexisted. By acknowledging the condition of flux we in turn acknowledged the role of the individual engaged in a continual process of making relations, the urban experience as something in continual production6 We began use the term ‘urban medium’, it was a way of referring to the city as a continuous and in between space. A site for activity and medium for everyday creative acts.7

We were interested in learning from these observations of the urban medium
and our aim was to further understand how an encounter with the physical and spatial qualities of our work could trigger, structure, even disrupt this making of relations, and engaged in a more meaningful way with the temporal nature of interior design. In earlier work we had identified that a performative occupation of urban space was being structured through both formal and informal interior encounters. We speculated that in these encounters different types of display were being used to bring about a variety of social, informational and commercial modes of exchange. We wanted to use this latest work to reflect on how display and exchange could be further understood relative to our practice and more widely the discipline of interior design. It was at this point we wrote the following abstract as a provocation for the project Complexity and Fullness. It brought together these ideas of display, encounter and exchange within an urban medium and effectively became a motivating aim for his phase of projects.

At the heart of reciprocal exchange between people lie the twin drives of desire and sacrifice: one person’s desire for an object, and another’s willingness to give up (sacrifice) the object for that desire or its representation (another object or token). Retail space, although having a very specific intent — that of consumption — is a complex and full experience. It actively uses spatial experience, personal interaction, still and moving image, text and other devices to engage and activate its occupants.

Within this complex medium, the act of ‘display’ plays a pivotal role in the early seduction and subsequent desire that fuels the social and monetary exchanges upon which commerce ultimately relies. Understood in the broadest sense, display becomes an arresting spatial tactic and site of encounter that is complex and multi-layered in nature. The active condition of ‘display’ not only as conveyer of information or conspicuous presentation but also as a significant moment in the access to and engagement in an interior that is in constant production through a process of exchange: a state of becoming.

8 Neil Cummings and Marysia Lewandowska, The Value of Things (Bud: Birkhauser 2000).
9 Ibid.
Complexity and Fullness was a creative work made for a group exhibition at Form Gallery, Perth in 2012. The exhibition was part of a conference that called for a response to “the world of interior as a state of constant and dynamic becoming”\(^\text{11}\)

The work was highly speculative and set out to explore ideas of display and exchange within the urban medium using techniques and ideas that had developed from the previous projects.

In a departure from the large-scale construction that had been a feature of the scenic sets, we agreed that this work should instead take the form of an assembled scale model – not dissimilar to the earlier Carry On. Beyond the pragmatics of transporting the work to Perth, we wanted to drop down in size to allow for more investment in the crafting of the model, while also being able to work quickly and more fluidly as the ideas unfolded. The written proposal and the more intimate scale of the model served as the only pre-planned parts of the project.

Improvised Progression

We embarked on the project with no fixed plans - it was to be a process of improvised development through making. We started with the scenario of encountering a retail display while moving through the urban medium. There was also some conversation about the size of the work. As is so frequently the case in our practice, an element from an earlier project made the decision for us. In this case, the ply ‘mirror’ from the installation at ACMI was opportunistically chosen to serve as the baseboard for the model.\(^\text{12}\) Not much else was discussed. Some new smaller elements were quickly made, working without plan on a shared table. Things began to move across to the ply board. Tentative arrangements were made. Conversation would occur. As one element was made and located, it would frequently inspire a number of others to follow, often by the other designer.

At a certain point in the process this early phase of free play seemed to reach a limit in usefulness. The work was becoming too open with too many competing ideas playing out. We recognised that there needed to be a moment of reorganisation. The work was evaluated against our initial ideas of display, encounter and exchange. In assessing the key elements we identified that we were modeling a scenario akin to a shop window, which was point of encounter within a wider context of street, mall and store. Using a framework that harked back to ideas explored in Carry On we considered how the model structured movement and encounter via approach, engagement and departure. This allowed us to establish a certain spatial logic across the board in relation to the window. Clearing the board of all the fragments, we made

\(^{12}\) See images on p173.
diagrammatic drawings straight onto the pre-painted ply. Refinement of the fragments then recommenced.

The visual complexity of elements grew - a mirror was positioned in relation to the drawn diagram, pushing the diagram back out in a new direction. More lines were added. We introduced narrative references through printed images and words. In a desire to thicken up the scene, we started to borrow elements from the Carry On project. Through this technique of assemblage we were building visual density: a series of small frames, alluding to a highly abstracted shop front, directed your line of sight through the work. Fore, middle and background were interplaying together, building spatial and visual relationships that could be assembled as images of interiority. Through visual cues it had began to structure our gaze, spatially position us and yet in doing so did not entirely complete the view. If anything as the model developed it moved away from resolution, there was now sufficient complexity in the model that it began to offer up multiple possibilities. It required active consideration by us to resolve potential scenes. It was drawing us in allowing for a virtual occupation, but its fragmented and diagrammatic quality resisted certainty as to what these scenes exactly were.

We brought in a camera to capture these scenes, it immediately recalled the camera monitor present on the film set. The resulting images were composed, rich and increasingly suggestive of complex urban conditions. We printed these out immediately and placed them back into the model. This was a direct reference to the simultaneous role of the monitor within the studio. In framing up the images it made apparent and heightened to us the process of
Image: Point of hinge, with abstract retail display in foreground.
positioning and selection that we were experiencing ourselves. Importantly, the camera also began to affect the arrangement of the scenic model as we adjusted the fragments in an attempt to tighten the visual composition. The use of the camera established intensities of fragments and vantage points that persisted through our ongoing development of the work. Both model and camera were affecting each other, and even if this relationship in its pursuit of imagery was slightly contrived, it was revealing and structuring the quality of encounter experienced by us and subsequent inhabitants of the work.

Not everything proceeded with such neat agreement. I struggle to recall any clear disputes between us within any of the projects; however, that is not to say we always understood each another, or completely agreed about the direction of the work. Quite frequently, I would make something and lay it onto the board, only for it to be appropriated to some other trajectory that Roger was pursuing. Sometimes this worked and the new direction was adopted; at other times ideas were reversed. On occasion Roger or I doggedly pursued the original idea until it ‘won out’ over the attempted appropriation. More typically though, we would put aside our uncertainty in the other’s idea and place trust in the new direction – a willing step into the unknown.

As a process, this in some way reflects the ways in which complexity, relationships and negotiation are built within the urban medium. Some levels of the project are laid down strategically – such as the thematic ideas of display and the urban – while other elements tactically respond to what is occurring around them in the development process. It is a playful, social way to work but is also very productive. It allows genuine complexity to be generated as each designer is required to respond to the levels of uncertainty and influence that come from collaboration. The improvised approach also has the great advantage of allowing us to be in the work, experiencing the interior in production and making decisions as we design. In this way, it becomes a performative situation.

In the Round

Having progressed the design process to a point where we could better understand our own spatial relationship to the scenic model, we realised that we needed to spread out and move into a larger room. This indicates a significant tactic in our practice. On some level the deliberate positioning of the camera prompted this, however, we have always preferred to work in the round. In a larger space we could move around, step back, and then enter into the work – more actively occupying the design process. We passed string lines through the work; the rear faces of the scenic elements were reconsidered and became new front faces. New lines were drawn and interestingly, the work started to venture off the board. Material elements were positioned like satellites around the centre assemblage. They took on different forms: partial frames like some odd surveying equipment; pieces of display that referenced elements in the centre; arrows directing the viewer to a distant and now significant map pin. As well as referencing the centre elements, these lines also frequently constructed relationships between each other, directing the eye in and out of the work, drawing the viewer and the surrounding room into the work.

The work was now becoming more considered and crafted. Elements had been remade and new material introduced, bringing a certain reflective gloss
to the work. When it came to deciding how the work was to be displayed, we chose not to show the work on a plinth. Instead, we constructed legs for the elements, raising the work from table height to an elevation that encouraged a standing crouch. The work was repositioned into a gallery space and its elements were fine-tuned. Once again we photographed the work from different vantage points, extracting several resolved images from the work. In a final gesture, we outputted these images on a small dye-sublimation printer. The kind of test prints that you might encounter on a photo shoot: the images were small but visually very sharp and became compelling and curious artefacts. These were stacked along the length of a cantilevered outrigger in order to allude to a highly linear storyboard: simultaneously depicting the work while also becoming a part of the work. The images came to embody a subtle disruption of time and space.

Through reworking and continual crafting, the work had become detailed and intimate, and yet somewhat contradictory. The newfound openness of its field-like arrangement meant that it occupied an area of approximately four square metres and could be described as a model, diagram, prototype or – given its arrangement – perhaps even a small installation.

With regard to our design process and the subsequent gallery encounter the work was now beginning to operate as it should: not just framing images but demanding active participation. It was moving from a representational mode of rendering interiors to a speculative diagrammatic machine. The scenic model was an operative device that not only directed you inwards to its scenic imagery but also invited you to make new occupations of itself and the
surrounds, to speculate on what and where your interior experience might be.

Doha Diversions

An invitation to Doha to make a project as part of a conference workshop allowed us to further explore spatial and interpersonal relationships of display and exchange within an urban medium. Our aim was to continue ideas developed in *Complexity and Fullness* by exploring ideas of urban encounter and exchange and through techniques of diagrams and scenography. With a group of students from the Virginia Commonwealth University in Qatar (VCUQ), we set out to discover scenarios of interest and bring them together through the production of a large inhabitable diagrammatic installation.

Unsurprisingly, the field observations in Doha revealed that some decidedly different cultural strategies and tactics were being deployed, not least of which was the way space was being used to reinforce and subvert distinct social systems. We narrowed our focus to include three conditions. The first of which was the car, which embodied strong social hierarchies both inside and out. Second were the souks and bazaars, which offered intimate, pedestrianised retail trade. Third were the ever-present Samsung smart phones, which seemed to fragment and mediate both distant and intimate social exchanges.

The installation *Display Tactics* was constructed as a low elevated walkway in the grounds of Muthaf Museum of Contemporary Art. The walkway, which was built from full sheets of ply timber, was used by us to establish...
an abstracted diagram of the spatial relationships we had observed. It was a response to a series of diagrammatic drawings developed from our initial observational studies. The ply arrangement made use of rotations, mirroring and asymmetry in the plan of the walkway in an attempt to build spatial complexity.\textsuperscript{13}

Upon this ply arrangement we began to position ourselves and the students. It allowed us to speculate and converse about what we had observed and then through drawing and models analyse a series of experiences, including the social exchanges occurring within and in relation to the car, different retail exchanges including shops, car drive-ins and a shoeshine kiosk. In this way through the process of building the installation we were also scripting performative exchange. We began to build and add various additions to installation that established, reinforced and destabilised interior relationships. The walkway acted to divert and direct movement, while elements such as built-in seating and viewing frames positioned where and how people stood, sat and looked.

However despite our understanding of the installation as an abstract diagram or device for generating performative engagement with reflection the final installation was too representational. Participation by others became too literal and scripted – sit here; look through there etc. It failed to properly incite possibility or speculation because its spatial events were too easy to anticipate.

We did; however, have successes with the project particularly when we started to introduce a series of small mirrors into the installation. Initially drawing from the materiality of Complexity and Fullness, these mirrors became a reference to the auto mirrors and variously tinted and transparent window surfaces of cars. We realised that as people in cars negotiated their way around the city and through the many drives in kiosks of Doha these reflective surfaces were being used tactically by occupants to observe and exchange with others, it seemed a highly refined social interaction in a city experience dominated by cars and roads.

The shape of the mirrors we used directly referenced the screen shape of the newest Samsung phone, which seemed to be Qatar’s latest device of choice. The use of these mirrors was a reference both to the prevalence of these devices but also the mediating role that the phone played in the social scenarios we were observing. The immediacy of image production and capability to directly display them on the screen or share with others meant that time and space was becoming fragmented and complicated. The phone was being used not just to bring other spaces into the immediate scene but also because everyone was using them in continuous and productive way offer up different visual narratives of the same encounter to each other.

Having laser-cut a number of Samsung screen blanks from mirror, we inserted them into the installation, either in precise relation to the seating and viewing positions or mounted in a linear sequence along the walkway. Variously angled, these mirrors began to visually complicate and fracture sightlines with each encounter. Being small and fixed in space, they required proximity and subtle body positioning to make sense. They drew in fragments of the
Images: Mirrors engage and produce social exchange and fragmented views of installation and site.

installation, other inhabitants and the surrounding site to produce fleetingly interior images. Much like the phone and rear-view mirror, the mirrors produced temporary relations and enabled different, less obvious exchanges to occur. Framed on the mirrored screen, the interior experience of the installation was brief, seductive and immediate. The mirrors were drawing in the participant, inviting performative responses, and through the framing of temporary image they produced experiences that were far more unexpected than the more obvious encounters with the larger built parts of...
fleetingly interior images. Much like the phone and rear-view mirror, the mirrors produced temporary relations and enabled different, less obvious exchanges to occur. Framed on the mirrored screen, the interior experience of the installation was brief, seductive and immediate. The mirrors were drawing in the participant, inviting performative responses, and through the framing of temporary image they produced experiences that were far more unexpected than the more obvious encounters with the larger built parts of the installation.

This visual fragmentation began to capitalise on the scenic qualities of the installation. Our confidence in producing work that is very incomplete and unenclosed to the point of being skeletal, meant that the installation became visually very transparent. This transparency allowed layers of the installation and surrounding site to build up in the reflected images. In some respects, the mirrors overcame the linearity of the walkway.

*Display Tactics* proved to be of mixed value to the research. It was useful in progressing ideas and became a bridge and precursor to the next project. It also allowed us to explore the urban medium through the lenses of display and exchange. We gained further confidence in our ability to design convincingly with a pared-back, incomplete scenic language. However, with the exception of the mirrored elements, the work struggled to engage and bring about meaningful interior participation. The scale was definitely an issue, and despite our love of working fast it is now clear that we attempted too much. We struggled to build enough visual complexity using the materials or the time we had. The work was further complicated by its location in a garden. Our previous work had borrowed from its urban surrounding, using it as a background layer. Here, against the strangely lush gardens, it looked more like a landed object. The installation needed to be located within a built-up urban context. Ultimately, this project had too many conflicting priorities and too little detail to genuinely draw people into a compelling or sustained experience.
Quick/Slow Transition

Quick/Slow Transition was produced for a group exhibition of interior designers at Bus Projects Gallery in Melbourne. There was a desire to produce a conclusive work that pulled together the different aspects of Complexity and Fullness and Display Tactics. In particular, this new project became a continuation of Complexity and Fullness displaying a strong likeness to the previous scenic diagram in terms of scale, materiality and techniques.

At the outset of the project, we were still concerned with exploring ideas of display and exchange; however, as the title Quick/Slow Transition suggests, we were also exploring how we can transition between different urban experiences and encounter scenarios from different speeds. We were aware of the differing qualities of encounter that arose from experiencing urban space via foot, car or public transport. In addition, mobility was significant as it brought into effect the experience of transition between different spatial scenarios.

The work brought together a number of quite different scenarios that were connected by the streetscape, including imagery, signage, retail windows, shopping malls, architecture, subways and underground stations. As in earlier projects, the work reflected on the mediating quality of mobile devices: in particular, the prevalence of camera and screen meant that the interchange between virtual and physical encounter were becoming integral to our imagined urban experience. The work was our attempt to scenically diagram the simultaneous quality of situations and the various spatial thresholds, both physical and virtual that produce or fragment one’s experience of urban space.
More so than the previous works, we wanted to layer, and collide many simultaneous experiences into the same moment, offer the inhabitant more variety of exchange.

In addition to exploring the urban medium we also had a growing awareness that the design artefacts we were making were collaborative tools. The coexisting qualities of strategic structure and tactical freedom that it brought to the design process seemed to make the work a highly productive place for collaboration and hence complexity to flourish. In fact, this was probably an equally important aim of the work. Much as in the production of *Motel*, we acknowledged that the process was as significant a research outcome as the designed artefacts themselves. We now understood that just as our work was performative, we too were working in a performative manner. Considerable interest lay in how we could learn from this new understanding. We speculated that when encountering our work, participants were potentially experiencing interiors in a similar process driven way.

With *Quick/Slow Transition* we adopted a very similar approach to the production of Complexity and Fullness, the only significant difference being the speed with which we worked. Now we were more confident in ideas and techniques and free from the difficulties of the previous large installation. There was little conversation and little need to rework sections; we went straight into the making of the exhibition and the work came together very quickly. It was exciting to be operating at this pace and prevented the project from becoming over-worked, which was perhaps my critique of *Complexity and Fullness*. Instead, here we were far more focused on building spatial and scenic complexity which in turn was producing a diagrammatic arrangement able to produce a multiplicity of temporal situations with a minimum of materiality.

**Ambiguous Complexity**

A major generator of the work’s complexity can be traced to the ply tabletop, which, through its strong composition, took on qualities of a drawn diagram. Its arrangement was the result of an improvised assembly in the workshop. Using geometries of reflection and rotation initiated in Doha, we hinged the table around into a strange angled intersection. In doing so, an underlying frame became exposed and cantilevered out into space at various angles. This frame began to imply lines layered above and below the ply surface, which...
was significant now this base layer was setting up directions of movement through and beyond the edges of the table.

Considered in isolation, it was at once an abstract and suggestive diagram. Meaning was implied through directions and intersections; it drew the eye into material intersections and then ambiguously led the eye out into space. As the scenographic elements were yet to be constructed, very few clues were offered up as to what the diagram might be revealing to us. It made no reference to a prior situation or understanding of knowledge; rather, it was a spatial composition that took the form of a urban diagram, a producer of potential relationships yet to come – a diagram as agent. I return to Grootenboer, who argues that diagrams of this kind point to the unfigurable and lead us to a becoming.14

As a diagram the ply tabletop became critical to how the project proceeded; it brought about a performative response from us as makers, scenarios made through the act of making. In the absence of an actual site or location to reference, the diagram became the space to which we responded. It activated our decisions as we built up the resultant scenic elements, graphic overlays and outlying mirrored satellites.

**Fragmented Fictions**

In response to this diagram of constructed lines and surfaces, we improvised the development of the scenic elements, which loosely referenced fragments of objects, built forms, architecture and other indeterminate references to media devices. Beyond the inclusion of a number of photographic elements; the material language was otherwise pared back and abstract. Across the surface of the diagram, Roger and I were constructing scenic encounters by building up fragments of imagery, visual references and incomplete spatial scenarios.

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Through this process, a number of quite separate references were being
developed: the mediated encounter with a reflective shop window (is that
Roger pushing a large ply plinth?); the internalised intimacy of a laneway (is
that Warwick Street?); liminal stairways to underground railways (London?
Melbourne? Seoul?), and a blank, abstract, commercial facade (perhaps
anywhere?).

As in much of our previous work, we were again making fictions and
implying spatial narratives. They were personal and mixed up, but in
many ways the actual references did not matter all that much. Of greater
importance was the fact that spatial narratives were being implied,
deliberately abstracted and indeterminate. The experience was much like
that of the readers of Invisible Cities: the modeled fragments became cues
and prompts for the participant to produce and assemble spatial narratives
of their own. We challenged them to unravel the alchemy, but perhaps knew
that they could not.

We were drawing on our own internal references to build complexity in the
work. But these were at best half-truths, mere fragments of reality used to
expand fictive spatial encounters. As we started to spatialise these memories
in the model, they immediately became something new through a process
of design: they became not a representation of somewhere else, but rather of
themselves.

Our willingness to divert into fictional space was significant to the
collaborative process. The model allowed for an exchange of ideas that was
referential but uninhibited by previous actualities. It became a mediator
between us. Even though things were sometimes discussed, neither of us was
ever absolutely certain of the meaning of the other’s contribution, but worked
with it nonetheless. The model structured our work but avoided the didactic
and certain. It meant each designer was never absolutely fixed on a particular
outcome. I would argue that this model made Roger and I far more willing to
allow the other to intervene, to add, to change and to collaborate.

As we layered different fragmented narratives and references onto the
diagram, any kind of cohesive scale became increasingly difficult to pin
down. The surface of the ply diagram seemed to reference something
akin to an urban diagram at a possible scale of 1:1000 or more. And yet
the diagram itself was clearly a 1:1 timber table. Elements of the model
jumped around: certain elements alluded to something at perhaps 1:20, while another immediately adjacent element might suggest a scale of 1:100. Through implication, the various elements also lent scale to the empty space within and around the model. Much like our use of narrative, scale was indeterminate but it was also fragmented. The different scales, overlaid upon each other, were by necessity breaking down any idea of continuous time and space. This had the effect of disrupting any absolute logic that might be interpreted from the arrangement of the base layer diagram.

The diagrams and scenic references clearly pointed to an abstracted and assemblaged representation of an urban space. However, it was immediately clear that the work could not be read as a cohesive whole. Rather, it was a diagrammatic model in which different scenarios and types of encounters collided. It was a representation of our own fragmented experience of urban time and space: disjointed, non-linear and produced. Ideas of narrative, time and space were implied but uncertain. The model contained abrupt thresholds and qualities of encounter that depended upon means of approach and the convergence of actions and events.

The model became multiple cities, continuous city, urban. It was a layering of fragmented narrative. Like a diagrammatic Calvino, it combined many fragments of different cities to unpack and propose understandings of an impossible city that exists tantalisingly out of reach in the reader’s imagination.15

Incompleteness and Indeterminacy

The hinge [emphasis added] describes a rotation on one axis about a fixed point. A hinge may be a contrary machine, an object of precision in the service of indeterminacy. A decision that is “hinged” is pending – a contingency, it can go this way or that. A hinge may be the resolution of a contradiction and its transformation into another contradiction; it may be an instrument of paradox.

Diller & Scofidio

Materiually, we were happy for things to appear ‘unfinished’. We used card pinned together or even bulldog clips to hold elements in place; elements were hung with cotton or loosely laid into position. This is not to say the work was un-crafted or lacked care, rather that we worked with speed and lightness. We were simply much more confident in what was required to produce a convincing experience. Perhaps more so than in any of our earlier work, the material language of Quick/Slow Transition implied an in-progress, temporary duration and yet it still managed to convince.

We deliberately harnessed this incompleteness to produce indeterminacy. Scenically, we would work up a particular vantage point though an assemblage of elements. On one side we would pay particular attention to crafting a convincing reference, with the remaining sides then revealed as nothing more than cheap card. But this was not just about a thinness of space. From another angle this unconsidered card surface would become implicated into another scene - suddenly it was no longer a backside but a backdrop. This discovery caused us to recall the paradoxical spaces of the film and TV studio: the odd way in which the fronts and backs of scenic sets could be at once utterly disconnected and simultaneously together. We were enjoying being able to reference and celebrate the absolute transitions of the scenic elements, the uncovering of our construction, the abrupt falling away of a partially resolved view only for it to then manifest into something new. As Diller and Scofidio recognise, the threshold between recognition was a spatial ‘hinge’: a point of resolution and transformation. We were using complexity and indeterminacy to draw people into the work, inviting opportunities for contemplation and discovery. The work was offering moments of spatial recognition or fragments of resolved imagery within the shifting conditions of its interior, hovering on the brink of resolution and incompletion.
5.0

Closings
Still In Flux

I feel sure that when I swung open that truck door several years ago, the simplicity of that brief interior experience contained no trace of the complexity that would ensue. As once again I summon the interior imagery to my mind, I have no doubt that it is an interior still in flux.

This PhD was established under the title Mediated Interior. This reflected an interest that directly connected back to an understanding of interior design made in commercial practice. I recognised that an interior experience had a potentially powerful influence over a consumer, in particular their willingness to adopt abstract values of brand from a materialised space. This influence suggested that within the us there was a tendency to knowingly suspend disbelief and accept the improbable: that experiential meaning could become more than the actual space encountered. It was also apparent that experiential meaning was in flux and could shift between different encounters.

The PhD has provided an understanding of the processes that underpin this mediation. It has allowed me to recognise that interior experience is indeed in flux, a produced reality occurring through a convergence of actual and virtual conditions. It positions the interior as a spatial and temporal situation one that is co dependent upon the inhabitants making of relations. These relations are temporally created through both immediate performative actions and engagement with a wide net of everyday social conditions. In this way the interior experience can be considered to be a partially subjectively becoming in which the status of the inhabitant is that of active participant.
producer and mediator of experiential meaning.

Through the PhD, our practice has used the city as an urban laboratory. Early speculative operations placed emphasis on mobility and encounter. Later works examined the role of display, social exchange and the individual as producer. This has revealed that as interior designers we do not conceive the city as a spatially stable whole, but rather as a fragmented and continuous urban experience. Further, we can now understand that urban experience is spatially non-linear, without certain thresholds, nor fixed beginnings or ends.

The urban experience is largely through continual re-consumption in a perpetual mediated flux that reflects the broader contemporary social condition. Within this indeterminacy, interiors are produced from encounters that can be extraordinary or banal, deliberately constructed or everyday and coincidental. It is an irresolvable, complex condition, but optimistically also one that is full of individual and collective potential – an urban mise en scene for individual and collective production.

Performative Participation, Subjective and Empowering Productions

By considering the work of Making Distance through the PhD, I now understand how the practice has adopted the indeterminacy of the diagram and representational medium of scenography as tools for operating within the medium of complexity and flux.

In attempting to build useful tools for working with complexity we have realised that we can actually harness the diagram’s ability to abstract and reduce through representation, to engage with complexity rather than circumnavigate it. The openness of the diagram makes it a generating tool within the design process, and ultimately leads to a more open interior experience. The diagram becomes a maker of new convergences and knowledge, rather than simply a communicator of prior understanding. It provides a conversational space in which collaborative ideas can interplay and intersect.

There are three principal ways the diagram has emerged from the work. Firstly: the use of complex, dense and indeterminate printed textual surfaces have allowed for the speculation on spatial, temporal and narrative relationships through the activation of internalised and actual mapping processes. Secondly: representational drawings and abstracted storyboards that allow for speculation on event, encounter and experience through the making of visual relationships by the viewer. Thirdly: complex scenic arrangements that create an interplay of different spatial and temporal relationships, activating participation through speculation and inhabitation.
This latter technique, the scenic diagram is the contribution of our practice to the discipline of interior design. It is a paradoxical hybrid of representational fragments and abstract diagrammatic arrangements that can be inhabited through a range of intimate and 1:1 scales from diagrammatic models to installations and exhibitions. Those encountering the work are presented with diagrammatic, field like arrangements of made elements that carry levels of carefully crafted indeterminacy, ongoing incompleteness and inherent flux.

The scenic fragments, once assembled into interior representations harness the image’s ability to reference and depict other events and space. This has allowed us to imply narrative and to introduce sufficient levels of realism to build levels of credibility in the work. For the inhabitant, this becomes an important aspect in the interior production process, helping to engender disbelief and allowing a convergence of actual and virtual conditions.

Drawn into the work through this process of interior assemblage, inhabitants discover the work hinges between resolution and incompleteness, a device of speculation. In this way the scenic diagram acts as a mise-en-scène for performative participation and subjective production of interior experience.

It has also facilitated a performative approach to the design process in which we are activated mediators, bodily encountering and subjectively producing within the medium of design itself. For us and others this has allowed the issue of full authorship to be overcome within the collaborative design process and subsequent engagement of the work.

By trying to minimise the unavoidable structuring and determination that exists in all design, levels of flux and subjectivity in the work of Making Distance allow for differences of experience. It provides a critical space for conversation and exchange and provides opportunity to externalise the otherwise internal subject. By approaching design in this way the interior can be understood as a critical social tool for exchange, as much a temporal process as a fixed and pre determined spatial arrangement.

Dissemination

The significance of this research has been recognised through our invitation to exhibit and participate in a number of peer-reviewed programs at both national and international settings. These include: Brighton University, UK; Australian Centre for the Moving Image, Melbourne; Form Gallery, Perth; MATHAF – Arab Museum of Modern Art, Doha; and Bus Projects, Melbourne. This research has also been publicly disseminated through journal articles including IDEA Journal, and in public lectures and workshops, including at Virginia Commonwealth University in Qatar.

The research has influenced a number of teaching studios at RMIT University, and within the student cohort it has helped to foster a culture of design research through making. Our methods have been adopted in – and also have manifested annually through – the ambitious production, installation and curation of ‘INDEX’, a renowned graduate exhibition and event for the RMIT Interior Design program.
Complementary

Making Distance has emerged from the PhD as a viable design research practice. For Roger and me this is a significant and exciting outcome. Our understanding of what we each bring to the collaboration has developed through the progression of our respective PhDs. Early in the research we faced tricky questions about the ‘frictions within the practice’. Given the newness and extremely convivial nature of the practice, these questions were incredibly hard even to consider. Our conscious decision to write the ADR component separately may seem to be at odds with ideas of collaborative research, but it has allowed for a better identification of our individual priorities within the work and the manner in which they complement the joint practice.

Within the PhD Mediated Interior I argue that an interior is in continual flux. Both diagram and scenic are understood as active design tools, which in turn act as empowering agents for the individual to subjectively to consider their own interior meaning. By using these mediated tools, production becomes a speculative activity of selection or filtering, which places an emphasis upon the temporal interior experience.

In Negotiated Space, Roger proposes the interior is brought about through the making of relations, which in turn are actively established via a process of negotiation. Roger places importance upon the technique of drawing to establish and reveal these relations to each other, while the building of conversation is facilitated through the assembly of models. For Roger, the process of negotiation is arguably more of an organisational force upon the work revealing more of a spatial priority within Roger’s contribution.

Ultimately, an inherent openness in our respective conceptual frameworks of negotiation and mediation allows the spatial and temporal priorities of our practices to complement each other in a highly productive way.

Future departures

The anticipated completion of the PhD now allows us to consider the future directions the practice may take; pragmatically in terms of the means of making, philosophically the questions we wish to pursue and contextually the areas to which we think our mode of interior design can make a useful contribution.

An ambition for the practice is to now build a model of research that can allow for speculative making across a global network of academic and industry design researchers. Beyond the obvious advantage of international congeniality, the hope is that this approach will allow us to test how our operative and performative tools and strategies of practice can engage with the paradoxical by working simultaneously across both global networked flows of information and intimately scaled embodied engagement.

Whilst certain to continue making tools in an analogue manner we are now also keen to explore how our practice may better engage with and utilise emerging digital technologies. Again this may be through the learning of
practical techniques, software and the like, but equally could occur as a critical engagement with interdisciplinary practitioners who have expertise in contemporary technology. It is useful to consider other divergent designers and creatives such as media, but interestingly this approach could also lead to an engagement with disciplines outside of our current frame of reference such as those concerned with the urban, geography, social sciences, commerce and even politics. The hope being that this can bring new ways of thinking to our practice but also position interior design as a critical and operative agent within these first order disciplines.

There is an expectation that we will continue to work in and question the urban context. Whilst also recognition our scenic approach can allow for the design of events, shows, installations, exhibitions and, potentially, performance-based projects. Within these areas there is a desire to pursue and develop a more open and empowering approach to design, place more priority on how design may better engage the public through a reconsideration of inhabitation and experience in a mediated society. Pivotal to this will be the continued making of participatory and performative devices that accommodate difference, instigate improvisation and foster a more collective and social interior for exchange. This is the practice of Making Distance.
6.0

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Representation


Photography

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**Performative Everday**


Diller Scofidio + Renfro


Emile-Jacques Ruhlmann.


**Site & Installation**


Christo and Jeanne-Claude.


Mike Nelson.


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The Situationists.


WonderWall Inc.

**Design Process**


Appendix
The 3 Tonne ‘o’ Space project, developed for the 2008 State of Design festival Melbourne, was a mobile and evolving series of experimental performance spaces exploring interior design within the confines of a 3 tonne truck.

The project was an attempt to challenge the assumption that an interior space is a static and immovable environment defined by its containing walls. Instead it sought to expand the conventional boundaries of interior design in the public realm through the appropriation and occupation of a ubiquitous utilitarian mobile environment (the back of a 3 tonne truck).

The mobility of the truck allowed us to take the interior to various locations within the City of Melbourne and act as a ‘pop-up’ event across the design festival program. This approach situated the work within a shifting urban context and made it visible to a diverse audience.

An invitation was given to the general public to participate in a design process in two ways:

1. Occupying the space of the van and thus contributing to the production of the interior/performance.
2. Actively involving the participants in design decision making in relation to the van interior as an ongoing speculation or inquiry.

The emphasis of the project was on process rather than product. The brief for the festival was framed as ‘Design for Everyone’ and ‘Design as a Verb’. We set out to communicate a design process by producing the interior over the duration of a week (there was also an extended period of testing and experimentation prior).

The audience for the project was both the general public and our design peers. A significant contribution came through conversations and experiences with both groups as we attempted to respond to the questions, challenges and reflections offered up.

The open rear box of the truck, usually viewed by the passing general public in the act of loading and unloading goods for delivery, was taken on as an interior space for occupation and inhabitation. The two designers of the project were located inside or close to the truck engaging the general public in conversations about design as a process. Over the duration of the week long festival contents were moved around within and outside the truck producing a continued review and change of spatial structure and relationships. This transforming interior...
also changes through an increasing accumulation of materials, objects, audiences, and contributions including food, drawings and artifacts built on site. The re-use of found design, commercial and industrial materials as well as objects and furniture sourced from op shops played a key role in the installation. These were contrasted against the readymade truck interior environment and upon inspection often contained highly crafted details and models that were woven through the installation. A certain ambiguity in the initial encounter was important, this combination in material and objects whilst clearly related, also deliberately posed questions as to what type of interior space was being encountered.

Particular attention was paid to the narrative and its context when selecting material and objects, specifically the relationship of the truck to a design festival context and the wider city. Key themes emerged that the installation either considered or alluded to 1) the aesthetic language of a commercial truck 2) a type of design studio 3) a site office 4) the language of installation/event/performance 5) borrowed techniques from media and branding to bring authority and visibility to the installation.
Selected Sites:

Royal Exhibition Building, Carlton – External forecourt coinciding with Design:Made:Trade fair - Daytime
Trades Hall, Carlton - Covered Carpark - coinciding with Iron Chef event - Evening
City Square, Melbourne - Public northern end of area of square – Daytime
Ladro Restaurant, Fitzroy - 2 hour street parking - coinciding with Design 'O' Pizza dinner - Evening
Federation Square, Melbourne - Kerbside Loading Zone St.Kilda Road – Daytime and Evening
37 A'Beckett Street, Abaris Print Works - 2 hour street parking - Is Not Magazine Retrospective and Peter Bennetts Photographer - Recent Work Exhibition
11-13 Warwick Street, North Melbourne – Laneway - Breakdown Party
Also spotted at various impromptu parking meters throughout the Melbourne CDB
Project Details:

3 tonne Mitsubishi Canter Van
Promotional signage
Cardboard packing cases
Paper and card artifacts - various
Printed images - various
AV and Projection
Furniture: desk, chairs, display vitrine, file cabinet
+ assorted
Objects: various design and construction office
equipment, books, clothes, suitcases, pendant lamp
2 designers + guests and public
Carry on was produced for a conference exhibition ‘Occupation: Negotiations with Constructed Space’ hosted by Brighton University, UK. 2009. The project was a critical reflection upon the previous installation 3 Tonne ‘o’ Space and continued to explore the spatial relationships and negotiation within the urban city. It was understood to be simultaneously both reflective and propositional and included descriptive and analytical imagery, models and text.

The work consisted of a model and series of printed images concealed within a wooden carry box that could be unpacked and assembled as an exhibit piece. The name of the work was a reference to the carry on baggage allowance given by airlines, as the intent was for Roger to personally carry the work to the UK in order to set it up. This came about both as a pragmatic response, but also to allow the piece to act as an analogy to the mobility and performative transformation of packing and unpacking that took place in the truck project. In this case the international carry on allowance given by Qantas for international flights: Length 56cm (22in) + Height 36 cm (14in) + Depth 23cm (9in) = Total linear dimensions 115cm (45in)1 became a starting point and a defining constraint for the design.

Materially the work was made of a ply carry box that split open to reveal a collection of scenic parts that included scaled trucks, fragments of buildings and an abstracted city grid or ground plane into which a number of spatial scenarios were etched. It also included printed images of 3 tonne ‘o’ space in various sites.

Unpacked and re-assembled it diagrammed out the relationship of the truck to the city in various sites and considered spatial concerns such view, approach and engagement; foreground and background context; edges, thresholds and layering of sites. The approach was understood to be both analytical, in that relationships between sites and truck were depicted, and scenic in that the viewer was drawn in and encouraged to engage with various different types of encounters with the trucks.

(view from above v’s the full complex images produced form close up)

Project Details:

1 no. ply timber carry box (560x360x230mm closed / 720x360x115mm open)
2 no. etched acrylic inserts
3 no. Mitsubishi Canter Vans (scale approx. 1:50)
3 no. printed elements for vans
9 no. acrylic cutout building with applied transparent images (various scales)
6 no. printed images and text 540x320mm
1 no. air ticket ticket MLB to LHR return
For the past 30 years INDEX, the annual graduate exhibition of Interior Design at RMIT University, has been held in a diverse range of sites. The spaces have ranged from empty commercial tenancies, dry docks, abandoned factories to inner city warehouses.

INDEX is a significant undertaking. It begins with the acquisition of a site that is determined primarily by location and cost. The sites will usually require adjustments to services (electricity, lighting, plumbing) and accessibility.

It is a highly collaborative exercise. It brings together students, friends, academics, builders, sponsors and industry partners and engages with local communities, prospective students and alumni. Anthony Fryatt and myself held the joint role of coordinating the production of this exhibition and event between the years of 2009 and 2013.

What has become apparent at the conclusion of the PhD is that the evolution of INDEX over these five years reflects the development of the work of Making Distance over that time. Our ambition for INDEX has increased over that time by extending its format as exhibition and opening party to an occupation of space over time that provides multiple engagements for its participants.
An transdisciplinary film project
Motel: A Film Project. 3 Writer. 2 Actors. 1 Motel.

A couple sit, pace the floor, or make love on the disheveled bed. She leaves in a car, driving beyond the future. He arrives from the past, and can only stay half an hour.

In Motel three short films explore the spaces of an anonymous motel room, and the spaces of a relationship and time-travel.

The Motel project commenced in 2008: it centered around the production of a triptych of short films set in and around a common fictional location, an Australian country motel.

This project constituted an activity of film making situated within a broader framework of research, or, viewed from the other direction, as a piece of research through self-reflective creative practice.

The aim of the research was to investigate modes of collaboration; and in particular:
1) to discover how a trans-disciplinary collaboration between film-makers and interior designers might productively destabilize the established methodologies of film screenwriting and production;
2) to explore methodologies of multi-authoring in a screen work that move away from the primacy of the single directorial auteur; and
3) to examine how a design-oriented focus on the concept of 'interior' may lead to spatial re-conceptualizations useful for screen-writing and directing practices.
In Motel, contrary to more conventional film production, there were a number of deliberate rules or obstructions that were introduced in an attempt to disrupt established methodologies.

1) each writer/director (David Carlin, Paul Ritchard and Christine Rogers), none of whom had ever worked together before on a creative project, were separately to write a script for a narrative fiction film of less than ten minutes, set in and around a ‘motel’ locale, to form part of a triptych;

2) each script was to feature two main characters, a man and a woman;

3) the six different characters in the three films were to be played by the same two actors (Natalia Novokova and Syd Brisbane);

4) the final form of the triptych was to involve either the inter-cutting of the three stories or their sequential screening as ‘companion pieces’ together constituting a whole, with this decision to be made in post-production; and

5) the only pre-determined narrative link between the scripts was to be the motel locale.

Interior Designers

Interior designers Roger Kemp and Anthony Fryatt joined the Motel project at a point when the scripts were already drafted. Deliberately sought out to offer up an approach different to that of a specialist film production designer, they brought to the project a particular attention upon the concept of ‘interior’, rather than a focus upon aesthetic and stylistic production issues.

Treating the scripts almost as found objects led to a negotiation of spatial relations presented through the scripts. This allowed critical spatial relationships between actors, objects and sets to be understood through levels of proximity and intimacy that were generated through a process of interiorizing or exteriorizing spaces. From this the implication of time, duration and distance in interior environments could be considered and manipulated.

This conceptual framework was then introduced back to the writer/directors and the now present cinematographer, Robin Punkett, via design techniques such as drawings and diagrams and spatial layouts of the scripts in a manner that became referred to as the ‘rotated script’.

The effect of this was a slowing up of the production process that avoided an immediate interpretation of the scripts into production sets and locations. It became more a process of negotiation between the two fields, where process or methodology became significant outcome.
Production

The production process took place over several weeks in different film studios and location shoots that included a country motel and Victorian rural roads. Each writer acted as director for their own scripts, Robin Plunkett was the cinematographer throughout, with the interior designers now occupying a territory that sat somewhere between art direction, construction and set decorators. As well as the actors there was also a moderately large production crew.

A complete motel room was constructed within one studio for significant sections of the shooting (Roger’s script was completely shot this way, the other two were more varied). This allowed each of the scripts to be located within a common room that through redecoration and styling allowed the three directors to allude to different time periods for their respective part of the triptych.

A desolate rural road was used to shoot a number of moving and stationary scenes for Ritchard’s script using two 70’s period cars. This was supplemented with extended scenes shot within the car interiors using a second large studio.

Carlin’s script was shot equally using his iteration of the studio based motel room set and an actual motel. For this the motel reception was largely adapted and intercut with shots of the exterior areas of the Motel, there were a series of car scenes shot on surrounding roads and lastly a smaller third studio was used for reshooting close ups sections to intercut with the location shoot.

All footage was shot on a single digital camera using a variety of techniques including handheld, tripod, dolly and track.

Postproduction editing was undertaken by Anna ###, with a number of different arrangements of the scripts trailed until it was finally agreed that each script would be shown in their entirety, as opposed to intercut. The order was the Papin Sisters,
A premiere screening of the Motel film triptych took place at AFTRS in Melbourne on September 9th, 2010.

The three films making up the triptych are:

'The Papin Sisters', written and directed by Christine Rogers:

'A woman waits, naked, in a motel room, for her lover to join her. He slips between time, and is traveling with his younger body. He enters the room, short on time and determined not to continue this illicit and dangerous liaison.'

'Spiral', written and directed by David Carlin:

'A journalist arrives at an out-of-the-way motel chasing a story on time travel, and experiences an uncanny reunion with a boyfriend from her teen years, while the hacker motel clerk attempts to manipulate reality.'

'Agency Time', written and directed by Paul Ritchard:

'In 1968 time Travel has just been privatised. Cine is to undertake her first 'travel' under the guidance of Van. Things go horribly wrong as she is hustled through time and space. She come back momentarily to seek revenge.'

Project Details:

1 no. studio set of fictional motel room with ensuite bathroom (3 no. iterations set in different non specific decades)

1 no. Motel location, Seymour Victoria (including partial reception refurbishment)

1 no. partial studio set of above motel reception

Various Road locations around Victoria

1 no. Volvo 164 circa 1969-75

1 no. Mercedes W114 circa 1968-76

1 no. Toyota Celica? Circa

Various furniture, props and costume
1. INT MOTEL OFFICE

An infinite spiral.

Camera pulls back to reveal the spiral is the pattern in the centre of a vinyl record on a turntable playing on a motel office counter. Music playing: some old sixties bossanova or similar. Motel décor might also hail from the early sixties.

Beyond the open door, a car appears along the road, pulls in and parks.

JANICE, the thirty-something (on a good day) driver sits a moment in the car, continuing an animated mobile phone conversation.

She gets out, still on the phone, clutching a laptop bag and kicking the door shut with her foot.

JANICE

...yeah, well, whatever! Its just supposed to be kooky interesting like, y’know, David Byrne kooky interesting. If I get jackshit then go with Jane’s puffthing on the Dalai Lama and fucking happiness, alright? Byeee.

She shoves the phone in her pocket and walks into the office.

The young guy, JULES, working behind the counter has obviously been listening. With wild black hair, looking like a geek on holiday, he’s the dude who runs the turntable.

JANICE

I had a booking, name of Freoli.

She hands him her credit card. He looks at it and breaks into a broad grin.

JULES

Hi.

His enthusiasm is somewhat wasted on her. She looks at the row of keys waving in the breeze.

JANICE

It is fucking hot, isn’t it. Scuse my French. Do you sell beer?

JULES

Gotta kettle in the room.

This compensation is small indeed.

JANICE

You heard anything about a conference out here somewhere?

JULES

(tapping her name into keyboard, stops to look up)

Time travel theme?

JANICE

(grins) Nope.

He, playing the computer keyboard as if it is a musical instrument, can barely maintain a smirk. She looks like she wants to punch him.

Janice is unimpressed - the guy is unsettling her. She takes a key from the row and turns for the door. She starts to feel like she has forgotten something important - she can’t think straight.

JULES

(stating a fact)

You like muesli!

JANICE

(paying no attention)

Yes, I like muesli.
they travel for a while

in the room.

a key

a picture of us:

across the years

the photo

the photo

the photo

the photo

the photo

the photo

a photograph of them

their papers

a photograph of them

the bed

the bed

the bed

the bed

the bed

her slip

the dog

the bed

the bed
This installation, located at studio 1 Australian Centre for the Moving Image, Melbourne, explored the time/space relations depicted in the project titled Motel: a triptych of short films by the interdisciplinary team David Carlin, Paul Ritchard, Christine Rogers, Anthony Fryatt and Roger Kemp.

One of the aims of the Motel project has been to explore the creative potential of interdisciplinary collaboration; for the film-makers, working with interior designers rather than a specialist film production designer, as would usually be the case, has provoked a challenge to the way the film scripts have been developed and interpreted before the film triptych was shot, and enabled fresh perspectives on key aesthetic and stylistic production issues. The distinct conceptual approach the interior designers bring to the concept of interior, in particular, has meant that the process of visualizing the film’s settings has expanded into a dialogue as to how this idea of interior can be brought to bear on the narrative themes of intimate connection and distance that run through the triptych.

For the interior designers, working in the hitherto unfamiliar realm of film production has prompted new perspectives on the idea of interior that is by definition central to their practice and research. These are; the use and production of narrative in forming interiors, the camera as a spatial mediator, the relation between interior and image, and the implication of time, duration and distance in interior environments.

Within the 3 films time is explored through ideas of time travel, duration, extension and compression. Distance is a significant driver in the work considering spatial relations between intimacy to infinity.

The installation comprised; Film shorts, prints of stills, scripts, diagrams and drawings, models, video cameras, television monitors, film props and partial set installations. It investigated the various media based spaces defined as imagination space, set space, camera space and film/screen space.
Motel Project
installation
ttp conference
16.09.2009

2 black painted mdf pedestals
700mm H x 1500mm L X 300mm W.
Supplied by RMIT University

3000mm L x 1000mm H
plywood panel on 19x38mm pine
frame suspended by nylon cord from
lighting grid. Overlaid with graphic
print on paper.

3 Monitors and 3 DVD players
top mounted to 3 black painted mdf
pedestals 700mm H x 300mm L X
300mm W.
Supplied by RMIT University

2 Floor mounted data projectors
Supplied by RMIT University

1 camera monitor on tripod
Supplied by RMIT University

2400mm L x 1800mm H
plywood ʻpicture frame' panel on
19x38mm pine frame supported on
timber legs and support suspended
by nylon cord from lighting grid.

1200mm W x 2400mm H ply panels
on 19x38mm pine frame supported
on timber legs and support
suspended by nylon cord from
lighting grid.

800mm W x 1000mm H ply panel on
19x38mm pine frame supported on
timber legs and support suspended
by nylon cord from lighting grid.

panel 1,2,4,5,7
panel 3
panel 8
panel 6 ʻpicture frame' panel
openopen
The Temperature’s Rising is a TV series produced in 2010 for screening on Melbourne’s free-to-air community TV station C31. The Temperature’s Rising combined drama, comedy, music, documentary and news segments in an entertaining and innovative media melting pot.

“We all know about climate change. We all know it’s important. We all know it might end life as we know it. We all know it’s hot. But what do we make of this? In many ways we are sick to death of hearing about it. We want to get on with living our lives. The point of The Temperature’s Rising is to describe these lives. To explore what it means to be living in the world at this time and in this situation. The series explores the importance of adapting to climate change and the difficulties in doing so, on a personal, everyday, immediate level and in distinctive and offbeat ways.”

An overall scenario for the set is an urban street / lane that allows transition from outside café seating to inside café and provides a series of urban fragments that introduce further narrative potentials of the street.

These urban fragments including a lamppost, metro train sign, bus stop sign, advertising hoarding, ticket window, bench seat mesh fence and steps. We imagine that props such as a shopping trolley, rubbish bin, construction equipment and bicycles would be used in conjunction with the set to contextualise scenes and characters.
The Temperature’s Rising was a TV series being produced in 2011 screening on Melbourne’s free-to-air community TV station C31. It will also be distributed widely online. The Temperature’s Rising will combine drama, comedy, music, documentary and talk segments in an entertaining and innovative investigation of what it means to be a member of Gen Y. We all know about Gen Y - they buy a lot of stuff, live with their parents, are always online and have short attention spans. But beyond the labels and stereotypes, what are the generation currently in their twenties really like? What’s on their minds, what do they do and care about? Are they really so different or is it just marketing spin? Coming soon, online and in six broadcast television episodes, The Temperature’s Rising is a show that explores these questions and sets out to challenge Gen Y assumptions. Much of the drama in this series occurs within the ‘Mercury Rising Market Research Company – Y Division’. The set presents a corporate call centre that brings together the various workers and managers in conversations and activities that explore issues relating to perceptions and assumptions of Generation Y.

The desks are configured in such a way as to provide visual connection to each call center operator and allow direct dialogue. The camera is positioned collecting up the third party view of the conversation. Visual depth of the space is generated through a layering effect via the alignment of furniture, partitions, shelving and a elevated platform for the managers office. The intention here is to create a clustering of objects that present a ‘thickening up’ of space through and around the musicians whilst being set against the infinite background of the white cyclorama. The cut between the call center drama and the musical performances occur through the use of iPods by a character or when a caller is placed on hold.
This set was designed for an online video tutorial for the School of Health Sciences at RMIT University. The consulting room provides a space for actors/chiropractors to demonstrate techniques and approaches for consultative and examination procedures used in the education of undergraduate students.

The long section of wall provides a backdrop to a part of the footage that captures a patient’s walking style. The wall has a slit window opening that allows light into the space suggesting an external context.

The other walls are used as background screening devices to assist in directing the viewer’s focus towards the patient and practitioner. The joinery items, the consulting bench and associated props provide cues as an office/medical practitioners consulting room.

The painted floor sections articulate a change in zone between the more administrative function of the desk and the more procedural space of the chiropractic table.

There are four main components of the set: a series of walls and screening devices, joinery items including a desk and shelves, props including the consulting bench and painted out floor areas.

Project 2.5
The Consulting Room
In the Pines

Project 2.6

Poster artwork for the ‘In The Pines’ program of events at Federation Square 1-25th December 2011. The image as an A3 poster was pasted up around Federation Square and the adjacent train lines. The image is a response to the song ‘In the pines’.
In this research project we consider retail as a medium of space that we move through and inhabit as part of our day-to-day activities. Retail space, although having a very specific intent — that of consumption — is a complex and full experience. It actively uses spatial experience, personal interaction, still and moving image, text and other devices to engage and activate its occupants.

Within this complex medium, the act of ‘display’ plays a pivotal role in the early seduction and subsequent desire that fuels the social and monetary exchanges upon which commerce ultimately relies. Understood in the broadest sense, display becomes an arresting spatial tactic and site of encounter that is complex and multi-layered in nature.

At the heart of reciprocal exchange between people lie the twin drives of desire and sacrifice: one person’s desire for an object, and another’s willingness to give up (sacrifice) the object for that desire or its representation (another object or token). This research identifies the active condition of ‘display’ not only as conveyer of information or conspicuous presentation but also as a significant moment in the access to and engagement in an interior that is in constant production through a process of exchange: a state of becoming.

The work examines the production of interiors that is brought about through an engagement by the occupant with implied narratives and settings. These spatial scenarios are manifest via the layering and arrangement of scenic devices, including constructed sets, props, and image.

Suspension of disbelief and an acceptance of the ‘unreal’ is often a necessary participatory condition in this work. The assembly of fragments, objects and actions intentionally seek to activate the role of the participant as author of their own experience.

The exhibited model is a site from which a series of artefacts and images are produced using techniques including Complexity and Fullness.
photography, projection, diagramming and storyboarding. These images and artefacts are then worked back into the model, which in turn increasingly becomes more complex and multi-layered in nature. The model and artefacts are brought together offering up an arrangement of abstracted scenes; becoming an interior that is simultaneously reflective and propositional.

This installation-based project follows on from a series of built works including models, film and public interventions that are part of an ongoing research enquiry into the production of interiors through the use of scenic strategies.
This project examined ideas of ‘display’ as an arresting spatial tactic and site of encounter. The etymology of the word ‘display’ suggests a link to the idea of folding out, a flexing or bending. The 1:1 installation set in the grounds of the Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art in Doha, Qatar and built as a part of the TASMEEM conference, explored the active condition of display not only as conveyer of information or conspicuous presentation but also as a significant moment in the access and engagement of an interior.
This work discusses the city as a medium of space we transition through and inhabit as part of the everyday, a complex and full urban interior that is simultaneously a banal and fantastical experience. Far from a fixed condition, this urban interior is constantly in a process of production, assembled and affected by the built environment, objects, information, media and personal interactions that we encounter.

This understanding of the urban emerges from a series of built works including models, film and public interventions that are part of an ongoing research enquiry into the production of interiors through the use of scenic strategies. The work examines the production of interiors that is brought about through an engagement by the occupant with implied narratives and urban settings. These spatial scenarios are manifest via the layering and arrangement of scenic devices, including constructed sets, props, and images located in or drawn from the city.

Suspension of disbelief and an acceptance of the ‘unreal’ is often a necessary participatory condition in this work. The assembly of fragments, a mise-en-scène of objects and actions intentionally seeks to activate the role of the participant as author of their own performative experience. This interior simultaneously becomes both real and fictional, a mediator between the self and others.

Bus Projects
25-31 Rokeby Street,
Collingwood, 9th-26th April 2014

Quick/Slow Transition
Completed Project List:

'Quick/Slow Transition,' constructed model in curated group exhibition, Bus Projects gallery 25-31 Rokeby Street, Collingwood, April 2014.


'INDEX,' RMIT Interior Design Graduate Exhibition, 23 Wills St, Melbourne, November 2012.

'Complexity and Fullness,' constructed model in curated group exhibition, Form Gallery, 357 Murray Street, Perth, 7 September to 6 October 2012.

'INDEX,' RMIT Interior Design Graduate Exhibition, 79 Ireland St, West Melbourne, November 2011.

'In the Pines,' poster artwork in curated group exhibition, Fracture Gallery, Federation Square, Melbourne December 2011.

'The Consulting Room,' set design for online video student tutorials School of Health Science, RMIT University, 2011.

'The Temperature's Rising 2,' set design for 6 episode television series, Channel 31, Melbourne, 2011.
Associated writing and lectures:

Journal articles:


Conference papers:

Carlin, D., Rogers, C., Ritchard, P., Fryatt, T., Kemp, R., 'Motel: A Couple, a Bed, a Table, a Chair, and the Unseating of the Auteur' 2010 ASPERA Screen Education and Research Conference. University of Sydney. 7th to 9th July 2010. (Presented by David Carlin)


Talks and lectures:

Invited Lecture and Laboratory Leader: TASMEEM, Virginia Commonwealth University in Doha, Qatar 10 – 17th March 2013.

TTP (Time Transcendence Performance) conference, Monash University with Fryatt, A., Rogers, C., Ritchard P., Carlin, D. Floor talk at installation at the Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI) October 3, 2009

Kemp, R, Invited lecture and collaborative design studio 'Projects to Ride' and lecture with Konkuk University GSAK Seoul South Korea. 2009