PHENOMENOLOGY AND LANDSCAPE EXPERIENCE: A CRITICAL APPRAISAL FOR CONTEMPORARY ART PRACTICE

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Table of Contents

List of Illustrations

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Abstract

This thesis examines some of the ways in which phenomenology might be applied to the representation of landscape experience within contemporary art practice. In particular, the thesis examines how embodied landscape experience, informed by an understanding of phenomenology, might be articulated by contemporary art practice that uses the media of film and digital video. The thesis also questions ways in which time might contribute to an understanding of such a representation of the landscape. Based on a critical analysis of landscape experience and its representation in art practice, the thesis identifies critical omissions both within the aligned disciplines of cultural anthropology and art history, particularly in instances where art has been employed ineptly as a tool for critical enquiry. Through a conceptual analysis of phenomenology, cultural archaeology, cultural anthropology, theories of technology, art history, critical film theory and art practice, this project makes a critical examination of new ways in which art can articulate phenomenological notions of landscape experience, both in the forms of a written exegesis and in examples of my own practice.

To these ends, the writing of Christopher Tilley and Tim Ingold is examined in order to draw upon some of the ways in which cultural archaeology and cultural anthropology use Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology and James Gibson's ecological theory of visual perception to understand an embodied engagement with the landscape. Following an expanded phenomenological examination of landscape the thesis identifies ways in which cultural anthropology has used painting. This examination is followed by an analysis of the work of Mike Michael and Don Ihde in order to determine the role played by technology within the mediation of experience and its representation in art. The writing of Joyce Brodsky is examined to analyse the relationship between embodied experience and art practice and, using Sobchack's analysis, the thesis describes ways in which Merleau-Ponty's idea of reversibility can

explain moving imagery as the perception and expression of experience. As part of the method of analysis, a case study is conducted into how phenomenological ideas that have been identified in association with landscape experience might be understood within Tacita Dean's work *Disappearance at Sea.*

An analysis of phenomenological notions of landscape experience within my own art practice has led to the generation of a body of practice that includes film and digital video media. Key examples of my art practice have been selected that can articulate this thesis. Specifically, a 16mm film, *Line,* and a digital video, *Length II* provide evidence of contemporary art practice articulating an experience of the landscape from a phenomenological viewpoint. Within the production of moving imagery, there is a sequence of human actions and technological interventions that can be considered in phenomenological terms. Through a reflection of my own embodied experience - extended by vehicles, cameras and their associated technology - *Line* and *Length II* pay specific attention to how the placement of a camera and its associated technology mediates the mobile character of an experience of the landscape. Central to this enquiry has been the contention that through a rigorous application of phenomenology, a new mode of making moving imagery emerges, specifically one that gives particular emphasis to the placement of the camera and its associated technology in order to reveal the dynamic relationship between a perceiver and their environment in the twenty-first century.

Introduction and methodological forward

This thesis examines the representation of landscape experience within visual art practice with specific reference to phenomenology, a discipline of philosophical enquiry that privileges the senses in the apprehension of knowledge.

Over the last century – and particularly over the last twenty years or so - the status of landscape representation has been much contested within a variety of modes of art practice.[1] Both art historians and archaeologists have discussed contentious topics connected to our experience of the world and its representation within art practice. Controversy, for example, has recently arisen over ways in which seeing and perceiving function in our understanding of the world. Art historian Jonathon Crary has examined developments and changes in vision and perception that are highly germane to this thesis.[2] The nature of sensation and perception in the nineteenth century, says Crary, adopts features from psychology and physiology and leads to a way of thinking about vision that includes the idea of a separation between the perceiver and the perceived. Such an abstraction of vision is not only a precondition for modernist painting in the later nineteenth century but also, he argues, the basis for earlier visual mass culture. [3] Likewise, archaeologist Colin Renfrew has drawn parallels between artists and archaeologists and proposes that the visual arts today have transformed themselves from their preoccupation with beauty and the representation of the world into a radical

[1] Jonathon Crary, *Techniques of the Observer* (Cambridge, Massachusetts; London, England: MIT press, 1990).
Edward Casey, *Earth-Mapping: Artists Reshaping Landscape* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005); W. J. T. Mitchell, ed., *Landscape and Power* (Chicago, London: The University of Chicago Press, 1994, 2002 ed.).
Edward Casey, *Representing Place: Landscape Painting and Maps* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002).
Colin Renfrew, *Figuring It Out* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2003).

[2] Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*.
[3] Ibid. 14.

engagement and interaction with the material world that can offer a fresh light on an understanding of the 'human condition'.[4]

This thesis, rather than viewing landscape as a fixed object for the purpose of contemplation - a paradigm of landscape representation common in western visual culture during the modern period and one that is inextricably bound up with processes of photographic representation - explores some of the ways a relationship between the whole body of a perceiver and their environment, or more succinctly 'embodied experience' of the landscape, can impact on modes of representation within visual art practice. Embodied experience, as I go on to show, can be characterised by an engagement with the surrounding world where an encounter is based on the sensory perception of the human body.

There are several writers whose projects are relevant to this research project that comment on the spatial representation of landscape.[5] In his seminal work, *Landscape and Power,* art historian William Mitchell suggests that there is a level of indeterminacy involved when speaking of 'looking at the landscape'.[6] Rather than being looked at, suggests Mitchell, landscape is often the overlooked background and this leads to questions over what exactly 'looking at the landscape' entails. To look at a view, suggests Mitchell, reveals a separation between a spectator and the landscape; here, the viewer is disembodied and is cast in the role of an externalised observer of the view in which only the eye has influence.[7] More recently, Mitchell has questioned the human subject and an immersive space in 'Architecture as sculpture as drawing: Anthony

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[4] Renfrew, *Figuring It Out*. 7.
[5] Mitchell, ed., *Landscape and Power*.
Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1971).
Malcolm Andrews, *Landscape and Western Art*, vol. Oxford University Press (Oxford: 1999).
Casey, *Earth-Mapping: Artists Reshaping Landscape*.
[6] Mitchell, ed., *Landscape and Power*. vii.
[7] Ibid.

Gormley's *Paragone*'.[8] Here, he considers an association between the human body and the experience of a built environment from the standpoint of an active engagement towards architecture.[9] Mitchell's enquiry can thus be seen to embrace an embodied experience of landscape in connection with contemporary artwork.

Similarly, historian Martin Jay, in his influential work, *Downcast Eyes,* also notes a separation between an observer and the landscape.[10] Jay examines an ocularcentric approach to vision and considers ways in which disembodied looking has dominated theories surrounding visual experience.[11] 'An antiocularcentric discourse', he says, '…has posed substantial and troubling questions about the status of visuality in the dominant cultural traditions of the West.'[12] Key questions posed by an antiocularcentric discourse include: is it possible for thought to be separated from sensual intervention and can an eye be understood as a privileged organ through which to channel knowledge?[13] Implicit within these questions is the influence of the sense of vision over hearing, touch or smell - a domination, as I go on to demonstrate, that is inverted by phenomenology.

Jay also examines the notion of bodily experience and its relationship to visual perception in his work, *Songs of Experience.*[14] Here, he identifies early ideas about the body and perception that can be compared with phenomenological notions of embodied experience. Specifically, Jay examines the work of sixteenth century French aristocrat and essayist Michel de Montaigne and compares it to the writing of twentieth-century

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[8] W J T Mitchell, 'Architecture as sculpture as drawing: Anthony Gormley's *Paragone',* Susan Stewart Anthony Vidler, W J T Mitchell, *Anthony Gormley, Blind Light* (London: Hayward Gallery Publishing, 2007).
[9] Ibid. 112.
[10] Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1994). 54.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Ibid. 589.
[13] Ibid. 591.
[14] Martin Jay, *Songs of Experience* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2006).

phenomenological philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty.[15] Montaigne's attitude to the body, says Jay, 'was that of someone who inhabited it fully as a lived reality, not that of an observer who could examine it from afar as an object in the world'.[16] Moreover, Montaigne's thoughts about experience, adds Jay, can be compared with the phenomenological ideas of Merleau-Ponty by demonstrating that self-understanding should not be the same thing as 'an autopsy on a corpse'.[17] Here, Jay is showing that the dynamic nature of a living subject needs to be considered when an examination of embodied experience is under scrutiny.

The central research question posed by this thesis is how can a bodily association with the landscape be articulated by contemporary art practice? Secondary questions that are implicit within this first question include what is the role of time within an embodied experience of the landscape and how can writers, who have posited what might be termed a sensuous engagement with an environment, appropriate contemporary art practices that are concerned with embodied landscape experience?

In order to provide an answer to these questions this thesis explores several ideas in connection with perception and art practice. In contrast to the tradition of visual representation that is primarily concerned with the static image and an ocularcentric manner of perception, this thesis considers an approach to landscape depiction that is informed by phenomenology. Specifically, the thesis makes a critical examination of landscape experience, from the disciplines of cultural archaeology and cultural anthropology, that is concerned with strands of phenomenological theory that focus on embodied experience as well as notions of perception from the discipline of ecological psychology. Phenomenological theories that inform such sensuous accounts of landscape experience include aspects of the work of Merleau-Ponty – specifically, his

[15] Ibid. 27.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid.

works: *Phenomenology of Perception,*[18] 'Eye and Mind' in *The Primacy of Perception,*[19] 'Cezanne's Doubt' in *Sense and Non-sense*[20] and *The Visible and the Invisible*[21] - about how we can understand our surroundings by an embodied relationship that is characterised by a fundamentally reversible relationship between the seer and the seen.[22]

The accounts of landscape experience examined within this thesis are also informed by ecological psychologist James Gibson's approach to visual perception that relies on a mutual relationship between an organism and its environment.[23] Within these accounts, a reciprocal stance is taken that understands that just as there is no perceiver without an environment, so there can be no environment without a perceiver.[24] It is worth noting that the term 'landscape' is used throughout this thesis to denote something that links bodies, movement and places into a unified whole whilst the word 'environment' is employed to describe the surroundings that are relative to a perceiver.[25] Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, and parallel modes of enquiry, that are used within what might be seen as a sensory engagement with the landscape, are especially pertinent to this thesis because the visual arts are seen to play an important role in articulating the corporal experience of an observer and their surroundings. For instance, the works of British artist Tacita Dean and American artists Jackson Pollock and Nancy Spero have,

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[18] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (London: Routledge, 1962).
[19] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1964).
[20] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Sense and Non-Sense*, trans. Hubert L Dreyfus and Patricia A Dreyfus (Illinois: Evanston, 1964).
[21] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1968).
[22] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*.
[23] James Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception* (New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., 1986).
[24] Tim Ingold, *The Perception of the Environment: Essays in Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill* (London: Routledge, 2000). 20.
[25] Christopher Tilley, *The Materiality of Stone: Explorations in Landscape Phenomenology* (Oxford, New York: Berg, 2004).24.

as I go on to show, been noted by critics for articulating notions of an embodied experience of an observer and their surroundings.[26]

The thesis examines ways in which contemporary art can be informed by textual accounts of embodied landscape experience in order to create a new way of articulating landscape experience through visual art practice. A literature search has been conducted that includes the work of Merleau-Ponty,[27] Gibson,[28] Tilley,[29] cultural anthropologist Tim Ingold,[30] cultural sociologist Mike Michael,[31] technological philosopher Don Ihde,[32] art historian Joyce Brodsky[33] and film theorist Vivian Sobchack[34]. Each of these writers conducts an enquiry that examines experience from the standpoint of an embodied perceiver and each takes a position that considers an association between an active observer and their dynamic environment. For example, Merleau-Ponty stresses the embodied nature of human consciousness and the ways in which space and time might be described in terms of lived experience, whilst Gibson considers an ecological model of perception based on a perceiver and environmental reciprocity. Here, the senses are part of a relationship between the perceiver and the environment where, for example, to touch something can imply that something also touches in return. Likewise, Tilley uses a method of enquiry in his archaeological analysis that includes his own embodied experience in association with his surroundings. Ingold meanwhile considers a practical engagement between an active perceiver and their dynamic environment in order to

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[26] Maria Walsh, 'Narrative Duration: Tacita Dean's *Disappearance at Sea',* Alan English and Rosalind Silvester, ed., *Reading Images and Seeing Words* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2004). 57.
Joyce Brodsky, "How to "See" with the Whole Body," *Visual studies* 17, no. 2 (2002). 99.
[27] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*.
[28] Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*.
[29] Tilley, *The Materiality of Stone: Explorations in Landscape Phenomenology*.
[30] Ingold, *The Perception of the Environment: Essays in Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill*.
[31] Mike Michael, "These Boots Are Made for Walking.: Mundane Technology, the Body and Human-Environment Relations," *Body and Society* 6, no. 3-4 (2000).
[32] Don Ihde, *Technology and the Lifeworld* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990).
[33] Brodsky, "How to "See" with the Whole Body.".
[34] Vivian Sobchack, *The Address of the Eye* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1992).

establish his anthropological ideas. Central to all of these concerns is the problem of how a human subject might perceive their environment through an active engagement with the constituents of their surroundings. An important element of an embodied experience of a landscape and one that is of fundamental concern to this thesis is how such an association is mediated by technology. For Michael, it is the ways in which simple technologies mediate an experience between a perceiver and their surroundings that is a prime concern, and for Ihde's writing, the central issue is how the mediation of experience by technology might be understood in terms of a phenomenological association with an environment. Finally, Brodsky examines whole body experience in relation to art practice whilst Sobchack considers the embodied relationships that operate specifically within the experience of moving imagery.

What is phenomenology? Briefly, it is possible to characterise phenomenology as a method of understanding the world that emphasises a description of phenomena as whatever appears, in the way it emerges, as it is manifested to the consciousness of a perceiver.[35] Edmund Husserl first established phenomenology in the early 1900s and the discipline broadly seeks to articulate the way things first arise in our immediate sensorial experience.[36] Furthermore, by paying attention to the direct experience of a human subject, phenomenology attempts to describe the world as it becomes evident to a perceiver.

Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology is based specifically on the experience of a living being and it is particularly appropriate for this project as he gives primacy to vision as understood through bodily activity; a way of 'seeing' that involves the whole body of the organism.[37] Also, within his theory of embodiment, Merleau-Ponty is

[35] Ibid. 426.
[36] David Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human World* (New York: Vintage Books, 1997). 35.
[37] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*.

concerned with how the visible might 'unfold' through bodily experience and how that which we perceive might be concentrated by the body over time.[38] Thus within his temporal theory, Merleau-Ponty focuses on how embodied experience intertwines past, present and future. Accordingly, Merleau-Ponty's theory focuses on the origins of perceptual knowledge arising from embodied activity. Within the gathering of such knowledge, he makes a distinction between reflexive thought, which we are aware of, and pre-reflexive thought that is below the level of conscious awareness.[39] Writing in *Phenomenology of Perception,* Merleau-Ponty seeks to articulate experience that is immediate and not pre-meditated - what he terms 'pre-reflective experience' – which is based on an intertwining of sensory perceptions and the world.[40] Within pre-reflective experience, argues Merleau-Ponty, seeing is understood as spontaneous, individual, and lived.[41]

Within his theory of embodiment, Merleau-Ponty writes of a fundamental reversibility between a subject and an object - an idea that has implications for the seer and the seen and thus also for the viewing of a landscape and for its representation in visual art. Outlining this sense of reversibility, the viewed, suggests Merleau-Ponty, by directing the spectator's stare, has as much power over the seer as the viewer has over what is being looked at.[42] In this context, the viewed is not an inert entity that takes on meaning from the subject's stare, but is rather an active part of the visual process that returns the look and directs the viewer in their ocular experience. Writing in 'Eye and Mind' in 1960 Merleau-Ponty describes a situation that occurred to the painter Paul Klee

[38] John Haworth, "Beyond Reason: Pre-Reflective Thought and Creativity in Art," *Leonardo* 30, no. 2 (1997). 2.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*.
[41] Olga Belova, "Feeling the Image: A Phenomenological Account of a Visual Experience," in *Art of Management* (Paris: 2004). No page nos.
[42] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, 'Eye and Mind', Galen A. Johnson, ed., *The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader: Philosophy and Painting* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1993). 125.

which describes the idea of an object taking on the active role of a subject.[43] Merleau-Ponty writes:

> In a forest, I have felt many times over that it was not I who looked at the forest. Some days I felt that the trees were looking at me, were speaking to me…I was there, listening…I think that the painter must be penetrated by the universe and not want to penetrate it.[44]

In this example we can see, from the looked-at object addressing the viewer, a breakdown of a subject-object dichotomy. Perception then, for Merleau-Ponty, involves a reciprocal relationship between the body and the world and a continuing exchange between both of these elements.

A key feature of Merleau-Ponty's concept of reversibility is the idea that a bodily engagement with the world occurs on the boundaries between the body and its surroundings. This somewhat complex idea is termed *flesh*.[45] For Merleau-Ponty, the idea of *flesh* arises from an overlap between a perceiver and their surroundings. Accordingly, the region of the overlap provides an area that comprises both subject and object. A perceiver and the perceived can thus be seen to arise from a common source, and this contributes to the idea of a breakdown of a separation between the viewer and the viewed.[46]

The notion of *flesh* is important for this thesis because it has been applied by a number of writers following in Merleau-Ponty's wake, specifically by Tilley within his sensuous engagement with a landscape and Sobchack within her phenomenological analysis of moving imagery.[47] Within an environmental enquiry *flesh* provides an idea of commonality between a body and its surroundings that is of value within a sensory

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[43] Ibid. 129.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Ibid. 127.
[46] Isis Brook, "Can Merleau-Ponty's Notion of 'Flesh' Inform or Even Transform Environmental Thinking?" *Environmental Values, Nature and Continental Philosophy* 14 (2005). 356.
[47] Tilley, *The Materiality of Stone: Explorations in Landscape Phenomenology*. 19.

examination into landscape experience.[48] Here, *flesh* helps to dissolve a separation between a perceiving subject and their environment. Likewise, within her analysis of moving imagery, Sobchack uses the concept of *flesh* to explain a breakdown of a separation between a viewer and the moving imagery within the experience of film.[49]

A sensory enquiry into landscape experience has also been addressed within the related disciplines of cultural archaeology and cultural anthropology.[50] (Indeed, it is interesting to see that an issue central to contemporary representations of the landscape, also impacts on a wide range of parallel disciplines). Both of these disciplines are underpinned by the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty and by the perceptual ideas of Gibson.[51] One difference between these two perceptual theories is that Gibson assumes that an environment is somehow 'pre-prepared', but for Merleau-Ponty the world emerges with its properties alongside the emergence of the perceiver.[52] It is worth expanding on Gibson's ecological model of perception at this point. Gibson provides a 'direct' approach to perception that, like Merleau-Ponty, relies on a reciprocal relationship between a perceiver and their environment. However, for Gibson, emphasis is given to perceivers gathering information in a direct way from the light reflected from surfaces. This light, says Gibson, can provide all the information a perceiver needs to understand both the physical character and the meaning within an environment. In her research into visual perception of the designed object, Daniela Büchler proposes that Gibson provides a practical method of perceiving that suggests that it is not the object that is perceived but rather its potential for action.[53] Thus, when we encounter a chair,

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[48] Brook, "Can Merleau-Ponty's Notion of 'Flesh' Inform or Even Transform Environmental Thinking?"?
[49] Vivian Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2004). 293.
[50] Tilley, *The Materiality of Stone: Explorations in Landscape Phenomenology*.
Ingold, *The Perception of the Environment: Essays in Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill*.
[51] Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*.
[52] Ingold, *The Perception of the Environment: Essays in Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill*. 168.
[53] Daniela Buchler, "Visual Perception of the Designed Object" (Staffordshire University, 2007). 49.

we do not see a collection of sticks and a seat, but rather we perceive the possibility of sitting.

The thesis, then, sets out in part to examine how Tilley uses the work of Merleau-Ponty and Gibson to conduct an embodied analysis of a landscape. Using Merleau-Ponty's idea of reversibility between subject and object, Tilley examines ways in which a landscape might be understood in a phenomenological way. Here, he reflects on the way in which objects in an environment might have the power to 'touch' or 'see' a perceiver.[54] Likewise, Tilley's account is informed by Gibson's theory of direct perception: he notes Gibson's idea of perception as an ambient activity whereby surfaces are revealed as a perceiver moves through the landscape.[55] Of particular interest is Tilley's phenomenological method of enquiry. By combining immediate, embodied experience with other forms of analysis, such as archival research and critical evaluation of the pre-existing literature pertinent to his field of study, Tilley provides a method of enquiry that might be termed an 'expanded' form of phenomenology.

Similarly, an examination of the work of Ingold considers ways in which a perceiver might be situated within the context of an active engagement with the constituents of their surroundings.[56] In particular, Ingold's understanding of how time might operate within the context of an engagement between a perceiver and their surroundings is examined. He uses Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology to explain how participation between a perceiver and their environment might be understood as temporal because it happens through embodied experience that occurs over time.[57]

[54] Tilley, *The Materiality of Stone: Explorations in Landscape Phenomenology*. 17.
[55] Ibid. 26.
[56] Ingold, *The Perception of the Environment: Essays in Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill*.
[57] Ibid. 196.

Likewise, Gibson's method of 'direct' perception is used by Ingold to explain the idea of surfaces unfolding as a perceiver moves through the landscape.[58]

The project goes on to examine some of the ways in which cultural anthropologists, such as Ingold, have used landscape painting as a tool to comment on the representation of the experience of space.[59] In particular, it examines a sixteenth century Flemish painting that has been used as a means of understanding experience. Writing in *The perception of the environment,* Ingold uses the example of Pieter Bruegel the Elder's painting *The Harvesters* as a vehicle for illustrating his perceptual ideas about an environment.[60] Even if we set aside the anachronism of a sixteenth century painting being subject to phenomenological interpretation - there are still a number of flaws in this approach. The medium of the artwork that Ingold has selected needs to be questioned in respect of its appropriate use in a phenomenological enquiry into landscape experience. Central to the idea of embodied experience are the notions of movement and sound. Ingold, however, has selected an artwork created from a static and silent medium. Also absent from Ingold's description of the landscape is the way in which technology mediates an experience of an environment. A sixteenth century landscape is arguably able to provide evidence of technology for the era in which it was painted but inevitably fails to articulate ways in which technology might mediate within a contemporary twenty-first century environment. An experience of landscape is not simply between a body and its immediate environment but usually involves other artefacts, or technologies.

From an examination of Ingold's enquiry it is apparent that an embodied engagement with the landscape needs to take into consideration ways in which technology mediates the dynamic relationship between a perceiver and their

[58] Ibid. 226.
[59] Ibid. 202.
[60] Ibid. 204.

environment. This topic is of particular interest to cultural sociologist Mike Michael. Michael argues that simple types of technology are frequently overlooked in a sensory understanding of an environment.[61] For example, our clothing and footwear provide us with a more comfortable association with the physical landscape than would an engagement involving simply our naked body. Michael also comments on ways in which simple, or mundane technologies might form chains that enable a human subject to engage more fully with their environment. A chain of mundane technologies might include a sequence such as socks, boots, laces and gaiters to provide the possibility of walking in wet or rough terrain.

The way in which technology mediates our experience of an environment is also a concern within Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology. In *Phenomenology of Perception*, technology is considered as extending the body in an understanding of perception.[62] The way in which technology might be explained by Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology is, in turn, central to the work of Ihde. Ihde proposes that by expanding the limits and capabilities of the body, a technological artefact can be seen to change the ways in which we perceive our environment.[63] Interestingly, within his phenomenological analysis of perceptual extension, Ihde considers the role of instruments, such as a microscope, that include a lens.[64] This is highly significant for this study as lenses are also used within the technology associated with moving imagery. As I go on to show, Ihde's idea of perceptual extension using lens-based instruments might be applied to the way in which technology mediates relationships that are involved in moving imagery. Accordingly, the series of relationships between an artist using moving imagery and a viewer of the work can be explained in a phenomenological way.

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[61] Michael, "These Boots Are Made for Walking.: Mundane Technology, the Body and Human-Environment Relations.".
[62] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*. 52.
[63] Ihde, *Technology and the Lifeworld*. 4.
[64] Ibid. 72.

This takes us to the central research question in this thesis: how then might the discipline of phenomenology and parallel enquiries impact on our understanding of landscape representation within visual art? As we have seen within a phenomenological understanding of landscape experience, primacy is typically given to the notion of a bodily relationship with the surrounding environment, rather than to the idea of a fixed gaze examining objects from a distance. Understanding a corporal relationship between observers and their surroundings provides a foundation for comprehending some of the ways in which we experience an environment in an embodied manner, and how such a process might be articulated within contemporary art practice.

Several art historians have used phenomenology as a critical tool to understand landscape painting. Brodsky uses examples of Cézanne, Pollock and Spero's painting, and other static forms of media, to describe phenomenological experience.[65] Writing in 'How to see with the whole body', Brodsky is concerned with the way in which the body is a conduit for the understanding of both the making and viewing of art.[66] However, by using instances of art practice constructed from static media, Brodsky fails to provide examples of art practice that demonstrate the element of movement that is crucial to the relationship between a perceiver and their environment. Indeed, the element of movement and its role in a phenomenological relationship with the landscape and the impact that it has on its representation constitutes an important area for critical enquiry in this thesis.

In short, then, both cultural anthropology and art history have used art ineptly as a tool to understand a sensory investigation into the landscape. By asking the research question of what happens to art practice when an embodied engagement with landscape experience is taken into account brings about a cascade of other research questions of

[65] Brodsky, "How to "See" with the Whole Body."
[66] Ibid.

secondary but nonetheless pressing importance. One of these pressing issues is the need to consider ways in which technology mediates an experience of an environment when art is used to provide a phenomenological understanding of landscape. Rather than focusing on notions of aesthetics – the act of making intuitive selections in the art making process based on sensory gratification - my own art practice reveals the mediating role of technology when a phenomenological relationship is considered, something overlooked by practitioners and theorists in the field. The role of movement is also revealed as a key feature of an embodied relationship. Within my art practice, notions of movement are of prime concern. Accordingly, this thesis sets out to make a critical examination of the dynamic and mediated nature of landscape experience and ways in which it might be applied to art practice.

More specifically, this thesis examines ways in which a relationship between bodily experience and a dynamic environment can be used to understand how moving imagery might articulate a corporeal experience of landscape. The making of films and digital videos involves a complexity of relationships between an artist, a set of technological interventions and a viewer that might be explained in a phenomenological way. Phenomenological ideas about moving imagery are central to the work of Sobchack who uses Merleau-Ponty's notions of embodied experience and Ihde's interpretation of technological mediation to examine the series of relationships involved within the making and viewing of film.[67] Using Sobchack's analysis, the thesis examines ways in which Merleau-Ponty's idea of reversibility can explain film as the perception and expression of experience; likewise, Ihde's phenomenological model of technological mediation using lens-based instruments is used to explain embodied experience extended by technology within the context of moving imagery.

[67] Sobchack, *The Address of the Eye.*

Drawing on strands of phenomenology from Merleau-Ponty and from parallel enquiries, this thesis goes on to examine how film and digital video might be used to explore ways in which time operates as part of a bodily experience of landscape. Again, these issues have been addressed in the field of phenomenology; but their critical examination in the field of art has yet to be done with thoroughgoing critical conviction. Clearly, temporality is significant within a sensory enquiry because an environment unfolds through the embodied actions of a perceiver over time.[68] By taking phenomenological issues of time from cultural archaeology and cultural anthropology and applying them to artwork that uses moving imagery, this thesis makes a sustained critical examination of ways in which film and digital video can articulate temporal ideas. In addition, this thesis questions how representation of an embodied experience of landscape, using both 16mm film and digital imagery, can be used to construct a critique for cultural anthropology and its related disciplines that provide written accounts of a sensory engagement with an environment. This issue is important because writers on the subject typically use examples of artwork to describe an embodied experience of an environment.[69]

For the purpose of examining some of the ways in which phenomenology and moving art make a critical intersection, a case study using the work of Tacita Dean has been selected. This study examines how ideas of embodied landscape experience might be applied to pre-existing contemporary art practice. Dean's use of moving imagery and technology, with an emphasis on time and experience, provides a useful artwork for a case study in order to examine some of the ideas of embodied experience that are of prime concern to this thesis.

[68] Tilley, *The Materiality of Stone: Explorations in Landscape Phenomenology*. 26.
[69] Ingold, *The Perception of the Environment: Essays in Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill*. 201.

It is worth noting that Dean's film has been made for exhibition within the space of an art gallery rather than that of the cinema. Whilst in a cinema a viewer is in a fixed position within their seat, in an art gallery the experience of an observer might be considered as a more mobile engagement. Using the example of Dean's film, *Disappearance at Sea,* an analysis is made of how notions of embodiment from accounts of landscape experience can be understood in relation to contemporary art practice that uses moving imagery. Specifically, notions of experience and time that have been identified within written accounts of an embodied engagement with a landscape are examined in relation to *Disappearance at Sea*.

Significantly for this project then, Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological ideas and the raft of critical enquiries that have followed in his wake over the last forty years can be applied to an understanding of both landscape experience and to the creation of visual art.[70] Multi-sensory, bodily experience and a dynamic environment are elements involved in both the perception of a landscape and within the making and viewing of artwork. Also, the ways in which technology mediates our experience of an environment can be applied to both an embodied engagement with the landscape and to its representation in visual art. This thesis explores omissions in the texts and works cited above to draw attention to a breach within what might be seen as a sensuous account of landscape experience whereby an artwork has been used as an inappropriate tool with which to articulate ideas of embodied experience. The thesis goes on to argue a case and to cite examples of ways in which my own art practice might address these omissions.

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[70] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*.
Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*.
Tilley, *The Materiality of Stone: Explorations in Landscape Phenomenology*.
Ingold, *The Perception of the Environment: Essays in Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill*.
Michael, "These Boots Are Made for Walking.: Mundane Technology, the Body and Human-Environment Relations.".
Ihde, *Technology and the Lifeworld*.
Brodsky, "How to "See" with the Whole Body.".
Sobchack, *The Address of the Eye*.

A body of work has been has generated that makes a contribution to knowledge and understanding in the field by addressing the shortcomings of the use of art as a tool to understand an embodied experience of the landscape. These shortcomings include the insufficient attention given to movement and its relation to the artistic media. Within my art practice moving imagery demonstrates the importance of embodied experience by revealing movement over time of my bodily connection with an environment through the conduit of a camera, a lens, a film, a train and a monopod. By the strategic placement of cameras and the use of vehicles, *Line* and *Length II* set out to address the movement of both a perceiver and their surroundings. Another shortcoming that has been identified is a neglect of attention to the ways in which technology mediates our experience of the landscape. Accordingly, within my own practice, a critical examination is made into the significance of the placement of cameras and their associated technologies. Within *Line* and *Length II,* as I go on to indicate, we are able to identify that attention to the mediating technology is consequential because it has an impact on the resulting imagery and emphasises the way in which technology mediates our experience. My own practice thus uses moving imagery to address the dynamic relationship between a perceiver and their environment and the mediation of experience by technology is a central concern.

This address has led to the generation of a body of work that includes film and digital video media. Using the medium of 16mm film, I explore ways in which technology mediates our association of an environment using the experience of a train journey recorded with a mechanical movie camera.[71] Another instance where I use moving imagery to address an embodied experience with the landscape is in a digital video, *Length II,* where the experience of a motorway journey is captured with a digital

[71] Bren Unwin, *Line,* 16 mm film, 2.5 minutes, 2007.

movie camera.[72] Through the use of moving imagery, embodied landscape experience, extended by technology, is a prime concern. Accordingly, an analysis of these two works shows how phenomenologically driven analyses of an embodied association with a landscape might impact on contemporary art practice.

The original contribution to knowledge of this thesis lies primarily within the ideas contained within *Line* and *Length II*. Here, an examination of phenomenological principles that informs embodied accounts of landscape experience conducted in the opening section of the research project has been applied to the making of a film and a digital video. In both instances, an examination of a cultural archaeological analysis of landscape experience has brought to light how an environment might be understood in a phenomenological way. By giving attention to ideas of embodiment, *Line* and *Length II* set out to articulate a phenomenological experience of landscape. Thus the method used to make the two artworks reveals, I suggest, a phenomenological experience of the landscape. Moreover, the method used to make these two artworks can be understood in terms of an expanded form of phenomenology. Both immediate experience and actions based on the reflection of pre-existing sources of literature have contributed to the making of my film *Line* and digital video *Length II*. An analysis of a sensuous engagement with an environment from the discipline of cultural anthropology revealed that movement and sound are both important issues within landscape experience. The mediation of technology was also identified as a significant issue. Within their imagery and viewing processes, *Line* and *Length II* both address issues of sound and movement and the mediating technology is a key feature within these two artworks. Other issues have also arisen in the course of this project and have been addressed in *Line* and *Length II*. From the discipline of art history, making and viewing practices from an embodied perspective were examined. These practices have been taken account of within the

[72] Bren Unwin, *Length II,* digital video, 90 minutes, 2007.

construction and configuration of *Line* and *Length II*. Also, ways in which film experience might be explained in a phenomenological way have been taken into account from the discipline of film theory and have also been addressed within an analysis of *Line* and *Length II*. Finally, a case study of Dean's film *Disappearance at Sea* tested some of the ideas discussed in this dissertation and this also informs the creation of *Line* and *Length II*.

The dissertation concludes with a critical examination of the work of other artists for whom this thesis is of potential consequence. Points of conjecture are established between the practice of other contemporary artists and some of the ways in which phenomenology and parallel enquiries might be associated with landscape representation.

CHAPTER ONE

Embodied experience of landscape

Introduction

The first chapter examines an experience of the landscape that considers the interactivity of the whole body of a perceiver and their surroundings. It is important that this issue is addressed at this stage of the thesis as an understanding of the embodied activity of a perceiver within a dynamic environment forms the basis for this research project. Notions of bodily experience underpin both the environmental and phenomenological agendas that inform this enquiry. These agendas are of consequence because it is ideas sourced from these disciplines that inform the visual art practice that, later in the thesis, will be analysed in order to establish ways in which artwork might articulate an embodied experience of the landscape.

A crucial feature of the relationship that exists between a perceiving organism and the landscape is the interrelationship between the bodily actions of a perceiver and their dynamic environment. This interrelationship is characterised by its mutual character. Here, no perceiving organism can exist without an environment surrounding it and, likewise, an environment implies an organism to be surrounded.[73] The dynamic environment comprises a complex of surfaces, edges, textures and, significantly, movement; whilst a perceiving organism might be considered as a living, active, multi-sensual being where understanding arises from an interrelationship between the sense organs, the body and the brain.[74] Also of significance for this thesis are ways in which notions of time might be part of this formulation. Time, as I go on to show, is an inherent part of a relationship between an active perceiver and their surroundings.

[73] Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*. 8.
[74] Ibid.

For the purpose of this enquiry several key texts have been selected from the disciplines of phenomenology[75], ecological psychology[76], cultural archaeology[77] and cultural anthropology.[78] From phenomenology, Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception* provides us with a useful starting point for analysing an embodied involvement with the surrounding world.[79] Within the discipline of ecological psychology, Gibson's *The ecological approach to visual perception* offers an account of perception that emphasises the role of the environment as a source of sensory stimulation.[80] A cultural archaeological account from Tilley, *The Materiality of Stone,* presents a phenomenological enquiry into how landscape may be understood in an embodied way[81] and Ingold provides a cultural anthropological analysis, *The perception of the environment,* that offers an account that situates a human perceiver within the context of an active engagement with their environment.[82] Each of these texts provides critical knowledge about bodily experience that contributes towards an examination of ways in which a perceiver might understand their environment. For example, phenomenology essentially concerns itself with embodied and pre-reflective involvement with the surrounding world. Ecological psychology, in turn, concerns itself with the communication of information between living systems and their environments. The discipline of cultural archaeology is concerned with how past elements of the landscape might be interpreted from a sensuous standpoint[83] and similarly, the related field of cultural anthropology examines what it is for human beings to inhabit an environment.[84]

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[75] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*.
[76] Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*.
[77] Tilley, *The Materiality of Stone: Explorations in Landscape Phenomenology*.
[78] Ingold, *The Perception of the Environment: Essays in Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill*.
[79] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*.
[80] Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*.
[81] Tilley, *The Materiality of Stone: Explorations in Landscape Phenomenology*.
[82] Ingold, *The Perception of the Environment: Essays in Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill*.
[83] Tilley, *The Materiality of Stone: Explorations in Landscape Phenomenology*.
[84] Ingold, *The Perception of the Environment: Essays in Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill*.

The first section of this chapter examines an analysis of the perceptual experience of a perceiver that relies on a direct method of gathering information about the structure and meaning of an environment. Using the work of Gibson, an investigation is made into the ways in which an active perceiver might gather information from their surroundings. Gibson's work is important to this thesis as his ideas of perception inform the writing of Tilley and Ingold. Central to Gibson's enquiry is the way in which the body and its surroundings are critical to the process of perception. The section also goes on to examine links between Gibson's ecological enquiry and Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological understanding of perception.

The second section of the chapter is informed by the work of cultural archaeologist Christopher Tilley. Specifically, Tilley's work examines how Gibson's ideas might be used in conjunction with phenomenological concepts from Merleau-Ponty, in order to understand an embodied experience of the landscape. Tilley's method of enquiry is also of special interest. He combines immediate experience with other sources of information in order to reach fresh conclusions about the landscape. This is of particular interest because, as I go on to show, an analysis that uses immediate experience as well as other forms of enquiry might also be applied to contemporary art practice.

Finally, this chapter analyses the writing of Ingold. Ingold is important. Writing in *The perception of the environment,* he examines some of the ways in which Gibson and Merleau-Ponty's work might be used to conduct an enquiry into how an active relationship between a perceiver and the constituents of their surroundings provides an explanation of the operation of time within the landscape and, more specifically, how temporality might be articulated within visual art. This section explores Ingold's use of Pieter Bruegel's painting *The Harvesters,* an example of artwork that describes a bodily and temporal experience of the landscape. An analysis

of this work shows the limitations that need to be imposed on the type of media and the age of the artwork when art is used as a tool to communicate ideas about the interrelationship between an active perceiver and their dynamic environment.

I

An ecological approach to visual perception

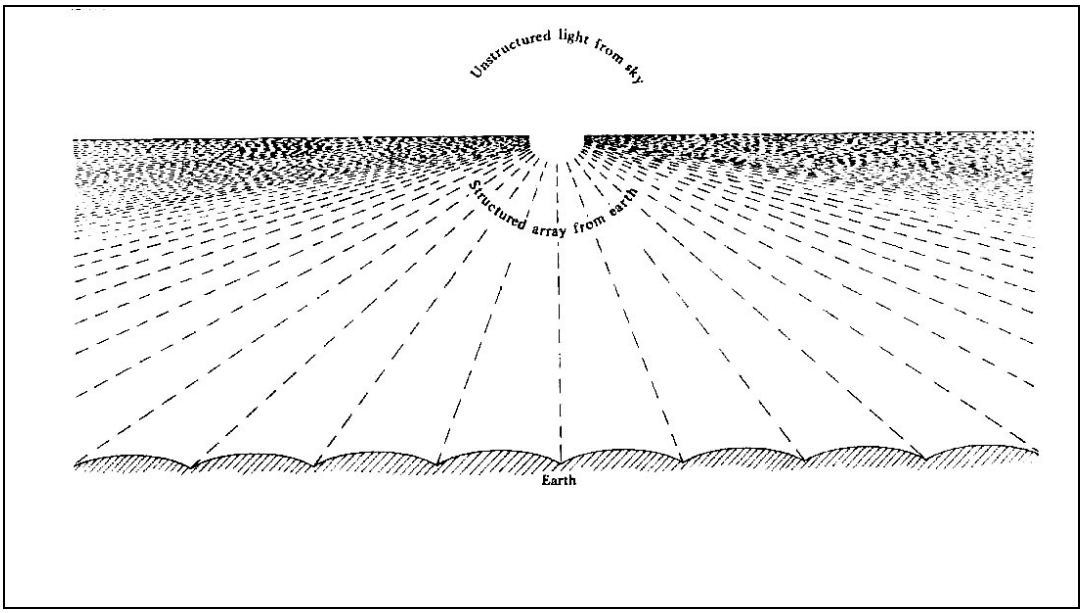
In order to understand an embodied experience of the landscape, it is first necessary to consider a relationship between a human perceiver and their surroundings. Writing in *The ecological approach to visual perception,*[85] Gibson proposes an approach to understanding perception that is based upon a reciprocal relationship between a perceiving organism and its environment. Gibson's writing is of importance for this thesis because his ideas underpin the cultural archaeological and cultural anthropological studies that inform this programme of research.

Gibson's enquiry provides a way of examining visual perception from a position that understands human and other sentient perceivers as whole beings in their environment. This position of mutuality between sentient beings and the space that is around them might be considered a radical departure from a cognitive point of view in which the mind is a disembodied receptacle for sensory data.[86] This view can be traced back to the work of the seventeenth-century French philosopher René Descartes.[87] It is widely recognized that Descartes posited a dualistic view of the body in which the mind operates outside and above the body. For Gibson, however, the importance of the bond between perceivers and their environment is based on the premise that no observer can exist without surroundings and that the essentially relational term 'the environment' is contingent on someone to perceive it.[88] Thus for Gibson, the words 'animal' – his term for a perceiving organism – and 'environment' make an inseparable pair.[89] Furthermore, Gibson emphasises a relationship between an active perceiver and the ambient light that

[85] Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*.
[86] Richard Gregory, *Eye and Brain: The Psychology of Seeing* (Oxford, Tokyo: Oxford University Press, 1998).
[87] Alan Costall, "From Darwin to Watson(*and* Cognitivism) and Back Again: The Principle of Animal-Environment Mutuality," *Bahavior and Philosophy* 32 (2004). 183.
[88] Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*. 8.
[89] Ibid.

is reflected from surfaces and objects within an environment. He terms this light 'the ambient optic array'.[90]

Gibson first suggests the ambient optic array in *The senses considered as perceptual systems,* where he asserts that light reflected from surfaces and objects can provide information to specify properties of the surrounding world.[91] At any point within an environment, he argues, light will converge on surfaces from all directions and provide direct information to a perceiver about their surroundings.[92] The intensity and composition of this light will vary from one angle to another, such as between different faces or inclinations of surfaces, and this spatial pattern of light is the ambient optic array.[93] Illustration 1 shows Gibson's illustration of the ambient optic array. In this diagram, says Gibson, it is assumed that there is a steady source of illumination and the ground, he says, is humped but not cluttered. The illustration, he adds, shows the separation of the ambient optic array at the horizon.



Illus. 1: The ambient optic array from a wrinkled earth outdoors under the sky
Gibson, The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception. 67.

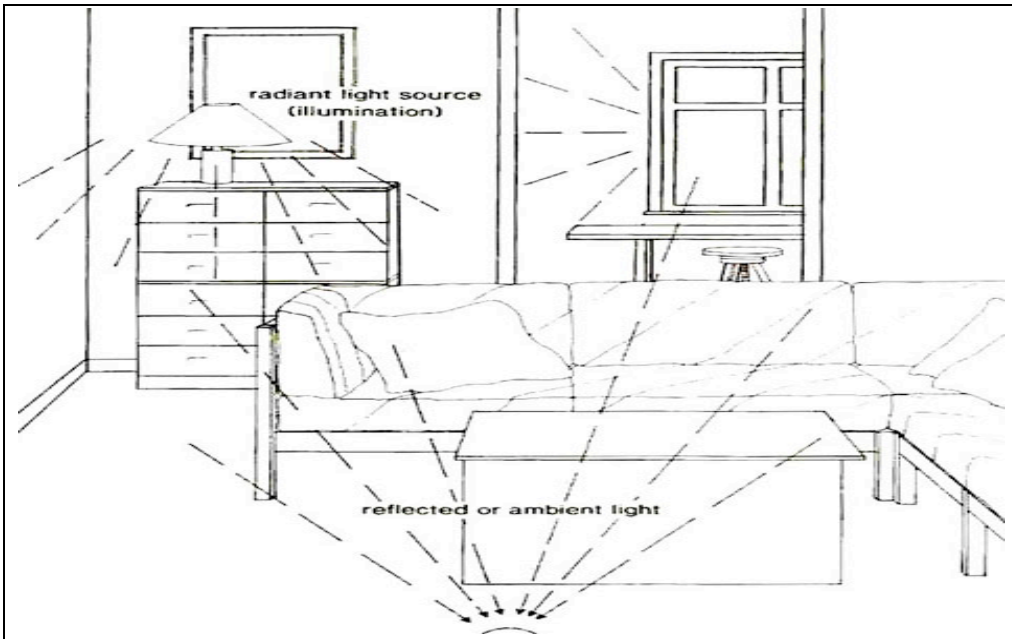
[90] Ibid. 65.
[91] James Gibson, J., *The Senses Considered as Perceptual Systems* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1966).
[92] Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*. 65.
[93] Paul Rodaway, *Sensuous Geographies: Body, Sense and Place* (London: Routledge, 1994).21.

The ambient optic array, says Gibson, contains all the information necessary for an active perceiver to understand their environment: the surfaces of an environment structure the light that reaches a perceiver and this restructured illumination provides direct information for visual perception.[94] Writers on models of visual perception, Vicki Bruce, Patrick Green and Mark Georgeson, describe Gibson's idea of the ambient optic array as a geometric abstraction, separate from a perceiver, and say that it contains light reflected from a surface that carries information for the observer.[95] The whole array of light reaching an observer, they suggest, provides direct information about the layout of surfaces and objects.[96] In this sense, the movement of the eye and the perceiver, and the movement within an environment, enrich the visual information, received by a viewer, about their surroundings.

An understanding of how an environment is perceived using the idea of the ambient optic array is, then, in contrast to an appreciation of perception from a cognitive standpoint that relies on interpretation of sensuous data by the brain.[97] Of particular note are the different starting points of a cognitive approach and Gibson's model. Whilst cognitive theory begins with the idea of an image being formed on the retina and then passed on to the mind, the starting point within Gibson's approach is the light reflected from surfaces and objects within an environment that presumes the presence of a perceiver.[98] Paul Rodaway, writing in *Sensuous Geographies: Bodies, Sense and Place,* suggests that Gibson's idea of the ambient optic array shows perception to be an active and exploratory process.[99] Perception, he says, involves 'the internal organs and the movement of extremities, as well as the specifically identified sense organs, and

[94] Patrick Green Vicki Bruce, Mark Georgeson, *Visual Perception: Physiology, Psychology and Ecology* (Hove: Psychology Press, 2003). 302.
[95] Ibid. 405.
[96] Ibid. 303.
[97] Ibid. 304.
[98] Ibid. 303.
[99] Rodaway, *Sensuous Geographies: Body, Sense and Place*. 20.

locomotion of the whole body through space'.[100] Moreover, says Rodaway, this model explores the perception of space with analysis of an environment that comprises surfaces, edges, textures and movement.[101] Rodaway elaborates on how the ambient optic array can be understood as a spatial concept. If the term 'space' is used to represent the structure of an environment, that includes the sum of people, things and the distances between them, he says, then Gibson's theory can be summarised as arguing that we perceive spaces because they structure the ambient light reaching our eyes.[102] Illustration 2 illustrates Rodaway's suggestion that Gibson's model of perception involves the whole body and the mind but is also situated in, and mediated by, an environment.[103] It is worth noting that Rodaway's diagram could be interpreted as inappropriate because of the fixed position of the 'eye of observer' that he tells us is 'moving through room'. However, it isn't moving but is rather fixed in a single position with no indication, i.e. the use of a dotted line, to suggest it might move about the room.



Illus. 2: The visual system or vision as spatial
Rodaway, Sensuous Geographies: Body, sense and place, 122.

[100] Ibid. 20.
[101] Ibid.
[102] Ibid. 121.
[103] Ibid. 13.

How does the ambient optic array provide information for perception? For a perceiver, information about the environment is provided by the ambient optic array in two ways. Firstly, says Gibson, the ambient optic array provides information about persistence and change within an environment.[104] Gibson terms this idea *invariants*. *Invariants* are properties of the ambient optic array that are determined by some specific characteristic of the environment and remain constant as other conditions vary. For instance, the amount of background texture covered by an object increases with its size but is *invariant* with its distance.[105] Similarly, an insect crawling over a rock can be considered as a variant feature that can be perceived by the persistence, or invariant character, of the rock. In each instance, invariant features within the ambient optic array are picked up by an observer and provide information about the physical properties of an environment.[106]

The ambient optic array also provides a connection between movement, perception and time. This connection occurs because the whole of the optic array is transformed as a perceiver moves through an environment and gathers information about surfaces and objects and about the relationship of those exterior faces and entities to their body. This perception occurs over time and leads Gibson to say: 'Perception of the world and of the self go together and only occur over time'.[107]

Gibson elaborates on notions of time and contrasts them with ideas about space.[108] The underlying feature of time, he says, is the sequential order of events, and space is determined by the adjacent order of objects and surfaces. Sequential order, he adds, cannot be compared with adjacent order, nor is it analogous to adjacent order.

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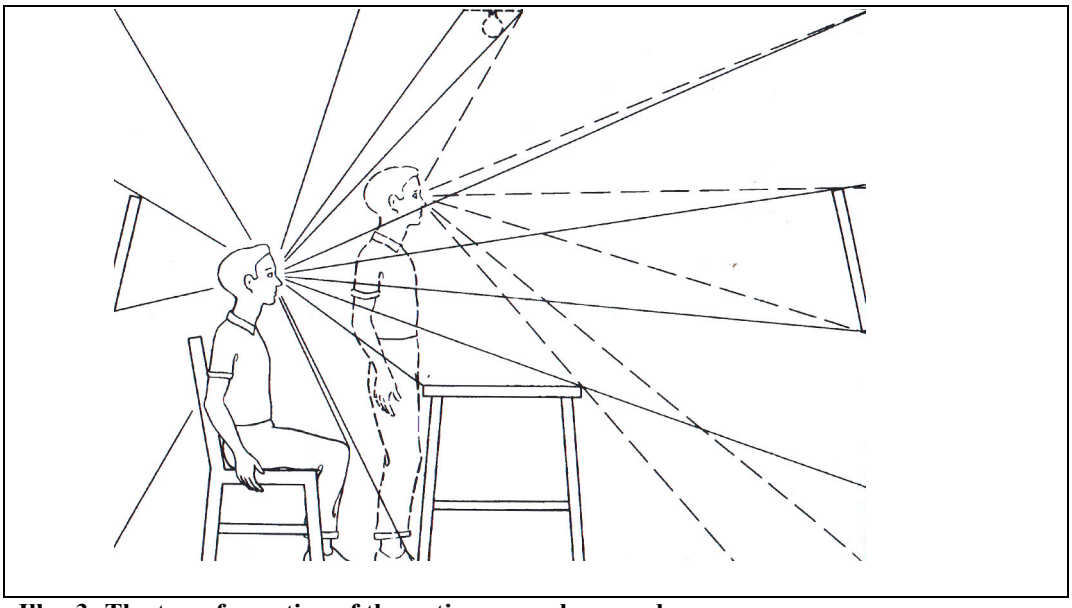
[104] Ibid.
[105] Vicki Bruce, *Visual Perception: Physiology, Psychology and Ecology*. 305.
[106] Ibid.
[107] James Gibson, "The Implications of Experiments on the Perception of Space and Motion," in *Final report to Office of Naval Research* (Arlington, VA: 1975).49.
[108] Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*. 101.

Moreover, argues Gibson, whilst the order of parts can be changed, the order of events cannot be permuted. For example, 'you can reshuffle the parts but not the events, as you can rearrange the furniture in a room but not the happenings that occur in it'. [109]

What happens to the properties of an ambient optic array when a perceiver, or objects within an environment, move? Movement brings about changes within the ambient optic array that are picked up by an active observer and Gibson terms this visual experience of movement the 'optical flow'.[110] Here, when a perceiver moves in an environment their motion will always be accompanied by a flow of visual features. For instance, when an observer walks past several objects in an environment, the relative movement in the ambient optic array will be specifically associated with the arrangement of the things that the perceiver passes. Transformations within the optic array are produced by motion and inform a perceiver about their position in relation to various objects in the environment, as well as informing them about their own movement. Illustration 3 demonstrates this point.



Illus 3: The transformation of the optic array when an observer moves
Bruce, Green and Georgeson, *Visual Perception, physiology, psychology and ecology,* 306.

[109] Ibid.
[110] Vicki Bruce, *Visual Perception: Physiology, Psychology and Ecology*.

Changes in the optic array are produced by the motion of an observer and by the movement of objects in an environment. For a perceiver, changes only exist in relation to persistence. This is because persistence and change are terms where each part of the pair is reciprocal to the other and where a distinction can be made between movement and apparent stability.[111] Gibson acknowledges the changes, or variants, produced by movement: 'What is clear to me now that was not clear before is that structure as such, frozen structure, is a myth, or at least a limiting case. Invariants of structure do not exist except in relation to variants'.[112]

It is interesting to note how Gibson came to consider optical flow within the ambient optic array. During World War II, Gibson (in pursuit of training pilots to improve landings and take-offs) realised that the perception of distance was a critical factor in the successful training of airmen.[113] Moreover, he maintained that the observed world remains perceptually stable despite movements of the perceiver. Diagrams were produced that show the optical flow for a pilot landing an aeroplane and how the invariant properties of an environment provide the basis for perception. Illustration 4, a 'landing glide', shows the optical flow for a pilot landing an aeroplane. In this example, there is an outflow of the optical array radiating from the point at which the pilot is aiming.[114]

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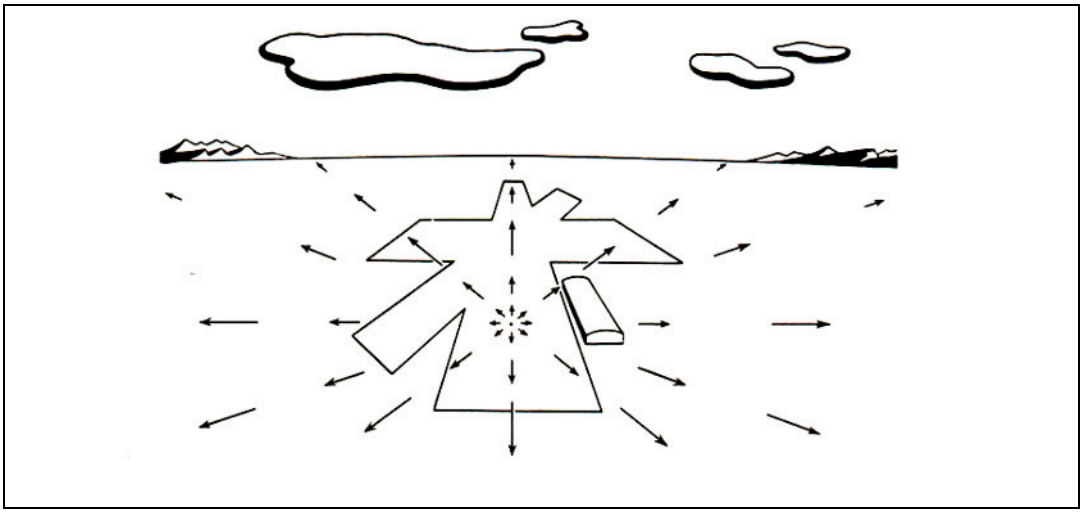
[111] Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*. 13.
[112] Ibid . 87.
[113] Eleanor J Gibson, *Perceiving the Affordances: A Portrait of Two Psychologists* (Mahwah, New Jersey; London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2002). 53.
[114] James Gibson, J., *The Perception of the Visual World* (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1950). 128.



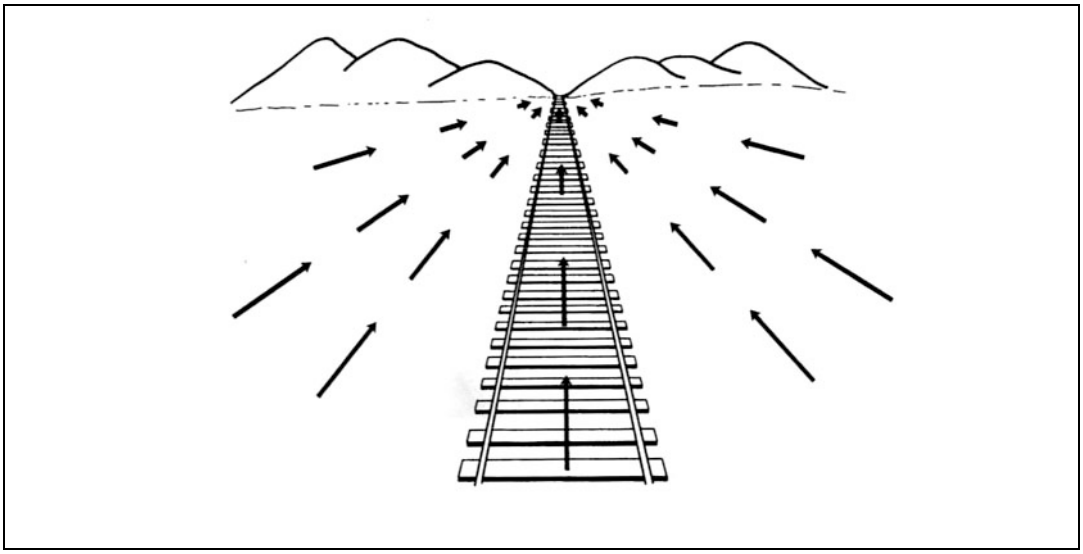
Illus. 4: The optical flow for a pilot landing an aeroplane
Gibson, *The Perception of the visual world* (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1950). 128.

The nature of optical flow is affected by the direction of the movement of an observer. For example, when an observer moves forwards sensory data appears to flow past the perceiver. However, when the movement of the perceiver is reversed, the same flow appears to change direction and moves forward.[115] From these observations of (the result of) movement, Gibson suggests that outflow specifies an approach towards things and inflow indicates a retreat from something.[116]

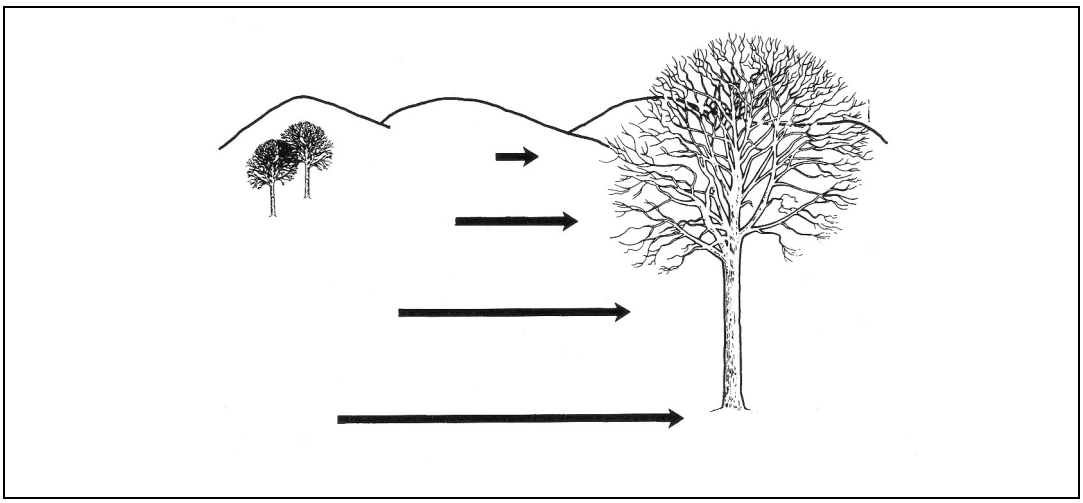
Transformations in the optical flow are brought about by changes in the environment as well as by the motion of a perceiver. For example, environmental changes might include the slight movement of leaves in the wind or the extreme motion brought about by an earthquake. Perception involves the mobility of the perceiver, movement of objects within an environment, or the motion of both.[117] Gibson attributes his interest in the changes that occur within optical flow to childhood experience with his father who was a surveyor on the railways. Gibson says: 'I knew what the world looked like from a railroad train and how it seemed to flow inward when seen from the

[115] Harry Heft, *Ecological Psychology in Context: James Gibson, Roger Barker, and the Legacy of William James's Radical Empiricism* (Mahwah, New Jersey, London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2001). 119.
[116] Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*. 227.
[117] Philip Glotzbach and Harry Heft, "Ecological and Phenomenological Contributions to the Psychology of Perception," *Nous* 16, no. 1 (1982). 111.

rear platform and expand outward when seen from the locomotive.'[118] Bruce, Green and Georgeson also comment on optical flow and its perception from a train.[119] 'If one was sitting on the roof of a train facing backwards', they say, 'there would be a continuous inward streaming of optical texture elements towards the point from which one was travelling' (Illustration 5). However, if one remained seated at a train window, the pattern of flow would be as shown in Illustration 6.



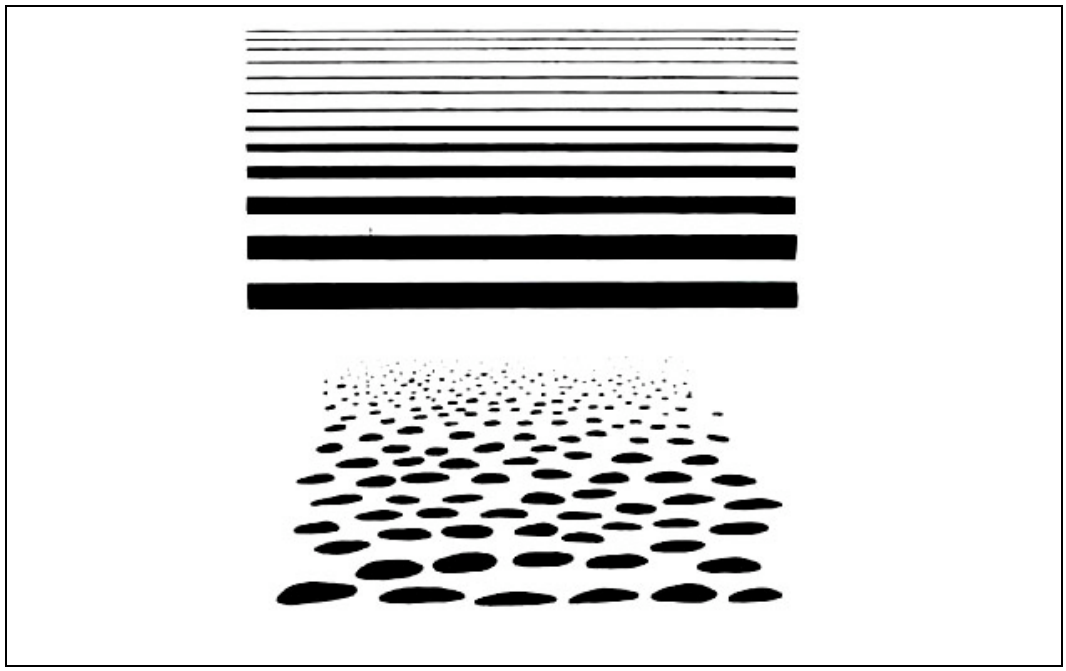
Illus. 5: The optic flow field for a person sitting on the roof of a train, facing backwards
Bruce, Green and Georgeson, *Visual Perception: physiology, psychology and ecology,* 307.



Illus. 6: The optic flow field for a person sitting on a train and looking out of the window as they travel from right to left through this terrain
Bruce, Green and Georgeson, *Visual Perception: physiology, psychology and ecology,* 308.

[118] E G Boring and G Lindzey, ed., *A History of Psychology in Autobiography*, vol. 5 (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1967). 127.
[119] Vicki Bruce, *Visual Perception: Physiology, Psychology and Ecology*. 305.

As we have seen, the environment in which we move structures the ambient optic array. This structure within the ambient optic array means that the perception of our surroundings is affected by the surface texture within an environment. Here, light reflected from surfaces on which we move, says Gibson, usually has regular texture, made up of elements of similar size and shape; examples of exterior surfaces with a regular texture might include areas of grass or a tiled floor.[120] Light reflected from such surfaces forms a structure in the ambient optic array that Gibson terms a 'texture gradient'. In Illustration 7 a texture gradient is used to show a surface receding into the distance.



Illus. 7: Examples of texture gradients
Bruce, Green and Georgeson, *Visual perception: physiology, psychology and ecology,* 303.

Gibson discusses his ideas about textures and surfaces, together with notions of size constancy, in a military report, *Motion picture testing and research: Aviation Psychology Research Report No 7.*[121] Here, Gibson uses an example of a ploughed field to show that with a textured background, estimates of the height of a distant pole in the field do not decrease, but only become more variable. Furthermore, he says, texture

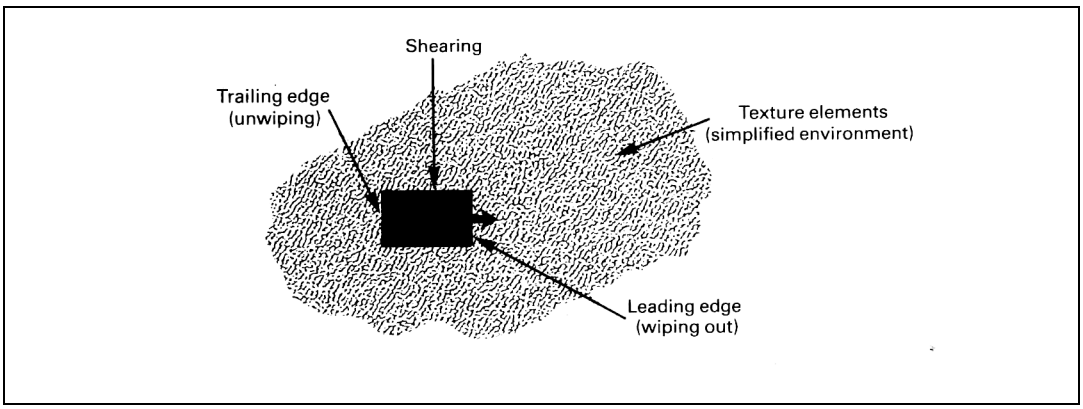
[120] Ibid . 302.
[121] James Gibson, "Motion Picture Testing and Research," *Report No. 7, Army Air Forces Aviation Psychology Program Research Reports* (1947).

gradients change when the slant of a surface that is relative to a perceiver alters and areas with regular exterior faces can reveal information for a perceiver about the size and distance of objects. The size of an object, says Gibson, will cover the same amount of background texture whatever its distance from the observer.[122] More recently, philosopher Edward Casey suggests that Gibson's understanding of texture gradients is based on a series of evenly decreasing gaps that move away from the perceiver as they place him or her in relation to these spaces.[123] Moreover, Casey proposes that Gibson's idea of texture gradients might be compared with methods of painting used by Rennaisance artists and also be associated with the grid system of Western map making.[124]

What happens to areas of texture when moving objects cover them? As an object moves, areas of surface texture are gradually covered by the shifting entity's leading edge whilst its trailing border reveals regions of the background. If the movement of the object is reversed, the textured surfaces that are covered in one direction are revealed by motion in the opposite way. Likewise, when an observer moves, textured surfaces within an environment that pass out of a perceiver's view in one direction will reappear when their motion is reversed.[125] Gibson calls this principle 'reversible occlusion'. He suggests that reversible occlusion underpins a perceiver's sense of a steady and constant environment and adds that in this idea even surfaces that are momentarily hidden can still be sensed.[126] Gibson clarifies this notion. Things that are temporarily out of sight, he says, can still be perceived because there is information in the ambient optic array about the edges that separate things. The edges that separate objects, he says, provide information about things being in front of or behind other

[122] Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*. 160.
[123] Casey, *Representing Place: Landscape Painting and Maps*. 151.
[124] Ibid.
[125] Vicki Bruce, *Visual Perception: Physiology, Psychology and Ecology*. 308.
[126] Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*. 76.

entities.[127] An edge that is a contour of a visible object, where another entity becomes hidden or revealed, is termed by Gibson as an 'occluding edge.'[128] Illustration 8 shows texture elements being hidden and revealed.



Illus. 8: Elements being hidden and revealed
Bruce, Green and Georgeson, *Visual Perception, physiology, psychology and ecology,* 308.

A connection can be made between Gibson's comments regarding the visible and the invisible features of an environment and phenomenological thought. Psychologist Harry Heft comments on Gibson's idea of occluding edges and suggests that, phenomenologically, a surface that was previously visible, but becomes gradually hidden, is still experienced as persisting even though it progressively disappears from sight.[129] Similarly, the surface that was previously invisible, but becomes visible as it emerges from behind an occluding edge, is experienced as having existed prior to the present moment.[130] Gibson's idea of an occluding edge arises, proposes Heft, from a phenomenological position.[131] Specifically, within Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, perception always involves a relationship between the visible and the invisible because the surfaces and sides of objects cannot all be seen at the same time.[132] Writing in *The Visible and the Invisible* in 1964, Merleau-Ponty comments on a relationship between

[127] Ibid.
[128] Ibid. 308.
[129] Heft, *Ecological Psychology in Context: James Gibson, Roger Barker, and the Legacy of William James's Radical Empiricism*. 122.
[130] Ibid.
[131] Ibid.
[132] Tilley, *The Materiality of Stone: Explorations in Landscape Phenomenology*. 10.

things that can be seen and those that are hidden from view:[133] He suggests that every visible aspect of being is related to an invisible dimension. The invisible, he says, can be imagined, but not seen; it is not non-existent, it pre-exists in the visible.[134] For example, all the sides of an object cannot be seen at one time. As one surface of the object moves into view, another disappears. This means that the way in which we experience something depends on our bodily relationship with that object.

There are also other ways in which Gibson's theory of invariants can be seen to correspond to Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology. Both Gibson and Merleau-Ponty understand perception as a continuous interchange between a body and the entities that surround it. Both writers take account of the direct and sensuous experience between an active perceiver and their dynamic environment. Gibson, for example, asserts that the body is a perceptual system that enables visual perception. 'The eye', he says, 'is part of a dual organ, one of a pair of eyes, and they are set in a head that can turn, attached to a body that can move from place to place.'[135] As we have seen, Merleau-Ponty also emphasises the role of the body in perceiving the world. He says that we are embodied beings who make sense of the world by acting in and on it. Our perception is always shaped by our position in space, our movements to or from the subject and by our specific tactile and other sensory perceptions of it.[136]

The second way in which Gibson's idea of the ambient optic array is able to provide information for a perceiver is by the concept of *affordance*.[137] The *affordance* of a surface or an object is the meaning that it can provide for a perceiver. For example, can it be held, eaten, walked on or sat upon? If any one of these actions can be fulfilled,

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[133] Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*. 215
[134] Richard Kearney, *Poetics of Imagining* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998). 121.
[135] Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*. 76.
[136] Belova, "Feeling the Image: A Phenomenological Account of a Visual Experience." No page nos.
[137] Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*. 127.

then it can be said to afford these potential actions for a perceiver. Thus, meaning can be picked up directly from the ambient light within an environment. This leads Gibson to suggest that if properties from the ambient optic array can specify the surrounding world, then meaning provided by surfaces and objects within an environment can also be determined without cognitive processing.[138] He says:

> Perhaps the composition and layout of surfaces *constitute* what they afford. If so, to perceive them is to perceive what they afford. This is a radical hypothesis, for it implies that the "values" and "meanings" of things in the environment can be directly perceived. Moreover, it would explain the sense in which values and meanings are external to the perceiver.[139]

Other writers have commented on various aspects of Gibson's concept of *affordance*. Bruce, Green and Georgeson discuss ways in which the physical properties of objects imply potential meaning for a perceiver. They suggest that if a surface is flat, extended and substantial then it has inherent properties of affordance for a perceiver.[140] On a different note, Heft suggests ways in which *affordance* might have a role in survival tactics. Perceivers, he says, need to be able to detect obstacles that would impede access to resources such as food and shelter; surfaces or objects that prevent a perceiving subject reaching their destination also need to be considered in terms of *affordance*.[141] Finally, Joan Iverson Nassauer, writing in *Culture and changing landscape structure,* comments on *affordance* being a property of the surfaces and objects within an environment. She says that Gibson defines affordance as existing because of the value or meaning that something intrinsically possesses – its potential – rather than being dependent upon the perception of the observer.[142]

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[138] Vicki Bruce, *Visual Perception: Physiology, Psychology and Ecology*. 309.
[139] Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*. 127.
[140] Vicki Bruce, *Visual Perception: Physiology, Psychology and Ecology*. 309.
[141] Harry Heft, "Affordances and the Body: An Intentional Analysis of Gibson's Ecological Approach to Visual Perception
," *Journal for the theory of social behaviour* 19, no. 1 (1989).
[142] Joan Iverson Nassauer, "Culture and Changing Landscape Structure," *Landscape Ecology* 10, no. 4 (1995). 232.

It has been noted by some writers that Gibson neglects the idea of cultural difference within his theory of *affordance*.[143] Bruce, Green and Georgeson highlight this problem.[144] They suggest that whilst it might be appreciated that affordances such as 'climbable' or 'graspable' could be specified in the ambient optic array, it is questionable whether those essentially cultural categories, such as 'eatable' or 'writable with', could be contained within the reflected light. Gibson's theory reaches its most controversial, they suggest, with his assertion that a letterbox affords the posting of letters by human subjects of Western culture. Whatever pre-existing knowledge a perceiver has, they say, anyone encountering a letterbox would see an unyielding object with an opening in which small objects could be placed. But to see it as a letterbox requires knowledge about the part that the object plays in a broader model of human activity and, in particular, knowing that stamped letters put in boxes like it will be collected and delivered to the addresses written on them.[145]

Alan Costall also identifies a weakness between Gibson's idea of *affordance* and cultural activities. The *affordance* of artefacts, are, he suggests, a focus for social influence that bring people together and offer joint activity. Objects, adds Costall, are experienced in relation to the community within which they have meaning; the use of a resource by one subject arises through the influence of other subjects. For example, says Costall, a child learns to use a spoon through a situation structured by its parent, rather than being left to discover the function alone.[146] Ingold also asserts that Gibson 'devoted scant attention to the specifically social and cultural dimensions of human life.'[147] As I go on to indicate, Ingold proposes that an environment *affords* joint and

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[143] Vicki Bruce, *Visual Perception: Physiology, Psychology and Ecology*. 309.
Alan Costall, "Socializing Affordances," *Theory and Psychology* 5, no. 4 (1995). 472.
Ingold, *The Perception of the Environment: Essays in Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill*. 167.
[144] Vicki Bruce, *Visual Perception: Physiology, Psychology and Ecology*. 309.
[145] Ibid. 411.
[146] Costall, "Socializing Affordances." 472.
[147] Ingold, *The Perception of the Environment: Essays in Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill*. 167.

practical actions that are shared by perceivers moving in the same region in pursuit of mutual activities.[148]

A connection can be made between Gibson's theory of *affordance* and phenomenological analyses of psychologists Glotzbach and Heft. Writing in their paper *Ecological and phenomenological contributions to the psychology of perception*, Glotzbach and Heft propose: 'For the phenomenologist, it is impossible to describe human experience without including meaning. The person is not situated in the world as a mere object; one fundamentally experiences the world in terms of the possibilities for action which it offers.'[149] On a similar note, Heft suggests that there is a phenomenological character in the idea of *affordance*. [150] An *affordance*, says Heft, as well as being associated with the features of an environment, is meaningful for an active perceiver as it establishes possibilities and limits in respect of actions.[151]

There are also differences between Gibson's theory of *affordance* and some strands of phenomenological thought. Gibson's analysis, for example, assumes that the world in which the perceiver moves is relatively fixed and somehow pre-prepared, with all its affordances ready and waiting to be taken up by a perceiver.[152] However, Merleau-Ponty points out that the process of embodiment is the same as the development of an organism in its environment. Rather than the world being somehow pre-prepared, Merleau-Ponty argues that it comes into being, with its properties, alongside the movements of the perceiver.[153] Unlike Gibson's model of perception, that claims meaningful properties to be held within the light reflected from surfaces and objects

[148] Ibid.
[149] Philip Glotzbach and Harry Heft, "Ecological and Phenomenological Contributions to the Psychology of Perception.", *Nous* 16, no. 1 (1982). 116.
[150] Heft, *Ecological Psychology in Context: James Gibson, Roger Barker, and the Legacy of William James's Radical Empiricism*. 123.
[151] Ibid.
[152] Ingold, *The Perception of the Environment: Essays in Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill*. 168.
[153] Ibid.

within a perceiver's surroundings, Merleau-Ponty puts emphasis on meaning emerging from an association between the body and the environment. He says: 'As the perceiver is a being-in-the-world, then the coming-into-being of the perceiver is part of the process of coming-into-being of the world.[154]

[154] Ibid.

II

A phenomenological appraisal of landscape experience

Thus far we have established one of two key modes of analysis. Next, in this section, a more overtly phenomenological analysis of landscape experience is developed through the examination of a relationship between an active perceiver and their dynamic environment. Specifically, this section considers a method of analysing landscape experience that takes into account the whole body of the perceiver and its surroundings.

Central to the concerns of this section is the work of cultural archaeologist Christopher Tilley.[155] Writing in *The Materiality of Stone: Explorations in landscape phenomenology*, Tilley explores the experience of landscape from an embodied perspective.[156] His examination of a bodily experience of the landscape is made from a position based on the direct encounter of a physically embodied mind in the world, rather than being something that occurs to a disembodied intelligence, somehow outside of the body.[157] Thus, Tilley's account provides this thesis with a way of considering an experience of landscape from a bodily, sensuous standpoint that is based on the material existence of the human body in the world.

There are several ways in which Tilley's phenomenological account of landscape experience is significant for this thesis. First, his enquiry is important because it provides a way of encountering landscape using the body, rather than just the eyes. This standpoint is pertinent because experience of a landscape from an embodied point of view is a prime pursuit of this thesis. Second, Tilley's account explores some of the ways that a phenomenological analysis might produce a new understanding of landscape

[155] Tilley, *The Materiality of Stone: Explorations in Landscape Phenomenology*.
[156] Ibid. 4.
[157] Ibid. 2.

through a linguistic redescription arising from bodily experience.[158] This analysis is of particular interest for this thesis as there are connections that can be made between Tilley's linguistic redescription arising from bodily experience and a redescription of landscape experience using visual art.

Firstly, how does Tilley produce this linguistic redescription of landscape from bodily experience? In order to understand this issue it is useful to consider the context of Tilley's enquiry. As a cultural archaeologist, Tilley's prime interest is in interpretation of the past through analysis of the present. Specifically, writing in *The Materiality of Stone,* Tilley is concerned with the significance of ninety-three prehistoric menhirs - Megalithic stones from the Neolithic to the Iron Age - in western and northern Finistère, Brittany.[159]

At the beginning of his investigation, and prior to an examination of the stones through bodily experience, Tilley engages in some initial research: library and archival enquiries and a consideration of previously recorded information. For instance, he writes how he has discovered that:

> Menhirs have been suggested to be landmarks or territorial boundary markers set up in association with the gradual post-Mesolithic clearance of the land for farming (Hibbs 1983; Burl 1985; Bender 1986; Patton 1993).[160]

This clearly is the result of a contextual understanding. Tilley also employs an embodied approach in his encounter with the menhirs. This is the part of his enquiry that he refers to as 'lived experience' and includes a bodily encounter with the landscape.[161] In practical terms, this bodily encounter includes a consideration of the physical characteristics of the stones he is studying. Accordingly, he writes:

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[158] Ibid. 30.
[159] Tilley, *The Materiality of Stone: Explorations in Landscape Phenomenology*. xiii.
[160] Tim Ingold, "Comments on Christopher Tilley: *The Materiality of Stone: Explorations in Landscape Phenomenology*," *Norwegian Archaeological Review* 38, no. 2 (2005).
[161] Tilley, *The Materiality of Stone: Explorations in Landscape Phenomenology*. 29.

> One of the most massive menhirs is at Les Sables Blancs in the suburbs of Douarnenez. This stone is 5.3 m high and 7.7 m around the base in circumference. It is situated on a very steep slope overlooking the Baie de Douarnenez with its broad face looking outward.[162]

Tilley's bodily association with the stones also investigates the character of the stone itself - such as the constituent elements of the rock, the personal experience of touching their surfaces and the aural experience of the sound emitted when the stone is struck.[163] Tilley even considers the smell of the stone, contrasting the absence of any odour arising from the menhirs to the olfactory qualities of wooden posts that the stones might have been associated with over time. Writing of his sensuous experience of the stones in the Haut Léon region of Brittany, he writes:

> These menhirs with their often rough and indented surfaces appear visually much coarser than those in Bas Léon but the texture of the granite is very different…These stones are rough visually but feel relatively smooth, the precise opposite of many of those in Bas Léon.[164]

From this evidence, we can see that Tilley's prime concern, following his initial research, is in the effect that landscapes have on the body, prior to any further analysis of interpretation or cultural meaning.[165]

However, this bodily way of experiencing a landscape needs to be analysed within the context of individual needs and interests. We do not receive information about the world passively. Rather, Tilley says, we act according to our own particular needs and interests. It is within the context of these needs and interests, he says, that information is received.[166] He states: 'it is in the context of a needful body reaching out to the world that meaning and significance are found'.[167] The following example from Tilley's analysis of prehistoric menhirs arguably demonstrates a bodily context for

[162] Ibid. 69.
[163] Ibid. 35.
[164] Ibid. 54.
[165] Ibid. 31.
[166] Ibid. 30.
[167] Ibid.

meaning. In this instance, the context for the information that Tilley is receiving is his enquiry into the relationship between the powerful character of the stones and a human perceiver. He says:

> The axe-like menhirs of Bas Léon, planted into the land, have enormous symbolic power. There is an overwhelming aesthetic force to these stones which dwarfs the human observer….The process of shaping destroys the individuality of the stone and transforms it into a static cultural symbol fixed erect into the ground.[168]

Next, within his enquiry, Tilley follows an account of an embodied experience of a landscape with articulation of his field observations. In respect of the menhirs in Brittany, this articulation involves such descriptions as:

> All the stones are of the same local granite, which is very coarse-grained with reddish pink quartz crystals. These quartz crystals may be oblong in form, ranging between 2 and 5 cm long and 1 – 2 cm wide, or more rounded, square or irregular in form and up to 5 cm in diameter. Thus the huge axe-shaped menhirs appear to the eye to be very smooth and uniform but they feel coarse, sharp and irregular when touched.[169]

So, we have seen Tilley describe his phenomenological association with the landscape. However, he adds, 'A 'pure' phenomenological approach on its own remains inadequate'.[170] Rather, he says:

> What is required is a constant attempt at an articulation between our bodily experiences and the production of reinterpretations using inspiration from existing texts which may inform us, be they archaeological, anthropological, geographical or geological or works in cultural and critical theory.[171]

Thus, following a textual account of his bodily encounter with the stones, Tilley makes a further analysis and critical evaluation using pre-existing literature. It is this stage of the enquiry, he says, that leads to new understandings based on the first two steps in the analysis. Hence, this final stage recontextualizes the first two phases to produce something new. In the case of the axe-shaped prehistoric menhirs in Bas Léon, he writes:

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[168] Ibid. 47.
[169] Ibid. 44.
[170] Ibid. 224.
[171] Ibid.

> In a landscape that was cleared for farming, menhirs gained a much greater potential to serve as landscape or territorial markers signifying the affiliation of different groups with discrete areas of land. The significance and meaning of the menhir tradition changed and they became signifiers of people taking control over and laying claim to the landscape and altering it on a massive scale. This stands in opposition to the more ancestral and mythic connections of unshaped stones, whose potential for establishing and maintaining a sense of individual or group difference was considerably reduced.[172]

For Tilley, then, we can see that an enquiry into material forms within the landscape requires several distinct phases: initial research, a bodily association with the environment and critical evaluation using both pre-existing literature and information gathered from embodied experience.

From Tilley's enquiry we have seen what is at stake when words are used to describe an experience of landscape informed by the expanded field of phenomenology. However, for this thesis it is necessary to ask what is at stake when 'art' – or more accurately some form of audio-visual denotation that we might name 'art' – takes the place of writing. This knotty question is of prime importance to this project and will be unravelled over the following chapters of this thesis.

Now, we shall consider in more depth ways in which Tilley uses Gibson's ecological theory of perception and Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology. As we saw in section one, there are close associations that can be identified between these two ways of understanding perceptual experience.

Of particular interest for this thesis is Tilley's idea about ways in which meaning and significance are gathered by a perceiver. Tilley explains his idea in detail. The way in which we experience a landscape, he says, is always unfinished, uncertain and therefore ambiguous. This ambiguity, he adds, provides 'an inexhaustible field of

[172] Ibid. 86.

affordances for us'.[173] This is interesting. As we saw in the previous section, the term *affordance*, within the context of gathering meaning from an environment, is an idea from Gibson's theory of perception.[174] As we have also seen, a perceiver gathers information about the meaning of surfaces and objects from an environment in a 'direct' way, without the intervention of a retinal image. This idea may be contrasted to the view of perception that relies upon the relationship of the eye and the brain.[175] Indeed, Tilley states that whilst a 'scientific' view of perception may be able to reveal something of value in the case of physical objects, it cannot deal with ways in which human subjects perceive their environment.[176]

Accordingly, Tilley extends his argument to consider an embodied method of gathering meaning from a landscape. Firstly, he says, meaning within a landscape is not pre-given in consciousness, nor imposed on things but is rather discovered during practical activity. Landscapes, he says, 'provide or furnish possibilities, either for good or ill. An *affordance* is neither an objective nor a subjective property but both'.[177] By this analysis, says Tilley, the perception of an environment provides meaning within a landscape that is potentially inexhaustible and encountered in the course of daily activity.[178]

Tilley also references Gibson's ecological enquiry when examining the role of movement within landscape experience.[179] In particular, he notes Gibson's stress on how perception is an ambient activity where the senses open the body to the world.[180] Tilley applies Gibson's idea to his study of embodied landscape experience: 'Movement

[173] Ibid. 30.
[174] Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*.
[175] Gregory, *Eye and Brain: The Psychology of Seeing*. 5.
[176] Tilley, *The Materiality of Stone: Explorations in Landscape Phenomenology*. 1.
[177] Ibid. 24.
[178] Ibid.
[179] Tilley, *The Materiality of Stone: Explorations in Landscape Phenomenology*. 26.
[180] Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*. 1.

between places', he says, 'involves their sequential experience, in their description the production of a narrative, linking the body to place and events in place'. [181] Landscapes, he adds, bring together bodies, movement and places into a whole.[182] In Tilley's analysis of the menhirs in Brittany, we find an example of movement linking body to place within a landscape. In this instance it is the movement of water as well as the movement of the stones by human subjects that results in the formation of the landscape. He says:

> Although it [the stone] is situated near to the highest point of the Léon plateau, the origin of the stone is probably riverine, brought from the Aber Ildut, at least 2.5 km to the west, Similarly, the broadest menhir at Kerscaven, embedded in a stream with water flowing along its sides, is 5.7 m high or three times the height of a person…The sheer enormity of such stones and the acts of their transportation and erection were intended to impress in the past as they do today.[183]

A connection can also be made between movement within a landscape and ideas of time. In this respect, says Tilley, 'temporality is carried by the movements of the body into, out of, around and between places'.[184] For example, in his description of the Neolithic menhirs, Tilley states:

> The same menhir may, in effect, appear as four or five different menhirs as one moves around it. As one face becomes lost in movement, another different stone is revealed. Such stones are obviously open to multiple interpretations depending on from where they are seen.[185]

Moreover, he says, memory also needs to be considered within a temporal relationship; time, he asserts, as well as involving a moving perceiver and their environment, involves the recall of previous events. Accordingly, Tilley writes of the way in which the rock at Bas Léon triggers memories of other menhirs encountered on a previous occasion. He writes:

> The granite here sometimes has a series of small inclusions of much finer-grained and harder rock completely lacking in quartz crystals and smooth to the

[181] Tilley, *The Materiality of Stone: Explorations in Landscape Phenomenology*. 26.
[182] Ibid. 24.
[183] Ibid. 36.
[184] Ibid. 26.
[185] Ibid. 38.

> touch. These inclusions may be rounded or somewhat irregular in form (like those found on the Kerloas menhir) but much more frequently they resemble axes in form.[186]

Unlike Gibson, who suggests that we abandon the doctrine that views all awareness as memory except for the present moment,[187] Tilley proposes that memory connects knowledge of one place to another. He says:

> The existence and nature of time, like place, depends upon the existence and nature of a perceiving subject, and there is not perception of place and landscape without memory. Past experiences become selectively conjoined with present perceptions and serve to colour them.[188]

Tilley elaborates on other ways in which temporality operates within the landscape. Our perception of the world, he says, involves a relationship with both the past and the future; experiences that have gone before are carried forward by our body and enable us to interpret the world. Tilley's account of the menhirs illustrates the way in which he understands perception and its association with time. He says:

> The origin of the stones too, whether derived from rocks exposed along the shoreline, from river channels or estuaries, stream beds or particular rock outcrops, like time was an important 'hidden' dimension to their meaning and potency. Each menhir would have its own origin story, which may have been mythologized over time or continue to reference the epic work of ancestors. Through time these stories might have merged and elaborated to incorporate world origin stories and cosmological knowledge.[189]

Thus moments of lived experience are orientated by and towards the past and involve a merging of the two. 'Past and present fold in upon each other', says Tilley. 'The past influences the present and the present rearticulates the past'.[190]

Specifically, Tilley takes a phenomenological approach that uses the framework of Merleau-Ponty's theory of embodied experience.[191] This approach, as we have seen,

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[186] Ibid. 44.
[187] Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*. 202.
[188] Tilley, *The Materiality of Stone: Explorations in Landscape Phenomenology*. 26.
[189] Ibid. 36.
[190] Ibid. 12.
[191] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*.

emphasises the intertwining of subject and object. Central to Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology is the idea of embodied experience. This type of experience relies on a lived body and its relationship, through engagement and interaction, with the world. As Tilley states:

> The body is concretely engaged in the world from a particular point of view that is always unfolding and changing in space-time. The mobile interaction of the body in the world creates a framework for experience which is produced in this lived interaction.[192]

Tilley uses Merleau-Ponty's idea of reversibility to examine some of the ways we might experience a landscape. He begins by considering a relationship with his own body. Although the human body is 'me myself', says Tilley, I can also know it 'from the outside'.[193] He continues: 'When I touch my left hand with my right hand, my body is both touching and touched, subject and object, a union of the two'.[194] Tilley emphasises that in the same way as touching needs a body that can be touched, seeing entails a body that is capable of being seen.[195] Accordingly, Tilley informs us that his enquiry involves 'an opening of my body to things, a reversible relationship between touching and being touched, myself and other, the effect of myself on things and those things on me'.[196]

Tilley asserts that Merleau-Ponty's model of perception, an example that recognizes unity between a perceiver and the perceived, can be applied to landscape experience. Accordingly, Tilley says:

> I touch the stone and the stone touches me. To feel the stone is to feel its touch on my hands. There is a reflexive relationship between the two. I and the stone are in contact with each other through my body but this process is not exactly the same as my touching my own body because the stone is external to my body and not part of it. Touching the stone is possible because both my body and the stone are part of the same world.[197]

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[192] Tilley, *The Materiality of Stone: Explorations in Landscape Phenomenology*. 29.
[193] Ibid. 16.
[194] Ibid.
[195] Ibid. 17.
[196] Ibid. 30.
[197] Ibid.

Tilley also questions how a bodily relationship with our surroundings can be considered as a unified whole. To answer this question, he applies Merleau-Ponty's notion of an overlap between an observer and their environment.[198] This overlap, which Merleau-Ponty terms *flesh*, considers a region at the borders of a body and its environment that enables us to speak of a commonality between people and things. Philosopher Isis Brook provides a useful description of the notion of *flesh*. She says:

> Merleau-Ponty describes flesh as an element. The element 'flesh' is both me and the world – 'a texture' – and it is our ability to both see and be seen, to touch and be touched that both gives us that direct experience of the enfolded nature of flesh and presents us with an emblem of that unfolding.[199]

Brook claims that the idea of *flesh* has value for environmental thinking as it seemingly points to a relationship 'between me and other humans and between me and non-humans'.[200] Significantly for this project, Brook says that *flesh* helps us to recognise and break down the idea of a dichotomy between an environment and its perceiving subjects.[201]

Tilley uses the idea of *flesh* to suggest an active participation between a perceiver and the world. Within a phenomenological enquiry into landscape experience, he argues, *flesh* shows that there is 'commonality between other persons or other things and me'.[202] In Tilley's embodied association with the menhirs of Brittany, any parts of Tilley's account that reveal his body in contact with the surrounding environment might be considered as evidence of *flesh*. For instance, he says: 'This stone is remarkable for

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[198] Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*. 135.
[199] Brook, "Can Merleau-Ponty's Notion of 'Flesh' Inform or Even Transform Environmental Thinking?" 359.
[200] Ibid.
[201] Ibid. 361.
[202] Tilley, *The Materiality of Stone: Explorations in Landscape Phenomenology*. 19.

whilst the surface of the quartz looks cracked and irregular, it is beautifully smooth to the touch with no sharp edges and an almost warm waxy texture'.[203]

Drawing on Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of perception,* Tilley states that the unity and reality of something can only be fully appreciated when all the bodily senses with which we relate to the thing are acting together.[204] Writing about the menhirs in detail, he states:

> The visual encounter of size and scale, shape and proportion was only one experience among many. The nature and character of the raw material, the stones themselves – their colours, the constituent elements of the rock the personal and intimate experience of touching their surfaces and the aural experience of the sounds emitted when struck…similarly, the stones do not smell…What we are suggesting is that the 'energy', power and significance of the stones was derived from an interlinked combination of multiple sensorial characteristics, at least of the visual, the tactile and the acoustic, of which we would argue, the first two were primary and dominant in most instances.[205]

Tilley discusses the idea of perception as an overlap of senses.[206] Perception of the landscape, he says, involves participation in the world whereby we do not separate our faculties of vision, hearing, touch and smell. Rather, the senses all contribute to the whole experience at the same time.[207] The multi-sensory character of experience, adds Tilley, should result in landscapes being conceptualised as heard, felt, touched and smelt; 'landscapes are not just visionscapes', he says, 'but also soundscapes, touchscapes and smellscapes as well'.[208] This is important. Although it is not necessary to remind ourselves that this chapter is analysing Tilley's phenomenological account of landscape experience for the purpose of creating an equivalence in visual art, it is helpful to consider the potential impact of 'soundscapes', 'touchscapes' and

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[203] Ibid. 60.
[204] Ibid. 12.
[205] Ibid. 36.
[206] Ibid. 14.
[207] Tilley, *The Materiality of Stone: Explorations in Landscape Phenomenology*. 14.
[208] Christopher Tilley, *Metaphor and Material Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell publishers, 1999). 180.

smellscapes', as well as just 'visionscapes' when considering points of contact between a sensuous engagement with the landscape and visual art practice.

Our knowledge of 'things in the world', says Tilley, is limited insofar as it is impossible to give a complete description of an object, listing every attribute, because such qualities change according to how we perceive an entity and in what context.[209] So, for example, the character of the light and the source from which it shines may fundamentally alter the qualities of a stone. Also, it matters whether the stone is smooth, rough, shiny, large or small. Tilley says: 'From a phenomenological perspective, these properties of smooth, rough, shiny, large or small are internally related. The yellow colour of a stone and its surface texture make that stone what it is and cannot be clearly distinguished from each other'.[210] Thus, says Tilley, rather than citing abstract characteristics, such as the colour or texture of something, we could say that things have their own properties.[211]

Tilley considers how both visible and invisible aspects comprise an environment.[212] He asserts that although the body is receptive to its surroundings, there are things that are always hidden from a perceiver. Seen from this vantage point, perception involves a relationship between both the visible and the invisible.[213] Returning to the Neolithic menhirs in Brittany, he says:

> Two hundred metres to the west there is a short NW-SE row of three menhirs situated midway down a gentle west-east slope running along the axis of the ridge. Today two of these are in a dense wood, the third is exposed in a field…This contemporary difference in the stones indicates in an interesting way how menhirs may have also looked very different in the past when encountered in wooded settings or a landscape cleared of trees.[214]

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[209] Tilley, *The Materiality of Stone: Explorations in Landscape Phenomenology*. 11.
[210] Ibid. 12.
[211] Ibid.
[212] Ibid. 10.
[213] Ibid.
[214] Ibid. 63.

The notion of the visible and the invisible is examined by Merleau-Ponty, and forms the title of his last, and unfinished, book.[215] The invisible, says Merleau-Ponty, is not an opposing feature of the visible. Rather, the visible contains the invisible and, likewise, that which cannot be seen is a part of that which is not hidden from view.[216] Tilley uses the example of a stone to describe an experience, according to Merleau-Ponty's principles, of visible and hidden surfaces:

> I can never see all the sides, faces or surfaces of a stone at the same time, but I can experience them in sequence, one by one, in a particular structure of encounter, but as one face appears in view another disappears. I cannot see inside the stone, and if I break it in order to do so, I have destroyed that which I set out to discover and simultaneously created something new. Thus the manner in which I experience an artefact, or a place, very much depends on the structure of my encounter with it.[217]

Tilley asserts an overt criticism directed towards most academic accounts of landscape experience. His study deprecates written accounts of landscape experience that are conducted without any actual experience of the subject of the enquiry; virtually all academic literature, he says, lacks experience of landscape and is therefore 'disembodied'.[218] 'Bodies', he complains, 'remain at the desk rather than in the field', a charge levelled at Merleau-Ponty's philosophical enquiry by Tilley.[219] Intriguingly, the closest to landscape Merleau-Ponty gets, Tilley suggests, is a discussion of Cézanne's painting. (In *Eye and Mind,* Merleau-Ponty proposes that Cézanne tried to represent landscapes as he actually saw and felt them, 'to make visible how the world *touches* us'[220] rather than through the rules of linear perspective, and this assertion is examined in chapter three of this thesis.) Most academics, adds Tilley provocatively, 'reduce

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[215] Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*.
[216] Ibid. 215.
[217] Tilley, *The Materiality of Stone: Explorations in Landscape Phenomenology.* 17.
[218] Ibid. 27.
[219] Ibid.
[220] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Sense and Non-Sense* (Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1964 (translation)). 19.

landscape to a matter of visual representation as opposed to bodily experience. 'Thus', he says, 'a geography of landscape becomes, peculiarly, a geography of paintings…'.[221]

It is worth pausing at this point to consider the implication of Tilley's criticism for this project. Tilley states that landscape is *reduced* (my italics) to a matter of visual representation. Furthermore, Tilley adds, 'in a purely visual description of a landscape, or in a photograph of it, we do not arrive back at that which we experienced.'[222] From this statement it might also be construed that Tilley is resistant to the idea of visual imagery representing embodied landscape experience at all. Furthermore, in a discussion in *Norwegian Archaeological Review,* Tilley's account of the menhirs comes under attack from Ingold who comments on the large number of photographs in his book but notes the presence of only a few poor quality drawings.[223] This lack of drawings, says Ingold, is strange given that Tilley states in his account that photography affords no more than the passive appreciation of a site. After a consideration of Ingold's criticism, Tilley responds that 'I would love to sketch my conclusions to this reply but unfortunately lack the artistic skill and brilliance that would be required to do so'.[224]

Tilley concludes his criticism of accounts that lack actual bodily interaction with an environment by advising what a phenomenological approach to landscape experience should comprise. It should be, he says, a 'richly textured carnal phenomenological "thick" description in which we truly attempt to reflect on the character of our experience, as opposed to a thin and sensorily impoverished "analytical" account'. Tilley's explanation seemingly offers an opportunity for this project to provide examples of artwork to represent landscape experience that, as well as

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[221] Tilley, *The Materiality of Stone: Explorations in Landscape Phenomenology*. 27.
[222] Ibid. 28.
[223] Ingold, "Comments on Christopher Tilley: *The Materiality of Stone: Explorations in Landscape Phenomenology*." 126.
[224] Christopher Tilley, "Reply to Comment, Comments on Christopher Tilley: *The Materiality of Stone: Explorations in Landscape Phenomenology*," *Norwegian Archaeological Review* 38, no. 2 (2005). 129.

conveying bodily interaction with a landscape, also exhibit qualities that reflect the character of that encounter.

It is interesting to note that within his enquiry into landscape experience, Tilley combines pre-reflexive bodily forms of experience with material from other sources that might be considered consciously premeditated. As we have already seen, pre-reflexive experience has been described as a fundamental ingredient of a phenomenological enquiry. However, Tilley's method seemingly accords with Merleau-Ponty's understanding of the world that includes interplay between embodied, pre-reflective experience and that which has been meditated upon.[225] In this idea, Merleau-Ponty, writing in *The Primacy of Perception,* suggests that 'the idea of going straight to the essence of things is inconsistent…What is given is a route, an experience, which gradually clarifies itself and others'.[226]

In a review of Tilley's book,[227] *The Materiality of Stone,* archaeologist Simon Stoddart suggests that Tilley has developed an alternative mode of scholarship that provides a thought-provoking experience because it is not just the experience of one individual.[228] Although Tilley's book might not subscribe to the precise phenomenological approach of Merleau-Ponty, says Stoddart, factors combine that make it of particular interest. Firstly, he says, Tilley uses rich sources of contrasting destinations that provide excellent examples for his enquiry. Secondly, Tilley's visits to the sites of archaeological interest use a level of thick description and this provides an insight into both his data and into aspects of the information that he finds interesting. Thirdly, says Stoddart, Tilley's use of sensuous engagement emphasises 'participant observation' and also draws on the observations of other archaeologists who preceded

[225] Haworth, "Beyond Reason: Pre-Reflective Thought and Creativity in Art." 144.
[226] Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception*. 21.
[227] Simon Stoddart, "Book Reviews: Archaeology and History," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 12 (2006).
[228] Ibid.

him. Thus, Tilley's account is not so much one that rejects previous experience, but rather, suggests Stoddart, his enquiry builds upon it.[229]

The combination of pre-reflexive experience with sources that have been reflected upon is also a topic addressed by artist John Haworth. Writing in 'Beyond reason: Pre-reflective thought and creativity in art', he also acknowledges that a full enquiry needs to combine pre-reflexive experience with material from other sources. [230] Haworth points to examples from the work of Merleau-Ponty that emphasise the need for an embodiment theory not to negate the importance of reflection. Merleau-Ponty, says Haworth, emphasises that pre-reflective experience is understood by reflection.[231] He adds that what Merleau-Ponty suggests is that pre-reflexive experience, 'is a route, an experience, which gradually clarifies itself, which gradually rectifies itself and proceeds by dialogue with itself and with others'.[232]

Ingold is somewhat less complimentary about Tilley's method of enquiry and cites a list of inconsistencies regarding his approach to landscape. One of these inconsistencies concerns Tilley's work on standing-stones and his claims that the research is based on experience. If this is the case, says Ingold, why then does he deal with speculation about what people might *believe*?[233] Moreover, says Ingold: 'Tilley has a penchant for wheeling in the ancestors, whenever needed, to lend an air of ethnographic authenticity to his conjectures'.[234] Ingold provides an example of Tilley's speculation about belief. He writes: 'the solution basins created by erosion on a

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[229] Ibid.
[230] Haworth, "Beyond Reason: Pre-Reflective Thought and Creativity in Art.", *Leonardo,* Volume 13, issue 2, MIT press, 1997. 144.
[231] John Haworth, "Embodied Mind and Creativity in Digital Fine Art: Putting the Body Back into Human-Computer Interaction," (Department of Psychology and department of Fine Art, Manchester Metropolitan University, 2002). Unpublished paper, Department of Psychology and department of Fine Art, Manchester Metropolitan University, 2002. 3.
[232] Ibid.
[233] Ingold, "Comments on Christopher Tilley: *The Materiality of Stone: Explorations in Landscape Phenomenology*." 123.
[234] Ibid.

standing-stone were perhaps regarded as carvings created by the ancestors'[235] Clearly, Ingold fails to recognise Tilley's expanded mode of phenomenological analysis. Rather, he claims that Tilley remains encumbered by a tradition where material objects stand in for cultural concepts.[236] Tilley, in response to the criticism of bringing ideas of 'belief' into his account says that: 'Ingold sets up a strange distinction between "experience" and "belief"'.[237]

Interestingly, although Ingold disputes aspects of Tilley's method, he takes up a phenomenological position for his own interpretation of landscape experience.[238] Somewhat confusingly, Ingold and Tilley are seemingly at odds over what constitutes a phenomenological enquiry. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to venture into an analysis of all the different forms that a phenomenological interpretation of a landscape might take, but it is interesting to note that Tilley's account of landscape experience, and Ingold's embodied study have opposing notions of what comprises a linguistic re-description of an embodied appraisal of an environment.

This section has undertaken an analytical view of an expanded phenomenological interpretation of landscape experience from a cultural archaeological perspective. Whilst Tilley's analysis has provided a useful insight into an expanded field of phenomenology, it has not fully investigated the relationship between a dynamic environment and an active perceiver. Therefore, in the next section, phenomenological aspects of landscape experience are examined from a cultural anthropological position that focuses on what it means to live and participate within an environment. Also, the next section introduces ways in which the embodied activity of an experience of landscape might be articulated within visual art.

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[235] Ibid.
[236] Ibid.
[237] Ibid.
[238] Ingold, *The Perception of the Environment: Essays in Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill*. 168.

III

Embodied experience and notions of time

We have seen in the previous two sections of this chapter some of the ways in which an active human perceiver interrelates with their environment; ecological and phenomenological notions of perception have been examined and applied to an embodied experience of the landscape. Next, in this section, an embodied experience of the landscape is examined in order to establish a relationship between an active perceiver, a dynamic environment and their association with notions of time. The idea of time, as we have seen earlier, is important within an embodied approach to landscape experience because temporality unfolds through bodily movements and actions over a period; furthermore, events that occur between an observer and their surroundings last in time.[239]

Matters relating to an experience of the landscape and its relationship to time are issues examined by Ingold.[240] Writing in *The Perception of the environment, essays in livelihood, dwelling and skill,* Ingold examines a bodily experience of landscape that puts an emphasis on day-to-day living and working; he terms this analysis a 'dwelling' perspective.[241] Of primary interest to Ingold, within his dwelling perspective, are Gibson's ideas of ecological perception[242] and the phenomenological thoughts of Merleau-Ponty.[243]

First, let us consider ways in which Ingold's analysis of time and the landscape is informed by Gibson's ecological model of perception. As we have seen, Gibson proposes that a perceiving organism gathers information in a direct way from their

[239] Dermot Moran, *Introduction to Phenomenology* (London: Routledge, 2000). 4.
[240] Ingold, *The Perception of the Environment: Essays in Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill.*
[241] Ibid. 173.
[242] Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*.
[243] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*.

surroundings in order to determine the properties of an environment and their meaning. Within his analysis, Ingold adopts two elements from Gibson's perceptual theory in order to develop his ideas about temporality and the landscape. These elements include Gibson's notion of *invariants*, an idea that addresses persistence and change within an environment, and his concept of *affordance* that addresses ways in which meaning can be gathered by a perceiver from their surroundings in a direct way.

In order to understand ways in which Ingold views an association between time and the landscape, an explanation is required of ways in which he incorporates the notions of *invariants* and *affordance* within his analysis. Firstly, let us consider Ingold's use of the idea of *invariants*. Central to this concept is the idea of movement. Hence Ingold uses the idea of *invariants* to understand motion within an environment because the concept of a mobile perceiver is critical to his comprehension of time in the landscape. According to Ingold, a perceiver looks for constancies, or *invariants*, as they move about an environment. These constancies, or *invariants*, underlie the changing patterns of light that reach perceivers from surfaces within their surroundings. In visual perception, says Ingold, we do not see patterns of light. Instead, what we see are surfaces and objects because the light reaching our eyes undergoes a gradual transformation and it is the invariants that underlie these changes that specify what we observe.[244]

Other writers comment on Gibson's idea of *invariants* in association with landscape and its relationship with a moving perceiver. Writing in *Sensuous Geographies,* Rodaway asserts that Gibson's idea of *invariants* is of particular interest to disciplines that are concerned with both a physical and a human world. This interest arises, claims Rodaway, because the concept of *invariants* gives significance to both the

[244] Ingold, *The Perception of the Environment: Essays in Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill.* 166.

environment and to the perception of a mobile observer.[245] Moreover, says Rodaway, it is the structure and the texture of the environment that determines what is perceived and the locomotion of the whole body of a perceiver provides a corporal interaction with its surroundings. Considering such a dynamic relationship, adds Rodaway, introduces the idea of time.[246] Temporality is part of the dynamic nature of visual experience because those things that we see illuminated in a particular way at a certain moment persist over time.[247]

Next, let us examine Ingold's use of the notion of *affordance* in order to understand how a perceiver can gather information within the landscape. Within his enquiry Ingold suggests that 'to perceive an object or an event is to perceive what it affords'.[248] As perception is an active and exploratory process, what we perceive is as a direct result of our actions. Thus we pick up particular kinds of information depending on the activity we are engaged in. As we have seen, the *affordance* of something provides practical information about the potential offered for activity within an environment.[249] This means that knowledge about an environment is gained through the activities and engagement of a perceiver with their surroundings. As a result, says Ingold, it is through practical activity associated with living in an environment that a world becomes meaningful.[250]

There are differences worth noting between the theory of *affordance* and phenomenological ideas of how an environment can offer meaning to a perceiver. In the case of *affordance,* says Ingold, the environment to be explored is relatively fixed and

[245] Rodaway, *Sensuous Geographies: Body, Sense and Place*. 13.
[246] Ibid. 125.
[247] Ibid.
[248] Ingold, *The Perception of the Environment: Essays in Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill*. 166.
[249] Ibid.
[250] Ibid. 168.

pre-prepared with its affordances in place ready to be taken up by whoever inhabits it.[251] In contrast, from a phenomenological perspective, the world comes into being, together with its properties, at the same time as the perceiver.[252] Specifically, for Merleau-Ponty, the coming into being of the person is part and parcel of the process of coming-into-being of the world.[253]

Writing in *From Darwin to Watson (and cognitivism) and back again: The principle of animal-environment mutuality*, psychologist Alan Costall suggests that affordances are properties of the environment even though they are dependent upon the perceiver. Apples, Costall says, *afford* eating – they constitute food – but this is relative to the perceiver: If human subjects did not eat apples then this fruit would not be food.[254] According to psychologist Edward Reed there is a social association between the concept of *affordance* and an environment. Of primary concern to Reed is the idea that perceivers share affordances within an environment. Perceivers, says Reed, are attuned through prior training and experience to focus on similar environments and it is through movement within the same surroundings, in pursuit of joint activities, that they will collect the same information.[255]

How does Ingold use the concepts of *invariants* and *affordance* to establish ideas of how time operates within a landscape? To begin with, let us examine Ingold's use of the idea of *invariants* in connection with temporal notions of landscape experience. We have already seen that Ingold uses the concept of *invariants* to describe the interaction of a mobile observer with their surroundings. It is through such dynamic

[251] Ibid.
[252] Ibid.
[253] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*. 206.
[254] Alan Costall, "From Darwin to Watson(*and* Cognitivism) and Back Again: The Principle of Animal-Environment Mutuality.", *Behaviour and philosophy,* Volume 32, Cambridge, 2004. 189.
[255] Edward Reed, 'The affordances of the animate environment: Social science from the ecological point of view', Tim Ingold, ed., *What Is an Animal* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1988). 119.

interaction that Ingold describes how time operates between perceivers and their environment. It is helpful at this stage to consider Ingold's description of the interactivity of perceivers and an environment as the 'taskscape',[256] a term he uses to denote a pattern of dwelling activities.[257] The taskscape, he says, describes a range of connected actions that include interactivity, as well as sound and movement, within an environment. According to Ingold, it is our experience, bodily activity and movements within the taskscape that provide us with a perception of time.[258] It is the pattern of such dwelling activities, he says, that provides the inherent temporality of the taskscape.[259]

Ingold relates the idea of movement and its relationship to time to Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology.[260] For Merleau-Ponty, perception is temporal because experience involves participation in an environment over time.[261] He says: 'the passage of one present to the next is not a thing which I conceive, nor do I see it as an onlooker, I effect it'.[262] Ingold uses this connection between participation and time to suggest that we perceive temporality within an environment not as spectators, but rather as participants, 'in the very performance of our tasks'.[263] Furthermore, the idea that we can 'observe' the passing of time is, says Ingold, an idea based on a false impression of disembodiment.[264] It is our own participation within an environment, he says, that provides us with a passage of time. Writing in *The perception of the environment,* Ingold provides a detailed account of his ideas about time:

> Reaching out into the taskscape I perceive, at this moment, a particular vista of past and a future; but it is a vista that is available from this moment and no other. As such it *constitutes* my present, conferring upon it a unique character. Thus the present is not *marked off* from a past that it has replaced or a future that will, in turn, replace it; it rather gathers the past and future into itself, like

[256] Ingold, *The Perception of the Environment: Essays in Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill*. 195.
[257] Ibid. 154.
[258] Ibid. 196.
[259] Ibid.
[260] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*. 416.
[261] Belova, "Feeling the Image: A Phenomenological Account of a Visual Experience." No page nos.
[262] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*. 421.
[263] Ingold, *The Perception of the Environment: Essays in Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill*. 196.
[264] Ibid.

> refractions in a crystal ball. And just as in the landscape, we can move from place to place without crossing any boundary, since the vista that constitutes the identity of a place changes even as we move, so like-wise we can move from one present to another without having to break through any chronological barrier that might be supposed to separate each present from the next in line.[265]

Within Ingold's account, ideas of bodily experience and movement are also employed to understand ways in which navigation within a landscape might relate to issues of time.[266] His ideas of temporal navigation, which he terms 'wayfinding', are informed by Gibson's concept of 'direct' perception. In the concept of wayfinding, he says, an understanding of the location in which the perceiving subject moves relies upon place unfolding over time and this knowledge is brought about by the relationship between an active perceiver and their environment. According to Ingold, the features of an environment are revealed as a perceiver travels along paths of view; we know our way about, he says, in terms of the specific order in which the surfaces of the environment come into, or pass out of, sight as we proceed along a path. Ingold applies this idea to how we might perceive a view. Visible surfaces, he says, comprise a 'vista…a set of unhidden surfaces; what is seen from here, with proviso that 'here' is not a point but an extended region'.[267] Thus as a perceiver turns a corner, or reaches the brow of a hill, a set of previously hidden surfaces comes into view whilst those within the former vista disappear from sight. Moreover, asserts Ingold, the passage from one vista to another constitutes a 'transition'. Therefore, he says, to travel from one place to another involves the opening up and closing off of vistas, in a particular order, through a continuous series of transitions. In this way, he says, vision takes place over time, along a path of observation. [268]

The significance of sound is discussed within Ingold's interpretation of the landscape. Sound, says Ingold, can be considered as having a temporal role because it

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[265] Ibid.
[266] Ingold, *The Perception of the Environment: Essays in Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill*. 238.
[267] Ibid.
[268] Ibid.

can be addressed in terms of bodily experience and movement and comes about by the interactivity of human actions and the environment.[269] It is interesting to note ways in which differences can be identified between the perception of sound and how visual recognition occurs. Ingold says:

> To be seen, a thing need do nothing itself, for the optic array that specifies its form to a viewer consists of light reflected off its outer surfaces. To be heard, on the other hand, a thing must actively emit sounds or, through its movement, cause sound to be emitted by other objects with which it comes into contact.[270]

Thus what we hear, says Ingold, is activity. Furthermore, he adds, activity can be heard even when the source of the sound cannot be seen.[271] Archaeologist Christopher Witmore comments on Ingold's analysis of how sound might be perceived within the idea of the taskscape. Witmore says that Ingold, by his analysis of sound, connects humans to the material world and to the qualities of bodily experience; Witmore believes that it is also sound that connects us to the actions of other entities. [272]

We have discussed several ideas from Ingold as to how time operates within the landscape. Now let us examine ways in which Ingold uses visual art to illustrate his theories of temporality within a landscape. To illustrate his ideas about time and the landscape Ingold selects a sixteenth century painting, *The Harvesters,* created by Pieter Bruegel the elder in 1565.

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[269] Ingold, *The Perception of the Environment: Essays in Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill*. 200.
[270] Ibid. 199.
[271] Ibid.
[272] Christopher Witmore, "Seeing the Past and Hearing the Fold: Symmetrical Approaches to Mediation" (paper presented at the Research into Practice, University of Hertfordshire, 2002). No page nos.

Illus. 9: Pieter Bruegel the elder, *The Harvesters*, 1565
Oil on canvas, 118 x 163cm, New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

This painting has a particular importance for Ingold. *The Harvesters,* he says 'more than any other, captures a sense of the temporality of the landscape'.[273] He adds: 'Rather that treating the world as its own painting, I should like you, the reader, to regard this painting by Bruegel as though it were its own world, into which you have been magically transported. Imagine yourself, then, set down in the very landscape depicted, on a sultry August day in 1565.[274] 'I shall comment', says Ingold, on features of the painting insofar as they 'illustrate aspects of what I have had to say about landscape and temporality'.[275]

First, let us examine Ingold's interpretation of aspects of the painting and ways in which they might illustrate his ideas about time operating within a landscape. He begins his analysis of the painting by considering the hills and valleys that are depicted in the picture. These topographical features, he tells us, guide the viewer's gaze in a

[273] Ibid. 201.
[274] Ibid. 245.
[275] Ibid. 202.

way that involves bodily movement. The contours of the landscape, he adds, are felt in the perceiver's body. 'It is the movements of falling away from, and rising up towards, that specify the form of the valley'.[276] By the actions of ascending and descending the contours are incorporated into our bodily experience. Ingold continues. Even if the perceiver stays in one spot, looking at the hills and valley involves movement of the eyes and the head. As you look across the valley to the hill, he says, the movement of your body accords with your attention as it takes in the landscape.[277] Moreover, adds Ingold, the topography within the painting is persistent in relation to the human life-cycle and erosion by flowing water and evidence of human activity are indications of landscape being formed and of time passing.

Next, Ingold examines the paths and tracks within the painting. These, he says, reveal something of the route taken to an observer's current location and indicate experience that has taken place. Furthermore, each path, he says, 'shows up the accumulated imprint of countless journeys that people have made – with or without their vehicles or domestic animals – as they have gone about their everyday business'.[278]

Another feature of Bruegel's painting is the tree in the foreground of the picture. This tree, Ingold tells us, acts as a focal point for the whole landscape. Moreover, its presence, he says, establishes a particular place and 'the people are as much bound up in the life of the tree as is the tree in the lives of the people'.[279] According to Ingold, the tree bridges a gap between invariant forms of the landscape and mobile forms of life.[280] Its solidity, he claims, 'presides immobile over the passage of human generations' whilst in contrast, its more transient aspect 'resonates with the life-cycles of insects, the seasonal migrations of birds, and the regular round of human agricultural activities'.

[276] Ibid. 203.
[277] Ibid.
[278] Ibid.
[279] Ibid.
[280] Ibid. 205.

Like the tree, the church is also a place filled with temporality. Whilst the tree has its roots in the ground, says Ingold, so the church has people buried in its graveyard. Both of these buried things, he adds, have the same 'temporal depth'.[281] The church, Ingold informs us, is subject to changes over time from the effect of plants, animals and human subjects as well as the forces of weather and decomposition. Furthermore, the church, he says, spans generations and would become a ruin without human input. Also, adds Ingold, the church, by the sounding of its bells, may be heard as 'a monument to the passage of time'.[282]

Ingold also focuses on the corn in the painting. This, he says, more than any other feature in the picture, brings the people together in a time-based way. The uniformity of the colour of the surface of the corn, he says, provides evidence of time by offering the people in the painting a shared visual experience. This experience is, says Ingold, one that 'binds every place in the landscape within a single horizon of the present…and provides a sense of *coavalness'*.[283] Whereas the tree binds past, present and future and gives a sense of duration, he adds, the corn provides a sense of being in the present time, the moment at which the picture's *mise en scène* was organised by the painter.

Ingold also uses the corn to describe movement in the painting. Where the corn has been cut, he says, it presents a 'sheer vertical front' whose outline progressively changes as the harvesters work.[284] This interface in the landscape, he adds, is an example of the way in which form emerges through movement.[285] Likewise, the sheaths of corn also provide evidence of movement. Each sheaf has a regular form arising from

[281] Ibid. 206.
[282] Ibid.
[283] Ibid. 205.
[284] Ibid.
[285] Ibid.

the process of binding the corn. Also, he says, the carrying of the sheaves down the path to the hay-cart, is another part of the labour process that involves movement of figures in the painting.

Ingold observes the activity of the people in the painting, both at work in the field and under the tree consuming bread. He describes how the activity of the people in the painting is revealed by sounds:

> Though the folk beneath the tree are too busy eating to talk, you hear the clatter of wooden spoons on bowls, the slurp of the drinker, and the loud snores of the member of the party who is outstretched in sleep. Further off, you hear the swish of scythes against the cornstalks and the calls of the birds as they swoop low over the field in search of prey. Far off in the distance, wafted on the light wind, can be heard the sounds of people conversing and playing on a green.[286]

Ingold concludes his analysis of *The Harvesters* by proposing that in attending to the hills and the valley, the tree, the corn and the birds in the painting, the people in the picture are part of the environment in which they are working. In short, he says 'the landscape is not a totality that you or anyone else can look at, it is rather the world in which we stand in taking up a point of view on our surroundings'.[287]

Although there are several reasons that can be cited as to why *The Harvesters* might be selected as an appropriate artwork to be viewed in terms of the temporality of landscape experience – reasons such as a consideration of bodily experience relating to Bruegel's landscape activity,[288] the idea of *The Harvesters* as one of a series of paintings that depicts time unfolding over a period, or the ecological notion of Bruegel's attention to the relationship between human subjects and their environment[289] (a biography of Bruegel by Carel van Mander, written in 1604, provides useful detail of his interest in

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[286] Ibid. 207.
[287] Ibid.
[288] E M Kavaler, *Pieter Bruegel: Parables of Order and Enterprise* (Cambridge: Cambridge Universtiy Press, 1999).
T Foote, *The World of Bruegel* (New York: Time-Life International, 1968). 71.
R and R-M Hagen, *Bruegel: The Complete Paintings* (Los Angeles: Taschen, 1994). 52.
[289] Kavaler, *Pieter Bruegel: Parables of Order and Enterprise*. 139.

painting an experience of a landscape)[290] – there are problems associated with Ingold's use of a sixteenth century painting to articulate contemporary and embodied notions of landscape experience. These problems include difficulties with the use of a painting to articulate sounds that are heard within an environment, doubts about the use of a necessarily static medium to articulate dynamic experience and the lack of consideration given by Ingold to changes in technology between the sixteenth and the twenty-first centuries.

Firstly, consider a painting and its capacity to denote sound. In spite of highlighting the importance of sound in his temporal analysis of landscape experience, Ingold has selected a silent medium that relies wholly on the imagination of the viewer in respect of what might be heard within an environment. Ingold's suggestion that 'you hear the swish of scythes against the cornstalks and the calls of the birds as they swoop low over the field' cannot be articulated by paint. Paint might stimulate the viewer into imagining they hear the actions of the scythes or the birds but is unable to convey the sound itself. Other writers also recognise this problem. Witmore suggests that Bruegel's painting provides us only with potential noise that can only be heard within the imagination of a viewer of the picture. The sixteenth century landscape depicted within *The Harvesters,* he says, was made with paint and a brush and the only sound that is mobilized in Ingold's example 'is the reality of oil on wood'.[291]

Of sound, so time. Although Ingold has emphasised the significance of movement within his temporal interpretation of landscape experience, he has selected a mode of art practice that is necessarily static and which does not articulate the dynamic character of a perceiver and their relationship to an environment. Referring to the stream in the painting Ingold tells us that this 'flows on toward the sea'. As you watch,

[290] Hagen, *Bruegel: The Complete Paintings*. 52.
[291] Witmore, "Seeing the Past and Hearing the Fold: Symmetrical Approaches to Mediation". No page nos.

he proposes, 'the stream flows, folk are at work, a landscape is being formed, and time passes'.[292] Such movement cannot be conveyed by paint. Whilst it is possible to identify the movement of a viewer in relation to the painting, such a medium cannot reveal the movement of both a mobile perceiver and their dynamic environment. Much has been written of the French artist Cézanne and his landscape painting and several critics have applied phenomenological principles to his artwork.[293] Although this is an issue that will be discussed in chapter three of this thesis, it is worth noting at this point that although Cézanne employed bodily activities, such as painting the same view from different aspects and at different times, his pictures, like those of Bruegel, are nonetheless unable to provide qualities of movement or sound that have been identified as significant parts of an embodied experience of landscape.

Changes in technology have taken place since the sixteenth century that also render Ingold's choice of *The Harvesters* an inappropriate tool with which to articulate phenomenological ideas about a contemporary landscape. Technological developments mean that landscape experience in the twenty-first century is considerably different than it was in 1563. Technological developments have effected many changes in the exchange of goods and their distribution; also, technology has contributed to transformations within areas of communication and travel and these changes have created an extensive gap between landscape experience in the sixteenth century and the present time.

Writing in 'These boots are made for walking: Mundane technology, the body and human-environment relations', Michael discusses Ingold's neglect of ways in which

[292] Ingold, *The Perception of the Environment: Essays in Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill*. 203.
[293] Jay, *Downcast Eyes*. 158.
Galen A. Johnson, 'Phenomenology and Painting: "Cezanne's Doubt"',Johnson, ed., *The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader: Philosophy and Painting*. 3.

technology has changed between the sixteenth and twenty-first centuries.[294] He praises Ingold for extending the idea of *affordance* by socialising it through his dwelling perspective of the landscape. However, says Michael, Ingold fails to recognise the role of technology in his account of *affordance* and its relationship to landscape experience. Affordances, says Michael, are not just between bodies and natural surfaces but are changed by technology.[295] Within a contemporary landscape, he believes, the situation is significantly more complex than a straightforward connection, such as that made by Ingold, between a human subject and a natural environment. Michael identifies a specific problem with Ingold's lack of attention to technological aspects of the footwear of the farm workers in *The Harvesters*. The footwear, says Michael, looks to be made by local artisans, thus suggesting that the landscape is based on local society. Chapter two will go on to examine Michael's analysis of the way in which technology mediates our experience of a landscape in more detail.

It is interesting to note that Ingold, writing in *Tools, Language and Cognition in Human Evolution,* has himself commented on an association between technology and an activity.[296] For example, he says that when he is writing with a pen, he concentrates on the writing and not on the pen.[297] However, this attention to technology is seemingly lacking in his analysis of landscape experience.

Writing in *Contested Natures,* environmental sociologists Phil Macnaghten and John Urry, also cite Ingold's use of *The Harvesters* as an inappropriate tool with which to articulate embodied and temporal notions of the landscape: Unlike the rural scene that is depicted in Bruegel's painting, they say, there has been a huge growth in science

[294] Michael, "These Boots Are Made for Walking.: Mundane Technology, the Body and Human-Environment Relations."
[295] Ibid.112.
[296] Kathleen Gibson and Tim Ingold, *Tools, Language and Cognition in Human Evolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993). 450.
[297] Ibid.

and technology that has resulted in consequences at both local and global levels.[298] Moreover, suggest Macnaghten and Urry, there have also been changes brought about by the development of visual and electronic communication systems that play a dominant role in how an environment is perceived. As well as all these changes, they say, new spatial practices have emerged which depend on the use of natural environments beyond the activity of agricultural work. For example, leisure pursuits and mass travel involve different types of interaction within an existing landscape.[299]

[298] Phil Macnaghten and John Urry, *Contested Natures* (London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 1998). 182.
[299] Ibid.

Summary

This chapter has examined an embodied experience of the landscape which occurs between an active perceiver and their dynamic environment. A relationship between an active perceiver and their dynamic environment, we can conclude, involves a reciprocal, interactive and mobile engagement between an observer and their surroundings and occurs over time. We can also infer that knowledge about the physical make-up and the meaning of our surroundings can be perceived in a direct way from the association between an embodied perceiver and their dynamic environment. This way of understanding an embodied experience of an environment is in accordance with some of the principles set out by Gibson in his ecological approach to visual perception. It also accords with ideas from Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of perception.

In section one the perceptual experience of a human perceiver was examined using Gibson's analysis of how meaning and physical structure might be determined in a direct way from the light reflected within an environment. Here, the ideas of *invariants* and *affordance* were examined in order to understand a reciprocal relationship between a perceiver and their surroundings. The idea of *invariants* was shown to reveal persistence and change within an environment and the concept of *affordance* explained that potential meaning might also be determined from a reciprocal relationship between an observer and their surroundings. We were also able to deduce that although there are similarities between Gibson's ideas about perception and Merleau-Ponty's principles of embodiment, differences arise in relation to how meaning might occur within a landscape. Whilst for Gibson meaning might be seen to be pre-existing in an environment, for Merleau-Ponty the world only becomes meaningful in relation to the bodily activity of a perceiver. Furthermore, Gibson's neglect of a cultural context has revealed the need to consider this aspect of an environment within an examination of embodied experience.

Section two examined a phenomenological analysis of a landscape informed by Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology and Gibson's perceptual theory. Here, we were able to see that these two ways of considering embodied experience might be applied to an examination of landscape experience. Specifically, Tilley applies Merleau-Ponty's idea of a fundamental reversibility between a subject and an object to an understanding of the landscape in order to explain a mutual relationship between a perceiver and their surroundings. He also applies Merleau-Ponty's idea of an overlap between a subject and an object in order to overcome the idea of a separation between a perceiver and the landscape. Of prime concern to Tilley is the way in which the relationship between a human and their surroundings brings about *affordance* of a landscape. However, in contrast to Gibson's ideas, Tilley considers perception of a landscape to be influenced by memories from the past. There is no perception of place, he says, without memory. Of particular interest to this thesis was Tilley's method of combining immediate experience with sources of pre-existing literature to provide what we might term an 'expanded' form of phenomenology.

Finally, section three examined an analysis of time and the landscape, informed by the work of Ingold. Here, we have seen that it is the movement of the body of a perceiver that provides an interaction with an environment and that through practical activity associated with living in an environment the world becomes meaningful. Using Ingold's analysis of the landscape, we have seen that participation within an environment can explain time in the landscape. Likewise, we have seen that features of an environment are revealed over time, along a path of observation, as a perceiver moves through the landscape.

Also in this section, problems associated with still and silent forms of artistic media were examined when considering ways in which visual art practice might

articulate embodied notions of landscape experience. Ingold's choice of artwork was shown to be inappropriate for articulating an embodied experience of the landscape. His neglect of suitable media and lack of attention to the ways in which technology mediates our surroundings made his choice of *The Harvesters* inapt. Fluent articulation of landscape experience by the use of visual art is a primary concern of this thesis; therefore, the next chapter examines how technology mediates the relationship between an active perceiver and their dynamic environment.

CHAPTER TWO

Landscape experience and technology

Introduction

This chapter examines some of the ways in which technology mediates our experience of the landscape and considers how technological intervention between a perceiver and their environment might be explained through phenomenological analysis. An enquiry into ways in which our surroundings are mediated by technology is important because such intervention can affect our understanding of embodied landscape experience. Technological mediation also impacts on the choice of artwork employed to communicate ideas of engagement with an environment.

There are several ways of approaching an enquiry into ways in which our environment is mediated by technology, such as a study of visualisation[300] or an enquiry into the role of media,[301] but in this chapter an analysis is conducted that approaches the issue from an embodied perspective. Central to the concerns of this chapter is the writing of environmental sociologist Mike Michael[302] and technological philosopher Don Ihde.[303] Writing in 'These Boots are Made for Walking: Mundane Technology, the Body and Human-environment Relations',[304] Michael provides a useful account of the role of specifically simple technologies and the ways in which they mediate between a perceiver and their environment. Ihde meanwhile provides a phenomenological interpretation of how technology might mediate within an embodied relationship. Using

[300] Jonathan Harris, *The New Art History: A Critical Introduction* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001). 181.
[301] Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media* (London and New York: Routledge, 1964).
[302] Michael, "These Boots Are Made for Walking.: Mundane Technology, the Body and Human-Environment Relations.".
[303] Ihde, *Technology and the Lifeworld*.
[304] Michael, "These Boots Are Made for Walking.: Mundane Technology, the Body and Human-Environment Relations."

these key texts from Michael and Ihde, this chapter examines the ways in which technology mediates the experience of an active perceiver and their dynamic environment from a position that considers the whole body and its surroundings.

The first section in this chapter examines the role of specifically simple, or mundane technologies that often go unnoticed because of over-familiarity - for example, a pencil or footwear. Using Michael's analysis, an enquiry is made into ways in which mundane technologies mediate the relationship between a perceiver and their environment.[305] The second section of the chapter examines how experience that is mediated by technology might be accounted for in a phenomenological way. This section is informed by the work of Don Ihde who examines ways in which the phenomenological ideas of Merleau-Ponty might be applied to how technology can extend the limits of perception.[306] Specifically, Ihde considers ways in which a perceiving subject might extend their sensory perception through a technological artefact. Finally, in this section, a connection is made between a phenomenological appraisal of ways in which technology mediates our experience of an environment and its application within visual art practice.

[305] Ibid.
[306] Ihde, *Technology and the Lifeworld*.

I

Experience and simple technologies

How might we approach the complex issue of ways in which technology mediates the relationship between an active perceiver and their dynamic environment? Writing in 'These boots are made for walking: Mundane technology, the body and human-environment relations', Michael considers ways in which specifically simple types of technology mediate relationships that occur between active perceivers and their surroundings.[307] Michael says that simple, or mundane, types of technology are frequently overlooked because of their integration into daily life. Mundane types of technology include articles of clothing and footwear, writing materials, walking aids and other simple items that, says Michael, have influenced our relationship with the environment in many ways.[308]

Although there is not a clear dividing line between mundane and complex, or what he terms 'exotic' technology, Michael says that innovations in technoscientific areas – in particular developments that have occurred within information technology and biotechnology – can be considered as examples of exotic technology that have played a significant role in reshaping our lives.[309] On the other hand, he says, mundane technology might include objects that are no longer novel and that are overlooked through familiarity. In his analysis, Michael elaborates on a crossover that exists between mundane and exotic forms of technology and illustrates this idea with the example of a pair of walking boots.[310] Walking boots, he says, can be considered as a mundane form of technology. However, they also have within their design, production,

[307] Michael, "These Boots Are Made for Walking.: Mundane Technology, the Body and Human-Environment Relations."
[308] Mike Michael, *Reconnecting culture, technology and nature* (London, New York: Routledge, 2000). 3.
[309] Ibid.
[310] Michael, "These Boots Are Made for Walking.: Mundane Technology, the Body and Human-Environment Relations."

and marketing strategies, evidence of exotic technology. Equally, says Michael, exotic technology is served by mundane technology; neither computer programmers, nor academics, he says, can operate without light bulbs, chairs, or footwear.[311]

Seemingly mundane artefacts such as walking boots can also be examined in relation to Gibson's theory of perception.[312] Specifically, Michael analyses a connection between walking boots and *affordance* – a term that, as we have seen, explains how meaning can be gathered from an environment in a direct way by the interaction of a perceiver and their surroundings. A significant feature of the connection made by Michael between mundane technology and *affordance* is the notion that possible actions within an environment reflect the capabilities and limits of a perceiver's body.[313] This, says Michael, means that the environment, rather than determining action, merely suggests the possibility of performing activities.[314]

Central to Michael's analysis of *affordance* and mundane technology is the idea that an embodied relationship between a sentient being and their environment includes a perceiver, their surroundings, and simple technologies that comprise material surfaces that can provide meaning.[315] For Michael, the concept of *affordance* does not simply arise out of an embodied relationship between a perceiver and the natural environment. Rather, it is interwoven with a multitude of other things, such as other humans, animals and technologies, all of which can expand or constrain *affordances* between a perceiving subject and the natural environment.

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[311] Ibid. 48.
[312] Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*.
[313] Mike Michael, *Reconnecting Culture, Technology and Nature* (London, New York: Routledge, 2000). 61.
[314] Ibid.
[315] Michael, *Reconnecting Culture, Technology and Nature*. 63.

In order to discuss the idea of *affordance* Michael begins by considering certain characteristics about walking boots. Walking boots, he says, can reflect key aspects of modern life such as movement, production and transportation and are part of the environment itself insofar as, like any material technology, they are composed of surfaces.[316] Moreover, he adds, walking boots can change potential meanings within an environment by expanding the range of possible actions for the body. Michael elaborates: A sequence of potential meanings, he says, can lead to 'cascades' of *affordances* where each link in the series relates to those connections on either side of it. For instance, says Michael, socks *afford* a more comfortable use of walking boots. In turn, he adds, the boots *afford* the possibility of using crampons. Moreover, he believes that this cascading series could be followed by the access to icy slopes *afforded* by the crampons.[317] Accordingly, for the natural environment to become accessible, states Michael, a series of *affordances* has to operate. So, for a mountain to afford climbing, for example, there has to be a cascade of *affordances* between the feet and the hillside.[318]

There are also other ways in which walking boots impact on the relationship between a body and its environment. Michael states:

> …there is the role of boots as mechanical technologies that can cause pain, dissolving identity and the relation between humans and nature; second there is the role of boots as signifying style and identity; third, there is the role of boots as embodiments of procedures of standardization and objectification; and finally, there is the role of boots as a technological means of physical and ecological damage to nature.[319]

These other roles, asserts Michael, overlap and are never distinct. Walking boots may be seen, he says, as material entities that mediate and assist in the flow of

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[316] Michael, "These Boots Are Made for Walking: Mundane Technology, the Body and Human-Environment Relations". 112.
[317] Ibid.
[318] Michael, *Reconnecting Culture, Technology and Nature*. 66.
[319] Michael, "These Boots Are Made for Walking.: Mundane Technology, the Body and Human-Environment Relations." 115.

communication between humans and their environment.[320] Thus, states Michael, rather than nature *affording* for naked bodies, an underlying assumption that we were able to observe in the last chapter, it *affords* to bodies-and-boots. Furthermore, only when mundane technology is considered, says Michael, do we see the complex interaction and communication involved in the relationship between a body and its environment.[321]

Writing in 'A Single Day's Walking: Narrating Self and Landscape on the South-West Coast Path', geographer John Wylie identifies a problem with Michael's account of mundane technology and its connection to the concept of *affordance*.[322] Michael's account fails, says Wylie, because his world of expanding possibilities is dependent upon contact with a ground that is 'phenomenologically unproblematic'.[323] As a walker becomes footsore, he says, 'so the landscape no longer takes shape as a set of readily affording surfaces for purposive and smooth motion'.[324] The surrounding world in Michael's account, says Wylie, focuses exclusively on the body and this results in the environment being marginalised.

Similarly, cultural geographers David Crouch and Luke Desforges also comment on Michael's account of mundane technology and its association with the concept of *affordance*.[325] They suggest that Michael complicates the role of technologies by picking 'the seemingly trivial technology of the walking boot and arguing that the boot creates a particular sort of *affordance* with nature which cushions the blows of rocks and the dampness of water as the wearer wanders across the

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[320] Ibid. 117.
[321] Ibid. 122.
[322] John Wylie, "A Single Day's Walking: Narrating Self and Landscape on the South-West Coast Path," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 30, no. 2 (2005).
[323] Michael, "These Boots Are Made for Walking.: Mundane Technology, the Body and Human-Environment Relations." 115.
[324] Wylie, "A Single Day's Walking: Narrating Self and Landscape on the South-West Coast Path." 244.
[325] David Crouch and Luke Desforges, "The Sensuous in the Tourist Encounter," *Tourist studies* 3, no. 1 (2003). 14.

landscape'.[326] Furthermore, they say, the fact that walking boots become taken for granted enables the wearer to feel 'immersed' in their surroundings and able to 'truly appreciate the feeling of the ground under their feet'.[327] This, they add, is indicative of technology mediating within the sensual experience. However, they say, technologies and their part in sensuous experience are not completely under the control of the human subjects who incorporate them in their practices. As an example of this lack of control, they cite boots that cause pain because they are not properly worn in. Boots that are not worn in, they say 'produce feet that hurt, so that although cushioned from the blows of nature, new sorts of blows to the body are experienced'.[328]

It is interesting that Michael takes an historical perspective on landscape activity and rural footwear. Rural footwear might be seen as an aspect of simple technology that Ingold neglects when selecting *The Harvesters* to articulate ideas of embodied experience. Michael takes an historical perspective on the association between landscape activity and rural footwear in order to examine the complex relationship that exists between a perceiver and their environment.[329] He points out that agricultural workers in the middle ages frequently worked in the fields stripped from the waist down and were consequently barefooted. During the fourteenth century, says Michael, leather overshoes were used, but their development into rubber galoshes didn't appear until 1830, when they were introduced from South America. In eighteenth century England, states Michael, rural footwear had regional variations. In northern England wooden clogs were favoured, whilst elsewhere shoes with studs around the heels were worn and in other places short boots known as 'highlows' were the custom. Rubber boots and shoes were initially just worn by the wealthy and only became the normal footwear for agricultural workers at the beginning of the twentieth century. Generally, adds Michael,

[326] Ibid.
[327] Ibid.
[328] Ibid.
[329] Michael, *Reconnecting Culture, Technology and Nature*. 64.

protective footwear for rural workers evolved very slowly, mainly due to a lack of money, materials and invention. However, he adds, cultural conditions such as gender division and fashion also affected the choice of footwear.

The point that Michael is making here is that rather than the somewhat simple analysis made by Ingold in respect of *The Harvesters,* the range of *affordances* within communities full of incomers and visited by tourists, such as exists in the modern world, is far more complex.[330] For Ingold, the footwear was unproblematic and the *affordances* defined by locality and community. However, in the modern world, a technology such as walking boots has a far more complex lineage. In contrast to reflecting a modern world filled with, and mediated by, complex technologies, Ingold's analysis of an embodied engagement with landscape is, says Michael, virtually hermetic.[331] The landscape, he adds, rather than being made meaningful by locality and community, as Ingold's use of *The Harvesters* might suggest, is, in contrast, complex and mediated by mundane technology.[332]

How can walking boots *afford* within a contemporary landscape? Michael suggests that within the heterogeneous relationship between humans and their environment that exists within a contemporary landscape, a mundane technology, such as walking boots, can be a transforming element.[333] Certain makes of walking boots, he says, can characterise different groups of people. For instance, brands like *Berghaus* or *Salomon*, he says, distinguish the committed walker whilst a brand such as *CAT* can be identified with urban use.[334] Accordingly, we can see that an embodied relationship with an environment is a complex association.

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[330] Ibid. 65.
[331] Ibid.
[332] Ibid. 64.
[333] Michael, "These Boots Are Made for Walking.: Mundane Technology, the Body and Human-Environment Relations." 114.
[334] Ibid. 55.

Michael considers other ways in which mediating technologies reveal *The Harvesters* as failing to illustrate a contemporary experience of the landscape. A sixteenth century landscape painting, he says, can show an exchange operating between environment, people and tools. However, he adds, within a contemporary landscape the properties that are exchanged have usually travelled further. Examples might include, says Michael, rubber, tourists or imported species.[335] Furthermore, he adds, an extended distribution within the modern world makes for a far richer heterogeneity than that experienced within a sixteenth century painting; diverse new spatial practices, such as mass travel and new communications media, are re-shaping our understanding of the landscape.[336]

[335] Ibid. 67.
[336] Ibid.

II

Phenomenology and technology

The previous section examined some of the ways in which simple forms of technology might mediate an embodied relationship between a perceiver and their environment. Of particular interest in this section is how an analysis based on Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology might be used to examine ways in which technology mediates experience. This analysis is important because phenomenological principles, specifically ideas about embodied experience from Merleau-Ponty, underlie both the textual accounts of embodied landscape experience, and the agendas from visual art, that inform this thesis.[337]

Phenomenological notions of how technology mediates a relationship between a perceiver and their environment inform the work of Ihde. Writing in *Technology and the Lifeworld,* Ihde suggests that our existence is filled with, and mediated by, technology.[338] He argues that human subjects are unable to lead lives without technology because they are inherently technological organisms.[339] The various ways in which technology is incorporated into our daily lives affects the way we act, perceive and understand the world. Like Michael, Ihde uses everyday examples, such as an alarm clock calling us into waking consciousness, to demonstrate how familiar technology may be overlooked.[340] However, unlike the approach taken by Michael, Ihde addresses ways in which technology mediates our experience of an environment in a specifically phenomenological way. Research suggests that Ihde's study attunes us to what we might consider the 'natural world', a world that includes an array of human artefacts and

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[337] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*.
[338] Ihde, *Technology and the Lifeworld*.
[339] Carl Mitcham, 'From phenomenology to pragmatism', in Evan Selinger, ed., *Postphenomenology: A Critical Companion to Ihde* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2006). 30.
[340] Ihde, *Technology and the Lifeworld*. 3.

technologies, and then introduces phenomenological complexities of those things that seem familiar to us.[341]

Can there be, asks Ihde, a phenomenological philosophy of technology?[342] To answer this question he draws on the work of Merleau-Ponty. Writing in *Consequences of Phenomenology* in 1986,[343] Ihde considers how Merleau-Ponty's understanding of embodied experience might be applied to an enquiry into how technology mediates an experience.[344] He suggests that Merleau-Ponty's ideas are particularly appropriate for an enquiry that addresses an embodied engagement with an environment because his work shows us that bodily experience may be extended through artefacts, or technology. Ihde quotes from Merleau-Ponty:

> A wooden wheel placed on the ground is not, for sight, the same thing as a wheel bearing a load. A body at rest because no force is being exerted upon it is again for sight not the same thing as a body in which opposing forces are in equilibrium…Vision is already inhabited by a significance which gives it a function in the spectacle of the world and in our existence…The problem is to understand these strange relationships which are woven between the parts of the landscape, or between it and me as incarnate subject…Sense experience is that vital communication with the world which makes it present as a familiar setting to our life. It is to it that the perceived object and the perceiving subject owe their thickness. [345]

Here, says Ihde, Merleau-Ponty shows a phenomenological association between a lived body and the perceived world. Moreover, says Ihde, Merleau-Ponty discerns that a body can be extended by technology. Ihde explains: Within a relationship between the body and the world, Merleau-Ponty shows us that the lived body can perceive an environment more fully through technologies.[346] He does this by proposing that by extending the limitations and activities of the human body with an artefact, perception

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[341] Vivian Sobchack, 'Simple Grounds: At home in experience, Selinger, ed., *Postphenomenology: A Critical Companion to Ihde*. 13.
[342] Don Ihde, 'If Phenomenology Is an Albatross, Is Postphenomenology Possible?' ([cited 14/11/2006); available from http://www.sunysb.edu/philosophy/research/ihde_3.html. 3.
[343] Don Ihde, *Consequences of Phenomenology* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1986).
[344] Ibid. 57.
[345] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*. 52.
[346] Ihde, *Technology and the Lifeworld*. 40.

may be extended too. Merleau-Ponty provides an example of technology extending the activities of a perceiving subject:

> A woman may, without any calculation, keep a safe distance between the feather in her hat and things which might break it off. She feels where the feather is just as we feel where our hand is. If I am in the habit of driving a car I enter a narrow opening and see that I can "get through" without comparing the width of the opening with that of the wings, just as I go through a doorway without checking the width of the doorway against that of my body.[347]

Ihde also considers Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological description of a stick, which a visually impaired person might use as an aid. This description is used to illustrate how perception may be extended and mediated by technology. He writes:

> The blind man's stick has ceased to be an object for him and is no longer perceived for itself; its point has become an area of sensitivity, extending the scope and active radius of touch and providing a parallel to sight. In the exploration of things, the length of the stick does not enter expressly as a middle term: the blind man is rather aware of it through the position of objects than of the position of objects through it. The position of things is immediately given through the extent of the reach which carries him to it, which comprises, besides the arm's reach, the stick's range of action.[348]

Writing in *Bodies in technology* in 2002,[349] Ihde proposes that the example of the blind man's stick shows that the cane/road touch is what the perceiving walker first experiences and this, says Ihde, leads Merleau-Ponty to suggest that technologies may be considered as embodied.[350] Moreover, he adds, the cane extends the walker's body and this leads to a changed sense of embodiment. Perceptual experience that is extended in this way, Ihde says, results from the materiality of the mediating technology.[351] Furthermore, he adds, the blind man's stick provides a basis for understanding how perception might operate at a distance and be mediated through technology.

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[347] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*. 143.
[348] Ibid.
[349] Don Ihde, *Bodies in Technology* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002). 7.
[350] Ibid.
[351] Ibid.

Other writers refer to Merleau-Ponty's description of the blind man's cane to discuss ways in which technology mediates our experiences of an environment. Within his analysis of technology, Hood suggests that the meaning of a technic – a term he uses to cover all artefacts which could be said to make something possible – is in the role it plays in mediating an experience.[352] Hood compares the cane of the blind man with the stethoscope of a physician and suggests that both of these instruments are information-gathering devices that bring about, and sustain, contexts for human experience.[353] For example, he says, a cane used as an aid by a blind person can enable recognition, and therefore usage, of areas of an environment that visual impairment would otherwise prevent. Likewise, a stethoscope can detect irregularities in breathing and heartbeat that would not be visible to the human eye or ear and which provides extended information for a physician. The position of the technic within an experience, Hood says, is made possible by the relationship between the technic, the body and some area of the immediate environment.[354]

Heft, writing in *Ecological Psychology in Context,* also discusses the relationship between a perceiving human subject and a technological artefact, such as a tool, that mediates between an observer and their environment and extends bodily action.[355] Of particular interest to this project is the way in which he compares the properties of tools with Gibson's idea of how meaning might be perceived within an environment.[356] Both tools and *affordances*, says Heft, exist in the environment as separate from a perceiver.[357] Whilst *affordance* refers to a relationship between a perceiver and a feature of the environment, he says, a tool refers both to the engagement

[352] Webster F Hood, "Dewey and Technology," *Research in philosophy and technology* 5 (1982).196.
[353] Ibid.
[354] Ibid.
[355] Heft, *Ecological Psychology in Context: James Gibson, Roger Barker, and the Legacy of William James's Radical Empiricism*. 342.
[356] Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*.
[357] Heft, *Ecological Psychology in Context: James Gibson, Roger Barker, and the Legacy of William James's Radical Empiricism*. 342.

between the perceiver and their environment and also to the association between the tool and the task. He writes: 'Tools are environmental features that can become appropriated into the goal-directed action of the individual; and in doing so they extend or amplify actions, and they alter the body's phenomenal boundary during their use'.[358]

There are two ways, proposes Heft, that we interact with tools. Firstly, we interact with them as extensions of our own limitations. Here, tools are environmental features that become appropriated into our actions and alter the body's phenomenal boundaries.[359] However, we also associate with them as objects that are apart from us within the environment.[360] In this case, tools exist potentially as independent objects between a perceiver and their environment. Moreover, proposes Heft, our interaction with tools allows us to do things that would otherwise be impossible and, as such, not only extend our range of possibilities, but also affect our way of thinking. Heft gives an example. In multiplication, he says, it is usually simpler to perform the calculation on paper. In this case, he says we are thinking with a pencil and a piece of paper.[361] The reason why these tools are useful, he says, is because rather than trying to perform the task on our own, it is distributed across the person and the implements.[362]

Ihde examines how implements that extend our perceptual boundaries can be considered in terms of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology in order to discover features about the ways in which we engage in a bodily manner with technologies.[363] Our embodied perception, says Ihde, is transformed by a relationship with technologies.[364] He terms this type of association 'embodiment relations' and discusses this idea using an example of a perceiving subject and their experience of writing on a blackboard with a

[358] Ibid.
[359] Ibid. 342.
[360] Ibid. 341.
[361] Ibid. 356.
[362] Ibid.
[363] Ihde, *Technology and the Lifeworld*. 72.
[364] Ibid.

piece of chalk.[365] In this example Ihde suggests that the blackboard is experienced 'through' the chalk and that the human subject feels the smoothness or roughness of the board at the end of the chalk.[366] From this analysis, Ihde concludes that the chalk, rather than being a separate object, is absorbed into the experience as an extension of the body. Accordingly, Ihde terms touch that involves a technological artefact as a 'distance sense'.[367]

In a similar way, and of particular significance to this project, Ihde considers how optical devices bring technology into an experience.[368] Central to this idea is the manner in which a visual artefact, such as a lens, can be situated between the seer and the seen in a position of mediation such as might be experienced with the use of spectacles or a telescope.[369] Within these examples, he says, the optical technologies are taken into a perceptual experience by being perceived 'through' the technology. Accordingly, whilst sight is directed to the other side of the optic, he adds, one sees 'through' the lens.[370] Using his own spectacles as an instance where the concept of embodiment relations operates, he proposes: 'My glasses become part of the way I ordinarily experience my surroundings; they "withdraw" and are barely noticed, if at all. I have then actively embodied the technics of vision'.[371]

It is significant for this thesis that in her phenomenological analysis of film experience Sobchack picks up on Ihde's idea of optical instruments and embodied relations.[372] She considers the relevance of Ihde's idea in connection with ways in

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[365] Don Ihde, *Experimental Phenomenology: An Introduction* (New York: Paragon Books, 1979). 139.
[366] Ibid.
[367] Ibid.
[368] Ihde, *Technology and the Lifeworld*. 72.
[369] Ibid .
[370] Ibid. 73.
[371] Ibid.
[372] Sobchack, *The Address of the Eye*. 175.

which perceptual extension might be involved within moving imagery.[373] In particular, Sobchack suggests that Ihde's example of writing with a piece of chalk on a blackboard, an instance that he uses to describe perceptual extension, can be substituted with a motion picture camera.[374] Sobchack states that 'For the filmmaker, the world …is experienced *through* the camera. It is seen and *felt* at the *end of the lens.* '[375] Sobchack also asserts that Ihde's account of instrument-mediated perception might be related to the projection of a film.[376]

It is worth pausing here to consider the impact on this project of Ihde's idea of embodiment relations and Sobchack's appropriation of his concept. Ihde, by an analysis that links the idea of perceptual extension and optical devices, has provided this thesis with a connection between ways in which technology mediates a bodily experience of an environment and how this idea might be applied to visual art practice. If we replace Ihde's example of embodiment relations, a case in point that uses instruments such as spectacles and telescopes, with a new model that includes cameras and projectors, then we have an instance of one way in which technology mediates our environment and that impacts on representation within visual art practice. Specifically, we have a model that impacts on methods of art practice that incorporate the use of lens-based media. This significant connection will be examined in detail in chapter three.

[373] Ibid.
[374] Ibid.
[375] Ibid.
[376] Ibid. 176.

Summary

In summary, the material presented in this chapter shows that our bodily association with an environment needs to take into consideration both simple and more complex types of technology. We have also seen that these technologies, when looked at in terms of embodiment, can transform our experience of the landscape. In addition, we have determined that ways in which technology mediates our experience of an environment may be understood within an analysis that uses phenomenological method. Specifically, we have observed that the phenomenological philosophy of Merleau-Ponty is an appropriate means of understanding the embodied relationship that exists between a perceiver, technological artefacts and an environment.

In the first section, an analysis of Michael's work revealed that the way in which technology mediates our experience of an environment is a complex association that needs to take into account seemingly simple technologies as well as the more obvious complex ones. An examination of Michael's work revealed not only a single mode of mediation between a perceiver and their environment but a series, or 'cascade' of technologies that provide what we have seen Gibson describe an *affordance* of the landscape. From Michael's account of how an experience might be transformed by the seemingly simple technology of footwear, it was useful to see how Ingold's neglect of such technology makes his choice of artwork inappropriate for a fluent articulation of embodied landscape experience.

The second section revealed that technologies might be considered in an embodied way that accords with the phenomenological principles of Merleau-Ponty. Here, Ihde's account of technological mediation showed the boundaries of a perceiver's perception to be extended by technology, leading to a changed form of embodiment. Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology was used to discover how we engage in a bodily

manner with technology and how our embodied perception might be transformed by technology being absorbed into experience as an extension of the body. Of particular interest in this section is the way in which optical instruments might also be examined as technologies that extend the boundaries of perception. Here, Ihde's idea of technology that incorporates the use of a lens might also be applied to moving imagery that utilises a camera and a projector. This connection is important because moving imagery is used within this enquiry as a means to articulate ideas about embodied landscape experience.

The first two chapters of this thesis have established ways in which an active perceiver might experience their dynamic environment and this fulfils the first part of this enquiry. Informed by the ideas formed in the first two chapters, the next chapter moves forward to consider ways in which landscape experience might be articulated within visual art.

CHAPTER 3

Embodied experience and visual art practice

Introduction

This chapter examines ways in which visual art practice might articulate notions of embodied experience. It is significant that this issue is analysed because, as we have seen in chapter one, problems arise when an inappropriate form of art practice is used as an example to articulate notions of embodied landscape experience. Accordingly, this chapter considers forms of artwork that have been cited by critics as providing evidence of whole body movement and it examines some of the ways in which technology might mediate within art practice.

Section one examines some of the ways in which whole body experience is involved in the making and viewing of visual art. In contrast to the eye/mind/image model of perceiving artwork, this section considers an analysis whereby an embodied and sensuous association between a perceiver and an artwork is examined. Using the work of art theorist Joyce Brodsky, an analysis is made of how an artist and a spectator might engage in whole body experiences within the making and the viewing of an artwork.[377] Central to Brodsky's enquiry are the phenomenological principles of Merleau-Ponty. As we have seen, these theories have also been identified as being pertinent to an enquiry into landscape experience and to an analysis of how technology mediates our experience of an environment.

[377] Brodsky, "How to "See" with the Whole Body.".

Section two analyses ways in which specifically moving imagery might articulate embodied notions of experience. This analysis is significant because, as we have already established in chapter one, problems arise with the use of a painting, a necessarily still form of art practice, as an example with which to describe an embodied experience of the landscape. Writing in *Address of the Eye,* Sobchack examines ways in which a sensuous engagement with moving imagery might be explained using phenomenological principles.[378] Specifically, she considers Merleau-Ponty's idea of a fundamentally reversible relationship between a subject and an object, and Ihde's notion of perceptual extension by the mediation of technology, to explain embodied ideas about the experience of film.

[378] Sobchack, *The Address of the Eye*.

I

Phenomenology and art practice

In order to consider ways in which ideas of embodied experience might be articulated by examples of artwork, this chapter begins with an examination of phenomenological notions of embodiment within the context of artistic practice. Central to this analysis of embodied experience within art practice is the work of Brodsky.[379] Writing in 'How to "see" with the whole body', Brodsky examines notions of bodily experience and their relationship to art practice.[380] She analyses both the making and viewing of artwork within a phenomenological framework and suggests that a multi-sensory, whole-body experience is involved in both the construction and the observing of art.[381] Moreover, says Brodsky, a new appreciation and awareness of ordinary things is brought about by the making and viewing of art. Artwork, she adds, is just another type of encounter between people and things in the world; it is merely a subset of encounters that occur through bodily experience.[382]

Brodsky's ideas about artwork and embodied experience are of significance to this thesis for several reasons. Firstly, notions of embodied experience, as we have seen in the first two chapters, inform each of the key texts used within an enquiry into a bodily association with a landscape.[383] Also, for the purpose of this study it is important that Brodsky's analysis is informed by the phenomenological ideas of Merleau-Ponty. Brodsky proposes that Merleau-Ponty's ideas of embodiment can be applied to both the

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[379] Brodsky, "How to "See" with the Whole Body.".
[380] Ibid.
[381] Ibid. 99.
[382] Ibid. 103.
[383] Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*.
Tilley, *The Materiality of Stone: Explorations in Landscape Phenomenology*.
Ingold, *The Perception of the Environment: Essays in Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill*.
Michael, "These Boots Are Made for Walking.: Mundane Technology, the Body and Human-Environment Relations.".
Ihde, *Technology and the Lifeworld*.

making and viewing of artworks and that his work 'comes closest to viewing the body in a manner that seems to dislodge the eye/mind/image paradigm'.[384] Within her enquiry, Brodsky considers notions of embodied experience by using examples of artwork from French artist Paul Cézanne and American artists, Jackson Pollock and Nancy Spero. Brodsky also provides this enquiry with an introduction into ways in which digital media might be understood in terms of embodied experience and this is relevant because examples of artwork provided for analysis in chapter five include a digital video.

Let us first consider some of the ways in which Brodsky's analysis is informed by the work of Merleau-Ponty. Within Brodsky's enquiry, Merleau-Ponty's breakdown of the subject/object dichotomy is used for the purpose of an analysis of embodied experience and its relationship to art practice. Writing in 'How to "see" with the whole body', Brodsky considers Merleau-Ponty's concept of embodied experience and his notions of the activity of a painter.[385] Merleau-Ponty says: 'The painter takes his body with him…Indeed we cannot imagine how a *mind* could paint. It is by lending his body to the world that the artist changes the world into paintings'.[386] Significantly for this project, Brodsky asserts that: 'Merleau-Ponty understood what many artists know in their bodies, that the eye/mind/image model of perception only minimally illuminates the ways in which we engage with the world'.[387]

Brodsky notes that Merleau-Ponty viewed the nineteenth century artist Paul Cézanne to be a paradigm of ideas about embodied experience and art practice because, by giving up the use of outline in his painting, and by ignoring the rules of perspective,

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[384] Brodsky, "How to "See" with the Whole Body.". 99.
[385] Ibid. 108.
[386] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "Eye and Mind," in *The Primacy of Perception and Other Essays on Phenomenological Psychology, the Philosophy of Art, History and Politics*, ed. J M Edie (Evanston: North-Western University Press, 1964). 162.
[387] Brodsky, "How to "See" with the Whole Body.". 108.

he 'abandoned himself to the chaos of sensations'.[388] Furthermore, by painting things many times over, Cézanne attempted to represent what happens when we move our head and things we can see seem to be in motion.[389] Moreover, Cézanne did not attempt to choose between feeling and thought in his painting but instead challenged tradition by trying to paint perception or 'matter as it takes on form'.[390] Cézanne's paintings, says Brodsky, are about being-in-the-world with others and with other things, even though he was reclusive and detached from society. He conveys direct experience within the conventions of artistic tradition.[391] Furthermore, adds Brodsky, Cézanne rejects both the scientific character of Renaissance perspective and the colour sensation sought by the early Impressionists, to convey his ideas. Instead, he develops ideas from the ancient Greeks and Romans that use tonal colour to suggest solidity and spatial complexities to convey experience.[392]

Experience from a phenomenological viewpoint, as we have seen, involves an overlap of senses, or synaesthesia. In her analysis of visual experience, Belova remarks on Cézanne's paintings as an example of Merleau-Ponty's argument that the senses overlap.[393] As we also observed earlier, an overlap of senses is considered part of a phenomenological experience of landscape.[394] Belova says that Cézanne's paintings present a mass of distorted colours and space that seem to vibrate. The reason for this, she adds, is because 'Cézanne tried to depict things as they appear to us in the world, in their wholeness, without being separated by our five senses'.

[388] Merleau-Ponty, *Sense and Non-Sense*. 13.
[389] Ibid.
[390] Ibid.
[391] Joyce Brodsky, "A Paradigm Case for Merleau-Ponty: The Ambiguity of Perception and the Paintings of Paul Cezanne," *Artibus et Historiae* 2, no. 4 (1981). 130.
[392] Ibid. 132.
[393] Olga Belova, "Feeling the Image: A Phenomenological Account of a Visual Experience" (paper presented at the Art of Management, Paris, 2004). No page nos.
[394] Tilley, *The Materiality of Stone: Explorations in Landscape Phenomenology*.

Similarly, Jay proposes that Merleau-Ponty understands Cézanne as someone who is devoted to painting the visible world as an exact study of appearances within the world, an idea he derived from earlier Impressionists.[395] Jay cites Merleau-Ponty, who says: 'We *see* the depth, the smoothness, the softness, the hardness of objects. Cézanne even claimed that we see their odour.'[396] Cézanne, Jay says, attempted to paint objects that were present to all the senses at the same time. However, he adds, Cézanne also tried to rediscover the density of objects that the Impressionists had dissolved. For Cézanne, he says:

> The object is no longer covered by reflections and lost in its relationships to the atmosphere and to other objects: it seems subtly illuminated from within, light emanates from it, and the result is an impression of solidity and material substance.[397]

Moreover, Jay believes that Cézanne restored the effect of density to objects whilst retaining a sense of embodied experience.[398] He achieved this, says Jay, by replacing the earlier Impressionists' limited palette of primary colours with one that included earth tones, as well as white and black. Cézanne's efforts to make visible how the world touches us led him, declares Jay, to be an influence to later painters, leading to movements such as Cubism, Futurism and Vorticism that made further explorations into his changes to the received visual order.[399]

It is also interesting to note Cézanne's own writing about the idea of sensation. In a letter to fellow artist Charles Camoin, dated the thirteenth of September 1903, he writes of the necessity to revitalize 'in contact with nature, the instinct, the sensations of art that live within us'.[400] Similarly, in another letter, this time to his former school

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[395] Jay, *Downcast Eyes*. 158.
[396] Merleau-Ponty, *Sense and Non-Sense*. 15.
[397] Ibid.
[398] Ibid. 159.
[399] Ibid.
[400] John Rewald, ed., *Co* (1937 (English translation by M. Kay, Oxford, 1941)). 255.

friend, Henri Gasquet, Cézanne speaks of 'expression of the confused sensations that we bring with us when we are born'.[401]

Brodsky also adopts Merleau-Ponty's concept of a fundamental reversibility between the seer and the seen. As we have seen, in this idea, the viewed, by inviting the look of a perceiver, has as much power over the looker as the viewer has over the perceived. Writing in *Eye and Mind,* Merleau-Ponty says:

> The enigma is that my body simultaneously sees and is seen. That which looks at all things can also look at itself and recognize, in what it sees, the "other side" of its power of looking. It sees itself seeing…it is visible and sensitive for itself".[402]

Again, Brodsky uses the painting of Cézanne to illustrate her ideas. In this instance, she uses Cézanne's self-portraits to demonstrate her ideas of the artist as both the seer and the seen. She proposes that Cézanne's bodily experience is evident in his self-portraits both through the twist of his torso and also by his eyes, which, in the painting, look in different directions.[403] Many of Cézanne's self-portraits, she says, show a difference in the direction of where the eyes are looking. By doing this, she says, Cézanne has activated and complicated the movement of the body. With one eye engaging with the artist's mirror, and the other eye looking elsewhere, there is an engagement between viewer and artist in a manner that brings an awareness of the artist as both seer and seen; as subject and object. Moreover, says Brodsky, within the self-portraits that show a marked turn of Cézanne's head over his shoulder (Illus. 10) he leaves an area at the top and sides of the painting that, through the use of vigorous brush strokes, conveys an idea of energy. Thus, she says, the activity of the head determines the painting of the background.[404]

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[401] Paul Smith, *Interpreting Cezanne* (London: Tate Publishing, 1996). 48.
[402] Merleau-Ponty, "Eye and Mind." 162.
[403] Joyce Brodsky, "Cezanne Paints: 'Whole Body' Practices and the Genre of Self-Portrayal," *Visual Studies* 20, no. 1 (April, 2005). 9.
[404] Ibid. 40.

Illus. 10: Paul Cézanne, *Self-portrait*, 1877-80
(25.5 x 14.5 cm), Musee d'Orsay, Paris, France.

Other writers also make a connection between Merleau-Ponty's notion of the seer and the seen and Cézanne's paintings. Of particular interest to this enquiry is Hugh Silverman's phenomenological consideration of Cézanne's landscape paintings.[405] Specifically, Silverman considers Cézanne's representations of Mont Sainte-Victoire in Aix-en-Provence, an area of landscape he painted frequently. The mountain, says Silverman, was virtually invisible to the residents of Aix-en-Provence; it was hardly noticed because of its familiarity and continual presence.[406] Cézanne, he says, painted the mountain from many different locations, each site constituting a different view of the mountain; he painted it at different times of the day and in all the seasons of the year over a period of several decades. He used oil on canvas and watercolours on white paper. Moreover, says Silverman, Cézanne repeatedly 'brought his body' to a location

[405] Hugh Silverman, 'Cézanne's mirror stage', in Johnson, ed., *The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader: Philosophy and Painting*. 262.
[406] Ibid.

from which he could see the mountain and regularly 'lent' his body to the mountain in the act of painting it.[407] He says:

> By lending his body to it [the mountain], standing before it with his easel and palette, Cézanne would lean forward toward his canvas and render visible what the profane eye would not see. Through both vision and movement, Cézanne would transpose the visibility of his own body in its relation to the mountain into the secret visibility of his canvas. The tracing of the invisible in the visible mountain would be inscribed onto the canvas and the new visibility would appear. Painting with his eyes and his hands, he attends to the depth of being there in the mountain; he establishes that depth along with colour, form, line, movement, and contour in the painting.[408]

Art historian Jane Munro also considers a painting of Mont Sainte-Victoire made by Cézanne at the beginning of the twentieth century.[409]

Illus. 11: Paul Cézanne, *Mont Sainte-Victoire*, 1904-1906
Oil on canvas, 73.8 x 81.5cm, Kansas, The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art.

In this painting, says Munro, Cézanne was concerned with 'stablilizing' the sensations he experienced when positioned before the landscape.[410] His paintings of trees, says Munro, provided him with forms that gave a strong internal structure to his

[407] Ibid. 269.
[408] Ibid.
[409] Jane Munro, *French Impressionists*, *Fitzwilliam Museum Handbooks* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003). 122.
[410] Ibid.

composition. These forms, she says, filtered more transient elements in order to create patches of colour that could convey composition and modelling of form.[411]

It is relevant at this point to mention the work of art historian John Steer who brings Cézanne into his analysis on painting in connection with Gibson's theory of perception.[412] As we have seen, Gibson's ideas of *invariants* and *affordance* provide a way of understanding how an active perceiver gathers information within an environment. Writing in 'Art History and Direct Perception: a general view', Steer considers the relevance to art history of *invariants* and *affordance.* [413] Steer argues that Gibson's perceptual theory offers a radically different interpretation to those concepts of perception based on the retinal image. They are more likely to be of use to the history of art, he says, than a theory based on a disembodied way of looking.[414] First, he considers Gibson's idea of *invariants* that, as we have seen, addresses persistence and change within an environment. It is a condition of any picture, argues Steer, that an artist utilizes some unchanging features of an environment rather than others. Moreover, proposes Steer, the concept of *invariants*:

> Does more than do away with the retinal image as a part of visual experience: it provides for picture-making an expandable set of what may…be described as "elements of likeness" which have little or nothing to do with absolute likeness but everything to do with the way in which the *invariant* principles governing different kinds of likeness are picked up and exploited.[415]

Steer applies the idea of *invariants* to Cézanne's painting. Within modes of paintings that are derived from the Venetian school, he says, and which reach their most complex development in the work of Cézanne, different sets of *invariants* are brought into play and this is why these particular paintings, as well as paintings generally, can articulate

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[411] Ibid.
[412] John Steer, "Art History and Direct Perception: A General View," *Art History* 12, no. 1 (1989).
[413] Ibid.
[414] Ibid. 94.
[415] Ibid.

our experience of the world.[416] *Invariants,* he says, are elements in which the artist is interested in and which he or she abstracts from the world.[417] What this process of abstracting does, he states, is bring aspects of our visual experience to our awareness. Steer proposes:

> In this sense, and this sense only, do paintings teach us to see and this is why, when we emerge from an exhibition, the world can often look so strangely like the images at which we have been looking. What we are for the moment selecting for attention in the world itself are the invariant factors abstracted from it by the artist.[418]

Steer also considers Gibson's theory of *affordance*, which, as we have seen, provides a direct and practical way for a perceiver to understand potential meaning within their environment. He uses the concept of *affordance* in connection with paintings and argues that it has significant implications within art because it suggests ways of avoiding a separation between sensation and meaning in a picture. If the *affordance* of something is significant within visual perception, he says, then it is also important in representational images.[419] When we view a painting, says Steer, 'we should not consider our visual experience of it as one thing and the meaning we attach to it as another'.[420]

Although Steer has helpfully noted ways in which the concepts of *invariants* and *affordance* might be applied to painting, critically, he points out that pictures are unlike our experience of the visual world because they are flat and static and the world is three dimensional and experienced through movements over time.[421] This is important and, significantly for this thesis, can be applied to the paintings of both Bruegel and Cézanne.

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[416] Ibid. 99.
[417] Ibid. 98.
[418] Ibid.
[419] Ibid. 103.
[420] Ibid. 96.
[421] Ibid. 101.

Brodsky considers phenomenological notions of embodied experience in connection with more recent artwork. She uses the work of Abstract Expressionist painter Jackson Pollock to consider whole body experiences that are involved in both the making and the viewing of artwork. Brodsky proposes that there are numerous practices using whole body experience that are involved in the process of making art but that these experiences usually remain outside the perceptual level of the viewer.[422] Moreover, she says, many of the practitioner's actions are related to the complexities of everyday living at any given moment, and these intricacies are frequently overlooked. Using Pollock as an example, Brodsky suggests that an understanding of Pollock's work is changed by knowing that he painted on large pieces of canvas on the floor, brought about by his interest in Native American Indian sand painting. (Illus.12)

Illus. 12: Jackson Pollock in East Hampton Studio,
Pollock-Krasner House and study centre, New York.[423]

[422] Brodsky, "How to "See" with the Whole Body.". 100.
[423] Photo from www.nationaltrust.org/.../ news/pollock.jpg.

Accordingly, says Brodsky, knowledge of the embodied processes that inform the artwork changes the viewer's perception of the work. This perception arises from a relationship between the active viewer and the work that is a result of embodied practice. She says: 'What I see hanging on the wall is now also a factor of what I know. As I change my perceptions so the work changes and that dialogue takes place between *my lived body and the embodied work*'.[424]

Brodsky uses Pollock's work to show how whole-body practice may be undermined by the way the artwork is exhibited. In spite of the artist pouring and dripping paint onto a canvas placed on the floor, she says, the painting, with the collusion of both the artist and the gallery, is shown both framed and wall-mounted. (Illus. 13)

Illus. 13: Jackson Pollock, *Mural*, 1943, Iowa, University of Iowa Art Museum.

[424] Ibid.

As Pollock wrote himself:

> My painting does not come from the easel. I hardly ever stretch my canvas before painting. I prefer to tack the unstretched canvas to the hard wall or floor. I need the resistance of a hard surface. On the floor I am more at ease. I feel nearer, more a part of the painting, since this way I can walk around it, work from the four sides and literally be *in* the painting. This is akin to the method of the Indian sand painters of the West.[425]

Other writers also question the presence of bodily action in Pollock's work. Art critic Jonathon Katz argues that bodily action is present in Pollock's work both through literal marks, such as handprints, and also in the way in which the paint is applied. He refers to Pollock's painting *Number 1, 1948*. In this painting Pollock has dripped paint onto his canvas that is placed on the floor. In contrast to conventional brush strokes, he uses a stream of paint to produce a continuous trajectory over the canvas. Katz says that although it is only Pollock's handprints that are evident, they are suggestive of the actions of his whole body.[426] (Illus. 14) Moreover, says Katz, the relationship between the evidence of body, such as the handprints, and the notions of bodily movement, through the pouring and gestural ways in which the paint is applied to the canvas, demonstrate a merging of body and materials. Furthermore, he adds, evidence of the process suggests ways in which the artist, through bodily action, engages with his materials and this, he says, provides evidence of the presence of the artist.[427]

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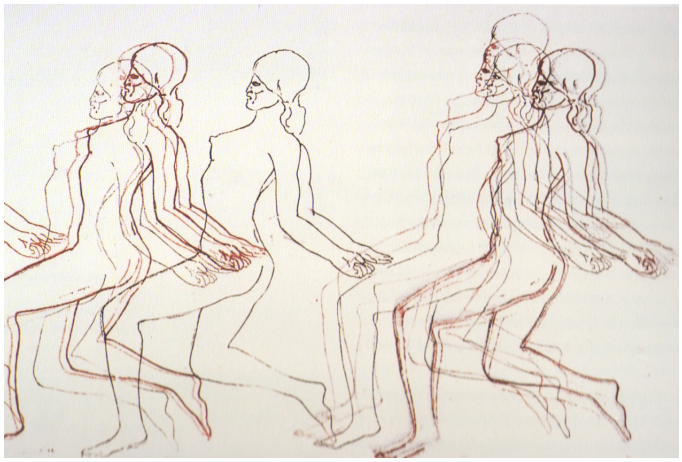
[425] David and Cecile Shapiro, ed., *Abstract Expressionism: A Critical Record* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990). 356.
[426] Jonathon Katz, 'Dismembership: Jasper Johns and the body politic', in Amelia Jones and Andrew Stephenson, ed., *Performing the Body, Performing the Text* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999). 180.
[427] Ibid.

Illus. 14: Jackson Pollock, *Number 1*, 1948, 172.7 x 264.2 cm, (detail), New York, The Museum of Modern Art.

What of the relationship between bodily experience and contemporary artwork? Brodsky claims that although we have become accustomed to contemporary artwork involving the viewer in multi-sensory and interactive experience, an emphasis on seeing still dominates discussion of modern practices.[428] Moreover, she asserts, in most contemporary art the wish to address the whole body, through interactivity between the work and the viewer, is evident both in the artist's conscious and unpremeditated strategies. Thus, says Brodsky, bodily experience is implicated even in art considered primarily visual.[429] Artists, she suggests, are a leading force in understanding embodiment and interaction as significant factors in bringing about new social practices.[430]

[428] Brodsky, "How to "See" with the Whole Body.". 100.
[429] Ibid. 102.
[430] Ibid.

Brodsky considers an embodied encounter with the artwork of American artist, Nancy Spero. She specifically examines Spero's scroll-type work entitled *Notes in time on Women.*[431] (Illus.15)



Illus. 15: Nancy Spero, *Notes in time on women*, (detail) 1979, Handprinting, gouache, collage on paper, 24 panels, 51 x 6398 cm overall.

Brodsky describes her embodied encounter with this work which is exhibited around all four walls of a gallery space:

> As I began to look I was constantly aware of the imagery surrounding me, and I frequently turned to see what was across the room, noticing, for example, that the stamp of the goddess was repeated many times on the continuous scroll. I finally broke the progression to move across the gallery space compelled by her repetitions of this, and other images of women from diverse cultures both past and present. My actions in real time were engendered by the dispersal of repeated images in Spero's constructed time/space framework that was anything but linear. The repetition and fragmentation enabled me to intercede at any place, and meaning expanded as I physically related part to part at my own discretion.[432]

By the use of repeated and fragmented imagery, says Brodsky, Spero's work enables meaning to expand as a viewer progresses around the gallery. Moreover, she adds, the movements that a perceiver needs to make to view the work were intended within the making of the work and entail a relationship between the whole body of the viewer and the artwork, in this case the scroll. Furthermore, adds Brodsky, a clearer

[431] Nancy Spero 'Notes in Time on Women', 1979, Handprinting, gouache, collage on paper, 24 panels, 51 x 6398 cm overall in ed. Jon Bird, Jo Anna Isaak, Sylvère Lotringer, *Nancy Spero,* (London, Phaidon Press Limited, 1996). 64.
[432] Ibid. 99.

understanding of the process of constructing the artwork is brought about by the interaction between the work and the viewer and this, she says, heightens the meaning of the work. It also, she asserts, provides a better understanding of the relations between real-life experience and what happens in the more rarefied atmosphere of an art gallery.

Brodsky compares the experience of viewing artwork with other sorts of experiences. She believes that, unlike the still popular notion that art asks for a different reaction to that required in other situations, the experience of viewing artwork is a form of the way we interact with the world.[433] To articulate her idea, Brodsky refers to the work of John Dewey who, in 1934, wrote:

> When artistic objects are separated from both conditions of origin and operation in experience, a wall is built around them that renders almost opaque their general significance, with which esthetic theory deals. Art is remitted to a separate realm, where it is cut off from that association with the materials and aims of every other form of human effort, undergoing and achievement.[434]

Both making and perceiving art, says Brodsky, are lived experiences that bring about an awareness that is often lacking in day-to-day activity. Moreover, she says, these lived experiences can bring about appreciation and critique that may reflect on what is usually considered to be ordinary practices, by raising awareness of 'what is actually happening in them'.[435]

How can notions of embodied interaction with artwork be applied to works of art that comprise digital information? Brodsky proposes that, as with other forms of art, sensitivity to viewing practices helps in understanding the artwork. Manipulating imagery on a computer screen is, she says, a very different activity to participation in multi-media events that involve digital technology. In the case of the computer screen, a viewer frequently interacts with the hands and the eyes, following pre-designed choices.

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[433] Ibid. 103.
[434] John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (New York: The Penguin group, 1934). 3.
[435] Brodsky, "How to "See" with the Whole Body.". 103.

This activity, says Brodsky, 'is closer to writing and reading text than to most ways of making and responding to material artworks'.[436] Digital artworks that involve the use of a computer screen and a keyboard, says Brodsky, curtail the movement of the artist and the viewer and in this situation the eye dominates. The computer, she says, is positioned to enhance all kinds of disembodied activity. On the other hand, virtual reality technology now exists where emphasis is on the user's body, in conjunction with technology, to produce a new reality.

Brodsky's views are helpful in establishing connections between digital forms of practice and whole body experience. However, we have already established that experiences where seemingly the eye dominates actually include the whole body. Thus Brodsky's comments about which organ or limb might dominate the experience are unhelpful.

Other writers comment on the connection between embodied activity and electronic forms of artwork. Writing in *Touch: Sensuous theory and multisensory media* Laura Marks proposes that digital imagery involves processes that are no less material than the medium of film. The medium, she says, is the physical trace of the object whose image it transmits.[437] Moreover, adds Marks, although digital video by 'knowing' everything that it holds in memory can be seen to offer a weaker link to the phenomenal world it records, digital video's virtual body becomes physical as soon as attention is given to the software and hardware platform from which it originates.[438]

[436] Ibid. 103.
[437] Laura Marks, *Touch: Sensuous Theory and Multisensory Media* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2002). 163.
[438] Ibid. 159.

Similarly, Haworth comments on digital art practice and embodied experience. Writing in 'Embodied mind and creativity in digital fine art',[439] Haworth asserts that a recurring topic in the practice of digital art is whether it makes the human body and material objects redundant. Significantly, he uses the work of Merleau-Ponty to suggest that redundancy of the body and material objects need not be the case when digital imagery is employed. Specifically, he says that Merleau-Ponty indicates that we do not see the world, but see with the world,[440] which, says Haworth, in artistic terms, suggests that 'different media with which we interact have different voices which play a part in the creation of enriched being, perception and consciousness'.[441] The making of digital imagery, he says 'can be seen to involve an interaction between consciousness, the body, technique and materials, in which the print emerges'.[442] Although making digital art involves machines, Haworth believes it is not 'machine-driven', rather, it is 'machine-facilitated'. 'The ultimate product', he says, 'depends on living in the world'.[443]

Haworth uses his own artwork, which combines research and practice, to explore interplay between mind, body and technology in art. Merleau-Ponty, says Haworth, stresses that pre-reflective experience is understood by reflection. What is given by pre-reflective experience, according to Merleau-Ponty 'is a route, an experience, which gradually clarifies itself… and proceeds by dialogue with itself and with others'.[444]

Haworth considers artistic process to include an interaction between consciousness, the body, technique and materials from which the artwork emerges. Any

[439] Haworth, "Embodied Mind and Creativity in Digital Fine Art: Putting the Body Back into Human-Computer Interaction.".
[440] Merleau-Ponty, *Sense and Non-Sense*. 59.
[441] Haworth, "Embodied Mind and Creativity in Digital Fine Art: Putting the Body Back into Human-Computer Interaction.". 3.
[442] Ibid. 7.
[443] Ibid.
[444] Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception*. 21.

artwork, he says, is situated within a tradition of art and this influences perception. The artwork can also be influenced, he says, by the body's situation in geographical place and, he adds, 'this process of interaction and exploration generates and reveals possibilities and visual experiences'.[445] Furthermore, suggests Haworth, the process of exploration becomes a vehicle for seeing which is influenced by the technology. This interaction, he says, extends into the world. Visual explorations undertaken with the computer can influence what one 'sees' in the world, and this, in turn, influences what is recorded experientially, mentally and digitally.[446]

[445] Haworth, "Embodied Mind and Creativity in Digital Fine Art: Putting the Body Back into Human-Computer Interaction.". 7.
[446] Ibid.

II

Phenomenology and moving imagery

The previous section examined notions of embodiment associated with static types of media, such as paint and printmaking. An analysis of this media was useful in terms of ideas of embodiment in making and viewing art and it was also noteworthy for observing historical precedents of phenomenological experience in art practice. However, the analysis failed to consider notions of bodily engagement in respect of artwork that employs moving imagery. We have seen in chapter one that movement is an inherent part of a dynamic relationship that exists between an active perceiver and their environment. Thus, in this section, a phenomenological approach to moving imagery will be examined.

A phenomenological approach to moving imagery is central to the work of film theorist Vivian Sobchack.[447] Writing in *The address of the eye: a phenomenology of film experience* and *Carnal Thoughts, embodiment and moving image culture,* Sobchack addresses a relationship between moving image culture and sensuous bodily experience. Significantly for this enquiry, her work is based on a bodily relationship between the viewer and the viewed, with an emphasis on corporeal activity, rather than a disembodied, or ocularcentric approach. Also of importance to this enquiry is Sobchack's examination of the role played by technology within an embodied approach to moving imagery.

Sobchack's work is informed by Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology[448] and Ihde's ideas about technology.[449] Firstly, Sobchack's analysis considers film experience as a

[447] Sobchack, *The Address of the Eye*.
Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture*.
[448] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*.
[449] Ihde, *Technology and the Lifeworld*.

system of communication based on bodily perception, an idea that accords with Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology. Within her analysis of film, she considers the relationship between the viewer and the viewed and examines viewing as an embodied activity.[450] A key feature of Sobchack's enquiry is an analysis of some of the ways in which technology mediates an experience of film. Accordingly, Sobchack applies Ihde's analysis to her enquiry in order to examine phenomenological notions of technological intervention within the medium of film.[451]

The topic of still forms of photography is a subject addressed by Sobchack as one that captures traces of 'real' existence; the photograph, she says, freezes and preserves a moment in time.[452] However, the still photograph, she says, fails to communicate the power of movement that is a fundamental part of a living body.[453] Furthermore, she adds, the photograph is different to our lived experience by never engaging in the activity of 'becoming'.[454] She notes:

> The photograph freezes and preserves the homogeneous and irreversible *momentum* of this temporal stream into the abstracted, atomized, and essentialized time of a *moment.* But at a cost. A moment cannot be inhabited. It cannot entertain in the abstraction of its visible space, its single and static *point* of view, the presence of a lived and living body.[455]

In contrast, claims Sobchack, the images within a motion picture exist in the world as a temporal flow.[456] Unlike the still photograph, she says, film exists for us 'as always in the *act of becoming*'.[457] Moving imagery, which exists as a flow over time, does not transcend our lived experience of time but instead seems to share in it. Thus a

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[450] Jane Stadler, *Intersubjective, Embodied, Evaluative Perception: A Phenomenological Approach to the Ethics of Film* (Routledge, 2002 [cited 3 19]); available from http://www.sunysb.edu/philosophy/research/ihde_3.html. 239.
[451] Sobchack, *The Address of the Eye*. 172.
[452] Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture*. 144.
[453] Ibid.
[454] Ibid.
[455] Ibid.
[456] Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture*. 145.
[457] Sobchack, *The Address of the Eye*. 60.

film, proposes Sobchack, exists for us as a visible representation of the coming-into-being of activity. Writing in *Address of the Eye,* she proposes:

> …film is always presenting as well as representing the coming into being and representation. It is a presence inserted in the world and our experience not as a series of discrete, transcendental, and atemporal moments, but as a temporal *movement* – as a presenting felt as presence and its passing, as a presence that can then be said to have a past, a present, and a future.[458]

Furthermore, she says, by transforming frozen points of view into objects moving in time and space, the film reconstitutes the photographic in a radical way.[459] Although moving imagery relies on photographic technology, Sobchack suggests that film is more connected to life and to the accumulation of experience, rather than its loss, than still photography. She writes:

> Although dependent on the photographic, the cinematic has something more to do with life and with the *accumulation of experience* – not its loss. Cinematic technology *animates* the photographic and reconstitutes its materiality, visibility, and perceptual verisimilitude in a difference not of degree but of kind. The *moving picture* is a visible representation not of activity finished or past but of activity coming into being and being.[460]

She says that film represents not only moving objects but also the movement of the human perceiver.[461] Thus for Sobchack, the significance of film lies in its emergence and existence that is encountered through an active and embodied viewer.

Sobchack considers the writing of philosopher Arthur Danto who comments on differences in perceiving moving and still imagery that are related to time.[462] Danto explains: With moving imagery, 'we do not just see *that* they move, we see them *moving*: and this is because the pictures themselves move.'[463] Danto ascribes this idea of movement to notions of time and describes an experiment to reveal how motion shows that still photography is not temporal in the way film is. In this experiment he suggests

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[458] Ibid. 61.
[459] Ibid.
[460] Ibid. 146.
[461] Ibid.
[462] Aurthur C Danto, "Moving Pictures," *Quarterly review of film studies* 4, no. 1 (1979).
[463] Ibid. 17.

that if one were to run a *slide* of the title page for eight hours, and compare this with running a *film* of the title page for eight hours, the difference would be apparent.[464] Firstly, says Danto, although one could not necessarily tell just by looking if it is a slide or if it is a film - as *what* is experienced will be the same in both cases – *knowledge,* however arrived at, should, he says, make a difference. Danto attributes this knowledge to the circumstances of showing the film or the slide: because of the type of projection, he says, at the end of eight hours the film will be over but not the slide. This is interesting and reinforces the idea, made in the previous chapter, of the significance of mediating technology. Danto relates his experiment to painting. Paintings, he says, like slides, lack beginnings and endings. 'Our viewing of a painting', he says, 'may indeed have a beginning and an end, but we don't view the beginnings and endings of paintings'.[465]

Sobchack suggests that the most significant feature of Danto's idea is film's dependence upon movement. Neither a lived body nor the body of film are, she says, static. Even seemingly static films, such as images of the Himalayas are, she adds, not still at all. Moving pictures, she says, are just that – pictures which move, not just pictures of things in motion.[466]

It is worth briefly turning to Gibson again at this point. Writing in *The ecological approach to visual perception,* Gibson explores the idea of a still picture taking shape 'in a frozen world by an observer who holds still and uses one eye'.[467] 'The arrested optic array', as he refers to a still image, is, he says, 'an unusual case of the changing array'. This mode of looking, he says, is not what the eye evolved for; ocular rest is a special case of optical motion, not the other way around. Rather, says Gibson,

[464] Ibid.
[465] Ibid. 5.
[466] Sobchack, *The Address of the Eye*. 206.
[467] Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*. 293.

the eye developed to register changes and transformations. He discusses the 'motion' of a film:

> The progressive picture displays transformations and magnifications and nullifications and substitutions of structure along with deletions and accretions and slippage of texture. These are the 'motions' of the motion picture…The progressive picture can also of course depict the movement of the observer himself in the environment as well as the motions of objects.[468]

Furthermore, he adds, because of this development, moving imagery, such as film, should be the basic form of depiction and the still image, such as a painting or a photograph, should be a special form of it. Gibson elaborates. Moviemakers, he asserts, 'are closer to life than picture makers'.[469] This proximity, he adds, is because moving imagery can depict the movement of a perceiver in the environment in a way that paintings cannot. Moreover, says Gibson, what gets depicted in a film is movement within an environment, a flow of events that is picked up by the visual system.[470] Thus, adds Gibson, to watch a film is similar in some ways to observing everyday life.

Gibson also discusses ways in which moving imagery is different to everyday life. He explains: The viewer is at the mercy of the filmmaker when it comes to selecting which aspects of the film to scrutinise, or to the composition of edited film. The information within the image, says Gibson, provides 'a sort of partial, second-hand perception for stay-at-home observers'.[471] This is a critical point for this thesis. Although an analysis of my own moving imagery will not be made until the final chapter, it is worth noting at this point that it is by *not* editing and by actively restricting selection of imagery that my own art practice reduces the 'partial, second-hand' characteristic of film which Gibson refers to.

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[468] Ibid.
[469] Ibid.
[470] Ibid. 292.
[471] James Gibson, "A Theory of Pictorial Perception," *Audio-visual communication review* (1954). 3.

The illusion of reality, says Gibson, that is present in moving imagery, shows that some of the same kind of information is present in films as occurs in the perceptual experience of a moving perceiver.[472] Significantly, he says that film, by being something other than a simple surface, provides the human observer with a variety of new experiences that come closer to perception than the still picture. However, he warns, films do not *become* perception. Rather, he says, the information for the surface of the image is contained within the light.[473] As we saw in chapter one, within his theory of perception Gibson proposes that information about an environment is gathered by a perceiver from the light reflected from surfaces – what he terms the 'optic array'. In the case of moving imagery, claims Gibson, the structure of the array undergoes transformations. Unlike still imagery, he says, the array in film is not frozen in time.[474]

How does Sobchack draw upon Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological theory to explain embodied experience in relation to moving imagery?[475] First, let us take an overview of how Sobchack views Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological ideas in relation to cinematic experience. For Merleau-Ponty, she suggests, the lived body is a system that enables access to, and engagement with, the world. Significantly, adds Sobchack, he sees the cinema as a visible paradigm of being in the world.[476] According to Merleau-Ponty, cinema is able to visibly demonstrate the complexities of perception.[477] Furthermore, and of particular interest for this thesis, the technology associated with cinema becomes a way of being in the world that rests on a consideration of technology as an extension of human perception.[478] For this reason, Sobchack suggests that Merleau-Ponty, writing in *Sense and Nonsense,* considers the cinema as a philosophical

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[472] Margaret A. Hagen, ed., *The Perception of Pictures* (New York: Academic Press, 1980).
[473] Ibid. xiv.
[474] Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*. 292.
[475] Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture*.
[476] Sobchack, *The Address of the Eye*. 164.
[477] Ibid.
[478] Ibid. 165.

model of phenomenological description.[479] He writes: 'The movies are peculiarly suited to make manifest the union of mind and body, mind and world, and the expression of one in the other'.[480]

How does Sobchack apply Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology to the relationship between a filmmaker and a viewer? First, let us consider how Sobchack draws upon his notions of embodied experience to explain film experience. [481] Using Merleau-Ponty's ideas about the viewer and the viewed she considers film experience as an embodied activity. She considers how films describe experience and how viewers experience film. Moreover, Sobchack, by considering both the filmmaker and the viewer as viewing subjects, suggests that film experience is the relationship between the expression of perception and the perception of expression.[482] Writing in *Address of the Eye,* she states:

> …the film experience is a system of communication based on bodily perception as a vehicle of conscious expression. It entails the visible, audible, kinetic aspects of sensible experience to make sense visibly, audibly, and haptically. The film experience not only *represents* and reflects upon the prior direct perceptual experience of the filmmaker *by means of* the modes and structures of direct and reflective perceptual experience, but also *presents* the direct and reflective experience of a perceptual and expressive existence *as* the film. In its presence and activity of perception and expression, the film transcends the filmmaker to constitute and locate its own address, its own perceptual and expressive experience of being and becoming.

Thus Sobchack understands film as being an embodiment of the filmmaker's perception of the world and the expression of that perception. Sobchack explains the experience of film by the activities of two bodies: the filmgoer's body and the body of the film, which has its own perception of a world.[483] For Sobchack, the filmgoer perceives the film within their lived body. The film's existence is lived as the filmgoer's body.[484] Sobchack claims her idea of film body fits with Merleau-Ponty's idea that other bodies become

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[479] Merleau-Ponty, *Sense and Non-Sense*. 48.
[480] Ibid. 58.
[481] Kath Woodward, "Book Reviews: Vivian Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Culture*," *European Journal of Women's Studies* 13, no. 1 (2006).
[482] Sobchack, *The Address of the Eye*. 9.
[483] Daniel Frampton, *Filmosophy* (London, New York: Wallflower Press, 2006). 159.
[484] Ibid. 160.

'the theatre of a certain process of elaboration and as it were, a certain view of the world'.[485] This being the case, Sobchack asserts that with the camera considered as a perceptive organ, the projector could be understood as its expressive organ and the screen as the centre of meaningful experience. In this way, Sobchack takes a view of cinematic imagery as existing as a visible performance of embodied experience and suggests that the film is to cinematic technology as human perception and its expression is to human physiology.[486] Writing in *Filmosophy,* Frampton identifies a problem with Sobchack's idea.[487] He says that in seeing film as a body, Sobchack, rather than emphasising its physical, mechanical qualities, conceptualises film as a lived-body so as to reveal its animated and intentional character. By claiming that film has a body, says Frampton, Sobchack is anthropomorphising film in a way that is 'forced and limiting'.[488] Phenomenology, suggests Frampton, concerns human engagement and reality. Film-being, he adds, is not human and the film-world not real.[489] By conceptualising film as a body, Sobchack *separates* it from the film-world and this, says Frampton, is a problem when phenomenology is translated to film. A human perceiver, he says, is 'separate yet mingled with our world'. However, film '*is*' its world. '…we need to give film its own terms', he says, 'not second-hand phenomenological ones'.[490]

For media theorist Jane Stadler, Sobchack's notion of the film's body can be seen in a broader light. Stadler proposes that Sobchack uses 'film's body' as a descriptive term that includes both the technological instruments that facilitate the production and reception of the film, as well as the perception and expression of the human beings involved in forming meaning within the film.[491] She says:

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[485] Sobchack, *The Address of the Eye*. 140.
[486] Ibid. 166.
[487] Frampton, *Filmosophy*. 42.
[488] Ibid. 46.
[489] Ibid.
[490] Ibid. 43.
[491] Stadler, *Intersubjective, Embodied, Evaluative Perception: A Phenomenological Approach to the Ethics of Film*. 240.

> …awareness of the movement of the camera and variations in sound in the film are evidence of the presence and movement of an intentionally directed attention, and it is here that the film's body reveals itself and the accuracy and applicability of Sobchack's terminology become evident.[492]

Central to Sobchack's ideas about film experience is her idea of a 'viewing view'. The viewing view draws on Merleau-Ponty's idea of a fundamental reversibility between a subject and an object. For Sobchack, it is the fundamental reversibility of perception within Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology that makes it relevant for an enquiry into moving imagery.[493] The idea of reversibility, as we have seen, describes a breakdown between a subject and an object, whereby the viewed has as much power over the viewer as the viewing subject has over the viewed object.[494] Significantly for this thesis, a fundamental reversibility between a perceiver and their environment underpins both Tilley and Ingold's descriptions of landscape experience and, earlier in this chapter, has also been cited in various forms of art practice. In a similar way, Sobchack uses Merleau-Ponty's notion of reversibility between subject and object to describe the complex series of relationships that operate within film experience.[495] Sobchack understands film itself as an 'object-subject' that sees and is seen. For her, film is both a viewing subject and a visible object for the filmgoer.[496] She states that film is a direct means of having and expressing a world. It is not just a view, but rather, by seeing and expressing what it sees, is a viewing view.[497] Critically, Sobchack declares that in its visual address and movement, moving imagery allows us to see objectively for the first time what was once a visible impossibility: that we are at the same time both subject and object in the world, both the seer and the seen.

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[492] Ibid. 242.
[493] Sobchack, *The Address of the Eye*. 3.
[494] Belova, "Feeling the Image: A Phenomenological Account of a Visual Experience.". No page nos.
[495] Sobchack, *The Address of the Eye*. 128.
[496] Frampton, *Filmosophy*. 41.
[497] Ibid.

Other writers comment on a relationship between Merleau-Ponty's theory of reversibility and the experience of film. One example is film theorist Laura Marks who, writing in *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses* says that Merleau-Ponty's model offers a position of mutuality between self and other that enables meaning from a film to be experienced in the body.[498] Furthermore, adds Marks, the experience of film is a special and intensified example of the mutual relationship between bodily experience and the world because there is an exchange between two bodies – that of the viewer and that of the film.[499] Moreover, she adds, if film viewing is comprehended as an exchange between the viewer and the film, then the viewer, rather than being seen as passive, must be understood as participating in the cinematic experience.[500]

As we have already seen, an inherent part of Merleau-Ponty's idea of reversibility is the notion of *flesh*. In this novel idea, Merleau-Ponty describes what happens in the interaction between body and environment. *Flesh*, he says, describes a bodily engagement with an environment and occurs on the border between the body and its surroundings.[501] For Sobchack's analysis into film experience, *flesh* is an appropriate way of describing an experience that collapses the distinction between the viewer and the viewed. The notion of *flesh*, she says, brings about an intertwining of the body and the world.[502] Moreover, notions of *flesh* enable an examination of the ways in which experience emerges through our bodily senses and how we inhabit cinematic space.[503] Significantly for this thesis, Sobchack suggests that the notion of *flesh* has an impact on ways in which technology mediates the experience of film.[504] She cites the example of

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[498] Laura Marks, *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2000).
[499] Ibid. 149.
[500] Ibid.
[501] Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*.
[502] Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture*. 287.
[503] Ibid .
[504] Sobchack, *The Address of the Eye*. 182.

the film *American Beauty,* as one in which the 'camera's eye', by making little distinction between human subjects and inanimate objects creates a correspondence between human flesh and the 'flesh' of things.[505]

It is useful at this point to discover ways in which Sobchack's enquiry is informed by Ihde's ideas of how technology mediates an experience. Ihde's work is of particular interest to Sobchack because his analysis is informed by Merleau-Ponty's idea of human experience emerging through the relationship of the lived body and the world.[506] Moreover, Ihde uses Merleau-Ponty's idea of lived experience to draw attention to ways in which technology impacts on the relationship between an embodied perceiver and the environment. Central to the work of Ihde, as we saw in chapter two, is a phenomenological interpretation of how our perception might be extended by technology. Ihde says that this type of association must be attentive to both the technology involved and to the lived experience itself.[507] Significantly, a key issue in Sobchack's analysis is the relationship between human subjects and technologies of perception.

Sobchack considers Ihde's analysis.[508] In chapter two it was noted that she uses Ihde's idea of the experience of writing on a blackboard with a piece of chalk. In this example, Ihde proposes that, rather than being a separate object, the chalk is absorbed into the experience as an extension of the body.[509] For Sobchack, Ihde's example of extending the senses with technology is transferable to moving image culture in order to gain insight into the complex series of relationships between artist, viewer and technology that are involved in film experience. She says:

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[505] Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture*. 301.
[506] Ihde, *Technology and the Lifeworld*.
[507] Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture*. 139.
[508] Sobchack, *The Address of the Eye*. 171.
[509] Ihde, *Experimental Phenomenology: An Introduction*.

> If we substitute the motion picture camera for the chalk, Ihde's initial description will seem familiar to anyone who has ever confidently engaged the world with that mechanism (confidence here invoked because it implies an already appropriated knowledge of, and experience with a machine more complex in its operations than a piece of chalk). For the filmmaker, the world (whether "real", drawn, or constructed in any other fashion) is experienced *through* the camera. It is seen and *felt* at the *lens-world "junction",* the "terminus" of the filmmaker's intentional extension into the world…In a more ambiguous manner, Ihde's description of this first modality of instrument-mediated perception is descriptive also of the spectator's relation to the world as it is engaged and made visible by means of an instrument, the projector.[510]

However, whilst Sobchack acknowledges that Ihde's interpretation of instrument-mediated perception is pertinent to moving imagery, it lacks, she says, the full description needed to account for the instrument-mediated nature of film experience.[511] The reason for this failure, says Sobchack, is because Ihde's analysis relates to the single act of instrument-mediated perception, such as a scientist looking through a microscope. This single act of instrument-mediated perception is different, she argues, from the more complex acts of instrument-mediated perception and expression that occurs in film experience.[512] Sobchack explains this more complex form of perception. Within film experience, she claims, there are two instruments within the act of mediation - the camera and the projector. Thus, film, says Sobchack, includes two acts that engage and address each other; the camera and the projector bring about two embodied acts of perception and expression. And this, she says, is different to Ihde's single act of mediated perception that he illustrated through the chalk and blackboard example.[513] Furthermore, adds Sobchack, a double act of instrument-mediated perception involves the filmmaker perceiving the world through the camera and the spectator perceiving, through the instrumentality of the projector, a perception of the filmmaker's relationship to the world.[514] Accordingly, says Sobchack, although this is a more complex relationship regarding mediation of technology, it does still give priority

[510] Sobchack, *The Address of the Eye*. 175.
[511] Ibid.172.
[512] Ibid.
[513] Sobchack, *The Address of the Eye*. 175.
[514] Ibid. 192.

to the lived body as a way of explaining how film experience may be mediated by technology.[515]

Other writers comment on Sobchack's appropriation of Ihde's idea of technologically mediated perception. Communication theorists, Tammy Bennington and Geri Gay, suggest that Sobchack uses Ihde's ideas to show that the mediated perceptions of the filmmaker and the spectator converge at the limits of the camera's/filmmaker's perception; a limit, they say, that is in and of the world.[516] They provide a useful 'diagram' of this series of relationships:

(Filmmaker - camera) > World < (Spectator – projector)[517]

Thus, they say, the perception of the filmmaker is mediated by the camera, the body of the film itself, and by the projector.[518]

What happens when Sobchack's views are applied to digital forms of moving imagery, rather than film? In contrast to her view of cinema, Sobchack considers electronic imagery as being less related than film to embodied experience.[519] The structure of electronic representation leads her to suggest that it 'phenomenologically diffuses the fleshly presence of the human body and the dimensions of the body's material world'. By technologically transforming imagery into pixels, Sobchack feels that electronic imagery, in comparison to cinema, belongs to *no-body*.[520] The electronic,

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[515] Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture*. 171.
[516] Tammy Bennington and Geri Gay, "Mediated Perceptions: Contributions of Phenomenological Film Theory to Understanding the Interactive Video Experience," in *Journal of computer-mediated communication* (Cornell University, 2000). 12.
[517] Ibid.
[518] Ibid. 13.
[519] Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture*. 152.
[520] Ibid.

adds Sobchack, has a tendency to trivialize and devalue the human body.[521] Writing in *Carnal thoughts: Embodiment and moving image culture,* she writes:

> Television, videocassettes and digital discs, VCR and DVD recorder/players, electronic games, personal computers with Internet access, and pocket electronics of all kinds form an encompassing perceptual and representational system whose various forms 'interface' to constitute an alternative and absolute electronic world of immaterialized – if materially consequential – experience. And this electronic world incorporates the spectator/user uniquely in a spatially decentered, weakly temporalized and quasi-disembodied (or diffusely embodied) state.[522]

The electronic, says Sobchack:

> …can ignore AIDS, homelessness, hunger, torture, the bloody consequences of war and all the other ills the flesh is heir to outside the image and the datascape. It can ignore the lived body that not only once imagined its techno-logic but gave it substantial grounding, gravity, and value…if we do not take great care – we are all in danger of soon becoming merely ghosts in the machine.[523]

Writing in *Touch: Sensuous theory and multisensory media* Marks takes a different view of embodiment and electronic imagery. [524] Of particular interest to this project is Mark's work concerning phenomenology and digital video, as this medium, as well as film, is employed within this project. Marks disagrees with the dominant view that presents digital media as immaterial, disconnected and discreet – consisting of pure data.[525] Instead, Marks suggests that digital media offers evidence of materiality. This materiality can be seen, she says, in the way in which the data are stored – in the form of code – within digital video and other forms of new media. Digital media also embodies materiality, says Marks, on social and global levels both within social exchange and within material enterprises such as e-business and web art.[526] In a review of Marks'

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[521] Ibid. 161.
[522] Ibid. 153.
[523] Ibid. 162.
[524] Angus Forbes, *Research in the Technological, Social, and Cultural Practices of Online Reading: Haptic Visuality (Laura U Mark's Touch: Sensuous Theory and Multisensory Media)* (2006); available from http://transliteracies.english.ucsb.edu/post/research-project/research-clearinghouse-individual/research-reports/haptic-visuality-2. 2.
[525] Ted Kafala, *Review 1: Touch: Sensuous Theory and Multisensory Media* (Resource center for cyberculture studies, 2006); available from http://rccs.usfca.edu/bookinfo.asp?ReviewID=370&BookID=299.
[526] Ibid. 3.

book, critic Ted Kafala comments that Marks has drawn to attention the materiality of digital media and the relationship between the embodiment of art and new media.[527]

Marks considers electronic imagery in a way that relies on Merleau-Ponty's embodiment theory for a 'haptic' examination that focuses on a bodily relationship between the viewer and the image.[528] (Mark's use of the term 'haptic' originates from its use by art historian Aloïs Riegel at the turn of the twentieth century and is based on a phenomenological understanding that involves a sensuous understanding using the whole body.)[529] In her essay *How electrons remember*, Marks addresses the question of what happens to materiality in digital media.[530] It is beyond the scope of this thesis to go into detail on Marks discourse on quantum physics, solid-state engineering and quantum computing, but it is worth noting that her argument points out that 'the electron, as physical entity, thickens and interconnects the physical world'.[531] Similarly, in her essay *Immanence Online*, Marks notes that work on the Internet, 'far from being virtual, indexes several layers of material, interconnected life'.[532] Writing in *Film-Philosophy,* Melanie Swalwell proposes that although Marks' enquiry focuses on film and video, many of her arguments indicate a point of contact with artists working in new media and with those who experiment with film and video.[533]

Of particular significance to this thesis is the way in which Bennington and Gay comment on Sobchack's notions of instrument-mediated perception and digital forms of moving imagery.[534] They question what might happen if digital forms of imagery and a

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[527] Ibid. 4.
[528] Marks, *Touch: Sensuous Theory and Multisensory Media*.
[529] Ibid. 18.
[530] Ibid. xxii.
[531] Ibid.
[532] Ibid.
[533] Melanie Swalwell, "The Senses and Memory in Intercultural Cinema," *Film-Philosophy* 6, no. 32 (2002).
[534] Gay, "Mediated Perceptions: Contributions of Phenomenological Film Theory to Understanding the Interactive Video Experience.".

computer replaces Sobchack's model of a camera and a projector.[535] 'The digital body of the video', they propose, 'does not express the filmmaker's perception through an unfolding in time but rather through a multi-dimensional unfolding in space and through time'.[536] Bennington and Gay elaborate. There are multiple frames and juxtapositioning of frames, rather than a single frame, they say, which provides the screen onto which the video is projected (the expression of the filmmaker's perception). Moreover, they add, there is no isomorphism between the temporal sequence of the viewing of the video and the sequencing within the video's body.[537]

Bennington and Gay look at digital media in the light of Sobchack's model of phenomenological film experience. They suggest that a multi-dimensional understanding is reached that acknowledges a diversity of experiences involved in the creation, perception and interpretation of digital media.[538] Furthermore, say Bennington and Gay, digital imagery can be seen as a form of mediated engagement with the world. Phenomenologically-inspired film theory contributes, say Bennington and Gay, to a more complex understanding of digital media and can provide insights into visual perception not available from literary approaches that dominate discussion around digital media.[539] Phenomenology, they say, can explore the acts of perceiving and expressing and the commutation between them as they are mediated by the various technologies.[540]

Haworth also explores theories of embodiment and digital practice.[541] Although Haworth writes specifically of digital prints, his ideas of Merleau-Ponty's embodiment

[535] Ibid. 13.
[536] Ibid.
[537] Ibid.
[538] Ibid.
[539] Ibid.
[540] Ibid.
[541] Haworth, "Embodied Mind and Creativity in Digital Fine Art: Putting the Body Back into Human-Computer Interaction.".

and digital practice might similarly be applied to digital forms of moving imagery. The ideas of Merleau-Ponty, suggests Haworth, allow critical insights within fine art practice that can enhance understanding and appreciation. Specifically, he adds, Merleau-Ponty suggests that we do not see the world, but see with the world.[542] In artistic terms, says Haworth, this means that 'different media with which we interact have different voices which play a part in the creation of enriched being, perception and consciousness'.[543] Significantly for this thesis, Haworth considers the use of computer generated artwork and embodied practice and says that 'the process of exploration becomes a vehicle for seeing which is influenced by the technology'.[544] Artistic vision, says Haworth, is continually reshaping itself in association with the world and this includes, he adds, technology, geographical place, culture and events. However, he says, the final artefact is dependent upon living in the world.[545]

[542] Ibid. 3.
[543] Ibid.
[544] Ibid. 7.
[545] Ibid.

Summary

This chapter has examined some of the ways in which still and moving imagery might articulate notions of embodied experience predicated on a range of writing from phenomenology and parallel sources. Moreover, it has analysed some of the ways in which still and moving imagery might provide evidence of phenomenological notions that, in the previous chapters of this thesis, have been attributed to ways in which an active human perceiver engages with a dynamic environment.

In the first section, Brodsky's account of whole body practices that are involved in the making and viewing of art have shown some of the ways in which Merleau-Ponty's ideas about embodied experience might be applied to art practice. Specifically, we have seen that although paintings by Cézanne might articulate his sensuous engagement with his surroundings, they fail to reveal evidence of his movement within a dynamic environment unfolding over time. Likewise, from the example of Spero's work, although we were able to determine that by strategic placement of the artwork an artist can manipulate the bodily movements of the viewer, we were unable to see evidence of the dynamic relationship that exists between the artist and her environment. Usefully, from the example of Pollock's painting we were able to determine that the way in which artwork is shown has an impact on a viewer's understanding of the bodily actions of the artist in the making of the work.

We also saw in section one how Gibson's ecological theory of perception might be applied to static media such as painting. However, as we have seen, Gibson's perceptual theory that relies on perception from the light reflected from surfaces in an environment requires both the movement of a perceiver and a changing environment. The static nature of painting is unable to articulate an environment experienced by such movement that occurs over time. Finally, this section showed how obviously material

forms of artwork, such as painting and printmaking, and less obvious types, such as digital media, can both be explained in terms of bodily activity within their construction and viewing processes.

The second section of this chapter used Merleau-Ponty's ideas of a fundamental reversibility between a subject and an object to show how film experience might be explained in terms of reversibility between the viewer and the viewed. From the phenomenological ideas of Sobchack we have seen film experience as a reversible relationship between the viewer and the viewed that is mediated by the camera and the projector. Moreover, we have seen ways in which moving imagery is more suited to an articulation of embodied experience because a film unfolds through movement over time. Significantly, a medium that unfolds over time has some similarities to the experience of a human perceiver. We have also seen that Merleau-Ponty's notion of *flesh,* that describes an overlap between subject and object, can be explained within the context of film by the distinction the moving imagery gives to human subjects and inanimate objects.

In addition, we have seen in this section that moving imagery accords more closely than still imagery to Gibson's ideas of a moving observer perceiving their environment through the light reflected from surfaces within their surroundings. Whilst still imagery has little in common with such a perceptual theory, moving imagery provides a similar sort of experience.

Of particular significance in this section is Sobchack's application to film experience of the idea of perception being extended by technology. Here, we have seen that Ihde's idea, based on Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, can be used to understand embodiment relations within moving imagery. However, we have seen that whilst

Ihde's example uses just one instrument of mediation, film experience relies on a more complex association that includes two instruments – the camera and the projector.

An examination into phenomenological principles surrounding film is of assistance in establishing ways in which moving imagery might fulfil the requirements of an artistic depiction of the dynamic nature of the relationship between a perceiver and their environment. However, for the purpose of this thesis, it is necessary to consider examples of film used within visual art in particular, rather than in the context of cinema. Consequently, chapter four will examine a case study where a contemporary visual artist has used film within an art gallery context rather than for projection within a cinema.

CHAPTER 4

Art practice and moving imagery

Introduction

This chapter examines ideas of embodied experience in connection with *Disappearance at Sea* by Tacita Dean[546] that, significantly, major critics have cited in a phenomenological way.[547] It is important to examine a phenomenological analysis of a film made for exhibition within a gallery rather than a cinema because the prime aim of this thesis is to analyse ways in which contemporary art practice might fluently articulate notions of embodied landscape experience. This chapter will thus analyse Dean's film to establish ways in which notions of embodied landscape experience might be understood within moving imagery used within visual art.

The chapter begins with an examination of ways in which a film shown in an art gallery provides a different bodily experience from one shown in a cinema. Then, following a formal analysis of *Disappearance at Sea* ideas of embodied experience are discussed in relation to the film. Next, Dean's method of using embodied experience in conjunction with textual information is considered. This is significant because, as we have seen, a method of enquiry that brings together embodied experience with information from other sources has been identified as being used to analyse a sensuous engagement with a landscape. Ideas about movement are also examined in connection with *Disappearance at Sea* and an analysis is made about the role of time within the film. Technology plays an important part in Dean's film and this is investigated in terms of how it might mediate experience both for Dean and for the viewer.

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[546] Tacita Dean, *Disappearance at Sea,* 1996, 16mm colour anamorphic, optical sound, 14 minutes.

[547] Maria Walsh, 'Narrative Duration: Tacita Dean's *Disappearance at Sea*', Silvester, ed., *Reading Images and Seeing Words*. 57.
Daniel Birnbaum, *Chronology* (New York: Lucas Sternberg, 2005). 68.

I

Case study: Tacita Dean, *Disappearance at Sea*

There are several ways in which Dean's film might be examined in association with phenomenological ideas. Firstly, there are phenomenological implications for the context within which Dean has chosen to show her film because critics have cited significant differences in terms of embodiment between a film made for cinematic viewing and one produced as an artwork. One writer who has commented on these differences in respect of Dean's work is art historian Maria Walsh.[548] She says that meaning can be conveyed in a bodily sense by the space the film is shown in and through the content of the film. Walsh says that it is important that *Disappearance at Sea* is a gallery installation as it gives the film 'a different address than the cinema theatre'.[549] Walsh explains. The cinema, she proposes, can lull the viewer into a dream-like state that makes them unaware of bodily coordinates other than those they receive from the image they are viewing. Whereas, says Walsh, the gallery installation space foregrounds the body's location in space.[550] She also comments specifically on the imagery within *Disappearance at Sea* in relation to the viewer's body. Dean, she says, upsets our sense of bodily coordination by obliterating the horizon in the film and this creates an immersive space for the viewer. [551] Also, adds Walsh, our equilibrium is upset by Dean's use of a black interval in the film.[552]

The significance of the location where a film is shown is also a point noted by film theorist Daniel Frampton.[553] Frampton suggests that the intellectual and attentive context of a gallery persuades the viewer to 'fill in the blanks' in the frequently

[548] Maria Walsh, 'Narrative Duration', Silvester, ed., *Reading Images and Seeing Words*.
[549] Ibid. 67.
[550] Ibid. 68.
[551] Ibid.
[552] Ibid.
[553] Frampton, *Filmosophy*. 207.

fragmentary nature of gallery film. Significantly, he uses *Disappearance at Sea* to illustrate such a phenomenon.[554]

We have seen in chapter three that the projection process can also have an impact on the phenomenological relationship between a viewer and the film. Writing in *Film art phenomena,* filmmaker and critic Nicky Hamlyn suggests that although Dean's films are shown in art galleries, they also relate to the cinema. [555] The reason for this, says Hamlyn, is that the projection processes are not explicitly addressed.[556] The loop machines that allow the films to run continuously, he says, are enclosed and thus hidden from the viewer. Furthermore, he adds, Dean's longer films are shown from specially constructed projection boxes. In this respect, he suggests, the work also conforms to the usual practice of video artists who use digital projectors mounted above the spectator.[557] For this thesis, Dean's choice of projection is significant. We have seen in previous chapters that the ways in which technology mediates our experience of an environment is a significant part of a phenomenological analysis. Thus the projection arrangement for artwork that is seeking to articulate phenomenological experience needs to be considered as an aspect of the work.

Critic and art historian Jean-Christophe Royoux also writes about Dean's method of projection and its impact upon viewing practices. He too comments on her use of looping mechanisms that provide continual playing potential. In contrast to Hamlyn, Royoux says that by showing her work in such a way the projection apparatus used in Dean's films are an integral part of their presentation.[558] As we have seen in the previous chapter, the way in which artwork is shown has an impact on the viewer's

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[554] Ibid.
[555] Nicky Hamlyn, *Film Art Phenomena* (London: British Film Institute, 2003). 43.
[556] Ibid.
[557] Ibid.
[558] Jean Chrisophe Royoux, 'Cosmograms of the present tense', Marina Warner Jean-Christophe Royoux, Germaine Greer, *Tacita Dean* (London, New York: Phaidon Press, 2006). 56.

perception of how the work was made. By showing the films with a 16mm projector, Royoux says that Dean's filming of material objects is closely linked with the format of their presentation. There is, says Royoux, 'a perfect fit between what is represented, the way it is represented and its presentation in exhibitions'.[559]

Filmmaker Guy Sherwin also comments on Dean's projection techniques. He says that by having no obvious beginnings or endings, and thus being appropriate for continuous projection, Dean's films are suited to a gallery situation.[560] Sherwin's comments might be considered in contrast to the idea, seen in chapter three, that a feature of moving imagery is its beginnings and endings. Here, beginnings and endings were associated with moving imagery whilst in static forms of imagery, such as paintings, it was suggested that beginnings and endings do not exist.

Somewhat confusingly, the attention given to the presentation of Dean's films by Hamlyn, Royoux, Sherwin and Frampton suggests that the way in which Dean has chosen to show *Disappearance at Sea* could be seen as contrary to existing practice within a gallery situation, yet also at odds with usual cinema practice. When attending an artist's talk, that included a viewing of Dean's film *Palast* at the Tate Modern gallery in London, 2006, there was no mention by Dean, who was present at the showing, whether the film was to be seen in a different form to the cinematic way in which it was presented.[561] It is interesting to note that in *Tacita Dean: Recent films and other works,* a catalogue produced to accompany an exhibition of Dean's work at the Tate Britain gallery in 2001, Dean's film work is described as 'filmography', a term that has been used to describe artists' films rather than film created for cinema.[562]

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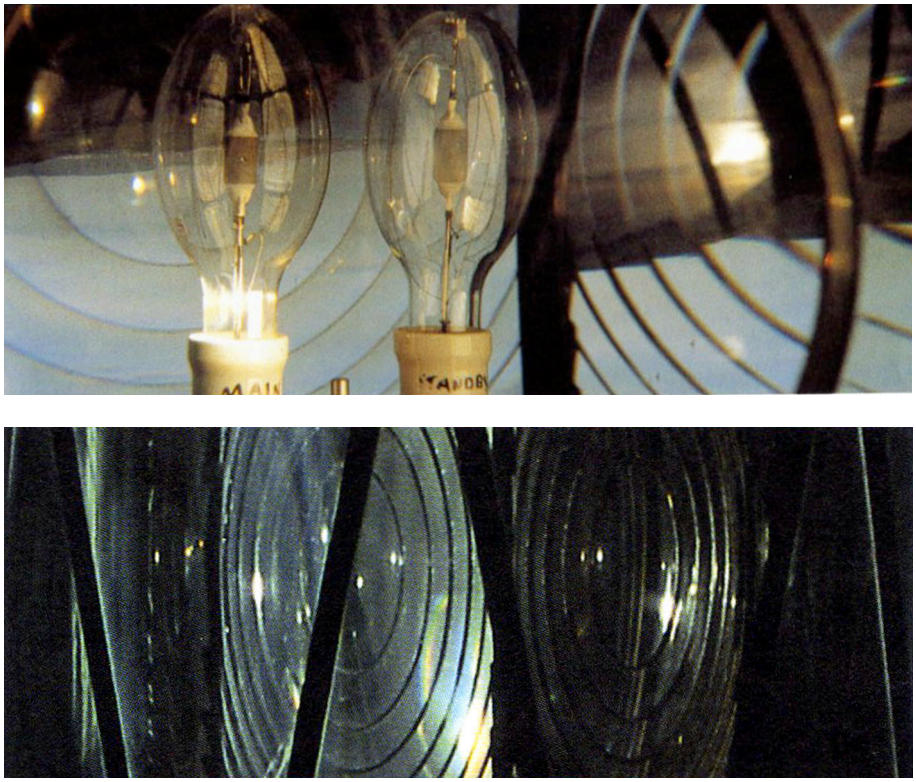
[559] Ibid.
[560] Hamlyn, *Film Art Phenomena*. 54.
[561] 'Tacita Dean: Artist's Talk', Tate Modern, Bankside, SE1, Tuesday, 6th June 2006.
[562] Tate Britain, ed., *Tacita Dean: Recent Films and Other Works* (London: Tate Gallery Publishing Ltd, 2001). 75.

It is significant at this point to look at the methods used within this thesis when Dean's film is considered within the overall structure of this enquiry. First, in order to understand quite how an analysis of Dean's film fits within the overall structure of this thesis it is helpful to look back over what has been presented so far. Thus far the thesis has considered some of the ways an embodied association with the environment might be understood through an analysis of landscape experience. In addition, the thesis has looked at ways in which visual art might articulate such experience of an environment. Within these analyses, examples have been cited from the key texts selected for this thesis. For instance, in chapter one, in the case of Tilley, his example of the menhirs at Finistère provided this thesis with a way of understanding an expanded method of phenomenology. Looking at Tilley's example revealed how his method of analysis includes embodied experience together with sources of pre-existing literature. Similarly, in this chapter, we can see that artwork might also use embodied experience together with more reflective elements. For this thesis then, Dean's work might be considered in an intratextual way as 'pre-existing artwork'.

Before considering how notions of embodied experience might be discussed in relation to Dean's film, the visual and audio content of *Disappearance at Sea* will be examined. In order to provide this information, I have viewed Dean's film several times and taken notes that have informed the following analysis.

The 16mm film has a playing time of fourteen minutes. The film comprises seven cuts, each of about two minutes duration, of different views of and from a lighthouse.



Illus. 16: Tacita Dean, *Disappearance at Sea*, Film stills, 16mm colour anamorphic film with optical sound, 14 minutes, London, the Tate Modern gallery.

The camera, fitted with an anamorphic lens that provides a widescreen format, is fixed to the lighthouse lamp during filming.[563] The film commences at dusk. It opens with intermittent light from clockwise rotational movement of the lighthouse lenses that gives an overall impression of a gold, grey and bronze image. There are two light bulbs visible in the centre of the image, and a barely discernible landscape beyond. The image of the moving lenses and the distant landscape fills the frame and is accompanied by a mechanical sound. The second cut changes to what can be seen from the lighthouse, out towards the sea. Here, a cliff, a horizon line and a flat sea are visible beneath a darkening sky, and movement of the lighthouse lenses can be detected on the far left of the frame. Also, structural elements of the lighthouse window casing can also be observed. Within the third cut, the lenses can again be seen moving clockwise and the sky may be glimpsed through the lenses. The imagery in this cut is darker than the first and second cuts, and rings that form part of the glass lenses cause distortion of the light

[563] Maria Walsh, 'Narrative Duration', Silvester, ed., *Reading Images and Seeing Words*. 59.

that moves across the frame. Again, two bulbs are visible and a mechanical sound can be heard. The fourth cut reveals a red, cloudy sky with a horizon line just below halfway down the screen. Here, the lenses of the lighthouse may be seen rotating on the left of the frame and the edge of the window of the building and its structure can also be observed. In this cut the image is partly red/orange, as a result of the sunset, and partly blue/grey from the light through the lighthouse lens. Also, a dark sea and cliff can be seen, as well as intermittent light flashes. This cut has a mix of mechanical and screechy sounds – possibly the cry of gulls. In the next cut a dark cliff with a beam moving from left to right across the frame is visible. Also, there is a strip of sunset in the upper right of the frame and again a combination of mechanical and gull-like sounds. The sixth cut reveals a rotating lens again, but this time with strong contrast between the intermittent light of the lighthouse beam when it is on and the darkness of a night sky when it is off. Here, the structure of the lighthouse casing can be seen and slight marks on the glass bring the viewer's awareness to the presence of the lighthouse window. The final cut begins with a black screen but after a few seconds a light can be seen travelling from left to right in the top right part of the frame. In this cut, the screeching sound fades and the film ends.

It is worth noting a difference in the last cut to the first six parts of the film. In contrast to the first cuts, Dean has revealed that the last scene of *Disappearance at Sea* is faked.[564] The reason for this, she says, is that lighthouses do not project their light onto the sea; they project it above and into the air.[565] Consequently, Dean has intervened with a mirror and a torch in order to create light on the surface of the sea. This is significant. Her intervention with a mirror and torch means that the film needs to be considered in a way that incorporates Dean's ideas following a period of reflection. On the one hand, this might be considered a phenomenological 'glitch'. However, if we

[564] Marina Warner, "Interview: Marina Warner in conversation with Tacita Dean", Jean-Christophe Royoux, *Tacita Dean*. 30.
[565] Ibid.

think about an interpretation of phenomenology that, as we saw earlier, considers immediate experience as a route to further enquiry, then Dean's activity with the torch and the mirror might be viewed in terms of an 'expanded' phenomenology. However, it is worth noting that it is others who have attributed Dean's film with phenomenological ideas, rather than Dean herself. Accordingly, ways in which the film might be considered to 'fail' in phenomenological terms are not stated as a comment of inept action on Dean's part.

How can ideas of experience be understood within the context of Dean's film? Experience enters the film in several ways. First, there is Dean's embodied experience of making the film. We know quite a lot about this topic from a textual component that accompanies her film. Dean has authored a book, entitled *An Aside,* which provides a textual narrative to accompany *Disappearance at Sea*.[566] The title of Dean's book is interesting. An 'aside' is a term taken from Shakespearian theatre denoting something spoken directly to the audience by an actor that doesn't affect the action on the stage.[567] Dean comments on an 'aside' in another exhibition catalogue.[568] Here she says: 'For me it is active: it is no stage whisper but a decisive moment when an actor chooses to address the audience directly whilst not affecting the action on stage'.[569]

Other writers comment on Dean's use of a textual component. Writing in 'Afterword' within Dean's textual component, critic Theodora Vischer suggests that although one does not need to be familiar with the narrative discourse of Dean's texts in order to watch her films, the complexity of the film is reinforced through its discourse of

[566] Museum fur Gegwenwartskunst Basel, ed., *Tacita Dean: Selected Works from 1994-2000, an Aside* (Basel: Museum fur Gegenwartskunst Basel, 2000).
[567] Ibid. 54.
[568] Tacita Dean, *An Aside: Selected by Tacita Dean* (London: Hayward Gallery Publishing, 2005). 5.
[569] Ibid.

the textual components.[570] Likewise, Royoux suggests that the textual component of Dean's work plays a specific role. He says that by revealing Dean's experience in *Disappearance at Sea,* the book has an impact on our understanding of the actions and objects that she employs in her work. Thus, says Royoux, the textual component contributes towards saving a fragment of reality from the past, thus preserving the memory of actions or objects that would otherwise disappear.[571]

For this thesis, it is interesting to note that Dean's work comprises several elements and is arguably indicative of her method of making art having common features with what we have seen as a mode of 'expanded phenomenology'. Firstly, there is the film itself that has been made after some initial research by Dean. The content of this film, we have seen, incorporates both material recorded from a fixed point on a lighthouse, which might be considered 'pre-reflective' and also comprises a cut that has been made following intervention by Dean. In addition, there is a textual component that accompanies the film that provides information of both bodily experience and details of material from other sources.

What else does Dean's textual component tell us about the making of *Disappearance at Sea*? Firstly, from the textual component, *An Aside,* we learn that a tragic story informs *Disappearance at Sea.* This is the story of Donald Crowhurst, one of nine competitors who attempted to sail around the world single-handedly in the Sunday Times Golden Globe Race of 1968.[572] Dean informs us that Crowhurst was ill-prepared for such a race, being a family man with a failing business and no professional sailing experience. However, she explains, his determination to enter and win the race set him on a path of delusion that resulted in him leaving Teignmouth in an unfit boat, ill

[570] Theodora Vischer, 'Afterword', Basel, ed., *Tacita Dean: Selected Works from 1994-2000, an Aside*. 54.
[571] Jean-Christophe Royoux, *Tacita Dean*. 61.
[572] Basel, ed., *Tacita Dean: Selected Works from 1994-2000, an Aside*. 22.

prepared and afraid.[573] Furthermore, Crowhurst's journey was entangled with the affairs of Teignmouth Council and he became a means for the council to gain publicity. Hopelessly caught up by his own bravado and by obsessive civic pride, he was towed out on the 31st October for the start of the race. Moreover, narrates Dean, as he tried to hoist his foresails they became hopelessly entangled, and he had to be brought in to shore again for assistance before finally setting off in the race. As he was mid-way into the Atlantic, Dean tells us, Crowhurst realised that he wouldn't survive one day in the Roaring Forties – a particularly windy region of the Atlantic – let alone make it around the world. At this point, says Dean, Crowhurst set about faking his journey. Crowhurst managed to convince the world, Dean informs us, that he was making great progress and in June 1969, when his fictional journey collided with his actual journey, he was able to radio Portishead and learn that he was officially winning the race. Then, Dean reports, the BBC radioed through plans to meet Crowhurst off the Isles of Scilly.[574] But in reality, says Dean, Crowhurst had lost all track of time and no longer knew where he was. Moreover, she says that he had developed an obsessive relationship with his faulty chronometer – an instrument to measure GMT time at sea – and that as a result of this association he was suffering from 'time-madness', a common problem for sailors who have to locate their position by rigorous time keeping. Finally, says Dean, Crowhurst, with a distorted sense of time and overwhelmed by his deceit and his offence against what he regarded as 'the sacred principle of truth'[575] jumped overboard with his chronometer. He was, she says, just a few hundred miles off the coast of Britain.

We also learn, in *An Aside,* of Dean's own experiences in relation to her quest to find out more about Crowhurst's tragic story. She provides evidence of her own interest in the event and of her subsequent quest in connection with the story. Firstly, we are told how Dean's quest began. It was with a train journey, she tells us, a journey that

[573] Ibid. 22.
[574] Ibid. 25.
[575] Ibid.

passed through Teignmouth where, she says, the train 'is often moving too fast for you to make out its name'.[576] Dean also reveals her experience with the townsfolk of Teignmouth: Speaking to an ex-council member, Fred Tooley, she tells of how she heard of Crowhurst's involvement with Teignmouth Council and how she was particularly struck by the minutes from a meeting of Teignmouth Council Publicity Committee, published in a book by two Sunday Times journalists who had covered the race at the time. They wrote:

> "And his final verdict, as reported in the local paper, put the tragedy into the right perspective from Teignmouth's point-of-view. 'Despite the sad end,' Mr Bladon, the ex-Chairman of the Council, told the meeting, 'The voyage has brought up more publicity than this Committee has managed in fifty years. We have had this extremely cheaply, and I hope the town appreciates it'. Donald Crowhurst would have been glad to hear he did not die in vain".[577]

Dean also describes her visits to the offices of the local Teignmouth newspapers and photographers in search of further information about Crowhurst's part in the race. Neither office could provide any original image of the event nor remember the postcard that Dean recalled being issued to commemorate the race.[578] In addition, Dean tells us about meeting the honorary archivist of Teignmouth museum in order to examine literature relating to the race. Here, Dean was shown a painting by a local artist of Crowhurst's trimaran, *Teignmouth Electron,* that in the picture, she says, 'floated awkwardly on a ferocious blue brown sea'.[579] In the corner of the painting, Dean tells us, was an image of Crowhurst's disembodied head painted against the waves. Dean was told by the archivist that the painting was considered too inappropriate to be shown after the tragedy and had stayed out of sight, ever since, in the museum. Also, we are informed of Dean's meeting with the boat pilot who towed Crowhurst out at the start of the race. Dean relates the pilot's description of the day he towed *Teignmouth Electron* out to sea for the start of the race. 'It was obvious to everyone', he said, 'that Crowhurst

[576] Basel, ed., *Tacita Dean: Selected Works from 1994-2000, an Aside*. 22.
[577] Ibid.
[578] Ibid.
[579] Ibid. 24.

didn't want to take part'.[580] Furthermore, Dean tells us, the pilot hinted at a conspiracy. The whole trip, he told Dean, was set up as a publicity stunt that went wrong.[581]

It is evident from Dean's writing that the time-madness aspects of Crowhurst's story intrigue and inspire her and form the basis for *Disappearance at Sea.* Accordingly, Dean chooses to use Berwick lighthouse as a location to make the film. For Dean, a lighthouse is able to represent aspects of Crowhurst's disturbed state of mind. She explains the reasons for this. Writing of the lighthouse in *An Aside,* Dean tells us that as the train approaches Berwick-upon-Tweed it is possible to imagine 'the smallness of that enclosed space in relation to the vast immensity of the space beyond: the space that is the sea'.[582] She says:

> At night, you watch in the blackness for the rotations of the lighthouse and you decipher time in the gaps between the flashes. Without this cipher, there is no time. Crowhurst's "time-madness", where he believed he was floating through prehistory, utterly alone in an unforgiving seascape so far removed from human contact is only just possible to imagine standing in the last human place where the ocean starts and the land ends in a solitary beacon of safety.[583]

Significantly, adds Dean, 'Like the man in the moon'… 'you can just make out the anguished face of Donald Crowhurst'...'he becomes the light of the lighthouse, his gaze fixed eternally on the horizon as he looks out upon the sea'.[584]

Using information from the film and the textual component of Dean's work, how might notions of embodied experience, be attributed to *Disappearance at Sea*? As shown above, experience that involves the whole body is important within a phenomenological enquiry. And, as Merleau-Ponty has written, experience can be understood from an embodied viewpoint.[585] As we have also seen, at the core of

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[580] Ibid.
[581] Ibid. 25.
[582] Ibid. 27.
[583] Ibid.
[584] Ibid.
[585] Christopher Macann, *Four Phenomenological Philosophers* (London: Routledge, 1993). 180.

Merleau-Ponty's idea of an embodied viewpoint is the temporal and reciprocal intertwining of an organism and its environment. This intertwining has been discussed in terms of landscape experience as well as in connection with a selection of embodied art practices. Now, it will be considered in association with *Disappearance at Sea.*

Dean relates notions of embodied experience in the textual component of her work. Bodily actions such as 'walking up grassy slopes',[586] 'wandering to a concrete jetty'[587] and 'having fish and chips in a café',[588] reveal some of Dean's bodily activities involved in the making of *Disappearance at Sea.* Admittedly, these statements relate little about Dean's bodily sensations but nevertheless they do provide evidence of Dean's enquiry being informed by actual experience rather than using information from a literary, or intellectual source. Analyses that are made solely from a desk, as we observed in chapter one, might be considered as providing a 'disembodied' type of enquiry.

The experience of sound is significant to Dean's work.[589] In chapter one, we observed that sound is also an important issue within an account of an embodied experience of the landscape. In an interview with cultural historian Marina Warner, Dean states that sound can heighten the sense of loss or disappearance within a film.[590] Accordingly, Dean says:

> For me, making a film is connected to the idea of loss and disappearance. When I put in the sound of a dog barking or a motorbike passing at dusk, I am so aware of the feeling of abandonment it can create. It's incredibly powerful, sound. It is so descriptive of that particular night time loneliness or dusk loneliness.[591]

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[586] Basel, ed., *Tacita Dean: Selected Works from 1994-2000, an Aside*. 22.
[587] Ibid. 23.
[588] Ibid. 24.
[589] Jean-Christophe Royoux, *Tacita Dean*. 59.
[590] Marina Warner, *Tacita Dean.* 17.
[591] Ibid.

The sounds within *Disappearance at Sea* change from the grinding of a revolving lighthouse lantern to the screeching of gulls above the sea.[592] These sounds are significant because, as we observed earlier, sound is able to convey activity that is not necessarily visible within a landscape.

Earlier in this thesis an overlap of our bodily senses was considered. As we observed, this idea, termed synthaesthesia, is an idea discussed by Merleau-Ponty and describes a significant part of how we perceive an environment.[593] Whilst watching and listening to the final cut in *Disappearance at Sea,* where the screen becomes filled with only a black image but the sound of screeching gulls can be heard, a viewer becomes aware of an overlap of senses. The idea of an awareness of overlapping senses occurring when one sense ceases is an issue discussed by Merleau-Ponty. He says that we can become aware of the interaction of the senses in perception when the sound of a film we are watching breaks down momentarily.[594]

An embodied analysis of our surroundings, as we have seen, needs to consider ways in which technology mediates our experience of an environment. In chapter two, both simple and complex types of technology were seen to have an impact on the embodied experience of a human perceiver. [595] In chapter three of this thesis, such an analysis was also shown to be applicable to an experience of film. Accordingly, Dean's film provides this thesis with the opportunity to apply ideas of technological mediation to an example of artwork that comprises moving imagery.

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[592] Ibid.
[593] Monika Langer, *Merleau-Ponty's Phenomenology of Perception, a Guide and Commentary* (Basingstoke: The Macmillan Press Ltd, 1989). 78.
[594] Ibid. 79.
[595] Michael, "These Boots Are Made for Walking.: Mundane Technology, the Body and Human-Environment Relations.".
Ihde, *Technology and the Lifeworld*.

In order to evaluate some of the ways in which technology mediates between a perceiver and their environment within *Disappearance at Sea,* it is necessary to examine the series of relationships that are involved in the making and the viewing of the film. There is a complex chain of experience, events and technical apparatus that can be identified as operating within the film. Firstly, the initial link might be considered as being Dean's train journey where she became fascinated with Teignmouth as the town associated with Crowhurst. It is significant that it is Dean's experience, mediated by technology, in the form of the train, which initiates the film. Following this train journey, many years later, Dean begins her quest in Teignmouth. This experience, as we have learned from her textual component, involves bodily activity together with material artefacts, evidenced by such things as a postcard issued to commemorate Crowhurst's trip and the minutes of the Teignmouth Council Publicity committee. These seemingly simple artefacts, along with many other 'mundane' technologies that were alluded to in chapter two, might be seen as significant parts of Dean's experience of her surroundings.

Next in the chain of actions and technology comes Dean's experience with the 16mm camera and its anamorphic lens. This camera is a complex piece of equipment that might be considered as an example of what is termed, in chapter two, 'exotic' technology. The lighthouse itself is somewhat an enigma. Although considered complex at the time it was constructed, it might, in today's terms, be considered a relatively simple device. (However, it is worth noting that advanced lighting techniques using a hydrogen fuel cell are being used to provide up-to-date technology within unmanned lighthouses that continue to operate today.) [596]By attaching the camera to the lamp of the lighthouse Dean extends the use of the camera. However, by not actually holding the camera Dean's action means that 'perceptual extension' occurs at a distance and thus arguably cannot be considered in terms of technology extending the perceptual boundaries of the body that was explained in chapter two. Dean's experience of

[596] 'Lighthouse is powered by hydrogen', *The Times* newspaper, 6/11/07, 22.

capturing the imagery at Bewick lighthouse also includes the mirror and torch used to fake the light across the sea. By the addition of such an action, Dean makes the already complex series of relationships even more diverse. The torch and the mirror change the series of relationships between Dean, the camera and the lighthouse. The potential meaning of something, or its *affordance* has been shown in chapter one to be a way of understanding an environment. Thus, for the sea to be visible in the film, a series of *affordances* is required between Dean's body, the torch and the mirror.

The idea of a 'viewing view', seen in chapter three, might be applied to *Disappearance at Sea*.[597] In this idea, the material body of the film might be considered as 'seeing' the landscape from the point of view of the lighthouse and 'expressing' the view when the film is exhibited. Finally, the image reflected from the screen, the screen itself, the projector and the experience of the viewer need to be considered within the chain of relationships associated with Dean's film.

There is further evidence of technological mediation within Dean's film. Specifically, redundant technology plays a significant role in her work.[598] Crowhurst's disaster happened in 1968 and when Dean tried to find details of the voyage she found yellowing newspaper articles, failing memories and a certain reluctance to revisit what had befallen Donald Crowhurst.[599] The faulty chronometer; the use of a lighthouse – an almost redundant form of navigation; her choice of medium – film rather than video or digital technology, arguably all relate to an interest in redundant technology. Furthermore, almost all the apparent technology – the yacht, the chronometer, the camera, the lighthouse and the projector, although hi-tech or 'exotic' at the time of their production, are now virtually obsolete compared to the equivalent items available today. Of interest to this thesis is that by positioning almost redundant objects and events

[597] Sobchack, *The Address of the Eye*.
[598] Jean-Christophe Royoux, *Tacita Dean*. 62.
[599] Basel, ed., *Tacita Dean: Selected Works from 1994-2000, an Aside*. 24.

within a present day context, Dean's actions can be understood as the past impacting on the present – an issue discussed above in chapter one.

An inherent part of embodied experience is the notion of movement. As chapter one demonstrated, an embodied relationship between a perceiver and their environment involves the movement of both of these elements. Later, in chapter three, ideas of motion were also examined in association with embodied notions of artwork and with an experience of film. Furthermore, movement within film has been seen to include the motion of the perceiver and their dynamic environment, both within the capture of the imagery and within the imagery viewed in the film. In addition, there is the movement of the viewer to consider. Movement is also present within the projection process, both within the mechanical components of the projector and in the film itself being pushed and pulled through the viewing apparatus.

Accordingly, we need to consider aspects of movement within *Disappearance at Sea*. Firstly, some of the imagery in the film will be examined for evidence of movement. In the first cut, there is evidence of movement of the lighthouse lenses. This movement brings into question the identity of the perceiver in Dean's film. Can the lighthouse, standing in for the gaze of Crowhurst, be accorded the perceptual properties of a perceiver? As chapter three observed, phenomenology deals with the relationship between a human perceiver and their world. A lighthouse is not human and therefore cannot be given the status of a perceiver. It can, however, be considered as part of a phenomenological association in a mediating role. Accordingly, the movement of the lighthouse lens is part of the mediating technology involved in the relationship between Dean and the landscape. Interestingly, Frampton suggests that *Disappearance at Sea*

'becomes' the bulb of a lighthouse, both mesmeric and mechanical'.[600] Dean's film, he says 'offers a filmic anatomy of a lighthouse, through a beam that glances off rocks'.[601]

In the film, the sweeping beam from the lighthouse reveals persistence and change within the landscape. Again, this is interesting. As chapter one illustrated, persistence and change that is revealed by the light reflected from surfaces within an environment is a way of explaining how we might understand the physical environment.[602] This explanation, Gibson's idea of *invariants,* relies upon the movement of both a perceiver and their dynamic environment. Thus, in *Disappearance at Sea,* the seemingly invariant parts of the image, such as the cliff and the structure of the lighthouse, determine our perception of those parts of the film that appear to be moving, such as the lighthouse lenses and the beam of light that sweeps across the sky.

Movement, as we have seen earlier, occurs over time. Moreover, time has been discussed throughout this thesis as an inherent part of an embodied relationship. As we have also seen, time is a fundamental part of the way in which a human perceiver experiences the landscape. How then might time be understood within *Disappearance at Sea*? Firstly, the camera reveals a landscape being disclosed over time. Accordingly, features in the film are revealed as the landscape unfolds over time. In this way, we can apply the temporal notion, seen in chapter one, whereby some surfaces are revealed as others pass out of view.

Another way in which time might be understood in Dean's film is suggested by Royoux who says that the unfolding of the film allows a past object, or situation, to be represented in the present.[603] Here, an association can be made between the past

[600] Frampton, *Filmosophy*. 207.
[601] Ibid.
[602] Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*.
[603] Jean-Christophe Royoux, *Tacita Dean*. 61.

impacting on the present within an interpretation of embodied landscape experience, an idea observed in chapter one, and Dean's film. A further example of how time operates within *Disappearance at Sea* is revealed in *An Aside*. Here, as we saw earlier, Dean contrasts the time-gap between the flashes of the lighthouse with Crowhurst's 'time-madness'.[604] Without the gaps between the flashes of the lighthouse beam, she says, there is no time. Likewise, Crowhurst lost all sense of time when his chronometer failed.

It is relevant that Maria Walsh relates the temporal dimension that is present in *Disappearance at Sea* to the work of Merleau-Ponty.[605] Walsh says that putting an emphasis on experience clarifies an understanding of time. It 'debunks the mastery which the notion of a centralized consciousness entails', she says.[606] Furthermore, she adds, an emphasis on experience also immediately introduces temporality. In her enquiry into Dean's work, Walsh highlights ways in which duration within *Disappearance at Sea* connects with ideas of time. Firstly, she says, the film creates 'a stark and startling sensory effect' that unites its separate cuts. The length of each cut, she adds, makes us sense something outside of the film, which is where we are located in time and space. Each shot, she says, is held for a longer period than we need to recognise the image. Thus the viewer's idea of time, brought about partly by the lack of drama, she says, is emphasised by the cuts and lingerings made at the time of the film but which also cut and linger in the viewer's own time.[607] Walsh also comments on time in connection with the audio content of the film. She suggests that off-screen sounds, such as the screeching gulls and the noise from the projector, contribute to a sense of something beyond the image.[608] The beyond of the image is not simply off-screen space, says Walsh, but is rather 'a sense of human time, spread out and seeping through the

[604] Ibid. 27.
[605] Maria Walsh, Silvester, ed., *Reading Images and Seeing Words*. 66.
[606] Ibid.
[607] Ibid.
[608] Ibid.

spectator's body'.[609] It is through duration, she adds, that time in the film passes into a space which connects with the spectator's own formation of experience. Furthermore, suggests Walsh, objects in the film, such as the lighthouse, the sky, the light and the horizon offer different sorts of time. The lighthouse, she says, presents a human measurement of cosmic forces whereas the horizon can be seen as the limit of cosmic time.[610]

It is pertinent at this point to consider another film made by Dean that also incorporates notions of movement and time – *Fernsehturm.*[611]

Illus. 17: Tacita Dean, *Fernsehturm*, 2001, Film stills, 16mm colour anamorphic film with optical sound, 44 minutes.

Dean made *Fernsehturm* in Berlin in October 2000. The work consists of a 44 minute, 16mm colour anamorphic film and, in the catalogue produced to accompany the

[609] Ibid. 60.
[610] Ibid. 63.
[611] Tacita Dean, *Fernsehturm,* 2001, 16mm colour anamorphic film with optical sound, 44 minutes.

exhibition in which the film was shown, there are several paragraphs of text, written by Dean, that inform us of her interest and activities in connection with the work. From this, we are able to see a further example of Dean's method of producing artwork by combining immediate embodied experience with other elements.

In *Fernsehturm,* Dean's fixed camera records the revolving of the restaurant at the top of Berlin's television tower.[612] This action allows us to observe Dean's relationship with her environment being mediated by technology. In this instance, both the camera and the revolving restaurant can be considered in terms of mediating technology. Dean tells us within the textual component that accompanies this work that she first went up the tower in 1987 on a college trip to Berlin, thus memories are strong, when Dean returns to the tower, both of the smell and the delight of the rotational aspect of the restaurant. Here, we are provided with an example of Dean's sensuous experience. We are also provided with evidence of memories of past events affecting the present, an issue discussed in chapter one. Moreover, Dean reveals in her textual component ideas that might be related to issues of time and movement: In 1987, she discovers, it took an hour to rotate 360 degrees. Now, she finds out, it only takes half an hour to do the full rotation. With the process of reunification of Germany, Dean muses; the speed at which the restaurant revolves has doubled. Also, within the text, Dean comments on the interior of the restaurant. The staff, she says: 'move around the restaurant floor as if choreographed for the corps de ballet, never pausing to show disorientation or doubt as their world continually shifts and moves away from them'.[613] In this example, we can observe a relationship between a perceiver and their dynamic environment, an issue that has been shown to be significant within an enquiry of embodied experience. Both Dean's relationship with her surroundings and an association between the staff and their environment are revealed. Within her text, Dean

[612] James Quandt, "Tacita Dean, Schaulager, Basel," *Artforum*. November 2006, 2.
[613] Tacita Dean,Sara Hughes Susan Daniel-McElroy, Arwen Fitch and Kerry Rice, ed., *Tacita Dean: Berlin Works* (St. Ives: Tate St. Ives, 2005).

reveals time as a prime concern. In this respect, she writes: 'the revolving sphere in Space still remains our best image of the future, and yet it is firmly locked in the past…As you sit up there at your table, opposite the person whom you are with and with your back to the turn of the restaurant, you are no longer static in the present but moving with the rotation of the Earth backwards into the future'.[614]

We can determine from the film and the accompanying text that issues of method, technology, movement and time recur in Dean's work. The constantly changing conditions, brought about by both the shifting aspect of the rotating restaurant and the change from day to night, enables Dean to explore light and time using the mediating technology of the camera and the circular revolving platform of the restaurant.[615] In a similar manner to *Disappearance at Sea,* a camera in a fixed position on a moving part of a building records what is taking place in front of it.[616] Interestingly, Marina Warner compares the illusion created by Dean's technique to being in a stationary train and thinking you are moving when in fact it is the train alongside that is moving.[617] This illusion, says Warner, has a relationship to cinema, which slows down time or puts the viewer in a 'different space of time'.[618]

[614] Ibid. 30.
[615] Friedrich Meschede, 'Fernsehturm', Tate Tate Gallery, ed., *Tacita Dean: Recent Films and Other Works* (London: Tate Gallery Publishing Limited, 2001). 50.
[616] Ibid. 54.
[617] Marina Warner, Jean-Christophe Royoux, *Tacita Dean*. 33.
[618] Ibid.

Summary

An analysis of Dean's work has provided evidence of some of the ways in which embodied experience might be examined within art practice that uses moving imagery but that has not been specifically made within the framework of this thesis. Moreover, by describing ways in which embodied experience might be understood in Dean's work, points of contact have been established between *Disappearance at Sea,* and phenomenological notions of landscape experience.

The information provided within this chapter shows that the part played by experience in Dean's work is complex. Phenomenological, pre-reflective experience has been complemented by sensitivity to other forms of enquiry. In addition, visual and textual information about experience and its mediating technologies have provided the opportunity to examine ways in which Dean's film might be understood in terms that have been brought to light in the earlier chapters of this thesis in respect of an embodied experience of landscape.

Moving imagery, as we have seen, provides a way of articulating embodied experience because it is able to reveal experience unfolding through movement over time. By using the medium of film, Dean's work is able to provide evidence of a landscape unfolding over time. We have also seen that although Dean's looped film is a gallery installation, the discrete placement of the projector means that it shares some characteristics with cinematic projection processes.

This thesis has identified movement as a significant factor when considering embodied landscape experience. In this chapter, movement has been identified operating in several ways within *Disappearance at Sea.* We have seen that the medium employed and the placement of the camera provide the viewer with a sense of

movement. However, when considered phenomenologically, the attachment of a camera to a lighthouse raises questions about the role of a perceiver in a technologically mediated relationship.

Time has been discussed as a fundamental part of a phenomenological relationship throughout this thesis. Experience, we have observed, unfolds over time. In this chapter time has also been discussed in relation to Dean's film. Here, the unfolding of imagery that occurs over time indicates a temporal dimension. The flashes of the lighthouse beam might also be understood in a way that indicates the passing of time. Furthermore, a temporal dimension is conveyed by the idea of what might happen when we lose sense of time. Here, Dean's textual component tells us about Crowhurst and his 'time-madness' that arises as a result of his broken chronometer.

The ways in which technology mediates an experience has been discussed as an inherent part of a phenomenological relationship. Some of the ways in which technology mediates within embodied experience have been examined in an analysis of *Disappearance at Sea.* We have also seen the significance of such mediation when technology fails, such as in the case of Crowhurst's chronometer. Furthermore, the significance of technology has been seen to operate in the chain of *affordances* that occur within filmic experience. In *Disappearance at Sea* such a chain of *affordances* is provided by a sequence that includes, amongst other things, a camera, a lighthouse, a torch and a mirror.

Of particular relevance is Dean's method of enquiry. By using immediate, pre-reflective embodied experience, as well as a textual document that includes information from sources other than her spontaneous bodily experience, Dean's artwork arguably provides us with an example of 'expanded phenomenology'. This is significant because such an enquiry might be aligned with Tilley's phenomenological method that we

observed in chapter one. Here we saw evidence of an enquiry that uses information from immediate embodied experience in conjunction with pre-existing literature.

Dean's film has provided this thesis with an example of embodied experience articulated through moving imagery that is employed within a visual arts context. From this examination, a firm ground has been established whereby my own practice, and that of others, might be analysed in terms of embodied experience discussed earlier within this thesis. By identifying links between Dean's film and phenomenological principles cited throughout this thesis, a bedrock is provided from which to analyse ways in which my own practice might articulate notions of embodied landscape experience. This analysis will be provided in chapter five.

CHAPTER FIVE

Bren Unwin and embodied landscape experience

Introduction

This chapter examines some of the ways in which my own art practice might articulate embodied landscape experience, thereby answering the research questions posed at the start of this submission. This is significant because the way in which my own art practice articulates notions of embodied landscape experience is a key issue within this project. In this chapter, ideas of embodied experience that have arisen throughout this thesis are examined in relation to my own art practice in order to analyse ways in which my film and digital video might articulate a phenomenological experience of the landscape.

Two artworks in particular are the key concern of this chapter. The first artwork to be examined in relation to embodied landscape experience is a 16mm film entitled *Line*. This film has a playing time of two and a half minutes and is intended for showing in a gallery space using a 16mm projector. The second artwork to be examined is a digital video entitled *Length II*. This artwork has a playing time of one and a half hours, is shown using an LCD screen with integral DVD player, and has also been made with the intention of being exhibited within a gallery space.

The choice of location for the making of the two key works is important. In previous examples of my work I have used unusual landscapes – for example, a site of volcanic activity and a quarry (see appendix 1). However, in these examples, the work looked beguiling because of the spectacular nature of the landscape. Moreover, I was so captivated by the subject that I stopped thinking about the experience and was instead

lured into thoughts of aesthetics. As a result, I have looked to my commonplace experience of moving within a landscape through spaces that are familiar to me. This has resulted in a process of revising my repertoire and its implications by using a selection of imagery from journeys that I frequently take by car, train, bicycle, bus and moped. As we have seen in chapter three, a new awareness of ordinary things is brought about by the making and viewing of art practice.[619]

In this chapter then, notions of embodied experience that have been examined within this thesis are applied to my own art practice that relies upon my own frequently taken journeys as the basis for its imagery. Firstly, ideas from written accounts of a sensuous engagement with a landscape are used to analyse how phenomenology and parallel enquiries might be applied to my own practice in order to understand some of the ways in which my artwork articulates notions of embodied experience. Specifically, within this part of the enquiry, particular attention is given to the role played by movement and time within my own practice. Ideas of movement and time, as we have seen, have both been shown to be of particular importance within an embodied association with an environment because experience unfolds through movement over time.

Secondly, the way in which our experience is mediated by technology is addressed in relation to my own practice. The manner in which technology mediates an embodied experience of landscape is complex and multi-faceted. Both the role of the body and the role of the media need to be considered. Phenomenology, as we have seen above, is acutely aware of the complex mechanisms whereby experience is absorbed into the body. As Merleau-Ponty has written, the experience of things is grounded in our bodily relationship with those things.[620] Moreover, both simple and more complex

[619] Brodsky, "How to "See" with the Whole Body.".
[620] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*.

technologies that mediate our experience of an environment have been shown to play a significant role within our association with a landscape and thus also need to be examined in relation to my own art practice. Finally, the method employed to make my artwork is analysed in relation to the method of expanded phenomenology that we have observed operating within written accounts of landscape experience and within the work of other artists.

I

Digital recordings of art practice submitted as part of this thesis

(Attached to inside back cover. Please note that the actual work will be available for viewing at the oral examination of this thesis).

i.

DVD: *Line*

This DVD contains a digitally recorded version of the 16mm film *Line.*

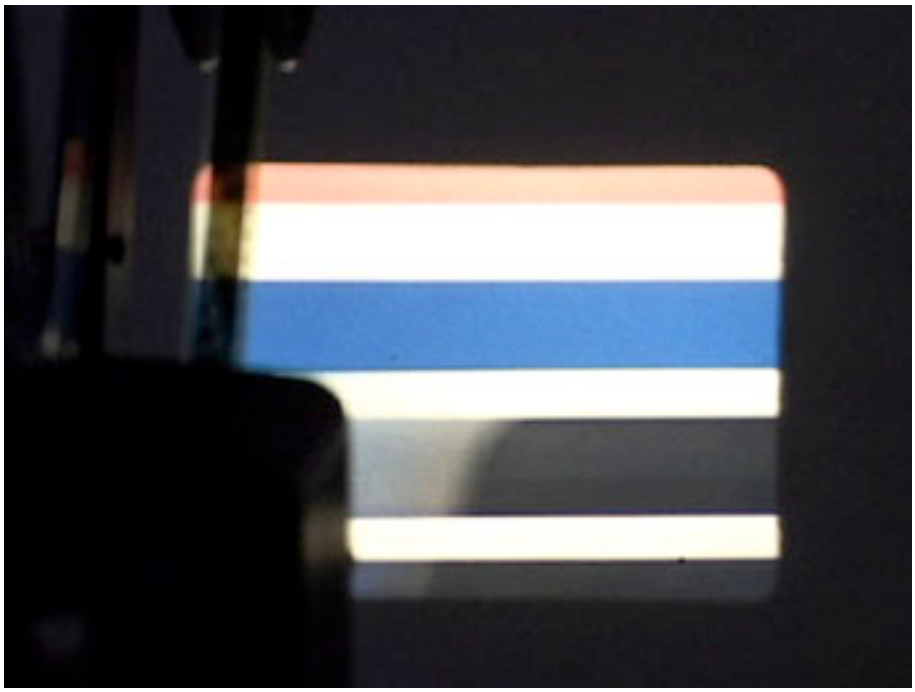
ii

DVD: *Length II*

This DVD contains a digitally recorded version of the digital video, *Length II*

II

An analysis of *Line* and *Length II*



Illus. 18: Bren Unwin, *Line*, 2007, 16mm film**,** 2.38 minutes.

Illus. 19: Bren Unwin, *Length II*, 2007, digital video, one and a half hours.

Firstly, the way in which *Line* and *Length II* might articulate notions of an embodied experience of the landscape will be examined in terms of ideas from phenomenological and parallel enquiries that have been analysed above. To begin this examination, aspects concerning an embodied engagement with a landscape will be analysed in relation to my 16mm film *Line*.

As we observed in chapter one, within a sensuous engagement with the landscape, a visual experience unfolds over time along a path of observation.[621] In the film *Line*, a visual experience that unfolds over time along a path of observation can be perceived by the viewer of the film as a series of buildings, electricity cables, trees and various other features associated with a suburban environment unfold from a point of observation from the window of a train as it travels through the Hertfordshire landscape. Here, as some features of the landscape come into view, others pass out of sight. Significantly, the features are observed from a point of view that reveals the movement of a perceiver travelling on a train and the motion that occurs within their surroundings.

We have seen in chapter one that a significant element of an embodied association with an environment is the idea of movement of both an active perceiver and their dynamic surroundings. Within *Line* there is evidence of both my bodily movement and of motion that occurs within my surroundings. The motion of the railway train and my embodied vision 'panning' the landscape is revealed by the strategic placement of the camera, screwed to its monopod and resting on the floor of the train. Also, by directing the lens of the camera through the window of the train, the projected imagery reveals movement, such as other trains, within the environment. Although for most of the duration of the film the movie camera is panning in the same direction as the train's forward motion, at other times the camera moves horizontally in the opposite direction to the movement of the carriage. These different forms of movement provide the film

[621] Ingold, *The Perception of the Environment: Essays in Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill*. 238.

with a range of motion that might be seen to accord in some ways to how an active perceiver travelling on a train observes their dynamic environment. This movement is significant. For the observer of the film there is an awareness of a mobile viewpoint in the film, provided by my embodied position extended by the camera and the train. Likewise, the viewer is aware of both static and moving objects and surfaces in the environment observed from my embodied and mobile position on the train as it travels through the landscape. In this way, the viewer perceives my experience as one that occurs between an active perceiver and a dynamic environment.

As we have seen in chapter two, notions of embodiment that are revealed in the artwork, and the way in which the work is shown, can reveal something of the bodily actions involved in its production. In *Line* the two types of movement that a viewer observes in the film - my whole-body activity and events within the environment - provide evidence of the embodied way in which the artwork was made. Evidence of my whole body activity is provided for the viewer by the camera recording the movement of the train that is extending my bodily experience, whilst other events that occur within my surroundings are filmed through the window of the train. For the viewer then, the embodied experience of seeing the film is influenced by the mediating technology and this is significant. If I had simply held the camera then the experience for the viewer would be quite different and probably more varied in terms of camera movement. However, by attaching the camera to the monopod and resting the combined structure on the train floor, the type of bodily movement perceived by the viewer of the film emphasises the mediating technology and accords specifically with the embodied experience of a train journey.

The essentially reversible character of a phenomenological relationship, which, as we have seen in chapter three, might also be applied to film experience, can be considered in relation to *Line*. Within the idea of reversibility, what is being looked at is

afforded similar powers to the subject who is looking. The imagery within *Line,* by directing the gaze of the viewer within the gallery, might be understood in terms of reversibility between a subject and an object. Using Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, we have also seen from Sobchack's analysis that film might itself be considered as an object/subject that sees and is seen. As we have also seen in chapter three, a film provides a 'viewing-view' by, arguably, 'seeing' and expressing what it sees.[622] In the context of *Line,* a 'viewing-view' can be explained by the landscape imagery that has been captured from the position of the train being projected onto the screen in the gallery for the viewer's attention.

The idea of time has been discussed as an inherent part of an embodied experience because experience unfolds through movement over time. In *Line,* the notion of time might be applied in several ways. Broadly speaking, the viewer is able to perceive my mobile experience on the train unfolding through movement over time. Furthermore, the viewer's own engagement with the film within the space of the gallery also unfolds through experience over time and thus can also be understood in a temporal way. There are also other clues in *Line* as to how time might function. Firstly, there is a rhythm to the film provided by the type of camera used to shoot the film and this might be said to give *Line* a certain pace. This regular pace can be perceived as a pattern of time in a similar way to how music or poetry might contain a characteristic pattern of beats that unfolds as a temporal type of activity. In *Line* it is significant that the rhythm in the film is provided by the winding mechanism of the 16mm mechanical camera. The viewer's perception of the imagery is affected by the power of the mediating technology that has been placed in a position that extends the limits of my bodily capabilities. Also, although the train journey was taken in seemingly constant environmental conditions there are slight changes that a viewer can perceive in the surrounding landscape that are indicative of time passing. The movement of clouds and changing light are both

[622] Sobchack, *The Address of the Eye.*

indicators of the type of temporal activity that occurs in the cycle of night and day and in seasons of the year.

Now, let us consider embodied experience in relation to my digital video *Length II.* Here, we are able to determine that digital imagery, as we have seen in chapter three, can also be understood in a phenomenological way.[623] Notions of materiality that are significant within an understanding of embodiment can be seen in the way in which digital media stores data and also how it operates within social exchange. In *Length II,* the coded information that is held on the DVD is evidence of its particular sort of materiality. Moreover, by exhibition of the digital video, ideas of embodiment can be understood in a relationship that exists between the imagery and a viewer of the work in a similar way to an artwork that employs the medium of film. A viewer has a different sensuous encounter with *Length II* than with *Line* in respect of sound. Here, once again it is the mediating technology that accounts for the different type of experience that the viewer has when looking at, or listening to, a digital video with a sound track rather than if they were viewing a 16mm, silent film.

Just as there are 'gaps' or perceived cuts for the viewer at the points in the film when the camera is being rewound, so too there are two points in *Length II* where the viewer may perceive that they have 'missed' something. The first time that this happens is at a service station where I turn off the digital movie camera because of the possibility of contravening the privacy of fellow human subjects. Such ethical consideration is part of our lives in the twenty-first century that was probably not an issue in sixteenth century Flanders. It is also significant for *Length II* that an action such as switching off the camera, performed because of a consideration of fellow human subjects, results in a different experience for the viewer. The second 'missing' part of the digital video is the absence of a short part of the sound track that records my conversation, via my mobile

[623] Marks, *Touch: Sensuous Theory and Multisensory Media*.

telephone, with the police. Here again, it is to protect privacy, this time my own, that the change in the sound track of the work has occurred. Such an action might be seen as phenomenologically problematic when considering pre-reflective experience, but, rather than a decision related to aesthetics or narrative, the edit was made so that the digital video did not compromise my own security when the work is experienced by other human subjects. The need to consider personal security is very much a part of twenty-first century existence that perhaps would have been rather different in 16th century Antwerp. These actions, both of which impact on the viewing experience of *Length II,* highlight the inappropriate usage by Ingold of an old, still and silent artwork.

As in the film *Line,* the imagery within *Length II* reveals movement of both the perceiver and their surroundings. Also, in a similar way to *Line, Length II* provides evidence of experience unfolding through movement over time. In *Length II,* this sense of movement is achieved by the placement of the digital movie camera in a position that, as far as possible, simulates the actions of my body in the car. Although it is possible to cite some similarities between the camera position and my seated body within the car, we have seen from Gibson's account of experience and film that moving imagery is not the same thing for a viewer as actually being there. However, it is worth noting that the use of moving imagery within *Length II* provides an experience for a viewer that is closer to the idea of an embodied relationship with an environment than could be provided by the use of still imagery.

As the car travels along the motorway the motion detected within the digital video by the viewer makes them aware of the camera viewpoint being from within the vehicle rather that 'of' the vehicle. This is significant because it means that the viewer is offered imagery of my embodied experience, extended by the car and the camera rather than imagery taken from a distant point that would indicate a separation between my experience and the landscape.

How might Merleau-Ponty's idea of an overlap between a subject and an object be understood within *Length II*? As we have seen, the idea of *flesh* is of value to a sensuous enquiry into landscape experience as such a concept can provide an explanation of how something is, for perceiving subjects and also for the world.[624] Within *Length II* we can observe the movement of my body and the motion, both perceived and actual, within the surrounding environment. The flow between my body and the environment necessarily reveals movement of both elements. In this way, there is not a particular emphasis on either my body or the landscape and an idea of separation that might be associated with an ocularcentric understanding of vision has conceivably been removed.

In chapter one, we were also able to observe the way in which written accounts of landscape experience are informed by the perceptual theories of Gibson. His ideas about the physical structure and meaning within an environment showed that information might be perceived from the light reflected from surfaces within an environment. Within *Length II,* reflected light reveals for the viewer surfaces passing into and out of sight as my journey progresses. Furthermore, *invariant* forms within the imagery enable the viewer to determine the moving elements within the digital video. For example, the stability of the dashboard is an invariant feature in relation to the changing landscape seen through the windscreen of the car. However, when we consider the different viewing processes associated with digital video and film, issues arise that need to be considered when applying aspects of Gibson's theory. Whilst in digital video, imagery is provided by visual information being transformed into electrical signals,[625] in film it is the intermittent mechanism of the projector that advances the film and allows the light to project the imagery onto a surface that results

[624] Brook, "Can Merleau-Ponty's Notion of 'Flesh' Inform or Even Transform Environmental Thinking?". 355.
[625] Sylvia Martin, *Video Art* (Koln: Taschen, 2006). 6.

in the moving imagery perceived by the viewer.[626] The action of light on the surface of individual images that are visible on celluloid film, and that has occurred as a direct result of my embodied experience in the landscape, is seemingly in closer accordance with Gibson's idea of 'direct' perception than is digital technology that relies on changes that happen in the translation of unrecognisable, encoded information.

We have also seen, in chapter two, that a cascade of *affordances* between a perceiver and their surroundings is dependent upon each step in the succession of potential meanings, in order to bring about activity within an environment.[627] Such a cascade of *affordances* can be applied to *Length II.* For example, the road surface *affords* the smooth contact with the tyres of the vehicle that, in turn, *afford* the motion of the car. Also, the engine, the fuel, the bodywork, the upholstered seating, my clothing, the camera and the windscreen are all entities that *afford* a relationship between the environment and my body. For the viewer, most of the technologies mentioned above are taken for granted and not perceived as separate parts of my embodied experience. However, without such a sequence of *affordances*, my embodied experience of the motorway journey would be quite different, and, accordingly, the viewer's experience would also be changed. Here again, the imagery in the digital video has come about as a result of the camera being placed in a position that affords the recording of the action of the car and other mediating technologies as they extend my bodily limitations when travelling along the motorway. Significantly, such a placement emphasises the mediating technology within my embodied experience.

It is worth taking a closer look at some of the mediating technologies that function in *Line* and *Length II*. As we have seen above, the way in which technology

[626] Kris Malkiewicz, *Cinematography* (New York, London, Toronto, Sydney: Simon and Schuster, 2001). 2.
[627] Michael, "These Boots Are Made for Walking.: Mundane Technology, the Body and Human-Environment Relations.".

mediates our association with a landscape is a significant part of an embodied experience. Although Frampton has suggested that an emphasis on technological questions with regard to film obscures possible poetic ones,[628] I propose that when technology is considered as part of embodied experience the understanding that is brought about as a consequence paves the way for thoughtful and poetic usage of the media. It seems to me that there is poetry in our everyday actions and patterns of existence that an emphasis on mediating technology is able to reveal with devastating clarity.

As we have seen above, the film *Line* has not been edited but rather relies on the mediating technology for its rhythmic character. *Line* is comprised of a single cut from twelve 'windings' of a mechanical camera using 100 feet of 16mm film and it is this technological mediation that provides the rhythmic character of the film. The wind-up camera has a limited duration for shooting a section of film before the mechanism requires re-winding. As we have also seen, the changes that occur from one shot to another, at regular intervals throughout the film, provide a rhythm to the artwork that provides evidence of an unfolding of time. However, in *Line* the time aspect is disrupted by my action of re-winding the camera mechanism. Whilst the camera is being wound, it is not, of course, recording onto the film. The viewer thus sees a series of 'takes' that do not run into one another chronologically. Rather than viewing my perceptual experience at the time of taking the film, the viewer has a different experience brought about by the character of the mediating technology, in this instance the wind-up camera.

We have seen that Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology starts with immediate and pre-reflective experience. Throughout the making of *Line* I have sought to retain phenomenological integrity in terms of immediate and pre-reflective experience.

[628] Frampton, *Filmosophy*. 45.

Although Frampton questions whether film that has not been edited is 'pre-reflective',[629] the way in which the medium has been used in *Line* to record embodied experience mediated by technology places it firmly in a position that is as 'pre-reflective' as possible and does not involve me making selections in terms of image content or zooming shots.

The camera used to capture *Line* does not have an audio facility. So, in keeping with phenomenological integrity, a soundtrack has not been added. Rather, the viewer hears the sound of the projector and this brings their attention to the ways in which technology mediates their own situation within the gallery. The audible pushing and pulling of the film through the claw mechanism of the projector and the sound of the motor within the apparatus provides evidence of the mediating technology that exists between the viewer and the imagery and also has some correspondence to my own experience when capturing the imagery. The mobile position of the viewer within the gallery space, in relation to the fixed position of the projector (albeit with moving parts) and the moving imagery on the fixed screen, or white wall of the gallery, provides an interesting and complex model for analysis. Here, the projector might be viewed in a similar way to the lighthouse in Dean's film *Disappearance at Sea.* The projector, like the lighthouse, mediates between the viewer and the work and yet the viewer is not physically attached to the projector just as Dean was not physically attached to the camera in the lighthouse. (It is unknown whether Dean was in the lighthouse at the time of making *Disappearance at Sea,* a point that might have an impact on a phenomenological analysis of the work). Can the projector then, in *Line,* with any degree of integrity, be said to be extending the bodily capabilities of the viewer? It is worth thinking about Sobchack's phenomenological analysis again here. If we consider Sobchack's anthropomorphism of film then we can perhaps place the projector in a mediating positing whereby it extends the 'capability' of the body that is the film.

[629] Ibid.

However, and as we have seen above, to attribute film with human qualities is phenomenologically problematic. At this point, Frampton's view of film needing to be understood in its own terms because it fails to fit into any existing patterns of thought seems the most appropriate conclusion.

Perhaps it is also worth reconsidering Sobchack's translation of Ihde's ideas regarding lens-based instruments. Can a projector really take the place of spectacles or a microscope when we consider ways in which technology extends the limits of our perceptual ability? Possibly not. Whilst spectacles and a microscope form a physical bond with the body, a projector is always separate from the viewer's body. However, if, within the sequence of technologies extending the range of action between a viewer and the moving imagery on the screen we include the viewer's shoes, the floor covering and the projector stand, then embodied experience extended by technology, that significantly includes the projector, is a justifiable claim. Also, a camera needs to be looked at in a different way to a projector. Usually, a camera is in direct physical contact with the body. Whether an older style camera that is held to the eye or a more modern style held in the hand and viewed via an integral screen, both sorts involve a physical connection with the body.

The 16mm projector is clearly visible to the viewer in *Line* and can thus be accounted for as a part of the work. Bearing in mind the discussion above, in this position, the projector can be seen to mediate between the viewer and the imagery reflected from the screen. Here, aspects of movement, time and technology are pertinent for the experience of the viewer as well as for my own experience that is revealed by the imagery of the film. As we have seen, such a conspicuous placement of a projector is an unconventional way of showing a film within a cinema context and although I have compared it to the lighthouse in Dean's film, it contrasts with the way in which Dean's film has been shown within a gallery space, discussed in chapter four.

In accordance with the writing of Merleau-Ponty, mediating technologies might also be considered as extending the limits of perception. In chapter two we observed Ihde's analysis of ways in which technology might be understood in a phenomenological way and in the previous chapter we have considered technology and phenomenology in the example of Dean's film, *Disappearance at Sea.* Although the example of Dean's film provided evidence of movement within the landscape, we have seen above that there is some ambiguity in the idea of a lighthouse being used to extend perception when the structure is not connected to a human perceiver or when the inanimate structure itself is conceived as a human perceiver. In *Line* there is no such ambiguity. The vehicle clearly extends the limits and boundaries of my perceptual experience and the camera, by its attachment to the fixtures within the train, is part of the technology extending my perceptual experience.

Attention will now be given to the ways in which technology mediates within my digital video, *Length II.* This digital video has been transferred from the mini-dv format used by the digital camera to a DVD and is shown via an LCD screen with an integral DVD system. In this way, the presentation of the digital video is in keeping with the capture of the imagery from a digital movie camera. As we have seen in chapter three, the way in which the work is shown reflects the embodied nature of the experience involved in the making of the artwork.[630]

In *Length II*, my perception is extended by the technology of the car and the digital video camera. This is a complex process that also includes a multitude of other technologies and which, as we have seen in chapter two, accords with the writing of Merleau-Ponty. As I have indicated, the role of the camera as extending the boundaries of my perceptual experience relies on its position attached to the seat of the car. Here, it

[630] Brodsky, "How to "See" with the Whole Body.".

is strapped firmly to the passenger seat in a position that allows the lens to be directed through the windscreen of the car. From this position, the digital camera is able to record my movement through the landscape in a way that places the car as an extender of the limits of my perceptual awareness.

Of particular interest in *Length II* is how the audio content of the digital video reveals embodied notions of the landscape. Here, an analysis of sound is more complex than in *Line*. In *Length II,* sounds have been recorded via the inbuilt audio system of the digital movie camera. These sounds arise from the immediate environment, such as my vehicle's engine, and also from a distant source via the mediating technology of my car radio. Intriguingly, and largely through methodological rigour, my car radio plays a significant role in artwork that set out to research an experience of the landscape. The sounds emitted from the radio were part of my perceptual experience at the time of making the digital video and when perceived by a viewer within the gallery they form part of the viewer's embodied experience of my work. Complexities arise in connection with the local traffic reports from radio stations that cut in over the pre-set radio station. These reports provide evidence of my movement across the landscape that occurs over time. A perceiver of the digital video can track my progress on the motorway, via traffic reports, from Hertfordshire to Berkshire, where my car, held up in a traffic queue, spills antifreeze across the motorway and ceases to function. Alerted to the malfunction of my vehicle by a fellow road user, I get out of the car to assess the damage and, using my mobile telephone, dial 999 to warn the police about the potential hazard I have caused. At this point, my embodied experience changes from one that is extended by the technology of my car to one that is extended by the mediating technology of my mobile telephone. Here we have evidence of a world very different from that of Bruegel's landscape within *The Harvesters.* My car is now merely in the position of a 'tripod' for the camera which is continuing to record my activities, both visually and aurally. My embodied experience is now extended by my mobile telephone that is sending out, and

receiving, invisible radio frequency waves across the landscape. The digital video reveals that my anticipation of the arrival of the police leads me to consider the legal problems associated with making a film from a potentially hazardous position within my car. Recent news reports contain plenty of evidence to suggest that road users in England are being arrested for potentially less intrusive activities to driving than my digital video making entails. So, I turn off the camera and this action, of course, brings about the end of the digital video. The demise of the camera battery had been my intended method of reaching a conclusion to the digital video. Instead, interestingly, it was the failure of the car and the potential legal problems of filming whilst driving on a motorway in twenty-first century Britain that brought about an end to *Length II.* Seen in this context, a phenomenological analysis that is illustrated by an old and static artwork looks rather lame.

As I have already stated, wherever possible, within both *Line* and *Length II,* minimal intervention has been applied to the making of the artwork. Thus, the imagery viewed relies primarily on pre-reflective embodied experience. However, it would be rather churlish to be over attentive to such technical details as the focusing ring or, in the case of *Line,* the exposure meter. Accordingly, in *Length II* the digital video camera was set at the start of the film to 'autofocus' and, similarly, the light meter used in *Line* was used to pre-set an appropriate aperture and shutter setting.

It is significant to note the methodology underpinning *Line* and *Length II.* Although pre-reflective experience has been the prime source of the imagery, both of these works have been made following a period of reflection based on pre-existing literature and artwork. Thus periods of reflection associated with this thesis can be said to have contributed to the making of the work. The artwork has also been informed by reflection following an analysis of written accounts of landscape experience. In addition, art practice made by myself and by others has also been considered prior to the

making of *Line* and *Length II* (see appendix 1). A combination of embodied experience and reflection that relies on other sources of information has thus provided the method employed in these two pieces of work and might be understood as an expanded form of phenomenology. This method of phenomenological enquiry has precedents, as we have seen, in the work of Tilley, Dean and Haworth. Here, we have examples of writers of embodied landscape experience, and visual artists, whose work includes notions of embodiment, each using a method that incorporates immediate experience with periods of reflection and information from other sources.

Summary

This chapter has examined ways in which my own practice might articulate ideas of embodied landscape experience. Specifically, the chapter has considered notions of phenomenological method and parallel understandings of embodied experience in relation to two artworks. From this analysis it can be concluded that my own visual art practice articulates notions of embodied experience that correspond in some ways to ideas that inform textual accounts of landscape experience. In particular, this chapter has established points of contact between my 16mm film, *Line,* my digital video, *Length II,* and textual accounts of landscape experience that are underpinned by phenomenological and parallel understandings of perception.[631]

Firstly, using ideas about an embodied experience of the landscape that have arisen within this thesis, I have shown ways in which a dynamic relationship between a perceiver and their environment is articulated by two of my artworks, *Line* and *Length II.* Specifically, I have described ways in which these two works provide evidence of movement and time that have been discussed as significant parts of a dynamic relationship between a perceiver and their environment.

Following on from how *Line* and *Length II* might provide evidence of an embodied association with an environment, I have considered ways in which the two works are mediated by technology. This is significant because, as we have seen in earlier chapters, technology transforms an embodied association with an environment. In this chapter, I have shown that simple and more complex types of technology have been considered in relation to the making and viewing processes involved in the film *Line* and the digital video *Length II*.

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[631] Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*.
Tilley, *The Materiality of Stone: Explorations in Landscape Phenomenology*.
Ingold, *The Perception of the Environment: Essays in Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill*.

Finally, in this chapter, I have examined the phenomenological method used in the making of *Line* and *Length II.* Using methodological principles that we have seen used by Tilley, Dean and Haworth, I have shown how immediate, pre-reflective experience and information from other literary and artistic sources has informed the creation of *Line* and *Length II.* Using a method that combines immediate experience with other sources, I have shown how *Line* and *Length II* provide a viewer with a new understanding, in contemporary art terms, of an embodied association with a landscape.

Conclusion

By way of a conclusion, it is worth summarising the key components in the review of existing literature and evaluating the contribution to knowledge that is central to this thesis. By way of a reflective postscript, I have assessed the communities for whom this investigation has potential consequences and considered areas of possible future research that arise as an outcome of the project.

Within this thesis, I have explored ways in which contemporary art practice can articulate ideas about the reciprocal and dynamic relationship that forms our embodied experience of an environment. Firstly, I have investigated ideas from Tilley and Ingold about how we might experience a landscape in a way that considers notions of embodiment. I have also considered pre-existing texts relating to embodied experience from the disciplines of art, the environment, and philosophy. Furthermore, I have analysed an existing artwork by Tacita Dean as a case study to show that ideas presented above might be applied to contemporary art practice. Finally, I have shown ways in which my own artwork provides an original model of how contemporary art practice might articulate embodied landscape experience. This new model evidences ways in which film and digital video articulate a dynamic relationship between a perceiver and their environment. By the strategic placement of cameras and their associated technologies, my own artwork specifically addresses the way in which technology mediates an embodied experience of the landscape and provides explicit knowledge of the perception and expression of an environment within the twenty-first century.

It is worth rehearsing the critical trajectory taken by this research project. The argument began by considering the controversy that has built up around ways in which the landscape might be viewed in an ocularcentric way. Here, looking is dominated by the eye and fails to take account of vision involving other parts of the human body. This

way of viewing considers the landscape as something fixed for the purpose of contemplation and indicates a separation between an observer and their environment. In contrast, we have seen that Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology provides a way of understanding our surroundings that puts emphasis on an immediate and spontaneous whole body engagement with an environment. Here, embodied experience relies on information gathered by the bodily senses in an immediate way from an environment and occurs over time. Thus for Merleau-Ponty, seeing is understood as lived, spontaneous experience.

We have seen that a fundamental part of Merleau-Ponty's understanding of embodied experience is the idea that what a viewer is looking at has an active role to play in the viewing process. I have examined his suggestion that what we are looking at has the power to direct our vision and might even be considered to 'return' our gaze. In this way, a relationship between a viewer and the viewed can be understood as reversible. As I have also shown, a reversible type of relationship between the seer and the seen, or the subject and the object, needs to be taken into account when we consider an embodied relationship between a perceiver and their environment and ways in which such an association might be articulated by art practice. We have also seen that within the idea of a reversible relationship between a perceiver and their environment, the idea of *flesh* leads Merleau-Ponty to suggest a further breakdown of a separation between a human subject and their environment.

Merleau-Ponty's idea of embodiment has proven to be a useful tool in this thesis. However, we have seen that for a full enquiry into landscape experience, immediate embodied experience needs to be considered in conjunction with other sources of information in order to provide what has been termed an expanded form of phenomenology. Tilley's cultural archaeological account of landscape provided us with an example where immediate embodied experience is used in conjunction with pre-

existing written material that was pertinent to his field of enquiry. Likewise, Dean's film, *Disappearance at Sea,* and my own research project, have both shown ways in which immediate experience might be complemented by other sources of information.

This thesis has also examined Gibson's ecological enquiry into an embodied experience of the landscape. As I have shown, his investigation is closely aligned to Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology because both writers share the idea of a mutual relationship between a perceiver and their environment. Gibson explained a process whereby a human perceiver gathers information from their surroundings through the perception of the light reflected from the surfaces within an environment. As I have shown, Gibson's ideas are significant to this project as both Tilley and Ingold use his theory of perception within their own accounts. However, as I have also indicated, problems have been identified with Gibson's neglect of how individuals and social groups within diverse cultures might perceive things from reflected light in different ways. This, as I have also indicated, has been the subject of enquiry in the field of ecological psychology, but not in the domain of the fine arts, as specifically moving imagery.

Moreover, this thesis has also examined how Tilley and Ingold use Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology and Gibson's ecological theory of perception to inform their respective accounts of landscape experience. We have seen that Tilley uses the work of Merleau-Ponty to understand a reversible relationship between a perceiver and their environment. We have also seen that Tilley's account is informed by Gibson's ideas about perception to describe the experience of movement within a landscape. Here, emphasis is given to the idea that perception is an ambient activity involving our senses being receptive to an environment. This thesis has taken particular note of the way in which Tilley uses immediate phenomenological experience together with other sources of information within his account of landscape experience. In such an 'expanded' form

of phenomenology, Tilley considers what others have written about his topic of interest and uses this, in combination with immediate phenomenological experience, in order to reach new conclusions about the landscape.

Ingold's enquiry into ways in which an active perceiver might be situated within the context of an active engagement with the constituents of their surroundings has also been analysed within this thesis. Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology is used by Ingold to understand how immediate embodied experience can provide ideas about time. As we have seen, participation within an environment is temporal, because it occurs over time. Similarly, Gibson's method of direct perception has been used by Ingold to understand how surfaces might be perceived as unfolding over time as a human subject moves within an environment. An analysis of Ingold's writing also highlighted the importance of sound in our perception of an environment. In short then, Ingold describes our experience of a landscape as involving participation in an environment that includes bodily movements and sounds that occur over time. However, Ingold's use of Pieter Bruegel's *The Harvesters* as a tool to describe how a landscape might be understood in a temporal way is highly problematic. A painting is a necessarily static medium and yet Ingold uses it to describe an inherently mobile relationship. Ingold's choice of artwork also fails in another way. Although it is reasonable to suggest that a painting by Bruegel might describe activity in a region around sixteenth century Antwerp, it cannot reveal how we experience an English landscape in the twenty-first century. Many changes have occurred between the sixteenth and twenty-first centuries that make our experience of an English landscape in the current period different to the depiction of a farm worker in Flanders over five hundred years ago.

This thesis has indicated that complex technologies, such as vehicles and communication systems and simple, or mundane, technologies, such as our clothing or footwear, have undergone a radical transformation that impacts on our relationship with

our environment. An investigation into Michael's account of technological mediation has revealed that specifically simple technologies not only mediate between our body and our environment but also link together to form chains of technologies that enable us to *afford* an environment. Whilst Michael's account provides a useful way of accounting for ways in which simple technologies are significant in the mediation of experience, there is arguably a problem in viewing the landscape in such a simplistic way.

I have also shown that our association with technology can be understood in a phenomenological way. From an analysis of the work of Ihde it is evident that a perceiver can extend the limits of their perceptual boundaries with technologies. Using Merleau-Ponty's principles of embodied experience, we have seen Ihde's interpretation of how a lived body might experience an environment more fully through technologies. Similarly, we have seen that Ihde applies his phenomenological interpretation of how technology mediates experience to technologies that employ lenses, such as spectacles or telescopes. This is highly significant. Cameras and projectors are both examples of optical instruments that use lenses. However, we have seen that rather than the single mode of mediation that Ihde describes, film experience is a model that involves both a camera and a projector and therefore needs to be considered as a more complex example when phenomenological method is applied.

Using Brodsky's account of a relationship between the whole body and the making and viewing of art, I have shown connections between the construction and perception of art and ideas of embodied experience. Although an analysis of Brodsky's enquiry provided a useful description of whole body activities in respect of painting and other still forms of imagery, it failed to address embodied practices in respect of moving imagery. We have seen that the motion of a perceiver and a dynamic, changing environment are critical features of an embodied experience with a landscape.

Therefore, it has been crucial to analyse embodied experience in relation to moving imagery.

Phenomenological ideas about moving imagery are central to the work of Sobchack. Using ideas of embodied experience from Merleau-Ponty and notions of mediation by optical instruments from Ihde, Sobchack demonstrated the sequence of relationships that combine to bring about a phenomenological understanding of film. Consideration of two lens-based instruments - a camera and a projector - led Sobchack to consider a more complex series of bodies and technologies to bring about a phenomenological understanding of film experience. Sobchack has enabled me to describe phenomenological experience and film. However, an examination of her work primarily addressed moving imagery shown within a cinema rather than that associated with an art gallery. We have seen that embodied experience within the environment of a cinema is different to that within an art gallery. In the former the viewer is physically fixed to the spot within a seat and might be lulled into a state of disembodiment by the immersive space of the screen. In contrast, the gallery makes no such demands. Rather, a more active response is encouraged and the viewer is free to move around the space and view the artwork from diverse positions.

Ideas of embodied experience have also been identified in Dean's making of the film *Disappearance at Sea* and in the tragic event upon which the film is based. This thesis has revealed that the textual component that accompanies Dean's film also impacts upon the viewer's understanding of experience and contributes to Dean's work being understood in terms of an expanded form of phenomenology. However, whilst Dean's work has provided an example of artwork that critics have suggested might be understood in a phenomenological way, and offered a model upon which to test some of the ideas presented within this project, *Disappearance at Sea* was not made in accordance with the critical perspective set out in this thesis.

If we acknowledge the critical perspectives set out in the literature review along with their strengths and weaknesses, and if, in turn, we note the strengths and weaknesses in the wide range of forms of art practice set out in this thesis – a range that extended from Bruegel to Dean – it is possible to identify a set of critical and conceptual gaps filled by this research.

And so to my own art practice that has been made in accordance with the critical agenda set out in this thesis. This agenda emphasised the need for attention to ideas of movement and to the mediation of technology when considering notions of landscape experience and its representation in art practice. How does my own work support the research that is evidenced by this thesis into how contemporary art might articulate embodied landscape experience? Firstly, by the use of moving imagery, *Line* and *Length II* offer examples of artwork that provide a viewer with evidence of the movement of a perceiver and motion within an environment. Secondly, *Line* and *Length II* both offer examples of ways in which human subjects move about the landscape in the present day; they both reveal a contemporary articulation of an embodied experience of the English landscape.

Broadly, a viewer of the artwork can perceive movement in *Line* and *Length II* as the moving imagery unfolds over time. As we have seen, in *Line* the perceived movement is of the kind we experience when we travel by train and has been achieved by placing an emphasis on the mediating technology. It is significant that by making the mediating technology a central concern in the work, the viewer is provided with imagery that reveals the dynamic relationship between a perceiver and their environment. Interestingly, we have seen that perceived 'cuts' in the film have been provided by the winding mechanism of the movie camera that is only able to capture approximately fifteen seconds of film before requiring re-winding. Significantly, this means that the

temporal experience for the viewer of the film is quite different to my own experience when shooting the film. The need to rewind the camera means that there are temporal 'gaps' in the viewer's perception of my experience. These gaps have been determined by the mediating position of the camera.

In *Length II,* a viewer of the artwork is able to determine ways in which attention to ideas of movement and mediating technology can be revealed in a digital video when phenomenological ideas of landscape experience are considered. Here, we have seen that a strategically placed digital movie camera in my car captures my mobile experience of a motorway journey as well as the changing features of the environment that occur during my trip. Evidence of my embodied, mobile experience is provided by a sequence of interventions that includes my body extended by mediating technologies. In this work, it is my perceptual experience extended by the camera and the car that is conveyed to the viewer. In the viewing process of *Length II,* the series of relationships between an observer and the moving imagery includes simple technologies, such as the viewer's clothes, together with more complex technologies such as an LCD screen with an integral DVD player. The breakdown of my car in *Length II* offered the opportunity to see what happens to art when phenomenological rigour is applied. Following the breakdown, and my subsequent move to a place of safety on the verge of the motorway, the car, we have seen, no longer has the role of extending my body and only plays the part of a 'tripod' for the camera. Instead, my mobile phone takes on the role of technology that extends my perception. The invisible radio frequency waves travelling across the landscape enable me to have a conversation with an emergency call-centre that would be beyond the possibility of my body alone.

The sound that can be perceived in *Length II* has also revealed several points of interest in respect of a phenomenological experience of an environment. In this work, the car radio has played a significant role in determining my location on the motorway

and providing evidence of distant activity. Local radio stations that cut in over the pre-set station provided evidence of my movement through the landscape, whilst news reports from London revealed how the mediating technology of the radio gives information about activities happening outside the visual field of a perceiver. The impact of invisible communication links, such as radio frequency waves, is significant for this thesis. As well as offering a route to further artwork, the huge increase in invisible types of technology serves to emphasise the inappropriate use by Ingold of an outdated artwork to describe contemporary landscape experience.

Consideration has also been given to the idea of sound in connection with *Line*. In this artwork we can hear the sound of the projector pushing and pulling the film through its mechanism. Here, the viewer's experience is predicated not only on what can be seen in the film but also the technologies that make it visible. The film has no audio content because the camera used to capture the film had no sound facility. Once again, in keeping with my desire to minimise extra layers added to the work, no sound track has been added. This is important because it stresses the phenomenological sequence of embodied experience involved in the spontaneous capture of the moving imagery.

Several distinctive features of *Line* and *Length II* contribute towards the way in which my film and digital video extend current ideas about an embodied experience of the landscape and its articulation by contemporary art practice. A contribution to knowledge can be determined by the way in which the two works articulate the dynamic relationship that occurs in an embodied experience of the landscape. We are now familiar with the idea that by providing evidence of movement and sound of both a perceiver and the perceived *Line* and *Length II* articulate embodied experience of a landscape. The two artworks also consider a range of technologies that mediate our experience of an environment in the twenty-first century. In this way, *Line* and *Length*

II provide examples of contemporary art practice that articulate embodied experience in the present era. Technologies emphasised in the artwork, both visible and invisible, highlight ways in which our experience of an environment is mediated. Our perception of both movement and sound within an environment is profoundly affected by their use. Their use also serves to emphasise Ingold's inept use of a painting that is over five hundred years old to articulate embodied landscape experience.

By way of a footnote, we could almost distil this thesis into an equation: Phenomenology is significant to ways in which we understand the landscape; phenomenology is by extension significant in how we understand representations of landscape; phenomenology has been extended by an awareness of technologies great and small; art has been affected by technologies great and small. Thus an art concerned with phenomenology, technology and landscape prompts a significant revision in how we perceive space.

Postscript

The arguments presented within this thesis provide potential insights for several communities into ways in which embodied landscape experience might be articulated within contemporary art practice. Cultural archaeologists, such as Tilley, and cultural anthropologists, such as Ingold, can be cited as two groups that could potentially benefit from this thesis by knowing ways in which contemporary art is able to reveal ideas about an embodied engagement with a landscape. Likewise, the ideas presented above could be of value to writers of technology, such as Michael and Ihde for whom the critical evaluation of their ideas in relation to contemporary art practice could reveal a novel application of experience mediated by technology. Art historians and theorists, such as Brodsky and Sobchack, might also find potential significance within this thesis. For Brodsky, the application of whole body experience and its application to specifically moving forms of art practice could be of potential interest and Sobchack's work might potentially be informed by a critical appraisal of her ideas in connection with moving imagery used within art practice. Writers of philosophical ideas about embodied experience, such as Belova and Casey, might be another community for whom this thesis is potentially informative because of its attention to ways in which Merleau-Ponty's ideas of perception might be understood within the context of a sensuous engagement of the landscape and its representation in art. Members of the artistic community stand to gain from the new model provided by this research project and it is worth identifying a more restricted group that fall within this category. Four artists whose practice addresses issues embraced by this thesis include installation artist Jane Quon; landscape artist, John Virtue; sculptural artist, Anthony Gormley and experimental filmmaker, Guy Sherwin.

Firstly, from Quon's own writing, we know that she is concerned about the catastrophic consequences of human activity on the ecosystems of the earth.[632] Specifically, her ecologically-based art practice is informed by her experience of deep-sea diving off of Tasmania's eastern coast. She informs us in her written text that unfamiliar sensations associated with the weightlessness of deep-sea diving led her to determine the content of her art and also her role as an artist.[633] Quon's artwork is informed by phenomenology and it is in this area that this thesis could be of particular consequence to her work. Significantly, Quon cites the work of David Abram, a philosopher whose writing is informed by Merleau-Ponty.[634] Using Abram's text, Quon suggests that it is through our senses, and not by the reasoning processes of the brain, that we establish the requisite sense of belonging to a larger ecological whole. In her installation: *We engage in invisible tides,*[635]we are able to see an example of how Quon applies Abram's writing to her artwork. This art installation is sunk one and a half metres below the mid-tide surface of Sullivan's Cove in Tasmania, and was created to convey a sense of the living complexity of marine ecology. In this work, a flowing wave effect is created with a steel-framed grid, lengths of semi-flexible vertical rod cut to different heights, and aluminium discs, that signify the movement, the intangibility and the elusiveness of nature. Naturally changing light conditions and the ebb and flow of the tide were key considerations in the making of the work and prompt a link to the dynamic nature of the environment discussed within this thesis. In describing the artwork, Quon quotes from Abram: 'In the untamed world of direct sensory experience no phenomenon presents itself as utterly passive or inert. To the sensing body all phenomena are animate'.[636] We can see that from her attention to a changing

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[632] Jane Quon, "Phenomenology and Artistic Praxis: An Application to Marine Ecological Communication," *Leonardo* 38, no. 3 (2005). 185.
[633] Ibid.
[634] Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human World*.
[635] Jane Quon, *We engage in invisible tides,* 2002 Mixed-media installation, Waterman's Dock Hobart, Tasmania.
[636] Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human World*. 81.

environment, and her consideration of phenomenological thought, Quon's ideas are seemingly in step with the concepts presented within this thesis. However, in Quon's writing about her work, there is no mention of the role of the mediating technology within the phenomenological experience or in its relationship to the artwork. As we have seen in chapter two of this thesis, ways in which technology mediates within the phenomenological experience has an impact on the outcome of the experience, both in the environment and within its representation in art practice. Ways in which this thesis addresses the mediation of technology within phenomenological experience, and within its representation in art practice, could therefore be of potential value to Quon's critical evaluation of her work, both within her immediate sensorial experience and in the artwork that represents her experience.

The second artist to be considered in terms of consequences of this thesis is John Virtue. Virtue's mixed-media images reference many different drawings that record his presence in the landscape and his immediate and pre-meditated response to that which is before him.[637] The drawings he makes whilst out walking are referenced to recreate Virtue's movement through the landscape, the passage of time, and his ever-changing relationship to his surroundings.[638] Richard Cork suggests that when looking at Virtue's work 'we become vividly conscious of the artist's physical motion as he wanders through the country, striding and then pausing when the urge to draw becomes paramount'.[639] These drawings might then be considered as a phenomenological record of Virtue's experience. However, whilst Virtue's re-creation of movement might be seen by critics to reflect what we have seen in this thesis as an understanding of place through movement along paths, his paintings are nevertheless static objects. (The issue of painting and movement was addressed in chapter one using Ingold's example of

[637] Tate St Ives, ed., *John Virtue: New Work 1998-2000* (St Ives, Cornwall: Tate St Ives and Plymouth University, 2000). 14.
[638] Ibid.
[639] Richard Cork, *John Virtue: Ten New Works* (London: Lisson Gallery Publications, 1989). No page nos.

Bruegel's work). For this reason, the way in which this thesis addresses the representation of embodied experience through movement in the landscape would be of potential value to Virtue. Simon Schama has also addressed ideas of embodied experience within Virtue's work. Writing in 'Why I love the painter John Virtue', Schama discusses Virtue's painting, *Landscape No. 704*.[640] He proposes that rather than having a detached relationship with the landscape, for Virtue there is: 'smash-mouth contact…it's rain-sodden, dirt-caked, foul-tempered, beery-eyed, jack-hammered, traffic-jammed, nervy exhilaration'. What Virtue provides, says Schama, is not a visual document of London, but rather an overwhelming embodiment of the city. Virtue's painting of London, he adds, 'is closer to an East End knees-up than to a prospect by Canaletto'.[641] If we set aside Schama's tendency to rhetorical flourishes, questions arise as to whether his interpretation is appropriate following reflection on the significance of movement within ideas of embodied experience that have been raised within this thesis.

Next, I shall consider the relevance of this thesis to the work of the artist Anthony Gormley. In a published conversation between Gormley, Ralph Rugoff and Jacky Klein, Gormley reveals that as a reaction against the conceptual pastoralism of the artists Richard Long and Hamish Fulton, he 'went to the body as a site of direct experience, trying to make something personal that while resulting in an object, was action-based'.[642] Gormley claims that his main concerns are existential and anthropological. He looks, he says, as much to anthropology and archaeology as to art in order to open up possibilities.[643] Attention to experience and to how the disciplines of anthropology and archaeology might inform art practice lends Gormley's work to an association with this thesis. Specifically, within the conversation with Rugoff and Klein

[640] Simon Schama, "Why I Love the Painter John Virtue," *The Guardian*, Monday, February 28 2005.
[641] Ibid.
[642] 'Field Activities: a coversation between Anthony Gormley, Ralph Rugoff and Jacky Klein', Anthony Vidler, *Anthony Gormley, Blind Light*. 40.
[643] Ibid. 42.

Gormley speaks of his work *Event Horizon.* This artwork consists of twenty-seven fibreglass, and four cast iron figures, cited at various locations in London. *Event Horizon,* says Gormley, involves the viewer in observation of the figures that are dispersed over the city. But, he says, the reversal of the normal relationship between viewer and art object is a preoccupation. The viewer of the artwork, he adds, becomes slowly aware that he or she is the focus of this witnessing field and as such they are surrounded by art that is looking at them.[644] Such a concern with ways in which the subject/object relationship might be reversed accords with Merleau-Ponty's writing about the seer and the seen, an idea has been a key issue throughout this thesis. Thus a connection can be made between the ideas presented within this thesis and the concepts that inform Gormley's sculptural work.

Interestingly, Mitchell comments on the dynamic nature of Gormley's artwork. In *Event Horizon,* he says, there is a paradox in that despite the (im)passivity of the figures, the encounter with space and place is dynamic.[645] This is interesting. A dynamic encounter with the landscape has been a key issue within this project and has highlighted the significance of movement in artwork that seeks to represent such an encounter. Speaking of his concern with the existence of the individual, Gormley states that he has to 'manage to engage the whole *being* of the viewer'.[646] Whilst the viewer of Gormley's work can be considered as an 'active perceiver', his static figures placed in a dynamic environment have an ambiguous quality. The employment of static figures in a dynamic environment potentially prompts the use of Gormley's work as an opening for further research into what we have seen Gibson describe as *variant* and *invariant* features of an environment.

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[644] 'Field Activities: a conversation between Anthony Gormley, Ralph Rugoff and Jacky Klein', Anthony Vidler, *Anthony Gormley, Blind Light*. 53.
[645] W. J. T. Mitchell, 'Architecture as sculpture as drawing: Anthony Gormley's *Paragone,* Vidler, Stewart and Mitchell, *Anthony Gormley, Blind Light.* 121.
[646] Renfrew, *Figuring It Out*. 121.

The work of filmmaker, Guy Sherwin, might also benefit from the phenomenological principles discussed within this thesis. Working in experimental cinema, Sherwin uses film to reveal phenomena that is not normally visible to the naked eye.[647] For example, in his film *Flight,* Sherwin has used an optical printer to rework a tiny fragment of film that depicts pigeons, semi-silhouetted in trees, shot using a long lens.[648] By slowing down, and at times stopping, the imagery, Sherwin manages to make the bird seemingly vanish by appearing to become part of the surrounding foliage. Through his manipulation of the media, Sherwin invites his audience to consider how the visual field may be filled with ambiguities. By his sensitivity to media and technical process, and his preoccupation with notions of perception, Sherwin can be cited as another artist for whom this thesis would be of consequence.

A literature search reveals a potential audience for this thesis from a variety of creative disciplines that use ideas about phenomenological experience and technology. A book, yet to be published, by performance artist Susan Kazel, entitled *Closer: Performance, technologies, phenomenology,* is one such example.[649] The preview of this book by its publishers indicates that Kazel draws on live performance, digital technologies and phenomenology to ask what can be discovered as we become closer to our computers as they become extensions of our ways of thinking, moving and touching.[650] This book would seem to promise yet another way in which this thesis can be considered as potentially consequential to those working in creative practice whose interests include phenomenological notions of experience and technology.

This thesis also provides a potential spring-board for further research, both for myself and for other artists. Within my own practice, the ideas within this dissertation

[647] Hamlyn, *Film Art Phenomena*.11.
[648] Guy Sherwin, *Flight,* 1998, 16mm, B & W, sound 4 minutes.
[649] Susan Kazel, *Closer: Performance, technologies, phenomenology,* The MIT Press, 2008.
[650] The Leonardo Book Series, 'Coming soon: Susan Kazel, *Closer: Performance, technologies, phenomenology,* The MIT Press, 2007.

are initiating work beyond the time frame of this research project. In particular, the idea of an overlap, or intertwining, on the boundaries of a perceiver and their surroundings is leading to new developments and exploration within my art practice. Specifically, consideration of a concept that involves an overlap, or intertwining of my body and its surroundings, but which I am unable to detect with my bodily senses, serves to highlight the role of the imagination within a phenomenological enquiry. We have already seen that a consideration of *flesh* is part of a phenomenological relationship involving movement and can be analysed in connection with technology. By the use of film, digital video and drawing media I now propose to explore ways within contemporary art practice in which the imagination might be understood within an embodied experience of the landscape. Merleau-Ponty says that the imaginary is both further and nearer from the actual. Further, because representation by art is a likeness only according to the body but nearer because the imaginary is in my body as a kind of diagram of the life of the actual, exposed for the first time.[651]

Ideas about the role played by the imaginary within a phenomenological relationship has led to an examination of how the phenomenological sequence of relationships between my embodied actions and a viewer might change if I substitute photographic imagery for drawn imagery. If I replace the camera with a pen and writable surface, what impact does this have on the notions of embodied experience and its articulation by contemporary art practice that have been determined within this project?

Currently, I am making drawings with a pen and ink directly onto 16mm film. Here, I can select features of the landscape, actual objects and surfaces or things from my imagination and draw them onto the transparent film. Using the ideas represented within this thesis, the pen might be understood as part of my embodied experience as it

[651] Merleau-Ponty, "Eye and Mind.". 121.

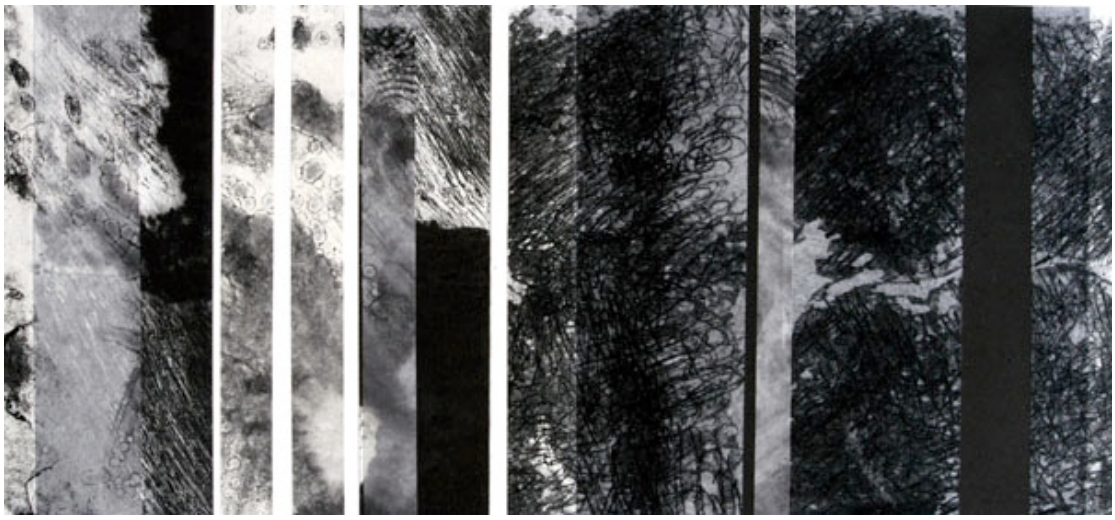
provides an extension to my perceptual ability. Here, the notion of *flesh* that describes an overlap, or intertwining between a human subject and their surroundings can be examined within a new series of interventions within my proposed drawing model.

Also, I am examining ways in which nineteenth century optical instruments might provide mediation between my drawings and a viewer of the work. An optical instrument such as a zoetrope operates as a turning cylinder around which spectators might view simulated action, often jugglers or acrobats. First constructed by William Horner in the 1830s, it provided a means to explore ideas about perception. As Jonathon Crary points out, although extensive documentation exists on the zoetrope, and related optical instruments, as an initial form of technological development leading to the emergence of cinema, little is written about the conceptual singularity of the device.[652]

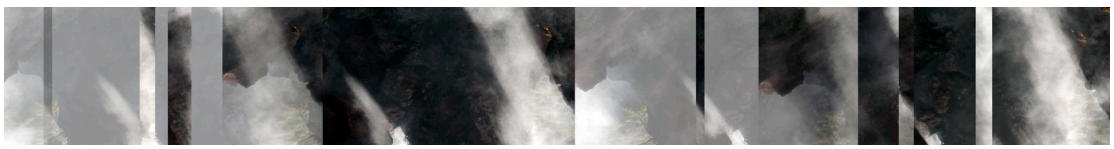
[652] Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*. 110.

Appendix 1

Examples of supplementary art practice that have contributed to this research project

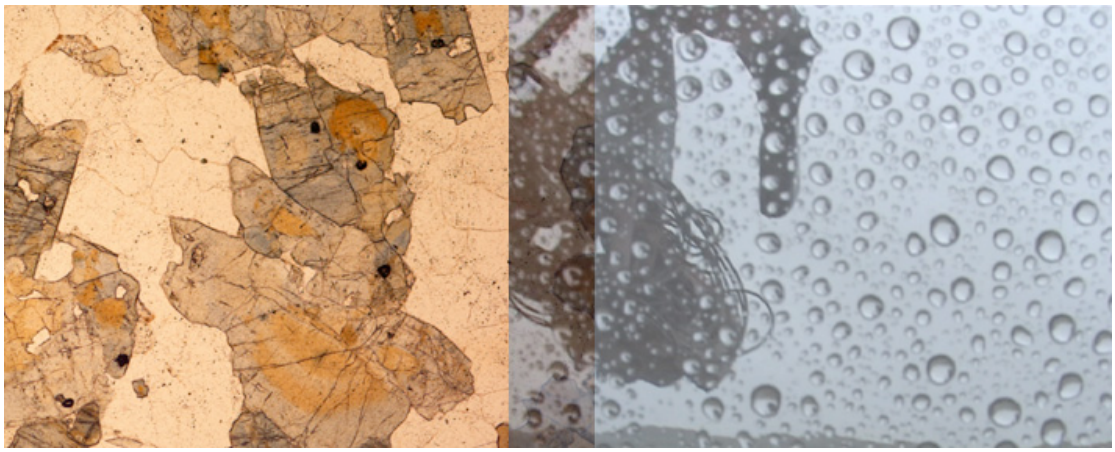


Illus. 20: Bren Unwin, *Unfolding vista*, 2005
Etching, carborundum, relief, collage, on Hahnemuhle paper.

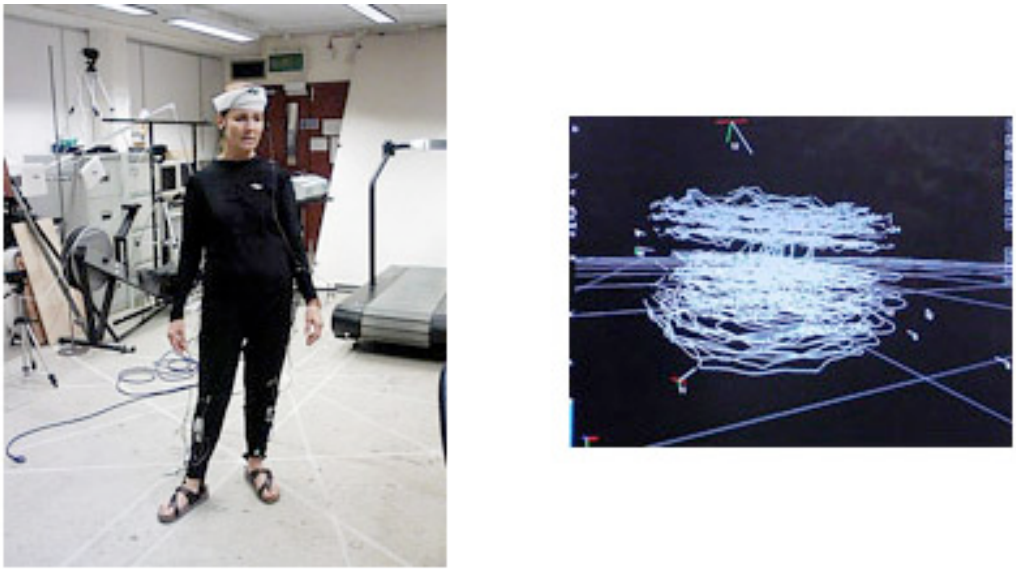


Illus. 21: Bren Unwin, *Fumerolic field,* 2005
Inkjet print on Olmec paper.

Illus. 22: Bren Unwin, *Invariant transformation*, 2005
Series of 29, 35mm slides, looped.



Illus. 23: Bren Unwin, *Littlejohns,* 2006
35mm slide with digital moving imagery.



Illus. 24: Motion capture suit and resulting digital image 2006
Dept. of Engineering, University of Cambridge.

Illus. 25: Bren Unwin, *Penwith Explorer*, 2007
16mm film, looped, 3 minutes, Newlyn Art Gallery.

Illus. 26: Bren Unwin, *Moped to studio,* 2007
Digital video, 15 minutes.

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