

EXPERIMENTAL METHODOLOGIES:
TOWARDS THE MOVING IMAGE

By

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EXPERIMENTAL METHODOLOGIES:
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Abstract:

The moving image — before it is anything else, before it delights an audience with beautiful stories, characters, before it communicates an idea — is the art of making us aware of movement; (Gunning 142) or, following László Moholy-Nagy, it is “the organization of light and shadow effects producing a new enrichment of vision.”

The methodologies in this thesis carry the legacy of experimental moving images, with its perspectives on formal aesthetics, emotion, and alternative modes of narrative. These methodologies informed my approach to physical interactions of objects and materials as a strategy to create unpredictable footage results — which through iterations yielded a poetic visual language from which I built a sequence focused on sensory impressions.

These modes of inquiry and iterative experimentation generated two moving images — visualizing the human experiences from the current unstable immigration laws as manifested on the southern border with Mexico.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. Introduction _____	1
A Brief Overview to the Moving Images _____	1
Lexicon _____	11
II. Influences: Historical and Contemporary Connections _____	13
Kyna Leski: Unlearning _____	13
Kyna Leski: Attentiveness _____	15
László Moholy-Nagy _____	17
Stan Brakhage _____	19
Martin Venezky: Lecture and Workshop _____	20
Interview: Markus Weisbeck _____	22
A Great Vocabulary of Images _____	26
III. Camera and Lights _____	28
Camera _____	28
Lights _____	30
IV. Methodologies _____	32
Motion and Light Methodologies _____	32
V. Studies Project Application: Immigrant Poem _____	35
Studies 1-5 _____	36
Image Associations _____	42
Project 1 Rationale: Immigrant Poem _____	43
Sequence Breakdown _____	44
Final Thoughts: Immigrant Poem _____	47

Chapter	Page
VI. Studies Project Application: The Evidence of the Unseen _____	48
The Organization of Movement _____	48
Study 6 _____	49
Water and Immigrants _____	50
Deserts Among Us _____	51
Shaping Light _____	52
Studies 7-9 _____	53
The Nonlinear: Narrative Explorations _____	56
Project 2 Rationale: The Evidence of the Unseen _____	58
Sequence Breakdown _____	59
Final Thoughts: The Evidence of the Unseen _____	64
Exhibition Documentation _____	66
VII. Conclusion _____	70
Post-Research _____	72
Study Reflections _____	74
References _____	78
Vita _____	81

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1: [Jeff Pachoud/AFP/Getty Images] Cave Painting _____	1
2: Robert Hirsch, an excerpt from the book “Seizing the light” _____	2
3: [MoMa Museum] Wassily Kandinsky, Cossacks _____	3
4: [MoMa Museum] Léopold Survage, Colored Rhythm _____	4
5: Norman McLaren, [National Film board (NFB)] _____	5
6: Sergei Eisenstein, 1928 [an excerpt by YouTube Channel “Lucas”] _____	6
7: Danny Yaunt [an excerpt from “The Reaping”] _____	7
8: Kyle Cooper [an excerpt from “Arlington Road”] _____	8
9: Henri Chomette [an excerpt from Five Minutes of Pure Cinema”] _____	9
10: Man Ray, an excerpt from “Emak Bakia” _____	10
11: Footage test [The Evidence of the Unseen] _____	16
12: [MoMa Museum] László Moholy-Nagy, Light Space Modulator _____	18
13: Stan Brakhage, a film clip from Mothlight _____	19
14: Martin Venezky Workshop _____	21
15: Martin Venezky Workshop _____	21
16: Surface Motion [a website by Markus Weisbeck] _____	25
17: Moving Image Diagram _____	34
18: Materials for Study 1 _____	35
19: Setup and results from Study 1 _____	36
20: Setup and results from Study 2 _____	37
21: Setup and results from Study 3 _____	38
22-23: Setup from Study 4 _____	39-40
24: Example of AfterEffects’ TrackMatte using results from Study 4 _____	40
25: Setup and results from Study 5 _____	41
26: Sketch of written poem _____	44
27: [Immigrant Poem] animation+arrangement _____	45
28: Typography from an abandoned train outside of the Tulsa international airport _____	45
29: Type animation and application with footage _____	46
30: Setup and results from Study 6 _____	49

Figure	Page
31: [Water and Immigrants] Sabotaged plastic water bottle _____	50
32: [Deserts Among Us] OSU campus footsteps _____	51
33: Setup and results from Study 7 _____	53
34: Setup and results from Study 8 _____	54
35: Setup and results from Study 9 _____	55
36-40: [The Evidence of the Unseen] Application and sequence breakdown _____	60-64
41: Gardiner Gallery, exhibition floor plan _____	68
42-43: [Post-Research] Reference/Model example _____	72-73
44-51: [Study Reflections] _____	74-77

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A BRIEF OVERVIEW TO THE MOVING IMAGE

Cave Painting

It could be said that moving images began in a cave 35,000 years ago when prehistoric humans visually recorded their hunting accomplishments using torches, organic pigments, and various image-making tools. The flickering of the fire torches – theoretically, gave Paleolithic cave paintings motion. For example, in Chauvet Cave, France, a lioness with multiple heads becomes an animated intimidating beast.



Figure 1: Cave painting

Caves were the first homes and its walls were the first canvas for ancient artists. Early artists decorated walls of protected caves with paint made from dirt or charcoal mixed with spit or animal fat. The pigments adhered to the wall because the pigment matured in the porous walls of the caves (Douma).

Photography

“The idea of photography existed long before the invention of the camera.

A primary function of visual arts originates in the desire to create a likeness of someone or something. The human urge to make pictures that augment the faculty of memory by capturing time is at the conceptual base of photography. As early as the 5th century B.C.E., the Chinese philosopher Mo Ti discovered that light reflecting from an illuminated object and passing through a pinhole into a darkened area would form an exact, though inverted, image of that object, offering a prototype of the pinhole »lensless« camera.

The development of the camera is an accumulation of many observations and experiments with contributions that go as far as Greek philosopher Aristotle, who around 330 B.C.E., during a partial solar eclipse, observed the crescent-shaped image of the sun projected through a small opening between the leaves of a tree. When these observations were first formalized into a camera remains uncertain” — Robert Hirsch (1).

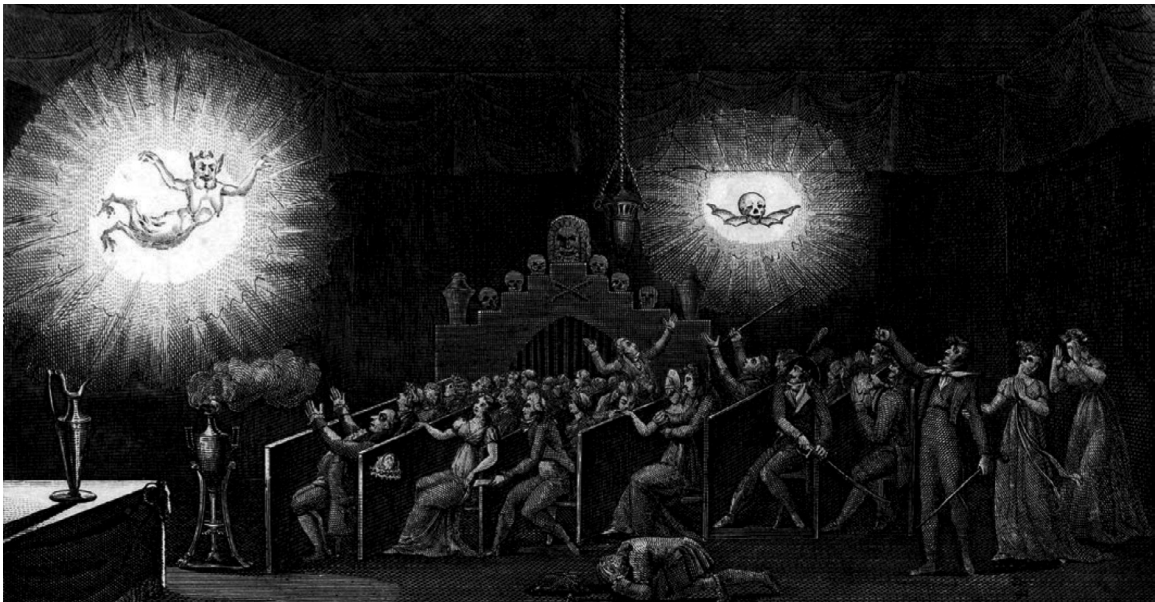


Figure 2: *Phantasmagoria at the Cour des Capucines, 1797.*

According to Hirsch, special effects were investigated in the late 1700's—by using a variety of lanterns and

special sound effects to provoke an eerie and frightening atmosphere in staged entertainment. Étienne-Gaspard was a moving image artist known for his phantasmagoria productions. Gaspard claimed he was only gratified if his spectators were shivering and shuddering, raising their hands or covering their eyes out of the fear (9).

Kinetic Painting

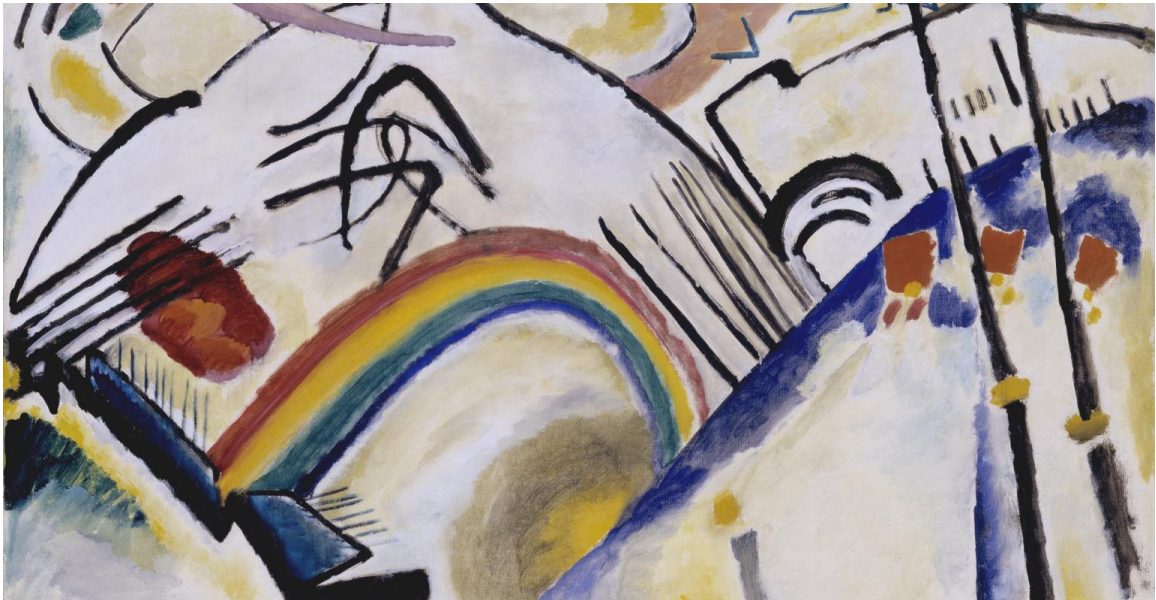


Figure 3: Wassily Kandinsky *Cossacks*, 1910 (Tate).

Synaesthesia is a neurological condition in which the stimulation of a sense (like touch or hearing) leads involuntarily to the triggering of another sense (like sight or taste). For example, people with synaesthesia might see the color blue when they hear the word 'fish' or, as in mirror-touch synaesthesia, they would feel a physical sense of touch on their own bodies when they witness touch on other people or objects (Tate). Russian painter, Wassily Kandinsky, had an interest in visualizing music in his paintings. The history begins with early attempts to create a kinetic analog to painting. Artists with the desire to create »moving paintings« as a way to visually render motion effects through abstraction, painterly

brush and color gestures. This ambition to reach audiences through moving images can be traced back to Russian artist, Leopold Survage (Betancourt 9). Survage was one of those artists that had an aptitude to create a visual art comparable to music. In *Rythme Coloré* 1911-1914, Survage attempts to visualize music through a series of 100 abstract watercolor paintings. In this series, Survage reveals an early understanding of stop animation. His goal in this series is to piece together a sequence of watercolor renditions to create the effect of »moving paintings«. During the early 1900s, Survage’s ambitious project could not be realized due to limitations in technology. This similar idea could also be seen in other artists such as Walther Ruttmann along with Hans Richter, Viking Eggeling and Oskar Fischinger—all practitioners of experimental methodologies with the medium of film (MoMa-2). The idea of synaesthesia influenced not just painting, sculpture, philosophy — synaesthesia continue to influence contemporary motion design practice.



Figure 4: Léopold Survage *Colored Rhythm*, 1913.

Experimental/Avant-Garde Films

When cinema first came into public notice at the end of the nineteenth century, moving image practitioners were invested on a single goal – to seize the moving image. Before there was any narrative or film stars, it was fascinating to see the movement of daily life projected on the screen (Gunning 142).



Figure 5: Norman McLaren, Hands-on moving image practitioner.

Among his many accomplishments, McLaren developed new ways of working and thinking about animation. He was famous for his hand-drawn animations (drawn on the film itself), pixilation and graphical sound. Motion design would not exist without the intersection of experimental filmmakers and the desire to reach a broad audience through compelling moving images. Motion design is a tradition in experimental media such as early abstract cinema, visual music performances, and video art from the twentieth century. The field is closely connected with early films, such as Futurist abstract films (1909-1912), Dada/Constructivist cinema (1919-1929), and a handful of artists and filmmakers such as, László Moholy-Nagy, Marcel Duchamp, Hans Richter, Viking Eggeling, Walther Ruttmann, Man Ray, Sergei Eisenstein, Norman McLaren and Fernand Léger. For these artists abstraction in image making was beyond the unrecognizable.

In agreement with art critic Roger Fry, experimenting with form, is not about imitating reality, but to find an equivalent to reality. Images ought to appeal to the disinterested and

contemplative imagination with a similar energy as the things of actual life appeal to our practical activities (Betancourt 13).

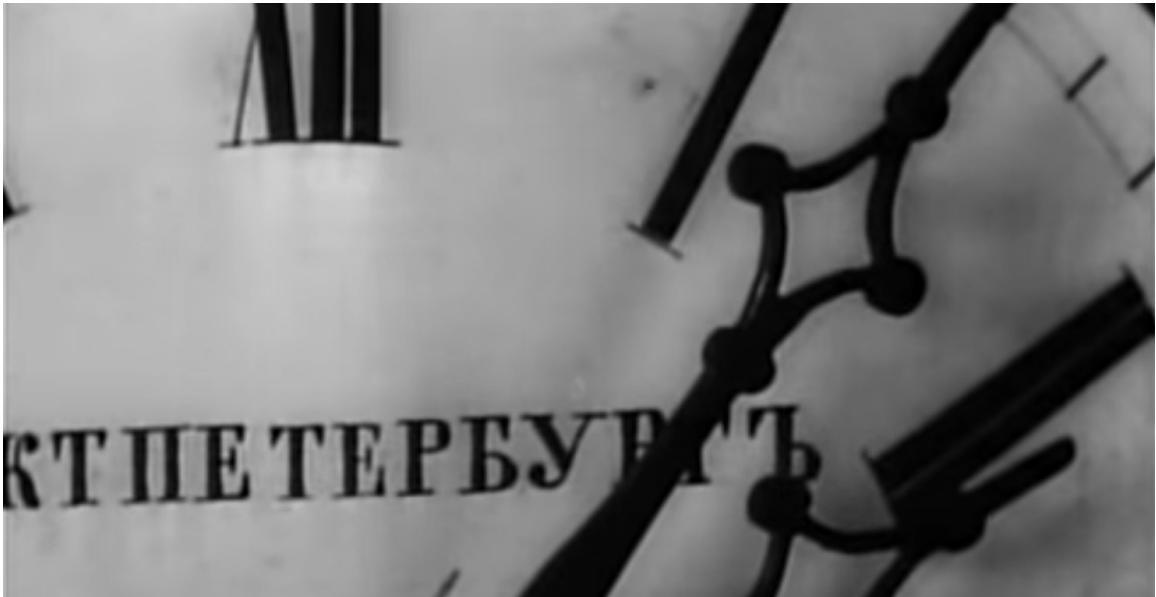


Figure 6: Sergei Eisenstein *October: Ten Days That Shook the World*, 1928.

Sergei Eisenstein developed his concepts of montage in films such as *October: Ten Days That Shook the World*, 1928. Through montage techniques, Eisenstein stood out from his contemporaries as one who understood moving image elements and techniques. Eisenstein used elements that would lead spectators consciousness into the ideas he wanted to communicate. Through montages that juxtaposed two ideas to formulate a third idea – Eisenstein implied events, rather than imitating reality, which forced spectators to make their own personal connections.

Experimental film, Experimental Cinema or Avant-Garde is a mode of filmmaking that rigorously re-evaluates cinematic conventions, alternative forms of narrative or methods of working (Pramagiore 247). Since the invention of this moving image mode, there has been an open discussion among its practitioners to properly identify a name. Today, experimental and avant-garde are the most common names associated to this mode of filmmaking. Avant-garde filmmaking is a military metaphor – Elspeth Kydd sums it up: “the name suggests

that artists are leading the charge to discover and deploy new innovative, cutting-edge techniques and ideas in their practice” (84). On the other hand, experimental filmmaking is one of the names that tends to embrace »methodology« as a mode of thinking when it comes to motion forms and structures. It is a name that is related to the exploration of diverse methods of expression. Experimental filmmakers are quite interdisciplinary since their frame of reference and inspiration can come from many artistic practices, such as, painting, sculpture, installation, and performance art (Kydd 84). The majority of experimental films have no specific narrative or story to follow; however, this does not mean that there is no successful communication to an audience. “Experimental films encourage its audience to think and ask questions about identity, meaning, psychological processes, experiences, and how these are interpreted through the medium of [moving images]” (Kydd 84).

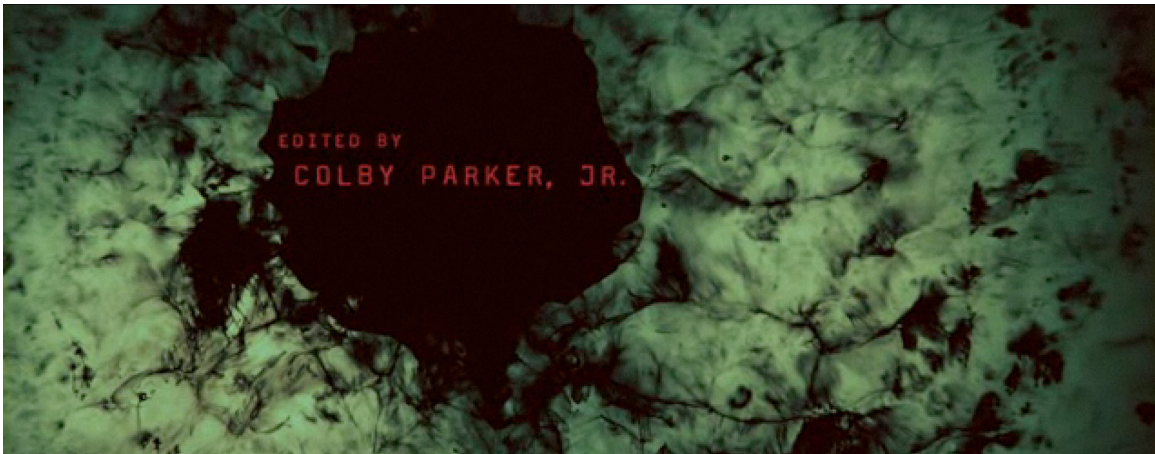


Figure 7: Danny Yount, Prologue Films *The Reaping*, 2007.

In *The Reaping*, Yount puts together images of extreme close-ups of frogs, locusts, flies, and blood — as a way to hint biblical plagues. With this montage, Yount taps into basic human emotional responses towards fear and darkness. He uses a haunting score and the unsettling editing style pioneered by Kyle Cooper in his main title for *SE7EN*.



Figure 8: Kyle Cooper, Prologue Films *Arlington Road*, 1999.

Today's experimental films are disguise by different modes of entertainment. Experimental films continue to influence the way graphic designers think and iterate through the process of making movie title sequences. In *Arlington Road*, Kyle Cooper explores the intricate fusion of double exposures, inverted colors schemes, varying frame rates, and the orange film roll outs from a hand-held 16mm camera. For *Arlington Road*, Cooper shows his strong abilities to transform a suburban peaceful American neighborhood into a sinister and haunting place.

Cinéma Pur

This method of filmmaking was radically involved in altering narrative and visual structures. Henri Chomette brother of Rene Clair was the first filmmaker to develop the concept of »Cinéma Pur«. He believed that cinema can draw from within new potentials of moving image making. His ideas involved the removal of reality from objects. Chomette created moving images that resembled visions. During Chomette's time, his motion explorations

were inconceivable outside the union of the lens and the moving reel of film.



Figure 9: Henri Chomette *Five Minutes of Pure Cinema*, 1925.

Chomette believed that the art of moving images should not be limited to literal representations of ideas. Omitting narrative logic or the true essence of objects and their function may create interesting connections from unexpected visuals. This mode of cinema explores inconceivable moving images that may beget with simple intersections of camera lens and materials (Haller).

Cinéma Pur or Pure Cinema, consciously implemented extreme camera angles, close-ups, fast and slow motion, negative sequences, abstract animation, multiple exposures, and rapid editing. These implementations were highly favored by Cinéma Pur filmmakers. Abstract films were not the only genre they explored, poetic documentaries and even attempts to capture dream-like footage and scientific experiments were among their interests. German writer and graphic artist, Peter Weiss, wrote in a retrospective description, “They wanted to create visions instead of illustrations.” In a film called *Emak Bakia*, Man Ray’s objective was to »shape motion« experiences, either by animating inanimate objects through stop-motion, photography or by exploring different camera

angles (Horak 5). “The public need never know that this fairy-like effect of light in many forms, that so delights it, is nothing but an aluminum saucepan” — Fernand Léger (Horak 5).



Figure 10: Man Ray *Emak Bakia*, 1926.

This experimental film is categorized as a “Cinépoème” and it features Ray’s mastery of Rayographs, double exposure, and studies of soft focus with a play of ambiguous forms. Ray explores motion ideas through mechanical parts and everyday artifacts—creating a delightful interpretation of light and transformations.

Lexicon

Cinema ::: The presentation of moving images. “A tool that makes us see, that makes us aware, of movement, and that overcomes our habitual oblivion of taking movement for granted” (Gunning 142).

Cinematography (Cinematographe) ::: Coined by the Lumiere brothers in 1890, who invented the technology to project a series of photographs in rapid succession, producing the illusion of movement. Evolved from Greek terminology, Kinema “movement” Kinein “to move” + Graphein (graphy) “to write.”

Cinemapoetry ::: Also known as video poetry, “it is a particular form of video art comprising poetry texts elaborated at various acoustic and visual levels” (Davino). Commonly embraced by **(Fluxus)** ::: A community of artists engaged in experimental processes.

Camera ::: The third eye that allows one to confidently engage in unpredictable visual results — it is a tool for inquiry and discovery.

Cinema Pur ::: It is a return to the elemental origins of moving images. A method to reduce complex narratives — a return to cinematic rhythm and expressive visual interests in light and motion to create an open visual dialogue for interpretation.

Experimental/Avant-Garde filmmaking ::: A method of filmmaking that focused on form, making freewheeling, semi-abstract films from assembled images, footage and snippets of text (Moma-3).

Experimenter ::: Prepares and engages with objects, materials and equipment to craft (moving) images. One who analyzes results throughout the process of preparation, observation and repetition of the experiment.

Motion Design ::: A mode of practice that applies filmmaking principles to graphic design.

Moving images ::: A repertoire of motion works that is gathered and activated (from the

process of experimentation/studies) to shape concepts.

Light ::: The primary element to engage in modes of formal inquiry. Light is manipulated to establish layers of expression. Light is an active agent that guides the viewer in the development of the moving image experience.

Narrative ::: A build up from a collection of moving images. Together these portray events or ideas, rather than imitating reality – it has a flow of its own, with open interpretations.

Process ::: It allows one to gather and develop a body of work full of potency. It happens gradually and organically.

Study ::: “It begins from what appears to be nothing” (Leski 2). A study slowly gathers possibilities for broader testing, which then leads one towards discoveries or failures.

CHAPTER II

INFLUENCES: HISTORICAL & CONTEMPORARY CONNECTIONS

Kyna Leski: Unlearning

The world of moving images is like a dreamland capable of merging a broad scope of creative practices. It is also capable of merging methodologies that bring to fruition compelling moving creations. Moving images are “tools that make us see, that makes us aware of movement, and that overcome our habitual oblivion of taking movement for granted” (Gunning 142).

As contemporary designers, how does one go about a methodology that brings to fruition new potentials towards moving images?

Kyna Leski, Professor in the Department of Architecture at Rhode Island School of Design – proposes a wide range of perspectives with keen observations towards the creative process. Her book, *The Storm of Creativity*, she activates a storm metaphor for literally understanding human creativity – its formation, development, cycle, and expansion into the making of that which is desired to output. *The Storm of Creativity* is not a how-to book, it is a book that aims to convince anyone who engages with a creative process to recognize how creativity unfolds in the process of »learning through unlearning.«

“The many processes are really stages of an overall process one navigates in knowing, making, or discovering something that does not yet exist” (Leski xx).

It would be interesting to see hands-on experimentation with contemporary time-based media as a way to align with Leski’s articulations, particularly on the necessity to empower experimental inclinations towards motion design education. To adopt this mindset, learning requires unlearning – forgetting old molds of thinking, which gradually transforms old preconceptions, towards an attitude that embraces purposeful play. According to Leski, this attitude compels one to go forward into fresh perspectives of making any type of visual or physical output. (Leski xx).

In the dreamland of experimental moving images and its traditions, ideas spring from unthinkable relationships that come in unison as methodologies mature over time. Leski encourages her readers to accept not knowing (so to speak) without giving in to the need for rational explanations in early stages of discovery (12).

“If your starting point is to name and identify potential solutions before unlearning, it is unlikely to lead to anything creative or outside what you already know” (Leski 13).

Leski’s observations align with experimental filmmakers that refuse to adopt mainstream cinema’s ways of thinking and crafting a moving image experience. Experimental filmmakers see their practice as one that must dwell on uncertain territories where they could work from the inside to the outside. Leski’s approach along with the experimental creative attitude may be a key into a genuine blank slate propelling exciting and true cinematic experiences.

Kyna Leski: Attentiveness

Having attentiveness could mean a variety of things depending on any given situation. For example, someone who adapts to the wishes of others or someone who is polite or courteous. This idea might come across as a parental directive, but it is an extremely important component of the creative process in any creative endeavor.

Attentiveness :::

Alert, mindful, observant. The action of paying close attention to something.

Kyna Leski defines attentiveness as “a key element of creativity ... attentiveness in the creative process deemphasizes information that already exists and what you and others may have done before” (25). For Leski, attentiveness is a way into a clear and open mind. That is to say, to be alert to what is happening at the moment, the »here and now«. When studying the processes of experimental filmmakers, these artists immediately align with Leski’s articulation of attentiveness in the creative process. Experimental filmmakers question mainstream cinema and their structures and methodologies of image making. These filmmakers are not interested in giving in to the patterns of past or current styles. Experimental filmmakers challenge all expectations with moving forms, making audiences “think and question the film medium itself, the role of film within society and culture and the status of a film as art” (Kydd 84).

Experimental filmmakers adopt a poetic approach to moving images, which forces them to think abstractly to generate a “kinesthetic impact” (Petric 3). Attentiveness is the root of their processes which causes an open mind towards accidents and spontaneity. For these filmmakers, becoming alert and spontaneous thinkers affords them to immerse themselves in numerous modes of working with unusual components towards the moving image (O’Grady 3). Gerald O’Grady, author of *The Emergence of Abstract Film in America*

comments, experimental filmmakers work from the inside to the outside, they search for unconventional cinematic forms and original structures, they are fully mindful of the complexity of the medium as well as the difficulty in dealing with cinema as an art form (3).

Kinesthetic Impact :::

A poetic experience created for the viewer. It is a combination of camera movement and editing techniques.

The best experimental films are abstract films. These films generate the most powerful »kinesthetic impact« that is not typical in any other medium or film genre (O’Grady 3). Even though this mode of filmmaking is the liberation from traditional narrative structures or the representation of reality – experimental filmmakers are mindful that the invention of unconventional methodologies is not enough for the creation of compelling moving images. In other words novelty is not the answer alone for a powerful kinesthetic impact (O’Grady 3).



Figure 11: Test footage for project 2: *The Evidence of the Unseen*.

During an evening walk, I came across a piece of tree bark. I examined it using extreme camera close-ups and through different light angles. In this study, I used two light sources to transform the tree bark in deep dark shadows. Lighting also became an active participant to reveal a mysterious hand. The final footage resembled a hostile desert terrain with a somber emotion.

László Moholy-Nagy

“I became interested in painting with light, not only on the surface of a canvas, but directly on space.” – László Moholy-Nagy

Based on Moholy’s body of work, perhaps his mind was constantly occupied with light, space, and three-dimensionality. His interest in the production of motion through objects and light using space led him to construct the famous Light-Space Modulator – a kinetic sculpture that would help him develop and visually articulate his ideas regarding light and space. In his influential book *Painting, Photography, Film* – co-edited with Walter Gropius, director of the Bauhaus – he asserted that “Photography and cinema had heralded a culture of light that had overtaken the most innovative aspects of painting” (MoMa-1). Moholy celebrated photography but magnified film as the purist form of expression, the ultimate medium of the future. By 1926, approximately, Moholy debuted his light-space articulations with his only abstract film, *Lightplay: Black White Gray* in which he synthesized many of his early experiments with light, motion, and structure. In agreement with Michael Betancourt, a motion graphics theorist, Moholy’s only film is significant not only for the Light-Space Modulator but for the ways he employed techniques and the motion picture camera to create an apparently abstract film using physical materials reflected by the Light-Space Modulator (68). Moholy carefully crafted each shot to incorporate the movement of the reflectors, balls, and rods – blending light to create a visual composite. Rather than documenting the function of the Light-Space Modulator, Moholy framed the output of the creation in a painterly, chiaroscuro way (Betancourt 68,69).

His interests and fascination with light, space and time were always present regardless of the media he employed. Whether he was painting or crafting a machine-like sculpture, he was ultimately interested in studying how all the inherent basic elements of objects

could interact together. Moholy was aware of the necessity that artists' and designers' understanding must adopt a certain mindset towards vision experimentation as an extension to develop formulas and strategies of making. He believed in the possibilities of renouncing academic molds, thus stretching human capacity to new tasks (The Art History). In other words, a creative education and practice is something for the mind as well as the eye and hand.

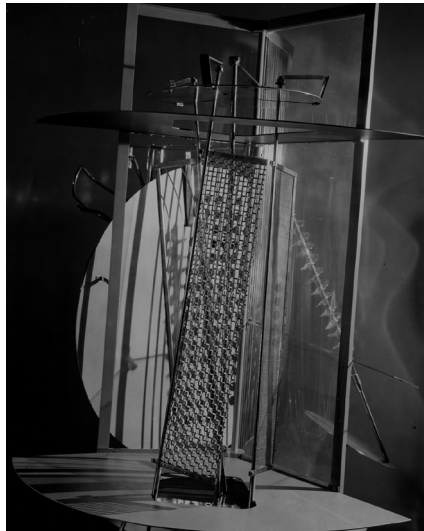


Figure 12: Light Space Modulator part of the film, *Lightplay: Black White Gray* c. 1926.

Painting, photography, film, sculpture, advertising, product design, theater sets — László Moholy-Nagy did it all. He remains as the most renowned Hungarian artist. Moholy, as he was known, began his career as a professor at the Bauhaus art school in Germany (1923–28). In 1937, he founded the New Bauhaus in Chicago, a school that continues today as the Institute of Design at the Illinois Institute of Technology. His concepts have been totally influential in contemporary society. Today, there is no part of art, design, and architecture anywhere in the world where his ideas are not apparent.

His work in film and photography could be seen as distorted, obscured or intentionally abstracted forms. But he did not see his compositions with this mindset. He used the camera as a tool to capture another level of reality in a much deeper and magnified way. Through

his work, Moholy demonstrated that abstraction is not distortion — it is something that is embraced by artists and designers as “an invitation to re-evaluate our way of seeing” (Barcio).

Martin Venezky, a contemporary graphic designer who champions hands-on material practice, affirms, “craft was once part of a designer’s trade” (Venezky 23). And perhaps modern practices of image making might have lost track of the imprints from creatives like László Moholy-Nagy.

Stan Brakhage

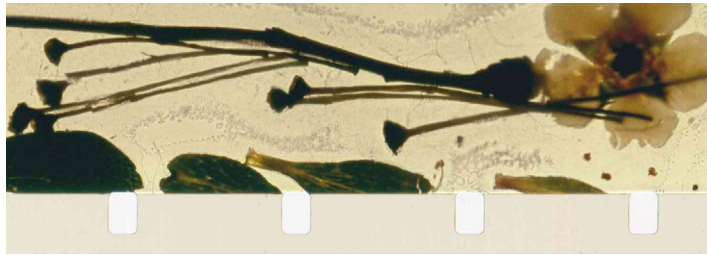


Figure 13: Stan Brakhage, Film clip from *Mothlight* (cameraless animation film strip).

“By the time most people see their first avant-garde film, they have already seen hundreds of films in commercial theaters and on television and their sense of what a [moving image] is has been almost imprinted in their conscious and unconscious minds.” — Scott MacDonald (Pramaggiore 11).

The first time someone sees an experimental film, their expectations may be confusing or shocking or even discover a feeling of delight by a cinematic experience never seen before. Experimental films provoke questions and conscious connections to personal memories through unorthodox methods of narrative and explorations of sound and vision. One of the renowned practitioners of this type of moving image is Stan Brakhage, a filmmaker that exchanged systematic narratives for pure visual poetry.

Brakhage's films are known for removing traditional expectations of narrative and dismissing all elements of common mainstream entertainment. Brakhage's approach towards moving images comes across as a higher level of visual pleasures and insights. For example, his film *Mothlight* is an intricate exploration of the aesthetic capabilities of the celluloid (film). It is a moving image that is "similar to paintings, sculptures or a dance performance" (Pramaggiore 12). In the process of making *Mothlight*, Brakhage intentionally interacts with the celluloid by physically taping moth wings, twigs and leaves onto the filmstrip itself.

For Brakhage and other filmmakers like Hans Richter, Walter Ruttmann, Malcolm Le Grice, and Maya Deren moving images connect through emotions. These emotions encourage deeper personal relationships from an audience. On the other hand, the "basic visual elements of moving images, such as composition (the arrangement of visual elements in the frame) and editing patterns, still carry great significance...in addition, meaning comes through symbols, [emotions] and metaphors" (Pramaggiore 12). Brakhage refers to this way of working as »moving visual thinking.« This strategy is a kind of inquiry that could "sometimes take the form of abstractions, a play of colors and visuals; or personal in nature (images and thoughts drawn from the artists' life and experience) or stylistically formal or reflexible, including items that are often considered mistakes in a narrative" (Kydd 83).

"Mastering your own eyes and your own conceptual skills is a better foundation to secure than mastering any machine." – Kyle Cooper (Drate 7).

Martin Venezky

On April 19, 2018, Martin Venezky visited Oklahoma State University as the Graphic Design Assessor for the undergraduate program. His evening lecture focused on his most recent

professional work and experimental methodologies. Venezky is known for his visually arresting abstract compositions using the camera to explore typography, objects, and materials along with a variety of high- and low-tech strategies. His approach to design incorporates wonderful unexpected surprises within his exhaustive formal inquiries.

“I rarely have a final effect in mind, and if I do, it almost never comes out as I intended. I often choose the tools I’ll use just because I enjoy the challenge or I’m curious what will happen.” – Martin Venezky

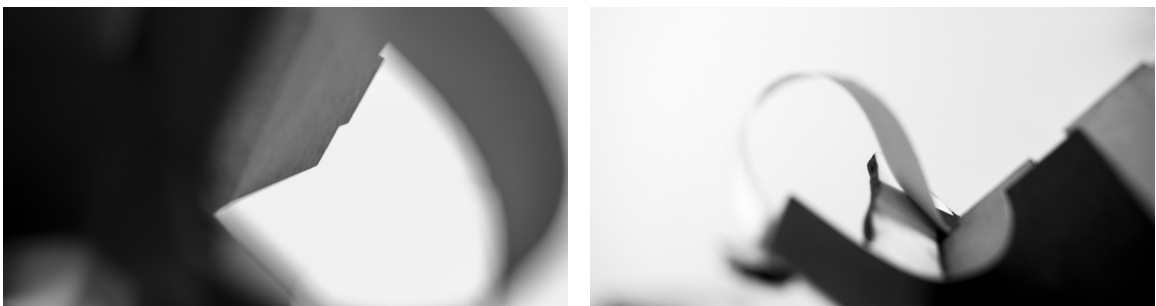


Figure 14: Images produced during the workshop.

During the workshop, all participants were introduced to multiple materials and objects found throughout the art building. Venezky was quick to explain that “making is a way of thinking.” The workshop prompt was simple: “Create anything, from anything.” This way of working allowed for unexpected surprises which were embraced as a way to launch the next inquiry. The camera was used as a tool for exploration and image making – for Venezky, “the camera is a tool that captures what might be hidden. The camera is a tool for investigation and not just for documentation”

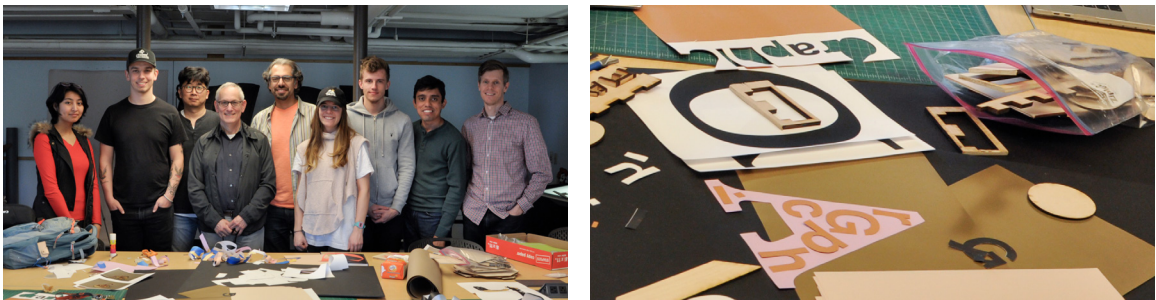


Figure 15: Martin Venezky Workshop.

Interview: Markus Weisbeck

Markus Weisbeck is a professor for graphic design at Bauhaus-Universität Weimar and co-founder of the Space for Visual Research. His approach to design takes the visual principles of 20th-century modernism as a reference point – specifically, the rich tradition of experimentation found in the libraries at the Ulm School of Design, Germany and Black Mountain College in Chicago. His studio, Surface, is known for hybrid design experimentation that continues to inspire many contemporary studios around the world.

***MB :::** Looking at your website, one of the words that seem to be most prevalent in your project descriptions is the word “abstraction.” Could you talk about the role of abstraction in the context of your graphics solutions?*

MW ... One should find a clear position when discussing abstraction and its aesthetics. What is good aesthetics? or what makes bad aesthetics?. It is much easier to follow the idea of abstract images than images that already have some type of meaning. Working in this way, one is able to let go of perfection. A lot of my processes invite a bit of randomness. I believe letting go of control and embracing some randomness is a very important part when doing design.

***MB :::** So, this is also something that is happening in your classroom?*

MW ... Sure, not one hundred percent, but approximately twenty-five percent of the teaching we are doing at Weimar embraces this approach of image making. We have set-up a physical space for visual research, which has led us to do workshops in China and Korea. This year, we plan on having a Summer workshop at Art Center and 15 other workshops worldwide with the theme of abstraction.

***MB :::** Your perspective on design is quite interesting and perhaps opposite to current design practice and teaching. What do you think of the current ways of image making? How do you respond to oppositions?*

MW ... Ah yes, first of all, we have the problem at the moment where we see a lot of designers working with the same tools. We have the same computers with similar software for visual communication. We must find some creative escape as a way to break the current system — we must strive for different modes of working. We know we can do everything in Illustrator, Photoshop or 3D programs, etc... but it is also much interesting for students to work with analog processes and experiments (in combination with digital tools). This is an alternative to open their minds towards new horizons.

MB ::: When experimenting, how do you know when to stop the process of visual inquiry?

MW ... Taste, it requires taste ... The process should be something that is not just one step, it should be a process that embraces two, three, four steps...and each step destroys the logic of the previous step. For example, using a piece of paper, make a fold, apply color to it, then fold it again, now burn that paper which then could lead to another step of unfolding and so on... In the end, it might take three or five steps to have something that works.

MB ::: The process requires a bit of letting go...it sounds like.

MW ... Yes, accepting less control is a very important component that every designer must embrace. It is a way to get to other dimensions. It is important to do things that surprise yourself.

MB ::: You touched on something very interesting, surprises. Talk about that...

MW ... There is a quote from conceptual artist, Sol Lewitt, he once said something like this, “In art and design, rational judgments repeat rational judgments. Irrational judgments lead to new experiences.”

MB ::: In the classroom or lab as you call it, how do you guide students in the process of working with a variety of media?

MW ... We are living in 2019, students are more inclined to digital tools. In the classroom, we

are able to switch from digital to hands-on and vice versa. When working abstractly in the classroom, we try, first of all, to find content that is flexible with the results generated. We have discussions with students. We challenge and ask students by asking – what could this be? what could be the reason for this form? And then, the [students] begin to be extremely creative with the results. For example, in the workshop at Korea, we were working in similar ways, we would make a variety of images, analyze the results and eventually we would interact with results through prompts. With all results, “imagine what that image could be? is it for a movie? what is the name of the movie? what is the emotion of the movie?” and so on.

MB ::: *So, you begin an inquiry of form, and then the concept comes second...*

MW ... Yes, that is one way, but it could go the other way around. In the professional world, there is little room for exploration. But let's imagine working for a company that has no visuals about their complex services. [How are going to visualize complex ideas?] You must explore possibilities through iterations. But you have to have an idea first, otherwise, nothing would make sense. And to bring it back to the students – I'm not saying that this is the only way to work with visual communication – this is simply another approach to design.

MB ::: *How does your perspective [methods] align to the overall history of graphic design?*

MW ... Ah yes, you can find fantastic roots all over. There were drawing schools in the 18th century in Switzerland that educated kids from orphanage institutions...during this time, it was common for young people to take the profession of their parents. But during the 18th century, a lot of kids had to grow up without parents. Unfortunately, they had to depend on these types of institutions.

Because these kids had rough backgrounds, instructors would guide them through abstract drawings as a way to guide them through emotions – it was a way to structure them...there

are a lot of Swiss designers that continued with these kinds of methods. In those days, it was an approach to learn/create from chaotic backgrounds, it was about bringing structure to young brains, without doing structured/rigid things.

MB ::: *What about the Bauhaus tradition, were they doing similar things?*

MW ... For sure, if you look at the drawing courses of the master, Johannes Itten, Bauhaus professor. His students might engage in a series of paintings about war... students would get paper and pencil and start their explorations. But it was not about drawing tanks, weapons or soldiers...no...it was about the »expression about war« their results were completely abstract/expressive compositions. Ultimately, we don't forget that we are visual communicators, so we should take a variety of methods to communicate something. We are visual translators. Maybe we can draw inspiration from our parent's stories, news headlines etc...you can make your own impressions of anything – and who knows, this could inform other projects in the future.

MB ::: *Thank you Prof. Weisbeck for your time!*

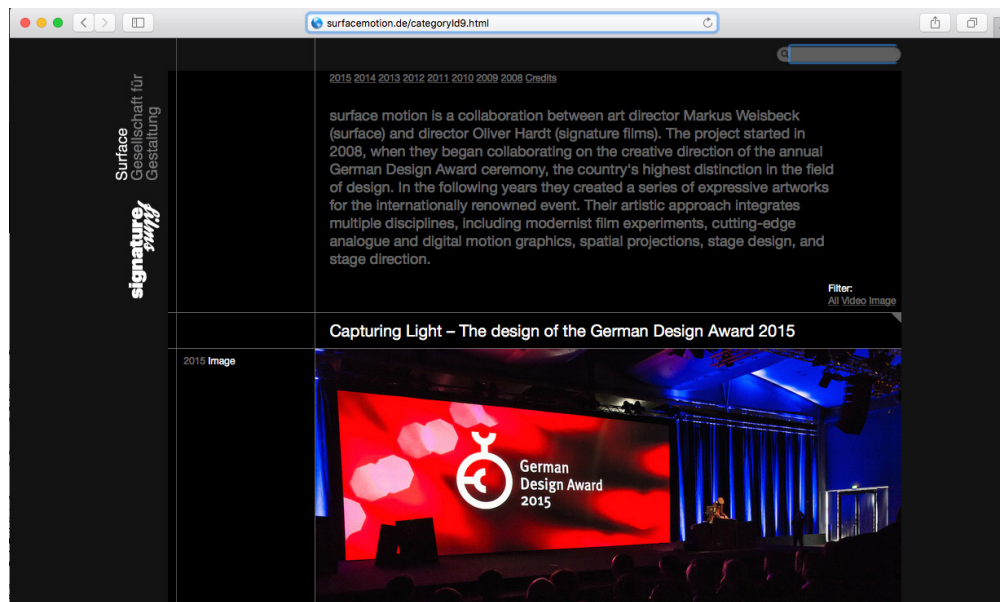


Figure 16: www.surfacemotion.de

A Great Vocabulary of Images

We all have in our conscience and unconscious mind a great vocabulary of images and I think all human communication is based on these images.”

— Tennessee Williams

Echoing the words of Tennessee Williams, we all tend to impose emotions, memories or meaningful events through objects and materials. No matter how ordinary these associations may seem, humans possess the inner ability to imaginatively transform things through the subjective eye and mind relationship. This simple analysis continues to activate a personal interest in holding and observing objects and materials with a level of unfamiliarity — a piece of paper found on the way to school could be the beginning of an ongoing exploration of form and expression.

German poet Justinus Kerner is known as the pioneer of making images from inkblots, better known as Klecksography. Since the 1890s, psychologists use Klecksography as a tool for studying the subconscious. Space for Visual Research shows Kerner’s connections about the process of visual transformations and its results: “one is neither meant to assume absolute control over a process nor to manipulate its outcome — even if it is the opposite of what one expected. At some point, one must accept this in order to be a stranger to one’s creation” (154).

When something is motionless, develop a process to discover through the camera, potential motion possibilities.

Is it possible to interact with materials without altering or reconfiguring its present quality?

Using prompts like the ones above is a strategy to begin visual inquiries using the camera as a tool to augment hidden attributes from found objects. The results from such inquiries

may have the potential to propel other creative endeavors. In psychology, this strategy aligns with »projective testing« – which is the ability to use the imagination to project images into definite or formless shapes (Wesibeck 154). Enlightenment philosopher Immanuel Kant offers valuable insights into human perception and inclinations towards unknown forms:

“The natural history collector sees cities in Florentine stone, the devout person the passion story in the speckled marble, some lady sees the shadows of two lovers on the moon in the telescope, but her pastor two church steeples. Fear turns the rays of the northern light into spears and swords, and in the twilight a signpost into a giant ghost” (Wesibeck 154).

This method of projecting questions and associations into objects and even materials is a strategy to stimulate an aptitude towards Brakhage’s idea of »motion visual thinking« and unlearning through visual phenomena. This is a strategy to pursue the perceptual process of creating and discovering motion within objects and materials that are often readily available around us.

“Projective testing sharpens the designer’s eye” (Weisbeck 155).

The definition of a serious but flexible exploration methodology is found in the teachings at Basel School of Design. An involvement with objects and materials goes back to Manfred Maier, Basel professor and author of *The Basic Principles of Design*. Maier believes in »feeling« objects and materials, for their aesthetics and possibilities of expression. Maier advocates that the large quantity of personal or found objects demands more than the commercial knowledge. Maier encourages his students to think about the interrelation of objects, tactile optical qualities, and the contrast between tactile feeling and observation. Maier also upholds manual experimentation, spontaneous invention, improvisation, and specifically, the discovery of a solid understanding of techniques (5).

CHAPTER III

CAMERA & LIGHTS

Camera

I am kino-eye, I am a mechanical eye. I, a machine, show you the world as only I can see it. Now and forever, I free myself from human immobility, I am in constant motion, I draw near, then away from objects, I crawl under, I climb onto them... Now I, a camera, fling myself along their resultant, maneuvering in the chaos of movement, recording movement, starting with movements composed of the most complex combinations... My path leads to the creation of a fresh perception of the world. I decipher in a new way a world unknown to you.” – Dziga Vertov

The way in which the role of the camera is written about throughout moving image theory combines philosophical articulations and poetic metaphors. Such views, compare the function of the camera to the human eye. The poetic term »camera-eye« is commonly seen in the practice of experimental filmmakers as a “metaphor that enlightens the mind [and practice]” (Quendler 13). According to William Wees, a moving image theorist, “the analogy of the camera-eye is simply a figure of speech. In other words, the eye and the camera are parts representing the entirety of their respective assemblies. Vision is no more a result of the eye alone than pictures emerging from the camera. For each situation, what we see is the

consequence of complex procedures that begin in the eye and the camera.”(Wees 22).

“All eyes are detectors of motion” R.L. Gregory points out, and “the motion they detect is of light moving in the retina” (Wees 13). With scientific facts explaining the function and similarities between the camera and the human eye, it is almost unpreventable that experimental filmmakers who invest time in poetic experimentation wouldn’t align their explorations with the basic process of human perception (Wees 13).

Russian filmmaker, Dziga Vertov is best known for his 1929 *Man with a Movie Camera*, a brilliant film that reveals an ordinary day in Moscow and Odessa. In *Man with a Movie Camera*, Vertov’s montage style explores and challenges the craft of assembling moving images by blurring the lines between narration, abstraction and cinematic artifice.

Vertov’s articulations of the role of the camera continue to persuade many contemporary moving image makers – including the way motion studies and results are scrutinize throughout this thesis. In 1923, Vertov wrote *Kino-Eye*, which is also the name of a film movement that assembles montages using rapid film fragments as a way of improving the norm of editing. According to Lu, Vertov believes that the filmmaker’s eye is able to see through the camera and join the entire montage of images. This belief permits Vertov to produce moving images that invite the viewer to indulge in free visual interpretations (Lu). “Through the camera [the maker and the spectator] are able to enter the world of moving images. For Vertov, the action that the camera captures should be something that unfolds without much interference” (Lu). The core idea behind the *Kino-Eye* is that the »mechanical-eye« of the camera, which Vertov alludes in his book as a »powerful machine« – is capable of seeing life more precisely than the subjective human eye. Vertov’s methods and articulations towards the moving image embrace formal relationships that are more visually honest and inspirational (Havis).

Lights

Photography :::

- *The word derives from the Greek photos (light) and graphe (drawing).*
- *Photography has the ability to connect us to our past, they remind us of people, places, feelings, and stories. Photography helps us to know who we are (O'Neill).*

Since the advent of photography, it has been understood that light is the photographer's main tool, after all, photography depends on light for successful exposures. However, light is not exclusive to photography. Light is also embraced and activated as a fundamental medium for many other creative practices that involve static or moving images. In fact, based on light theory – without light, there could be no vision, or photography, or any image making practice. Static or moving images, all depend on the way light is projected, received, interrupted or bounced off of materials. From this dependence, complex patterns of form, shadow, and color emerge. Regardless of the light source (the sun, fluorescent lamps or other electronic sources) light has an effect on the materials that interact with it (TPUB). Ultimately, light has come to be an essential participant in nearly all spheres of static and moving image vernacular.

“The basic purpose of lighting is to manipulate and articulate the perception of our environment. Lighting helps us, or make us, see and feel in a specific way” (Zettl 18).

Light triggers an emotional impact when it interacts with darkness. This combination becomes a driving force to influence the way viewers respond to moving images. The primal connotations of lights and darks are profoundly rooted in human psychology. Deep shadows are connected to drama, horror, majestic, and spiritual connotations. On the other hand, bright, over-exposed lights invite associations to excitement, reassurance or even the

feeling of discomfort when it is intensified (Film Reference). Graphic designers residing in the practice of moving images, also have a strong understanding of lighting. Using slightly different terminology, designers approach the concept of light as positive/negative or figure/ground. Judith Wilde writes, “Through the subtle articulation of light and shadow, an entire image can be implied” (29). In a similar manner, Lupton writes “positive and negative elements attract our attention equally and alternately” (106). In *Graphic Design the New Basics*, Lupton proves that figure/ground mechanisms are methods to explore and provoke multiple focal points of interest. These visual devices lead the viewer’s attention through moments of ambiguity (106). Figure/ground, as well as cinematic lighting, change the habitual approach toward seeing. Both are tools that merge what we see and what we know into fragments of form and meaning. Figure/ground and lighting are intrinsic to the orchestration of moving images — both are capable of “exploiting the brain’s capacity to find and create order” (Lupton 99).

“Light is the key ingredient of visual perception and orients us in space and time.

It also affects our emotions. Light is the signal that our eyes receive and our brain translates into perceptions...light is a form of radiant energy.” — Herbert Zettl

CHAPTER IV

METHODOLOGIES

Motion and Light Methodologies

The motion and light methodologies throughout this thesis align with the camera-eye analogy from Dziga Vertov's *Kino-Eye* and László Moholy-Nagy's idea on vision experimentation. Each study captures intricate light refractions by manually challenging the camera lens using various objects and materials. This approach is not to replicate the "incident of light," (Wesbeck B) but to generate an expression or mood. In each study, the role of the camera is to investigate light as a landscape of surprises.

Expression/Mood :::

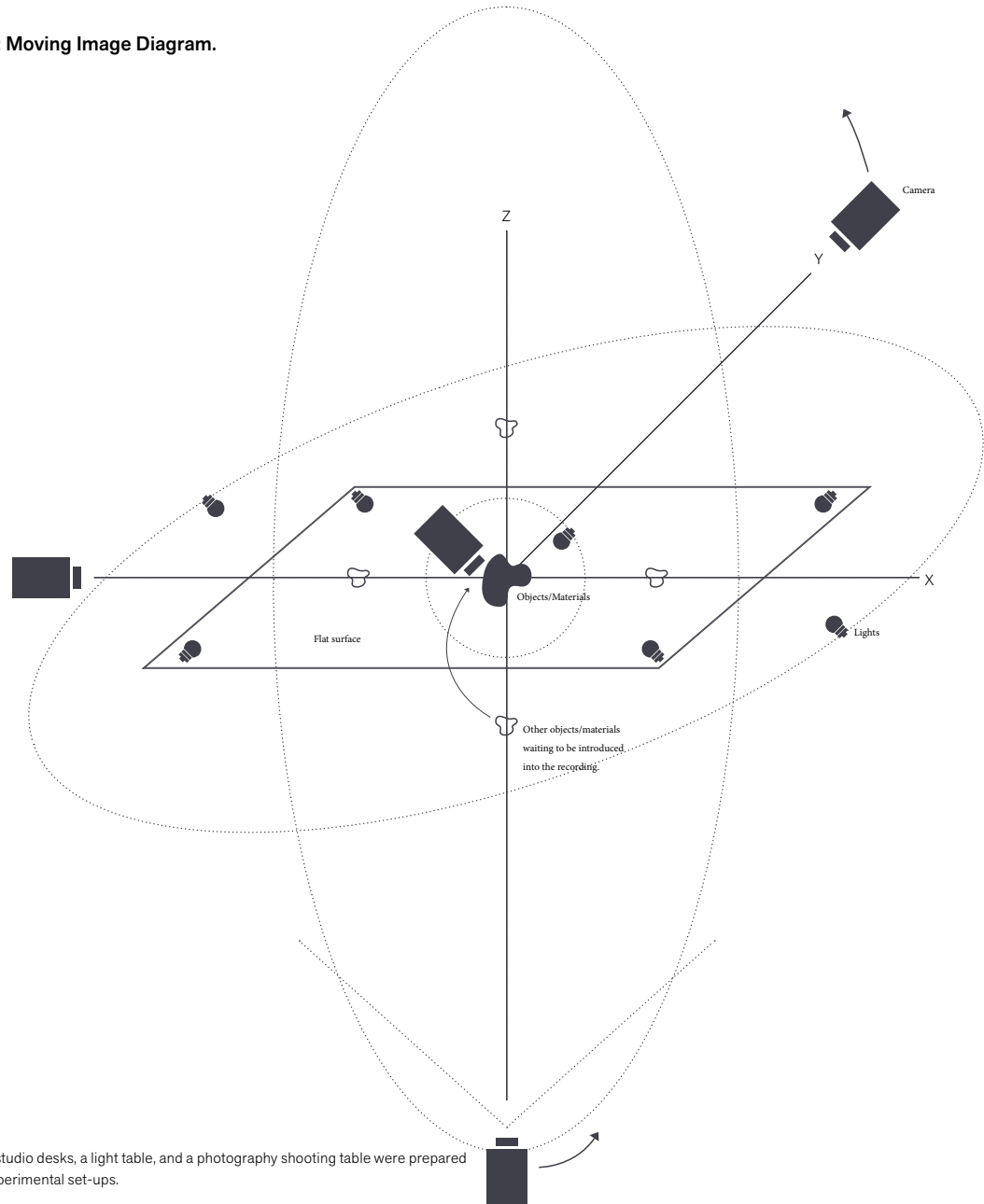
The goal of communication. It should not be confused with mere "effect" An effect may have an entertainment value which will detract from the expression if dominant (Hiebert 13).

Motion and light methodologies are layers of processes to keep the mind alert. It is a layering approach that invites different materials and tools to work together to produce results that ultimately facilitate »image associations«. The repertoire of results contributes to the development of *Immigrant Poem* and *The Evidence of the Unseen*. Motion and light methodologies is a process that insists on loose associations and the removal of preconceived

ideas – without having to sacrifice spontaneous occurrences. This process insists also on manual interactions, where motion is not created by digital »key frames« but on actual placement and adjustment of objects and materials while the camera captures footage. Professor of graphic design Kenneth J. Hiebert narrates the importance of concept development within a similar process:

“A good process keeps the mind alert. We progressively layer the material, prepare the way for connections to occur, and get ready for intuitive actions that are informed and appropriate—preventing us from jumping to conclusions prematurely. And while process is more important than results, we expect a good result from a good process... The real task is to build a sense of continuum from simple to complex so that in the movement to complexity, if this should be appropriate, there is a preservation of the traces of the original message vital for its viability. But it is also to experience that having a good basis means there is never a reason to be stuck on one solution or approach” (Hiebert 15,17).

Figure 17: Moving Image Diagram.



Flat Surface

- Several studio desks, a light table, and a photography shooting table were prepared for all experimental set-ups.

Camera

- The camera moves around the flat surface/objects/materials—throughout any axis.
- Tripod or short stand is optional.
- Handheld is optional.
- Zooming is only applied manually.
- Aperture, shutter speed or ISO are gradually adjusted before/during/after recordings.

Objects/Materials

- Objects/materials can be manually rearranged, disassemble or brought closer to the camera lens.
- Handheld is optional – depending on the objects/materials limitations.

Lights

- All studies begin with a single light – more lights can be added if necessary.
- Lights are often fixed on a single place, pointing in a single direction.
- Handheld is optional – lights can move/rotate throughout any axis.
- When working indoors – it is often better to turn off or dime down fluorescent/incandescent lights.

CHAPTER V

STUDIES | PROJECT APPLICATION: IMMIGRANT POEM

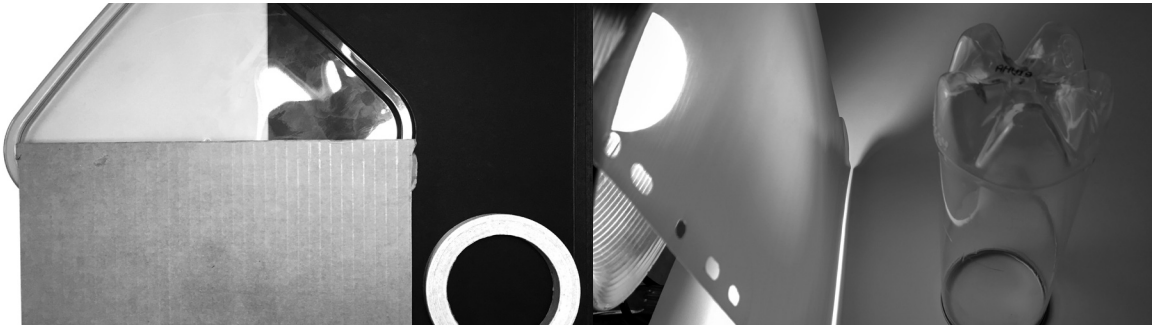


Figure 18: Materials for Study 1.

Questions and Prompts

- *In the process of experimentation through camera, materials and final results – is it possible to unlock my minds’ image storage bank of memory? and create representations of human emotions?*
- *Using the results from light studies, what are the inherent creative permissions to visualize personal events or memories?*
- *Analyze results and begin the process of free image associations based on filmmaking techniques.*
- *Persuaded and guided by all results, write/compile free image associations in the structure of lists, sketches, or analytical descriptions.*

Study 1 : Light Bending

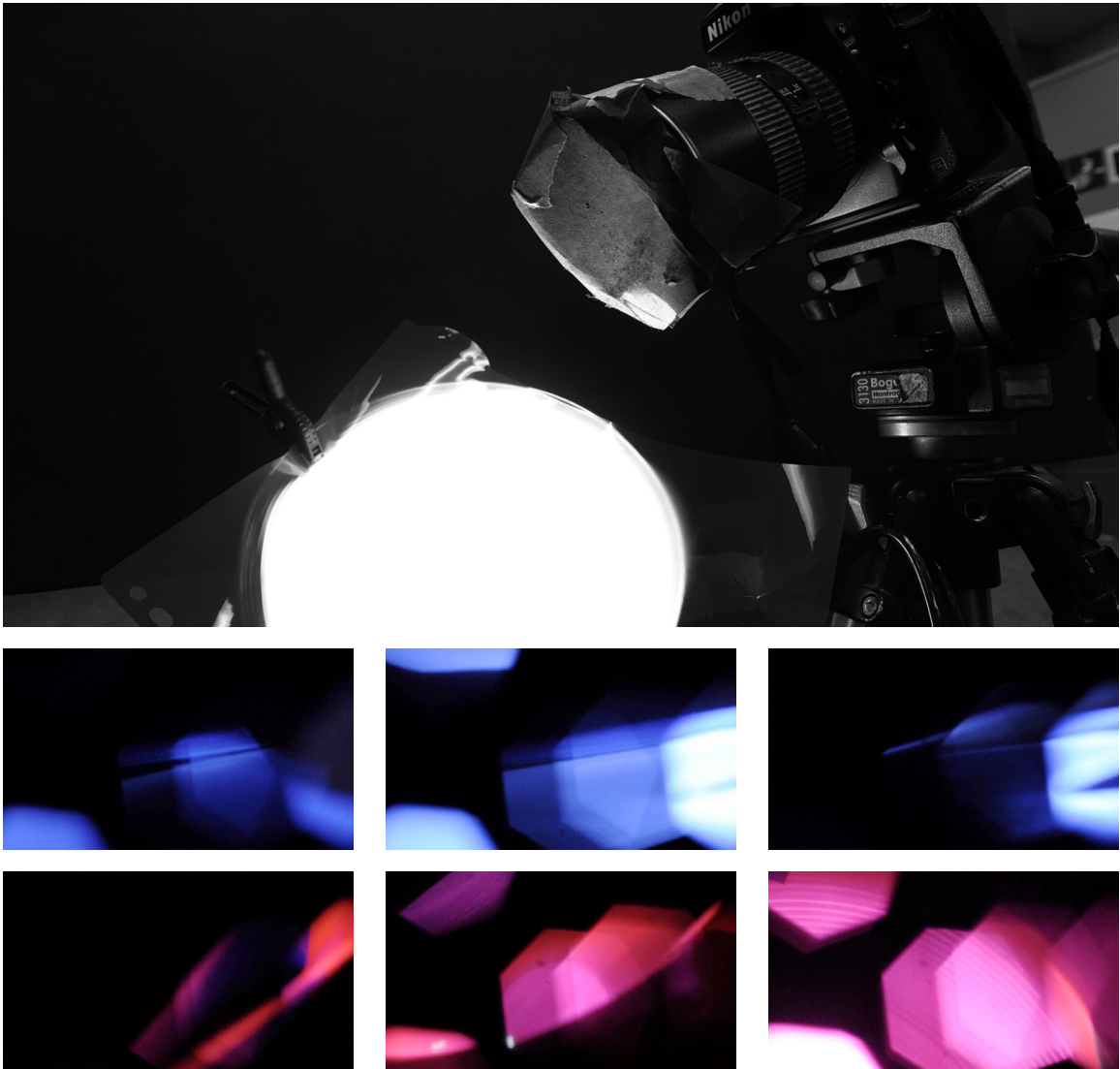


Figure 19: Setup and results from Study 1.

In this study, the camera lens is adjusted with a paper filter. The filter is perforated in the center with an X-Acto knife. These minuscule openings allow the camera lens to capture unpredictable light formations. By hand, a lamp slowly pans in front of the lens, while the camera records the light moving and contracting through the subtle interruptions of the perforated paper filter. In the process of recording light formations, the role of the camera is not merely capturing the essence of objects, but light phenomena. Color is created by covering the lamp with transparencies.

Referencing basic light theory, once light is emitted, the source is no longer in control. The speed in which light travels is influenced by the mediums that enhance or interrupt its trajectory. Light's independence is commonly denser when it travels through transparent mediums (TPUB).

Study 2 : Letter Stencil

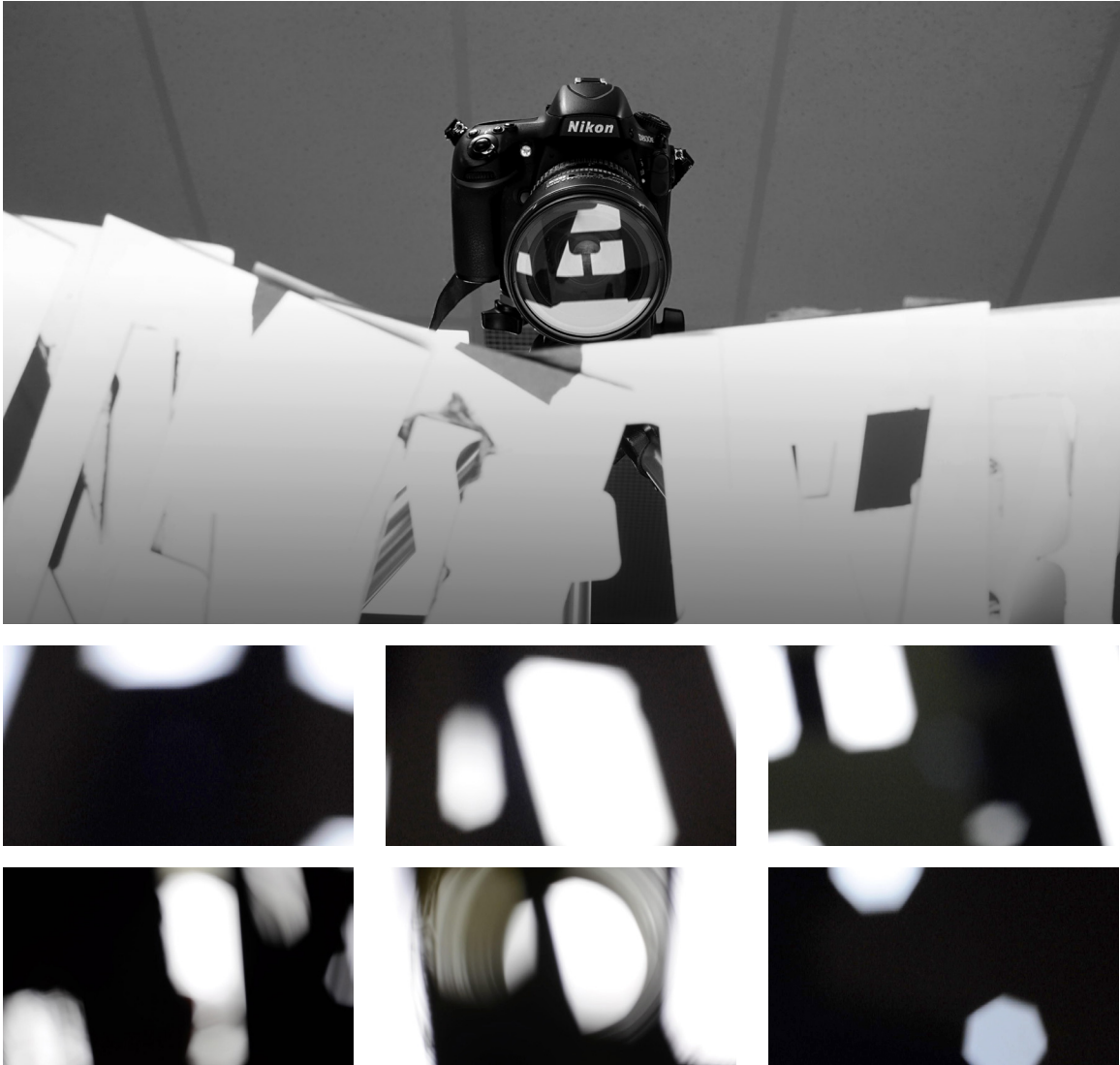


Figure 20: Setup and results from Study 2.

Letter stencils are randomly placed together to create a panel with wider/longer openings. The purpose is to enable light to seep through a variety of openings — creating soft, large light bokeh with dramatic contrast. Throughout this study, the stencil panel moves in front of a light table, while the camera struggles to focus on

a single point. Having the stencil panel closer to the camera lens produces softer edges with greater contrast and abstraction of the stencils.

Study 3 : Skin Transparency



Figure 21: Setup and results from Study 3.

For this study, my thumbs perform a light/motion exploration.

Our skin turns red as light penetrates through what may seem a thick layer. In reality, human skin is actually quite transparent. In a more scientific perspective, when our skin receives light and appearing red, it is due to all the blood cells absorbing the none red colors of light. This effect transmits a variety of reddish tone forms. Placing the camera in a dark room with manual focus and a high ISO – allows both thumbs to remain unseen

for the purpose of concealing and revealing light. To obtain greater red/orange hues, both thumbs must cover the entirety of the flashlight. Less light coverage creates small overexposed moments.

Study 4 : Letter Form

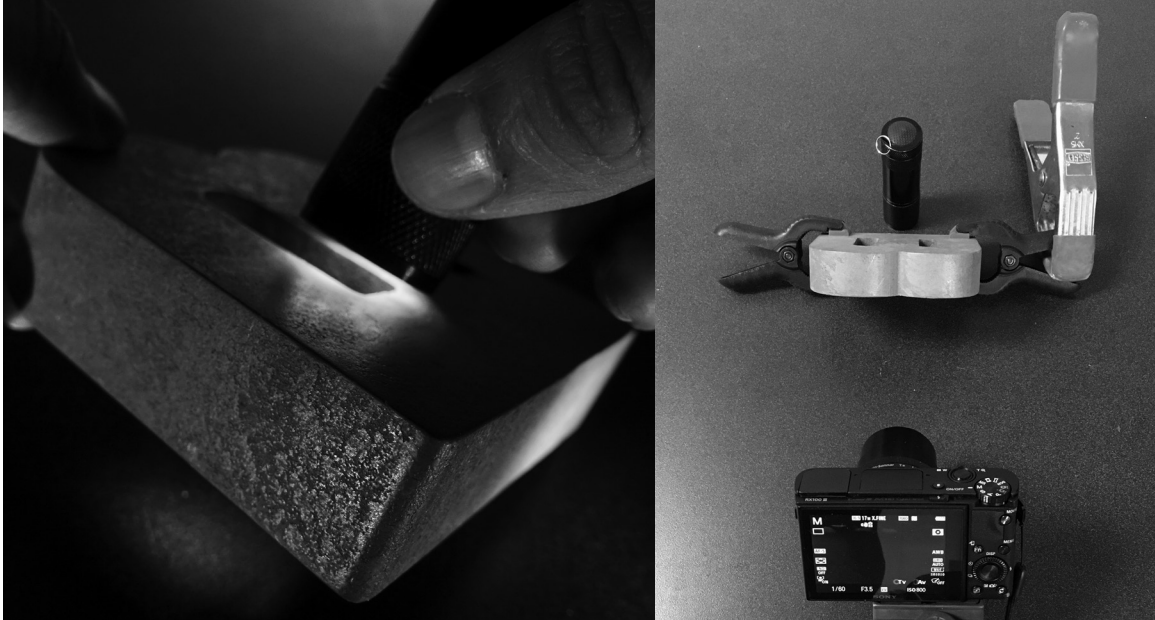


Figure 22: Setup from Study 4.

Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn was a Dutch painter, he is generally celebrated as one of the greatest visual artists in the history of art. His lighting techniques continue to influence both photographers and filmmakers. Rembrandt lighting is generally a portraiture tool with other equipment such as the main camera, light strobes, and the subject.

In this motion study, a concrete letter sculpture becomes the subject. The camera remains still on a tripod, as the light moves around the letter sculpture — exploring and activating the counters of the letter form; two soft and elongated light rays emerge. A dramatic impact is injected when the small flashlight slowly moves around the 'B' sculpture. According to Jennifer Van Stijll, a contrast of light and dark with areas disappearing into unlit shadows — it is said to provoke philosophical thoughts: good versus evil, life after death, serenity or dramatic chaos (196).

“The lens to see – to magnify, to minimize, to zoom, to focus, to blur, to mirror, to distort, to displace. I am paying attention to the visual, the physical, and the psychological distances – there is a spectrum of distances between the vast and intimate proximities.”

– Lisa J. Maione (92)

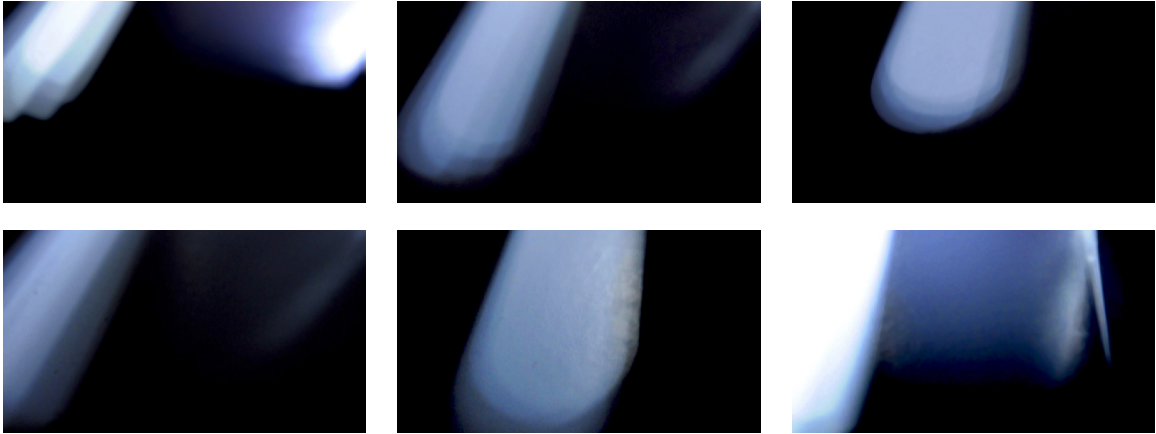


Figure 23: Results from Study 4.

This study loosely aligns with the idea of “spaces inside of spaces” (Maione 92). – light is usually a tool to navigate and see a space. Here, light becomes the subject that reveals soft subliminal moments of abstraction. Through the letter sculpture, light creates a series of gestures, leaving traces of poetic effects. With light, “one is able to see the traces of such gestures and effects that are otherwise left unnoticed” (Maione 92).

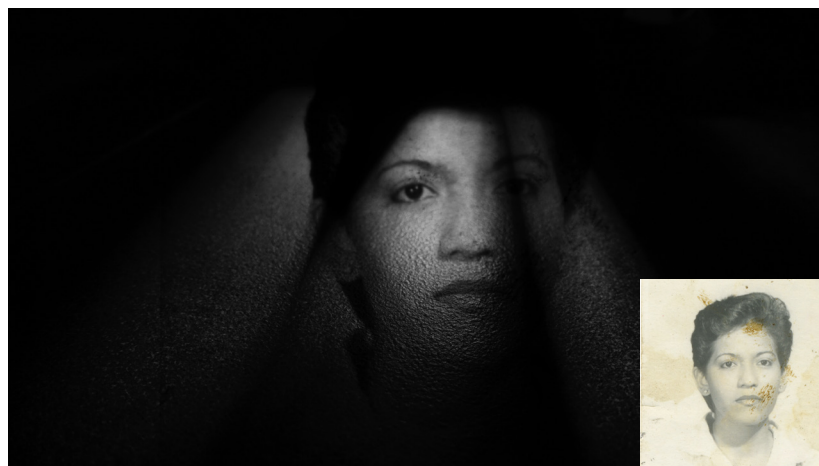


Figure 24: Example of AfterEffects' TrackMatte using results from Study 4.

Study 5 : Light Direction



Figure 25: Setup and results from Study 5.

In this short study, light seeps through the corner of boxes and other openings from reflective metal tools.

The change of direction that occurs when a ray of light passes through one material into another of different density is called refraction. "Refraction occurs because light travels at different speeds" (TPUB).

Image Associations

Coax ∴

- *Gently and persistently persuade »someone« to do something.*
- *Obtain something from »someone« by gentle and persistent persuasion.*

A constant search of knowing & discovering continues to drive the methodologies throughout this thesis. These methodologies invite free and rigorous visual associations which act as a connecting bridge of conscious creative behavior to personal beliefs and events. The results and methodologies in the *Immigrant Poem* project are to some extent grounded in the idea of “free image associations.” According to Tennessee Williams, American playwright, the ability to make visual associations is a mental mechanism that all possess. Williams once said, “we all have in our conscience and unconscious mind a great vocabulary of images and I think all human communication is based on these images” (Weston 37).

Film writer Judith Weston elaborates the idea of free image associations in her book, *The Film Director’s Intuition*:

“A documentary filmmaker told me that when he is interviewing people, one way he gets people to talk about their inner life is to ask them to describe images that are meaningful to them. This technique taps into the inner network of someone’s conscious and subconscious thoughts. This network of images is powerful information about what makes a person tick. It’s an emotional storage bank. What we are interested in, care about, value, wish for, fear, laugh at, dream off, remember, hope for — all are essential raw materials for the director as well as the writer” (128).

According to Weston, free and uncensored image associations is an activity that is mostly for right-brain directors and all creatives alike. But it is not only found in the director’s tool

kit — it is also found throughout the development of the *Immigrant Poem* project. Image associations is a process and strategy to unfold potentials and engage in modes of self-critique — it is a way to let self »do it wrong« It is a process to acknowledge, improve, repeat, but most importantly, to “take responsibility for obsessions [in every result]” (Weston 38).

Free image associations are a similar concept to Markus Weisbeck’s projective testing concept which is the human natural tendency to cast images onto things — it is a person who suddenly discovers a smiling face in cloud formations or the texture of objects brings back childhood memories. These two concepts from both writers are tools for meaning-making. In the *Immigrant Poem* project, both concepts are sources to visually persuade viewers into the journey of experimental moving image interpretation.

Project 1 Rationale: Immigrant Poem

The migration method and reasons for most immigrants depend on location, unequal job opportunities or the denial of visas, which forces immigrants and their families to travel as undocumented. In this motion sequence, a Latin American immigrant narrates his experience from a train crossing Mexico into the U.S. border. In the midst of darkness, this unknown immigrant hides inside an old and dark train wagon. He can only see lights seeping from the wagon’s rusted corners and cracks. Through the glimpses of light, flashbacks appear and disappear as the train continues the long dark journey.

Mise-en-scène :::

- *The visual theme.*
- *The setting or surroundings of an event or action.*

Immigrant Poem places the viewer in an environment that is partially unknown. With subtle light abstractions, the viewer is drawn to an experience of listening, reading, and observing.

The poetic mise-en-scène evokes the sad and lonely journey that most Latino immigrants must endure.

This motion sequence explores spatial discontinuity which is a strategy of experimental filmmakers. Krasner writes, “breaking spatial continuity allows you to reconstruct an environment that partially relies on the viewer’s imagination. This can establish a character’s viewpoint or intensify the emotional impact of the concept” (318).

Sequence Breakdown

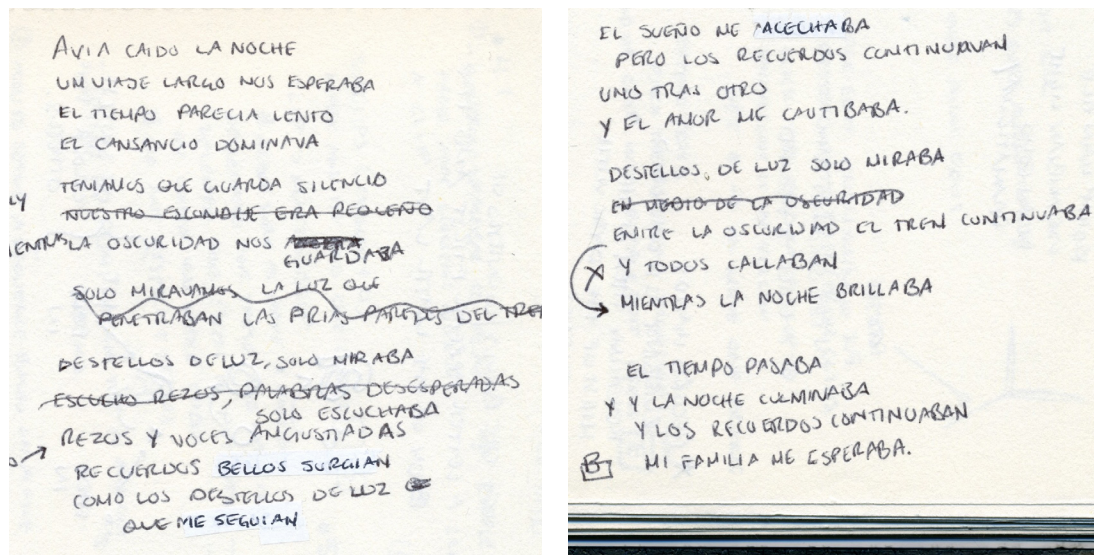


Figure 26: Sketch of written poem.

Poetry (derives from a Greek term, *poieo*, “making” or “I create”) is an art form that treats human language as malleable material to convey emotion or ideas to the reader’s mind. It is different from other literary works since it uses devices such as assonance and repetition to achieve a language that is felt or imagined. Poetry is also an interactive art that brings together devices such as imagery, word associations and musical qualities to generate a delightful play of different meanings. The word aesthetic of poetry is notoriously complex to translate from one language into another (what is poetry). The light experiments from chapter 5 — yielded a Spanish poem from a combination of written reflections and image associations to the immigrant experience.

The poem was written in Spanish and translated in collaboration with Cheryl Kutcher, an MFA graduate from Oklahoma State University. Since poetry generates a layering of imagery and meaning through the play of words into the readers' mind, *Immigrant Poem* explores the opposite idea of traditional poem conception. Instead, the repertoire of moving images initiates the need to write 'what I see'. Light abstractions perform the role of »visual subtitles«.

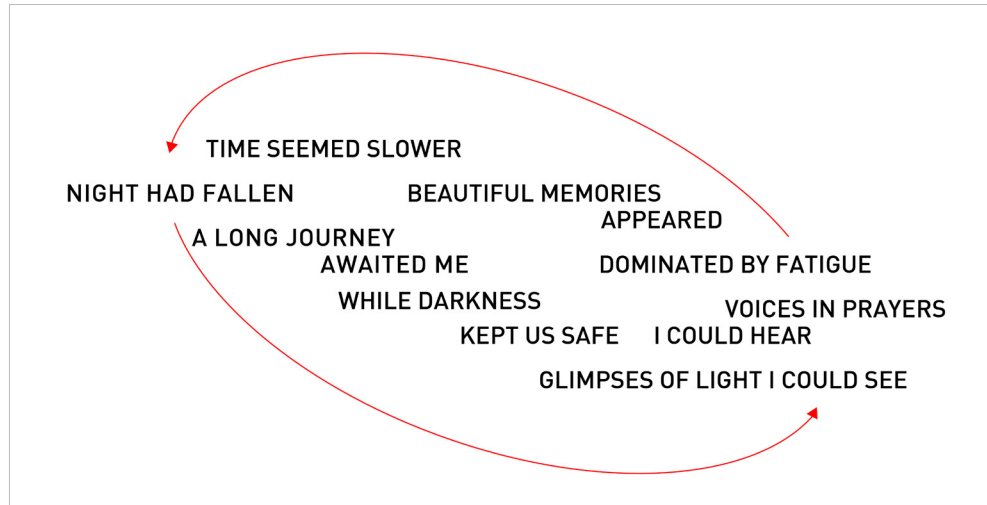


Figure 27: Animation+Arrangement.

Immigrant Poem places English sub-titles on multiple places throughout the composition. Every sub-title travels in circles from the center of the composition. The animation style uses features from the art of concrete poetry, which are "objects composed of words, letters, colors, and typefaces, in which graphic space plays a central role in both design and meaning. Concrete poets experimented boldly with language, incorporating visual, verbal, kinetic, and sonic elements" (Aube).



Figure 28: Typography from an abandoned train outside of the Tulsa international airport.



Figure 29: Type animation and (below) application with footage.

While the poem is recited in Spanish, each letter from the English translation is animated by slightly increasing its kerning. Opacity shifts help the animation achieve a graceful emotion when all letters come together to translate the Spanish spoken poem. In the midst of the textual translation, an ambiguous Spanish word briefly interrupts the entire animation.



The final application of experiments towards the immigrant experience idea; brings together a collection of light phenomena that interacts with kinetic typography, along with a careful synchronization to the spoken poem.

Final Thoughts: Immigrant Poem

In the creative process of Immigrant Poem, personal memories were the agents to draw out formal relationships and meanings never experienced before. These memories are fragments from stories I heard on the news and many family conversations. One of these memory fragments was the incident that happened in the summer of 2003 (a year after my arrival into the U.S.). Authorities found 19 bodies in a milk truck in the Texas City of Victoria. According to reports, all immigrants suffocated in the hot and airless trailer.

Through the process of examining light study results, it afforded me to tap into my inner network of images and memories. This creative process permitted me to pursue a profound and intuitive journey, as I proceeded to work with light studies.

Matisse once said that “to look at something as though you had never seen it requires great courage” (Kent 12).

My light explorations seem too distant from any idea at the time. But I felt a special energy every time my mind attempted to make relationships to my impressions of immigrant suffering. “There is an energy in the creative process that belongs to the league of those energies which can uplift, unify and harmonize” (Kent 5). This energy granted me the courage to work and make connections from every light exploration. And most importantly, this particular mode of working helped me overcome even the most difficult memories of my life.



Scan QR code to view *Immigrant Poem* motion sequence.

<https://vimeo.com/261230256>

CHAPTER VI

STUDIES | PROJECT APPLICATION: THE EVIDENCE OF THE UNSEEN

The Organization of Movement

Dziga Vertov was interested in the »organization« of movement. He believed that if necessary, one should invent movement through objects in space — through frame by frame and shot by shot relationships (Wees ch.1). In the tradition of experimental filmmaking, many practitioners like Vertov, have discussed similar concepts regarding projected images that are stimulated by objects. The motion studies in this chapter, explore cinema's basic principles of light, movement and time. The results are possibilities in which light phenomena becomes a source and stimulus for poetic interpretations and further image associations. This mode of utilizing quotidian objects and materials is adapted from Kenneth Hiebert's book, *Graphic Design Sources*. Hiebert draws experimental results from a variety of contexts — nature, music, and built environments (15).

In the book, *Cinematic Story Telling*, Jennifer Van Sijll articulates: “when a camera is placed in situations where it can shoot through objects like stained glass, water or plastic, for example, it alters the photographic properties of the image — creating organic distortions of reality and provoking a subliminal characteristic of a moving image” (144). For Van Sijll, great creative opportunities evolve from this simple camera strategy.

Study 6 : Water and Plastic

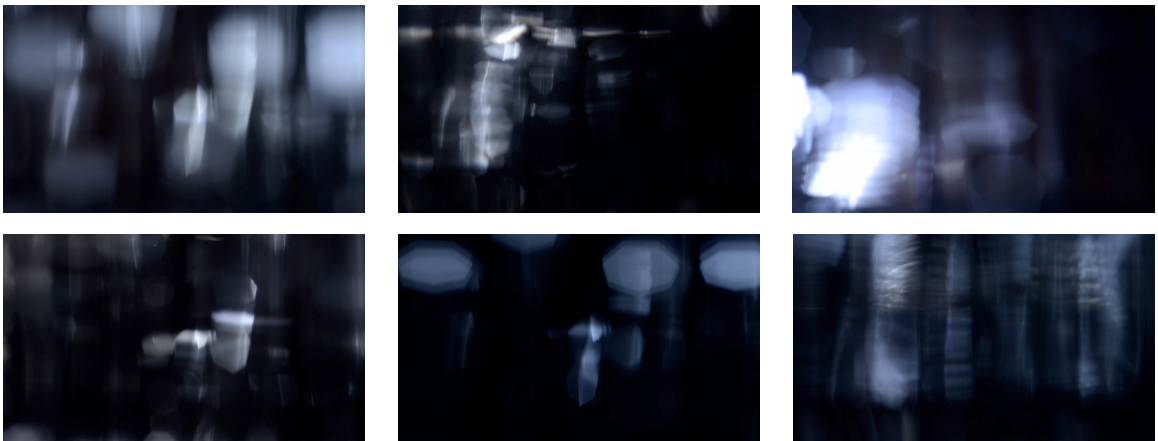


Figure 30: Setup and results from Study 6.

The process in this experiment deals with the redirection, reduction, and projection of light using a plastic transparent jug. Two LED lights are continuously panning around the water jug — causing new light formations by means of speed and the form of the jug itself. Due to the highly reflective plastic in combination with water, minor adjustments are necessary while the camera is recording. The exploration of angles and light distances suffice to bring about a rich collection of unpredictable light distortions.

Water and Immigrants



Figure 31: Sabotaged plastic water bottle.

According to the Disappeared Report, approximately 3,000 gallons of water left out for border crossers are intentionally sabotage, implicating the U.S. border agents in the majority of this inhumane act. The cruel interference against humanitarian aid is not only a type of vandalism but a mindset from border agents who believe in deterring people by condemning them to die of thirst in extremely hot temperatures.

The Disappeared Report states that “volunteers found water gallons vandalized 415 times, on average twice a week, in 800sq mile patch of the Sonoran desert south-west of Tucson, AZ from March 2012 to December 2015...this damage has an equivalent of approximately 3,586 affected gallons” (Carroll).

Caitlin Deighan, a spokeswoman for No More Deaths, believes that the strategy of funneling migrants into the desert, where thousands continue to die, begins from the Bill Clinton era. A wall as a way of deterrence is only another method to continue the funneling. Deighan says “it will mean more suffering and death...we do expect this crisis to worsen under the current administration.” The goal of humanitarian aid is not to encourage illegal migration, but to help those who are on the deadliest paths of the desert.

“Border crossers should drink between five to 12 liters of water daily, depending on conditions. Few manage to carry more than seven liters even though a journey through the desolate scrub can last several days or even weeks” (Carroll).

Deserts Among Us

Limitations have the potential to propel ideas forward, to move ideas into further inquiry. Limitations are magnets of serendipity, which often emerge in a split of a second. Sometimes, crafting moving images is like a deep pool of limitations.

Desire Lines :::

Paths that pedestrians take informally, rather than taking a sidewalk or set route.

At certain times, for example, traveling to other places becomes crucial for unique footage. In this motion study, location is a challenging limitation. The Sonoran desert is approximately 1,017 miles from Oklahoma. Online footage is readily available, with a set of constraints for every choice there is. During a late afternoon, I stumble through a sandy path, with perfectly printed footsteps, which are similar pieces of evidence throughout the Sonoran desert landscape. Some call these informal routes shortcuts; others, man-made paths. Another more romantic term exists »desire lines«.



Figure 32: OSU campus footsteps.

U.S. Border Patrol often follow and locate immigrants by footprints. According to border agents, if a footprint is deep, it is a sign of someone running. These footprints belong to Oklahoma State University students, who make their daily journey to class. In an effort to save time, students unconsciously make desire lines. Observing this behavior through the camera, campus desire lines suddenly appear as desert footprints.

Shaping Light

“Imagine an eye unruled by man-made laws of perspective, an eye unprejudiced by compositional logic, an eye which does not respond to the name of everything but which must know each object encountered in life through an adventure of perception. How many colors are there in a field of grass to the crawling baby unaware of ‘Green’? ... how aware of variations in heat waves can that eye be? Imagine a world alive with incomprehensible objects and shimmering with an endless variety of movement and innumerable gradations of color. Imagine a world before the ‘beginning was the word.’” – Stan Brakhage

According to Hiebert, the way in which a form or an image is etched in the mind is through the paradoxical rhythm of concealing/revealing. That is to say, visual communication generates interest by withholding rather than quickly giving away what intrigues the mind (12).

- *Is it possible to shape light through manual gestures? – and use results as concealers/revealers of other images?*
- *Is there a correlation between rhythmic light formations and cinematic transitions?*

Early experimental film techniques from Sergei Eisenstein and Dziga Vertov to contemporary individuals like Malcolm Le Grice who rejected smooth, logical transitions and mainstream interpretations of images. These filmmakers tend to present complex visual statements, disorienting expectations with repetition, close-ups, and rapid cuts. Based on these film techniques:

- *Allow results and possibilities from distortion, color-shift, and permutation of light as a language to juxtapose with other images/footage to continue further inquiry in *After Effects*.*
- *Through the exploration of light shaping, generate a system in which light could be shaped as editing transitions and emotion metaphors.*

Study 7 : Energetic/Colorful

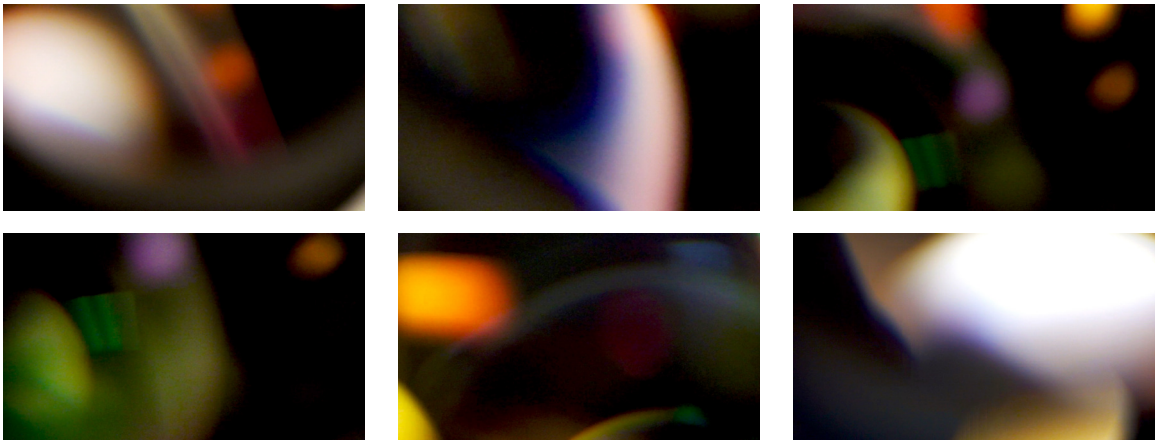


Figure 33: Setup and results from Study 7.

In this light study, a projector lens stimulates the next set of light formations. Using various speeds and distances, the projector lens is suddenly a creator of form while the camera records. The results are energetic and colorful moving forms that emerge when the shiny glass from the projector lens reflects available lighting from the studio. Fixing the camera on a single spot permits greater manual control while holding the projector lens with both hands.

Study 8 : Light Leak

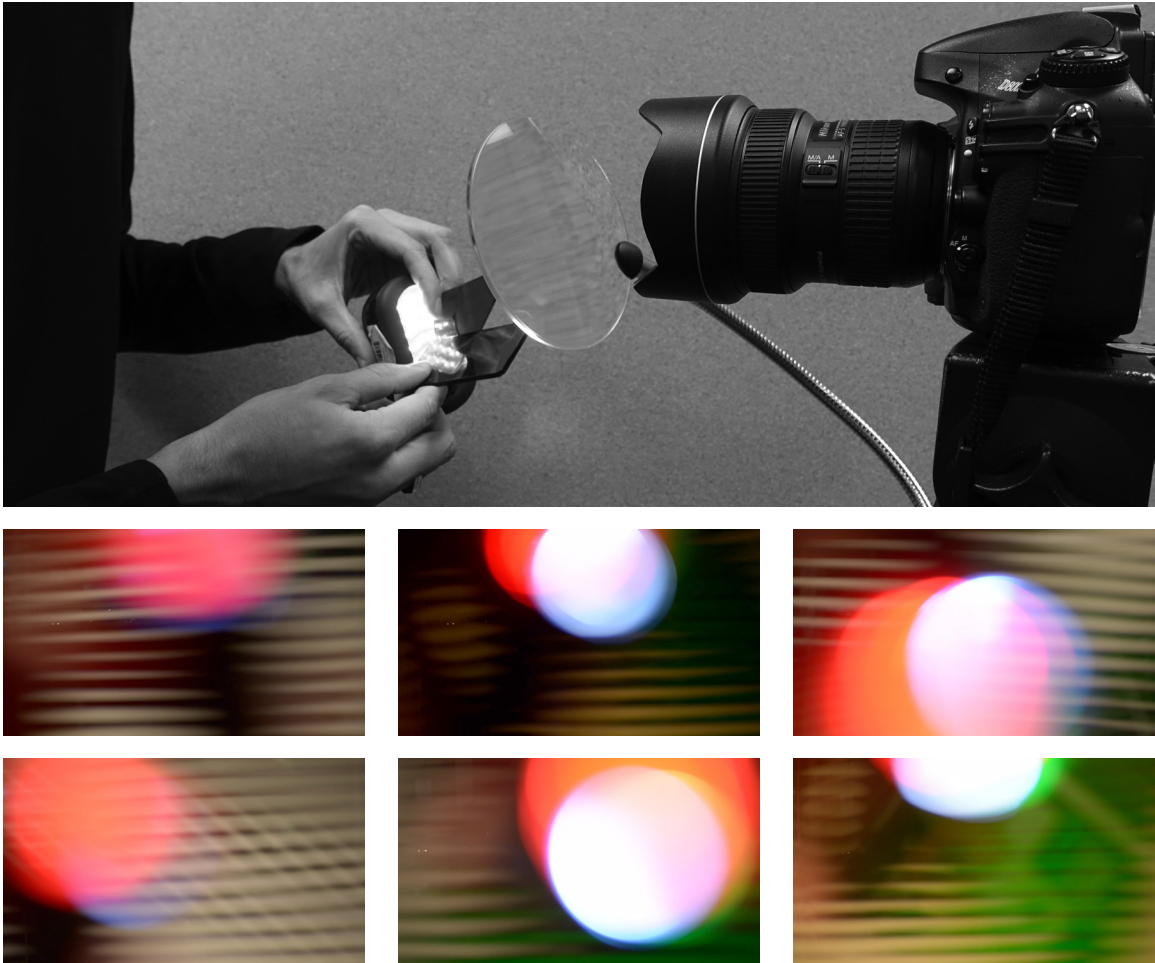


Figure 35: Setup and results from Study 8.

A light leak, considered as a problem, is a kind of stray light. These types of accidents are usually considered undesirable. However, for some filmmakers, these flaws are known to occupy valuable time and space in the final sequence. One of the reasons: light misbehaviors disrupt the temporal continuity of an entire motion sequence (Krasner 322). On the other hand, as a strategy to engage audiences on a purely visceral level, early experimental filmmakers, implement discontinuity and accidents in their moving images. They are known for portraying states of mind with filters, out-of-focus lenses, fast camera pans, close-ups, repetition, and ghost-like images (Krasner 318). The results in this study are possibilities to depict emotions (tension, shock or other psychological effects). The uninterpretable light abstraction in this study becomes a playground space for meaning and connections.

Study 9 : Control/Blur

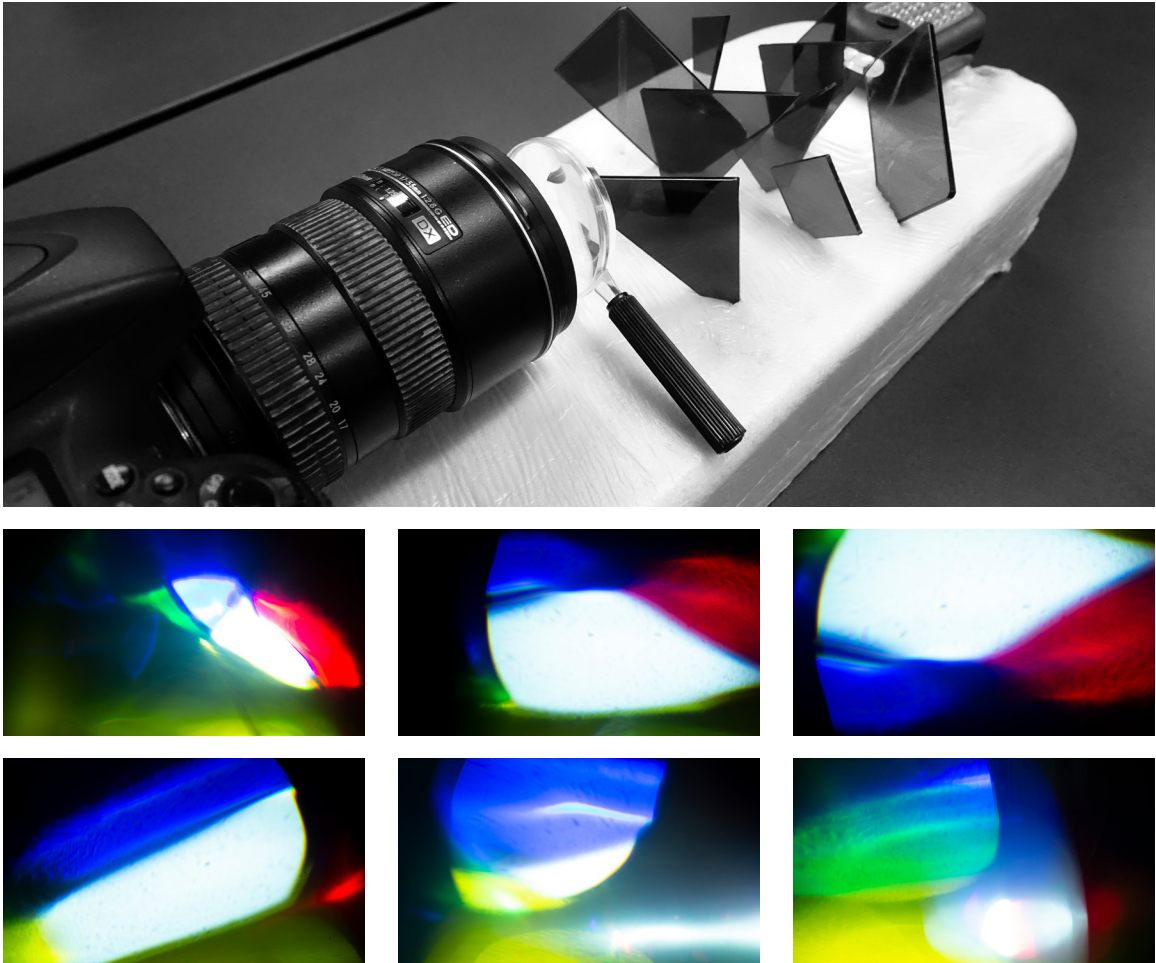


Figure 34: Setup and results from Study 9.

The inclusion of blurs and intersecting objects is once again investigated by using color transparent tiles and a small magnifying glass. Each color tile is pressed down in thick foam, creating a landscape of colorful transparent planes. In this study, motion does not depend on actual camera movements. Motion is created by panning the magnifying glass to interrupt the camera's point of view. The intention is to invent motion effects and to discover ways to improvise while recording. This procedure is a "reduction of intentionality" – Markus Weisbeck believes that results from intuitive studies, allows the designer to see the unfolding of surprises. The productivity of the experiment is enhanced by the reduction of intentionality and intuitive observation.

The Nonlinear: Narrative Experimentations

“There is a sea of meaning into which words can’t dip an oar, but which three pictures, considered together, and maybe in such and such an order, might get you into the flow of a very different style of thought. So, this leads to the idea that still pictures in a sequence are yet different from both words and individual still pictures in the way they create a path of related movements (meanings).” – Daniel Barnett

A narrative is a sequence of real or imaginary events. Narratives are often in the form of written or spoken words, or a combination of still or moving images (Traupman). In the famous *Poetics*, Aristotle makes the observation that narratives have a thematically coherent pattern – beginning, middle, and end. But, what happens when a narrative plays with these thematic patterns? What happens when the pace, the rhythm and the flow of sequences that are so familiar to narratives are spontaneously challenged?

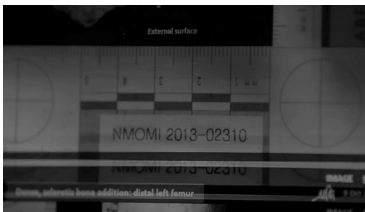
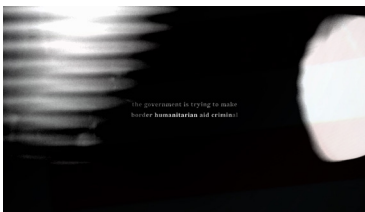
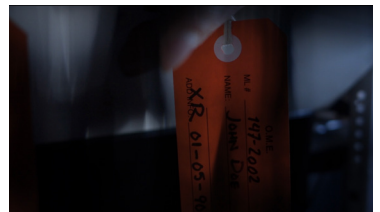
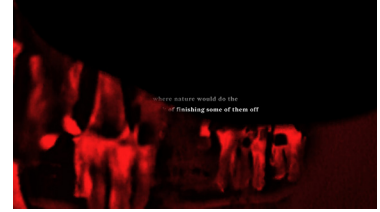
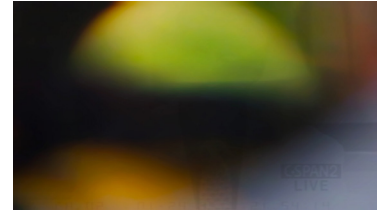
In a poem stanza, for instance, if textual expressions become too obscure or ambiguous, limiting the reader to move forward. When this disruption occurs in a poem, is this a reason to ignore that particular stanza? or the entire poem? Poem writers as well as moving image practitioners, eagerly invite the viewer to generate image connections when ambiguity takes over. In other words, what seems obscure and limiting in a poem or in a moving image, is far greater than a dull assumption. Narrative experimentations create deeper interactions with any audience (Barnett 43). According to Barnett, “if we make it across that immense chasm of ambiguity – a zone that’s new to us, a zone we haven’t seen before, an insight forced by the diversion of thought – when discoveries are discernible from the obscure and the limiting” – experimental narratives become »gifts« from the creator to the patient viewer (43, 44). In the sphere of moving images, this type of textual or visual play alludes to disruptive or nonlinear modes of narrative. This mode is often ideal to visually structure and represent human

memory. It is also a method to explore events out of chronological order. The abstraction of narratives is a method to refocus our attention as the sequence seamlessly transitions from one idea into another. Experimental narratives are »visual poems« which is a cinematic point of view from the 1920's Cinéma Pur filmmakers. "Multiple meanings abound in poetry so the movement of the mind through a poem is rarely linear, it is often perturbed, sometimes oscillating beautifully, sometimes downright turbulent, a quality of movement orchestrated by the poet, and conducted and played by ourselves. Also there is the expectation that it will be idiosyncratic. That is, the mind will never have move like this before. Meaning in a poem is earned more than assumed" (Barnett 44).

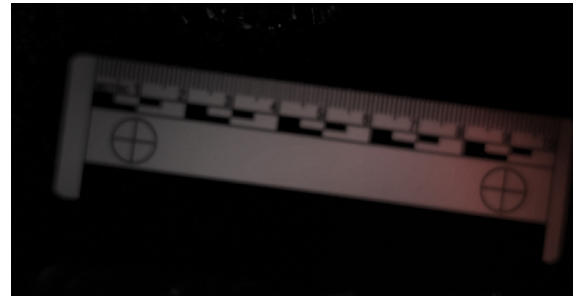
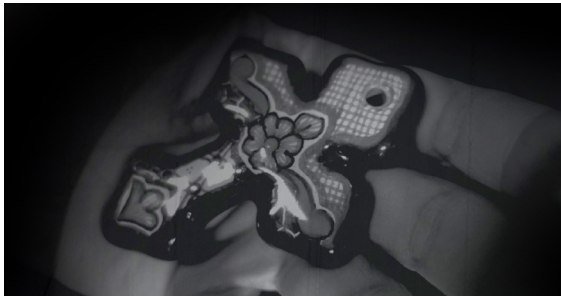
Project 2 Rationale: The Evidence of the Unseen

The Evidence of the Unseen visualizes the reality of undocumented immigration as manifested on the southern border with Mexico. The discoveries from previous poetic light interpretations have contributed to a visual language that portrays the violent Sonoran desert as a »weapon« of deterrence. For most immigrants, the desert route is not optional, since certain points of entry are more secure than others. This unequal border security causes a funneling effect, which leads immigrants towards the hostile Sonoran desert terrain. This begs the question, why not apply for a visa? For most Latin American immigrants, it is extremely challenging to earn a visa to enter the U.S. This process requires proof of enough valuable assets or a U.S. sponsor. Since most immigrants are poor, obtaining a visa is impossible for most low-income families. On one hand, *The Evidence of the Unseen* is a critique to the current U.S. border law and its unequal security strategies. On the other hand, it is a »moving image discourse« that brings awareness about this current humanitarian issue. It is a visual discourse that demands from the audience an interpretation that goes beyond subjective beliefs.

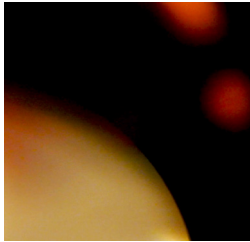
Sequence Breakdown



The final sequence is a relationship between multiple light study results which are manipulated using speed, texture, color, and a mixture of digital blending modes. The collection of light study results permits countless possibilities in the process of digital juxtapositions. This strategy aligns with Brakhage's idea of "moving visual thinking" or Venezky's "making as a way of thinking" which are part of the lineage of inventive thinking. "Inventive thinking is not to be confused with being creative. Having inventive skill is the ability to recombine two or more items in an unusual way... it is redefining the way we see things in the world" (DeMao 12).



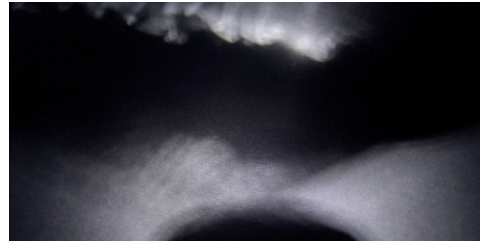
Forensic photo Scale: Commonly used by medical examiners for body remains.



Study 7.



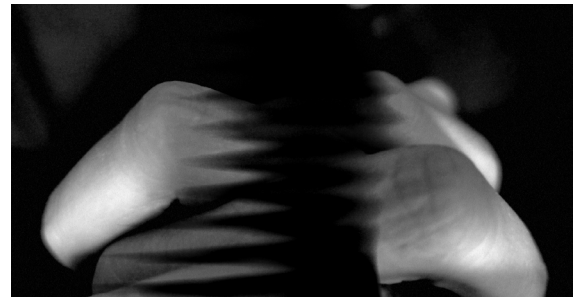
A decorative cross, symbolism of faith. Gift from Prof. Jahanshahi.



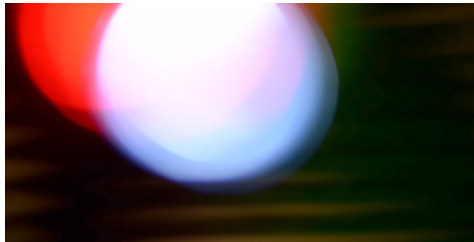
Study 6: Footage used to conceal and reveal.



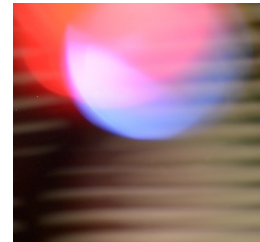
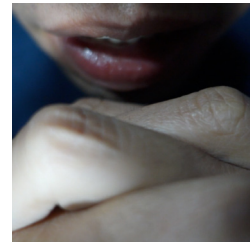
Black and white images with a deep black, a pure white, and varying grays in between can engage the eyes and draw viewers in. Tonal range is important for a dynamic image.



Psalm 91 prayer (Spanish).



Study 9: Removal of color with digital distortion. Footage used as a transition.



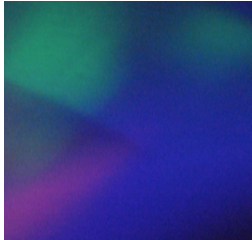
Study 9.

Figure 36: Application and sequence breakdown..

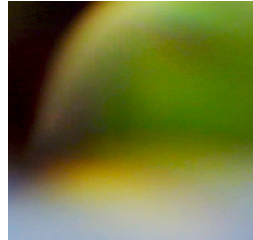
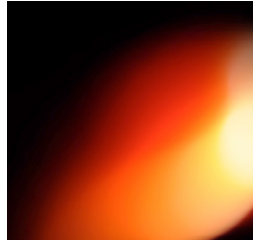
a strategy of passive violence that funnels migrants into inhospitable terrains—where there is no fence and no security



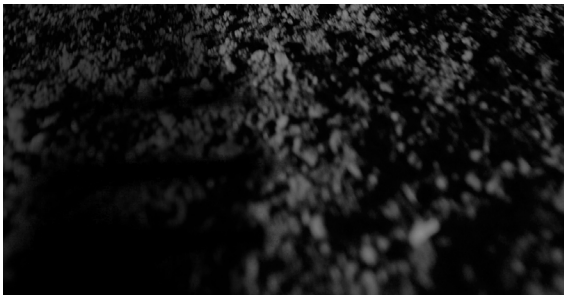
Portrait of my Mother. Immigrants commonly leave behind backpacks, containing family portraits.



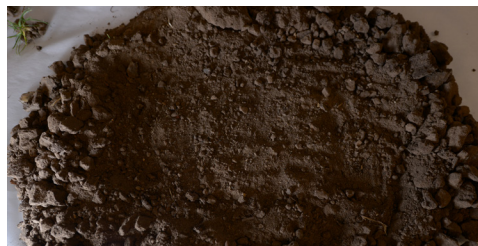
Color/speed exploration from a rotating party bulb. Footage used as a metaphor of traveling.



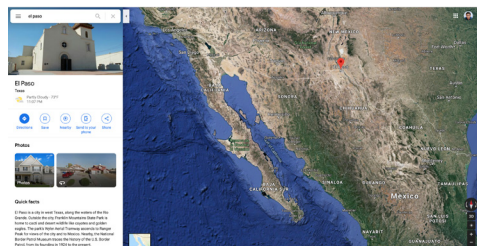
Combination of study 3 and 7 using — Linear light: Burns or dodges the colors by decreasing or increasing the brightness, depending on the underlying (photo) color.



Short fragments of study 9 were manipulated to create moving ghost-like shadows.



The desert walk footage was shot indoors using a photography shooting table. Shadows were intensified by pointing and moving a lamp closer to the setup.



Exploration of the desert. Google maps screen recordings.

Figure 37: Application and sequence breakdown.

Relationships :::

An ability to combine diverse visual elements so the parts keep their individual clarity while helping to form a richer whole (Hiebert 10).

Once limitations and visual relationships are understood, the process of orchestrating moving images using software becomes another level of inquiry. "Processing an image requires that it is in some way foreign, incomplete, unexpected. This processing as a result of questioning is a way a form becomes etched in the mind" (Hiebert 12).

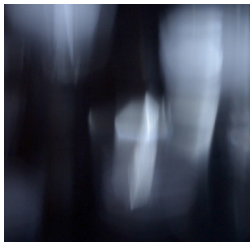
Limitations :::

Visual communication benefits from the emergence of limitations. Certain limitations forces the designer to make visual associations and something out of what is given (Hiebert 10).

Figure 38: Application and sequence breakdown.



This footage was juxtaposed with multiple light studies. This combination produced an eerie effect.



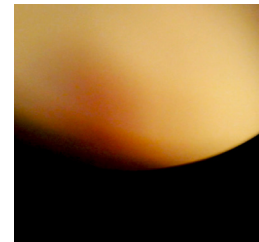
Study 6.



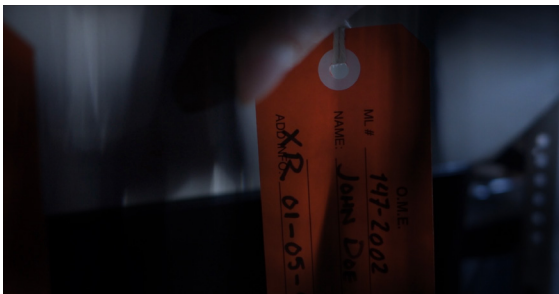
Gallon of water: study of reflection.



Medical examiner from Pima County, AZ.
Human remains/examination process.



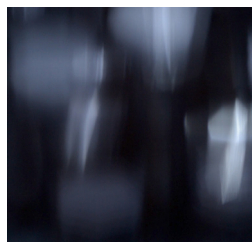
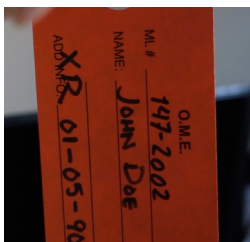
Study 7.



Identification tags for human body remains.



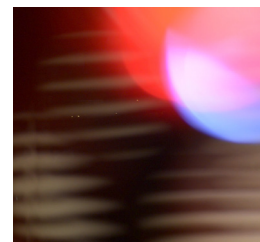
Trump excites his followers by asking "who's gonna build the wall?"



Study 6.



Trump rally.



Study 9.



Vultures can pick clean (skeletonize) a body in just 5hrs. This makes it hard to identify immigrants.



Immigrants walking in the wilderness remove their shoes as a consequence of severe blisters.



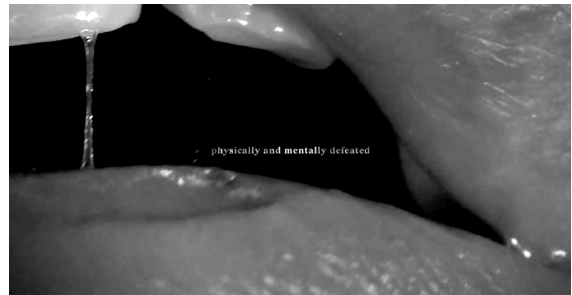
Video excerpt from National Geographic: Vultures - Photographing the antiheroes of our ecosystems exposure.



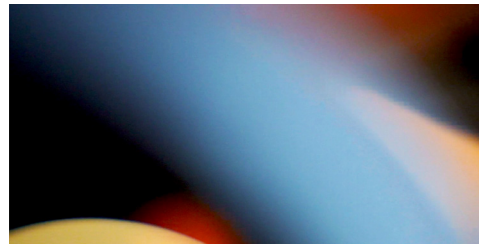
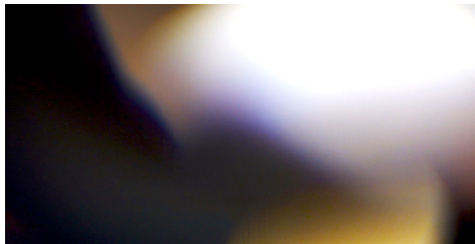
Study 6.



Study 7.



Dehydration is the common cause of death. 62% of cases are undetermined, primarily due to limitations of examination of decomposed and skeletal remains.



The light formations from study 7 are manipulated as concealers/revealers of footage. These also work in moments of transitions.

Figure 39: Application and sequence breakdown.

As soon as you are engaged in clarifying and intensifying an event through lighting, however, you not only become aware of shadows, you learn to use them for specific tasks ... clarifying and intensifying is also the role of shadows.” modified (Zettl 19).

— Herbert Zett

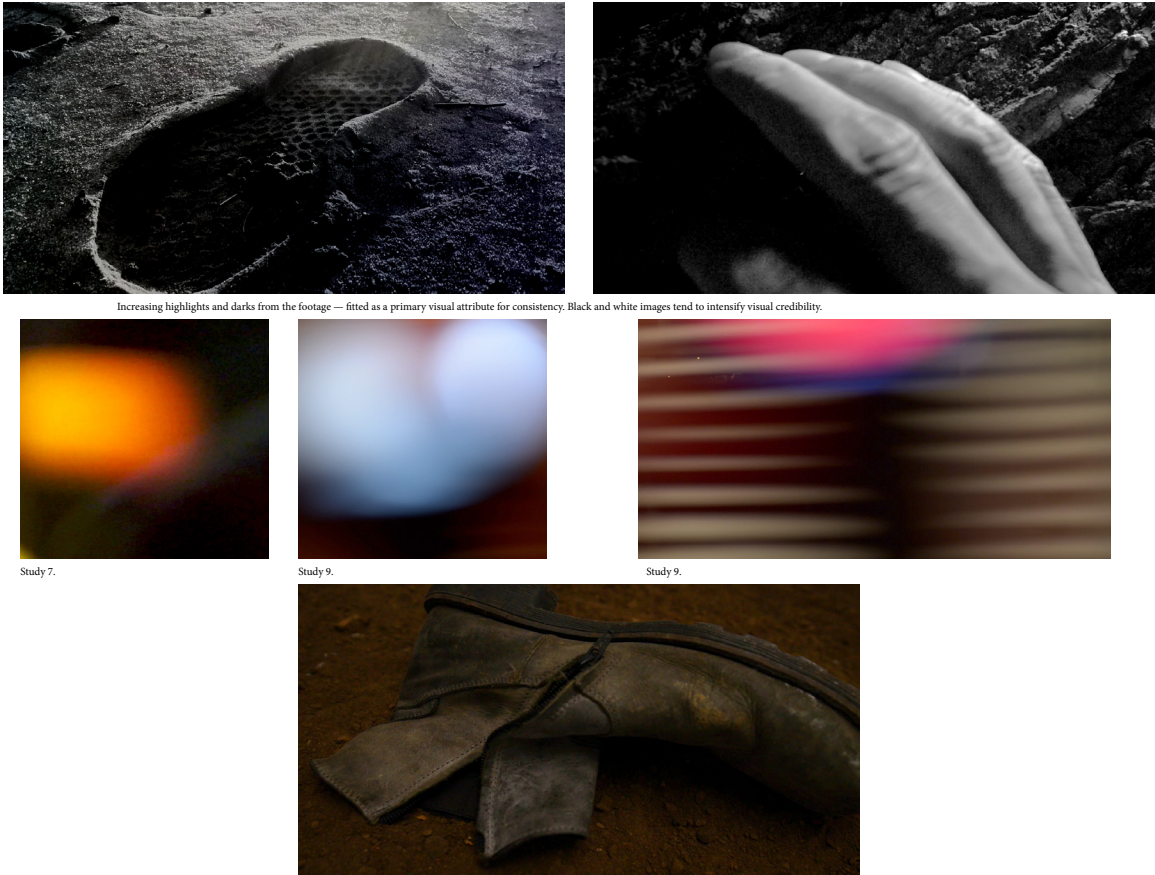


Figure 40: Application and sequence breakdown.

Final Thoughts: The Evidence of the Unseen

“There’s no trouble in knowing what you want to say. It begins in keeping out the rest of it.” — Kenneth Patchen (Kent 83).

Working in this short motion piece was more of a personal project than anticipated. The sources of inspiration came from unexpected places. For example, television news with political content, deceased immigrant archives, documentaries, and movie title sequences. On the other hand, personal associations occurred throughout the creative process, such as Christian practices (recitation of Psalm 91), personal artifacts (footwear, portraits and a decorative cross) and extreme close-ups to my hands, eyes, and mouth. These latter peculiar

sources led me to speak out my feelings and embody the experience of walking the Sonoran desert. *The Evidence of the Unseen* is a type of prologue because one source of inspiration tends to remain in my mind, which then leads to broader feelings and connections as the visual inquiry continues to develop within digital iterations. These iterations yielded me to follow a non-linear method of storytelling. Each source of inspiration is the first and ultimate cause of the visual vocabulary in *The Evidence of the Unseen*. This project is not necessarily biographical — it is a moving image that possesses the power to inform and broaden an individual's understanding of immigration policies and its future consequences.



Scan QR code to view *The Evidence of the Unseen* motion sequence.

<https://vimeo.com/330614959>

EXHIBITION | DOCUMENTATION

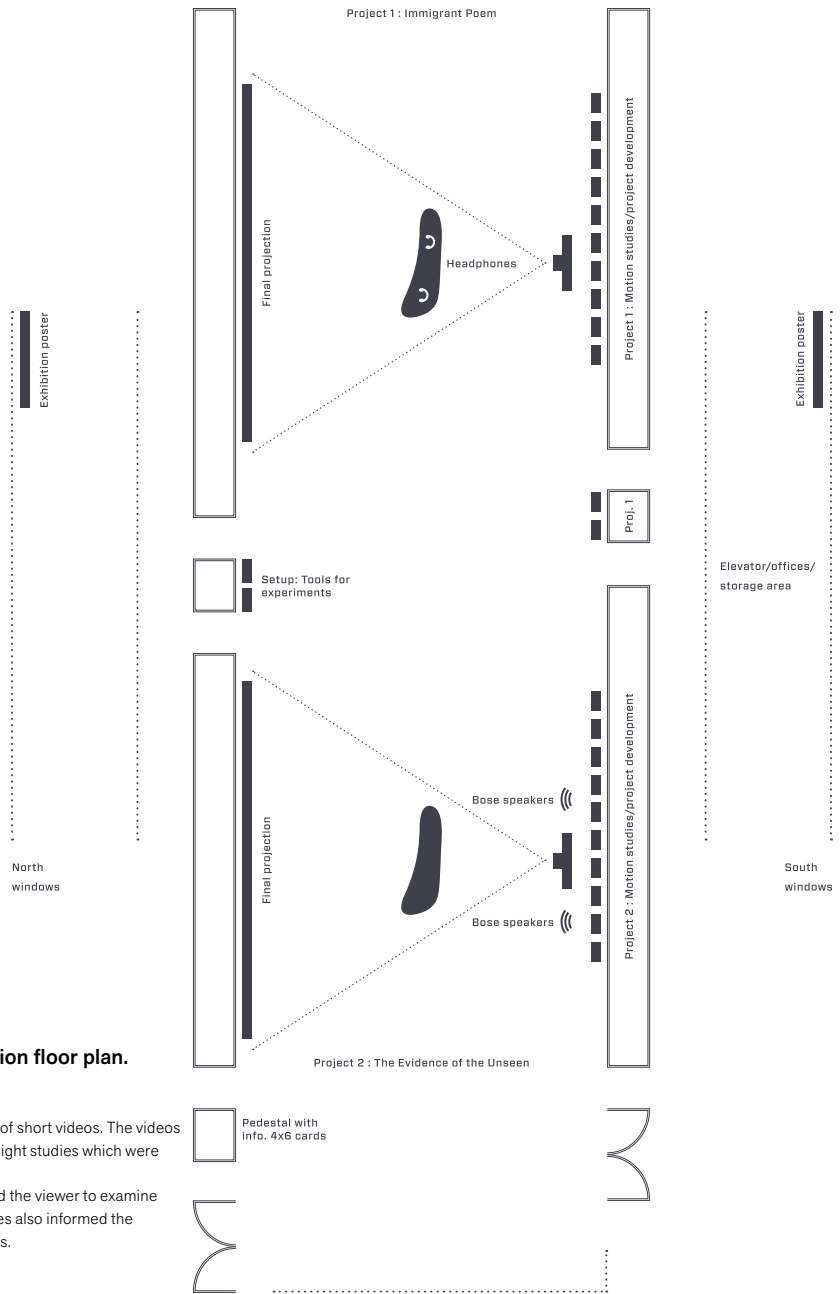


Figure 41: Gardiner Gallery, exhibition floor plan.

Motion studies/project development

- A total of 18 iPads were set to loop a range of short videos. The videos demonstrated motion studies and abstract light studies which were implemented in the final two projections.
- 4x7in images (framing each iPad) permitted the viewer to examine moments within each video loop. The images also informed the development of the two final two projections.

Projections for project 1 and 2

- Projector screen size: 50x87in
- To create an intimate experience – project 1 audio was transmitted using two headphones.
- To create a mixture of tension and openness in the gallery – project 2 audio was transmitted using two Bose speakers.
- To create a better picture contrast during the projections – the gallery lights were slightly dimmed down.

Setup of tools

- The tools featured in the exhibition were the main assets in the development of motion studies and final two projections.

Statement text

- Mounted print of thesis abstract.

Exhibition | Documentation



Projections using two 50x87in screens

Exhibition | Documentation

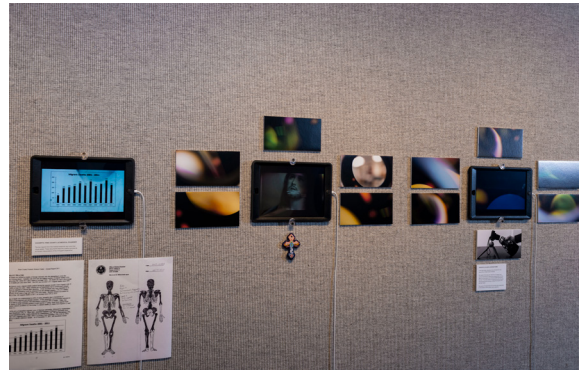


Project 2 | Immigrant Poem: Motion studies/project development



Setups: Tools for experiments

Exhibition | Documentation



Project 2 | The Evidence of the Unseen: Motion studies/project development

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

The term ‘experimental’ is far from unusable — experimentation is a methodology.”

— Martin Venezky

In the process of developing multiple light studies through rigorous iterations — several connections emerged. My collection of strategies and rich visual results hold a strong alignment within the lineage of inventive designers. For example, Martin Venezky’s experimental work is about a “circular set of steps” using the camera. For Venezky, the camera is a “middle tool” to generate extensive explorations. His methodology embraces surprises, which enables him to shift strategies to create new and deeper connections. This ability to be inventive is often confused with being creative. Inventive skill is the ability to recombine two or more items in an unusual way (DeMao Jr. 12). For Venezky inventive or experimental work is about:

“Setting up an experiment, running the process, analyzing the results and then letting the results guide the next experiment. There is no external aesthetic to experimental work. It is as much about setting criteria and using them to analyze results as it is about the producing of the material. Far from “going wild”, it is a very rigorous exercise that allows a designer to confidently engage in work whose results are unpredictable” (Munro).

Cross-fertilization :::

*Interchange or interaction (as between different ideas, cultures, or categories)
especially of a broadening or productive nature.*

The body of work that emerged from the performances and intersections of objects and materials aligns with the idea of “cross-fertilization” (Koestler 230) a technical term by Arthur Koestler, author of *The Act of Creation*. Koestler uses the term to reference the thinking pattern from the highest advances in the history of scientific inquiry, which are the interchange of ideas from multiple disciplines and modes of research. In his book, Koestler also makes the case for the importance of developing inventive methodologies with unconventional systems and unrestricted imagination. Simple components to consider, yet complex in many applications.

“Simplicity and complexity are both desirable traits. But simplicity without depth is empty, and complexity without coherence is wasted” – Kenneth J. Hiebert (Hiebert 17).

In conclusion, the practice of creating and communicating through moving images allows for numerous connections between disciplines, processes, philosophies, and articulations. Moving images invariably appear within our everyday lives. Moving images are in our pockets, laptops, billboards, subway platforms, and everywhere else in between (Kholeif 12). Arguably, the moving image encapsulates narratives, abstractions, emotions, dreams, memories, poetry, and many other visual phenomena that will continue to entice the human mind with rich discourses, ways of seeing, and educating the next generation of moving image practitioners.

Post-Research

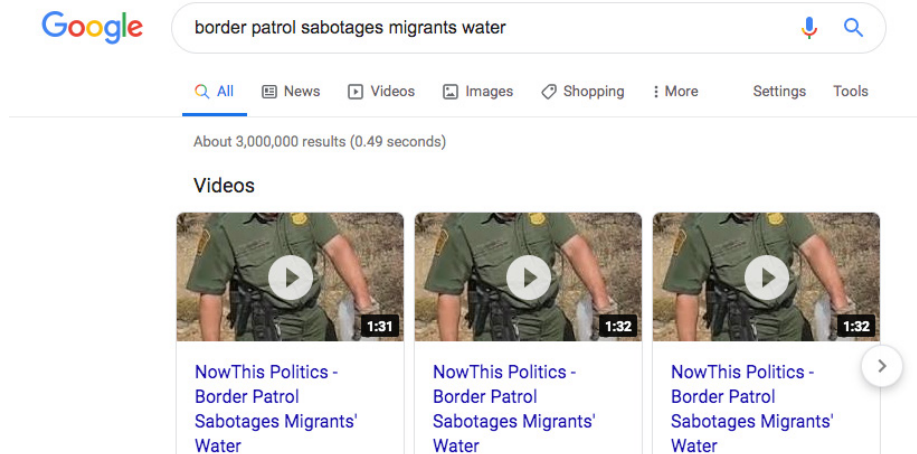


Figure 42: Reference/Model example.

Background

Surveillance cameras perform an important role in the current stories of Latin American immigrants trying to cross U.S. border seeking asylum. Homeland Security (DHS) employs various technologies to enforce strict regulations at the border, such as fixed and mobile video surveillance systems, thermal imaging devices, radars, ground sensors, and radio frequency sensors.

- *What is the true purpose of video surveillance footage other than detecting, identifying, apprehending, and removing undocumented immigrants?*
- *Is this footage public? – if not, why is the government hiding this evidence?*
- *What type of surveillance videos remain protected under DHS judgment?*

Direction

As a future research direction together with my current exploration strategies – I will focus on the incorporation of similar video surveillance technology that is commonly utilized by border agents. The purpose of this choice is to limit my creative process to less pristine footage and to reveal the consequences regarding the violent interference towards humanitarian aid as manifested on the U.S. border with Mexico.

Exploration : Graphic Design as performance art

My intention in embodying the experiences of immigrants is a method to provoke restless responses and greater impact on immigration discourse. Posters and other printed matter remain as the most effective method of communication, but I believe visual communication must blend unexpected creative practices without being bound by traditions.

Exploring graphic design as performance art and employing surveillance cameras, is a strategy to spread ideas and create a visual grammar of protest. Just like a poster is a banner for people to rally under when facing adversity, my performance and explorations is a collective effort to stimulate immigration discourse and help viewers connect with those making the journey towards the American dream.



Figure 43: Reference/Model example.

In this short narrative exploration, I embody the nocturnal experience of an immigrant walking through the wilderness. Along this dangerous trail, bottles of water are sabotage by U.S. border agents in an attempt to punish those who seek refuge.

References/Models

- *Border Surveillance Systems [PDF document published by DHS]*
- *Deadly Apprehension Methods [Publication series by thedisappearedreport.org]*
- *Television › Documentaries › Video archives › Case studies*
- *Graphic design as activism/as performance art*

Study Reflections



Figure 44: Study 1 – Page 36.

How does light overcome darkness? – How does it feel to be trapped, with nothing to hold on? –

How does the birth of a memory look like in our minds?



Figure 45: Study 2 – Page 37.

The light play relates to the peace that is experienced when a special memory arrives at a moment of uncertainty. The development of this study suggested numerous formal connections toward abstract feelings regarding time slowing down or the fear of never seeing another day.

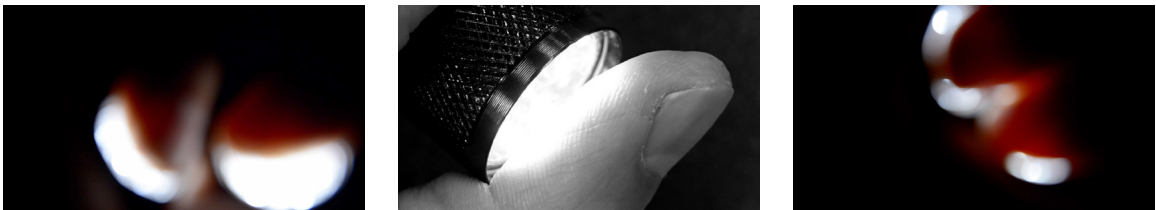


Figure 46: Study 3 – Page 38.

How does our soul/mind react when we must go through familial separation? – How are these emotions discerned? – This study reminded me of emotions that are difficult to explain.



Figure 47: Study 4 – Page 39.

These photographs belong to my family archive from Veracruz, Mexico. The condition of these images suggests the idea of fading moments. Juxtaposing these images with lights appearing and disappearing were attempts to visualize the reality of our short lives. These precious photographs are also examples of artifacts found along the Sonoran desert landscape – commonly found as evidence of undocumented migration.

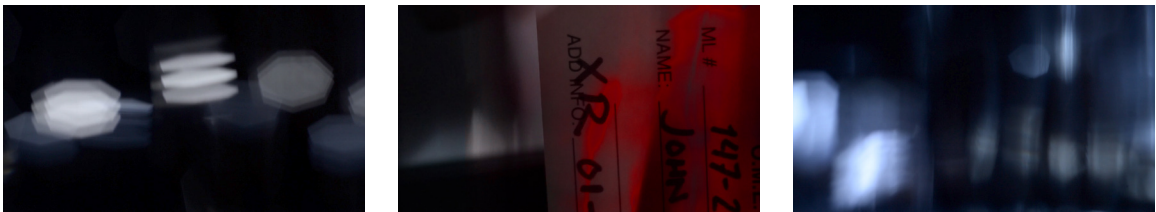


Figure 48: Study 6 – Page 49.

Speeding, cropping and colorizing the footage to produce aggressive transitions were successful additions in the final execution of *The Evidence of the Unseen*. These bursts of lights evoked the feeling of anxiety and shock, which are common symptoms of heat exhaustion.



Figure 49: Study 7 – Page 53.

The reality of immigrant deaths at the U.S./Mexico border seems invisible but remains undeniable. A multitude of opinions by today's media gains little impact. Activists attempt to reveal this unsolved reality while media conceals the facts of the Sonoran desert as a "weapon" of deterrence.

The results in this light study symbolize the endless cycle of immigrant deaths with the idea of concealing and revealing as a theme of exploration.

Study 7 was manipulated by removing color and increasing highlights and shadows. This exploration was successfully implemented throughout the entire motion sequence. Black and white images with a deep black, a pure white, and varying grays in between can engage the eyes and draw viewers in. Tonal range is important for a dynamic image.

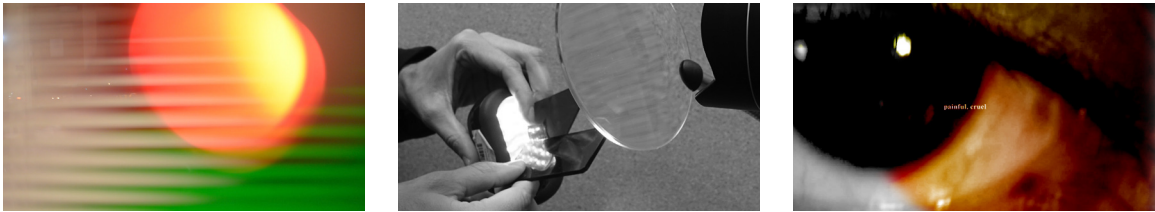


Figure 50: Study 8 – Page 54.

The results in this study are possibilities to depict emotions (tension, shock or other psychological effects). The uninterpretable light abstraction in this study becomes a playground space for meaning and connections.

"The shadow of death" is commonly used in the Bible to poetically speak about a type of thick darkness which is a metaphor of deep distress. Observing the behavior of these light formations, I began to recall moments of childhood prayers such as Psalm 23, which speaks about the deliverance from death. These recollections were used as the strategy to alter the benevolent aspect of the colorful lights and create dramatic transitions to portray the idea of a dangerous and unknown journey into the "valley of the shadow of death."



In this excerpt from *The Evidence of the Unseen*, my hands come together as a symbolism of prayer. While I recite Psalm 91, a mysterious shadow interrupts and conceals this moment of peace. The thorny shadow leads the viewer into the next statement of the narrative.



Figure 51: Study 9 – Page 55.

The results from this specific study are not within the development of *Immigrant Poem* or *The Evidence of the Unseen*. However, the intuitive nature of this process points me to future research regarding brain behavior towards abstraction.

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