

Meltdown

An Investigation of a Seascape in Two Film Forms

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in

Interdisciplinary Master's in Art, Media and Design

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# Meltdown An Investigation of a Seascape in Two Film Forms

## Thesis Supporting Document

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Master of Fine Arts 2017 in Interdisciplinary Master's in Art, Media and Design

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### Abstract

My thesis exhibition juxtaposes two distinct forms of cinematic representation of landscape, specifically depicting a grounded iceberg and tidal pools off coastal Newfoundland. In a screening room, a four-minute time-based documentary portrays workers on a repurposed fishing boat, ice harvesting. In an adjacent gallery, a cinematic media installation includes enlarged underwater-imagery of tidal pools, and shots of icebergs projected onto and refracted from acrylic discs. In the gallery, viewers move at their own rate, inviting an embodied process of audiovisual assimilation, opening up opportunities for affective response. In the supporting paper, I draw upon the texts of Steyerl, on horizon and aerial cinematography, Stilgoe on horizon, seascape and landscape, Massumi on embodiment and affect, and Brinkema on cinema and affect. Through the juxtaposition of narrative time-based and expanded cinema, I invite spectators to reflect on the impact of environmental changes on water, and its economic, community and personal consequences.

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To Carson who will lead the next generation.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

My Thesis for the Interdisciplinary Master's in Art Media and Design includes a media-based installation in a gallery and adjacent screening room, supported by this thesis document. The primary field of investigation is the cinematic representation of landscape with an emphasis on coastal Newfoundland. The exhibition explores use of the lens, photographic systems and visual experience as these relate to the capture and translation of imagery from the natural world, informed by close observation and engagement with recent writing on affect, cinema and the environment.

My enquiry extends from my observation and filmed documentation of a large iceberg, that was grounded in Duntara Bay, Newfoundland for a two-week period in mid-July, 2016. The exhibition is mounted in a small screening room and adjacent gallery, joined by a short corridor.

In the cinema screening room, the documentary depicts the harvesting of ice from an iceberg that has drifted into Iceberg Alley near Duntara for the production of designer vodka, beer and water, thus exposing the viewer to a recently launched contemporary economic activity. The audience sees the tools of fishing repurposed for the hauling of ice, and in the background the iceberg from which the crew collects the ice. There is seating in the small screening room for spectators to watch the four-minute duration of the film.

In the gallery installation, loops of macroscopic underwater shots of tidal pools captured from the littoral zone of coastal Newfoundland are projected large onto two opposing walls. In another area of the gallery space, looping images of the iceberg are projected onto and reflected from suspended acrylic discs of various sizes. The imagery of the iceberg registers the duration of the frozen artifact, its melting, its liquidity and its loss. The imagery of the tidal pool exposes its fragility and the teeming underwater life it sustains. The installation, comprised of image loops and audio sources within the space, has no fixed duration, allowing the spectator to wander within the exhibition spending time watching, and listening.

The gallery installation is spatially and temporally open-ended. The documentary in the screening room has a fixed duration. For clarity, within this text I refer to these two elements as *the documentary* and *the installation*.

My thesis argues that these two cinematic forms each generate different yet intersecting affective experiences. The synthesis, contradiction or oscillation between these experiences forms a new vantage from which the spectator can reflect on the subtle effects of environmental impact on our oceans. This relationship between the documentary and the immersive media-based installation is central to the argument of my thesis.

In my thesis exhibition, the documentary portrayal of ice is one part of a cinematic system, offset by the more dreamlike and immersive underwater imagery in the installation. The two rooms (small viewing room and gallery) include two intersecting forms of cinema. Both evoke the ocean environment, where the effects of global warming are visible. Thus the project strives to include but also exceed the single-channel documentary form, through its juxtaposition with the cinematic installation. The intent is to afford a context where viewers might reflect on escalating climate change and the affective states this provokes, at a time when global warming is becoming visible within specific landscapes and water worlds.

The documentary and the installation prompt different sensibilities and modes of seeing. The spectator situated within the immersive expanded cinema, surrounded by visual and audio cues, is given the option to wander freely and the time to reflect on the images and consider their forms. Here the viewer is the human actor moving through a space including footage and sounds of a non-human world of water, ice and organic oceanic matter. The space is reminiscent of science and nature films on television, but seen in unfamiliar scales and positions. In contrast, the documentary has a linear narrative story with a directed point of view. Here the audience is invited to watch the short film from a fixed seated position from the point at which they enter, to the point where it repeats – a finite duration. The shots of the fishermen pulling on their nets depict a longstanding gesture associated with decades of fishing and harvesting of cod. But here, the nets are pulled for a new purpose - for the collection of ice growlers. The hooks, nets, winches

and ropes are the props, previously associated with the hauling of fish, now transformed for the new economy of ice harvesting. Through gesture, viewers can empathize with the fishermen and make associations between the lost economy of cod fishing, and the new work of harvesting the ice that floats downstream to Iceberg Alley near the community. The state of change is evoked through the familiar gestures of net fishing applied to the strange new quarry of melting icebergs.

Theorist Brian Massumi, in *The Autonomy of Affect*, describes the state of affect as a precognitive bodily feeling that is immediate, different from emotion, autonomic, (self managing) and inassimilable (88). This takes place in the body before the mind, creating a state of the immanent or the potential, and producing a forceful, vibratory, disrupted affective state (1995, 90). Within this sliver of a gap lie the shimmering, transitory bumps and grinds of the affective trajectory. Shouse notes that it is important to distinguish affect from emotion. Affect is not a personal feeling. Feelings are *personal* and *biographical*, emotions are *social*, and affects are *pre-personal* (2016, 1).<sup>1</sup>

My thesis exhibition seeks to prompt reflection on environmental changes, and our dependency on water, a vital resource. Through situating imagery of the seascape in a media-based exhibition, the spectator is given the opportunity for a close reading enhancing its affective qualities. Affective experience encompasses the shimmers,

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<sup>1</sup> "If you don't understand try to feel. According to Massumi it works." from Elad Anlen, a participant in Brian Massumi's mini seminar in the School of Criticism and Theory (Leys 2011, 434).

disruptions, and breaches that create a state of flux opening up opportunities for new insights and perceptions.

## 1.1 Background

My life experience as a filmmaker encompasses a range of genres beginning with experimental then dramatic fiction and finally documentary, interspersed with ongoing projects in installation art and photography. My filmmaking career was initiated when in 1983, I lived in a tiny Inuit settlement two hundred miles from the Magnetic North Pole for one year. Having just completed four years of art college (OCA), specializing in painting and printmaking, my move to Baker Lake included a newly purchased Super 8 camera and 5 rolls of Eastman Kodak film stock, but no knowledge of film production. Later I joined the Funnel Experimental Film Co-operative and began a life-long process of self-training first in celluloid film and then digital video.

The production of culturally-themed documentaries (*The Many Faces Of Arnaud Maggs* (2002), *Suzy Lake: Playing With Time* (2014), *General Idea: Art, Aids And The Fin De Siecle* (2007), *Kinngait: Riding Light Into The World* (2010)) in combination with a wanderlust has taken me around the globe providing many opportunities for filming landscapes in remote locations. My film work up to this point has included single-channel, time-based cinema, but my approach has differed from conventional documentary. I have employed experimental processes that prompt affective and

emotional response, in part through my own presence as the camera operator and narrator of my films. My approach as an artist-cinematographer engages my movement through natural landscapes, capturing imagery with a variety of lenses. This influences the thesis exhibition. Embarking on my thesis, I felt compelled to explore new means of using the cinematic imagery I had gathered, including an expanded form of cinema where the embodied movement of the viewers within the installation might deepen their affective and artistic experiences. Via the lens of the camera and postproduction technologies, I implement shifts in the relative size, duration and spatiality of images of underwater life and the iceberg rising from the water's surface.

In the thesis document, I employ film language and terminology when speaking of production and post-production processes, however since I now work primarily with digital technology I use the words film and video interchangeably when referring to the form of the output. The distinction between video art and film art is an historical one and I situate myself in the latter world due to my early work in experimental film.

My previous media based work merges documentary and feminist/experimental approaches, frequently depicting bodies of water in the natural environment. My installation work featuring water imagery includes the single channel installations *Take Me To The River*, (MetalCulture, U.K. 2011/12) and *Hidden*, (Sydney Olympic Park, 2011) and photo-based work *Water: Ana High Altitude Shepardess* (TTC LED screens, Contact 2009). With my own advances in career and ability my concern over our

stewardship of the world's natural resources has increased. For the first time in history more than half of the world's population lives in urban environments and this is having a profound effect on our health (Berman 2009, 1207).<sup>2</sup>

Extensive research on the topic of human health and the symbiotic relationship between health and the natural world led me to make an episode of *The Nature of Things*

(*Dreams of the Future*: 2014), demonstrating that merely viewing images of nature led to improvement in both cognitive and physical functions in humans.<sup>3</sup>

While this qualitative research is beyond the scope of my MFA Thesis, the background of directing the television episode informed my politics and creative practice, prompting me

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<sup>2</sup> Scientists find that after a few minutes in a busy urban environment, the brain's cognitive function, including memory and self-control is significantly reduced, and the body begins to produce cortisol, the stress hormone (Li et al 2011, 2845-53). My years of experience as a documentary filmmaker incorporate extensive research including an expedition to Japan to film an episode of *The Nature of Things* (*Dreams of the Future*: 2014) to interview Dr Yushimako Miyazaki who demonstrated measurable differences in variable heart rate, blood pressure and cortisol production when test subjects were exposed to first a forest walk and then a busy urban experience (Park et al 2007, 123-8).

<sup>3</sup> Further research involved a series of interviews with scientists around the world conducting research into how exposure to the natural world has significant impact on various aspects of our health, including an interview with Dr Marc Berman at the Baycrest Centre for Brain Research where he determined that viewing scenes of nature for 15 minutes improved cognitive memory by up to thirty percent (2008, 1207-1212). According to a study conducted by Rachel and Stephen Kaplan in the 1980's "Attention Restoration Theory" (ART) asserts that people can concentrate better after spending time in nature, or even looking at scenes of nature. Natural environments abound with "soft fascinations, which a person can reflect upon in effortless attention, such as clouds moving across the sky, leaves rustling in a breeze or water bubbling over rocks in a stream" (1989, 4).

to explore the forms that images of nature might take in urban settings generally and galleries specifically.

With this in mind I entered OCAD University's, Interdisciplinary Master's in Art, Media, and Design program.

During the first semester at OCAD my explorations considered aspects of science in the form of a mobile nature depot that allowed visitors to experience nature through the five senses while learning about increases in memory function, natural killer cells and other potential health benefits. A second installation involved the construction of a tent filled with small live trees and ferns, a bed of moss, birch bark chair and other elements of the natural world. A series of experimental videos depicting wild horses and waterfalls filmed in Patagonia, Argentina were projected onto the walls of the tent. Audio elements included a live fountain, and recordings of wind and rain. The studio exploration was interspersed with readings including affect theory, informing my understanding of the potential of documentary and of expanded cinema to create new forms and affects.



Figure 1. Nature/Tent installation – semester one. Photo: Mangaard, 2016.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

My media-based installation work engages notions and aspects of landscape, affect, and sense of place. My early readings focused on the text by feminist arts critic Lucy Lippard, *The Lure of the Local*, in terms of considering the sense of place in the artwork.

Landscape architect and artist Alexander Wilson, in *The Culture of Nature*, influenced my consideration of the structure of nature movies. The text of filmmaker, writer and theorist Hito Steyerl, *In Free Fall: A Thought Experiment on Vertical Perspective* from her book *The Wretched of the Screen*, informs my consideration of horizon and aerial cinematography in the present situation. John Stilgoe's book *What is Landscape?* provided insights on the naming and cultural significance of seascape and landscape.

Eugenie Brinkema's book *The Forms of the Affects* informs my approach to different cinematic forms and their affective qualities.

## 2.1 Watching Nature Movies

Examining our relationship with the wilderness in *The Culture of Nature*, Alexander Wilson notes that since the Industrial Revolution our connection to the natural world has been transformed. We now need a guide or an interpreter, as evidenced by the growth in education and interpretive centres in parks, schools and at significant landmarks (1992, 56-57). Through the use of location footage, I position myself in the role of the guide, providing visual cues for the response of the spectator. Discussing the lens and our visual referencing of landscape, Wilson notes that Western society's proclivity to place the value of the human above that of its surroundings has resulted in a disconnect with the natural world (28-39).

With the "popularization" of the car as an essential mode of transportation in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, a vast infrastructure of highways was developed (as "proof of progress" and indispensability), and alongside it a movement that embraced driving as a pastime. The concurrent construction of roadside parks and campgrounds around natural and wilderness areas packaged nature, transforming but also commodifying it in the process. In turn, the car served as a barrier between the viewing of, and the experience of, the natural environment. Highways became the arteries serving a population of voyeurs who

need never leave the safe confines of their large comfortable vehicles. This observation of nature and wilderness through the window of the closed, often artificially air conditioned environment of the car, created a visual experience analogous to the tracking movement of the camera used in a dolly shot (28-39). Passengers observed as nature moved past them through the windshield of the car in a passive posture similar to the experience of watching television in their homes.

Referring to early television and nature movies including those created by Disney studios, Wilson speaks of their propensity to anthropomorphize the animal world creating stories and scenarios mimicking those of people. He discusses our relationship with wilderness and nature as being learned through and deeply informed by this anthropomorphic and utopian representation of the animal world. Considered old fashioned and outmoded, these early nature films function as harbingers of contemporary views on ecology and the interrelatedness and associated dependencies of all things human, animal, nonliving and environmental (128-130).

Watching nature movies, we wander in nature, viewing through the lens of television and film. The camera's eye becomes synonymous with control of what we see. The camera privileges vision and separates the act of photography from other sensory experiences, diminishing them in the process. A seamless "windshield" divides the reality of wilderness and the images in nature movies. This disassociates us from our surroundings. In my gallery installation of images of natural phenomenon, I strive to form connections

that disrupt these conventions of nature movies, opening reflection on environmental stewardship now.

## 2.2 Encounters with Daily Looking

In *Cultural Geography: the buzyness of being 'more-than-representational'*, Lorimer suggests that “focus falls on how life takes shape and gains expression in shared experiences, everyday routines, fleeting encounters, embodied movements, precognitive triggers, practical skills, affective intensities, enduring urges, unexceptional interactions and sensuous dispositions” (2005, 84).

Kathleen Stewart uses prose to describe the affective state in *Ordinary Affects*.

### Water Bugs

Positions are taken, habits loved and hated, dreams launched and wounded.

And just about everyone is part of the secret conspiracy of everyday life to get what you can out of it.

She thinks it's sort of like being a water bug, living on the surface tension of some kind of liquid. Seduced by the sense of an incipient vitality lodged in things, but keeping yourself afloat, too (2007, 42).

Lorimer and Stewart's words resonate and remind me of a continuously affective state that can go unnoticed. My thesis exhibition responds to this affective state of the world by suggesting that the spectator - through a juxtaposition of time-based linear documentary and media installation including expanded cinema - might uncover new ways of noticing, feeling and considering landscapes and natural phenomena.

In Annie Dillard's novel *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*, the author writes of the significance of vision and how experiences are generated through it. Her prose describes in minute detail how the act of looking deeply probes the nooks and crannies of our consciousness through close observation and attention to detail (1974, 14-34). The layers of meaning produced through sight are complex and trigger circuits that intersect, bounce, and conflict, creating new paths, implications and consequences.

I walked home in a shivering daze, up a hill and down. Later I lay open mouthed in bed, my arms flung wide at my sides to steady the whirling darkness. At this latitude I'm spinning 836 miles an hour around the earth's axis; I often fancy I feel my sweeping fall as a breakneck arc like the dive of dolphins, and the hollow rushing of wind raises hair on my neck and the side of my face (21).

It is through the actions of walking and observation that Dillard is able to experience her surroundings with an intensity that acknowledges surface "impressions". First her body

registers the breeze, feels the enveloping darkness and the hint of dew in the air through her skin while almost but not quite simultaneously, her brain in its precognitive state registers the dark creek with its microcosms of life rising to the surface. It is in the fraction of a split second, that transitory, unknowable moment between these two states, that there exists the ever so brief break for the transitions, bumps, grinds and disruptions of affect.

Such encounters are part of my own lexicon of lived experiences and time spent in the wilderness including lengthy periods of residing in a tent as a child, a year living in the high arctic with the Inuit, and a rudimentary knowledge of wilderness survival.

Informed by a personal history rooted in transitory states, I make note of Lucy Lippard's *The Lure of the Local*, in examining notions of home, place, and sense of belonging.

Utilizing artists and their work to support her argument, Lippard describes our sense of place as being informed by personal memories reinforced by documents and artifacts.

Considering the photography of artist Roger Welch, Lippard speaks of "the importance of place not as a grand earthwork carved in the desert but as a personal, spiritual, mental form we each carry inside us" (1997, 80-81). My large archive of filmed material functions as a reinforcement of the associations, and the mental memories I hold of all the locations I have ever filmed.

Citing oral histories and storytelling as central to the naming of place, Lippard discusses the importance of these practices in the formation of communal knowledge. Character is

established through familiarity and results in a sense of belonging. The narrative of Indigenous and First Nations people's linguistics were often informed by events and histories describing either plants, animals or resource related attributes of the location. These deep close relationships informed their understanding of, respect for and stewardship of the land (1997, 46-47, 286). Quoting Deborah Tall, Lippard describes her experience as being one that is a meeting with the land itself.

Because I've stayed the land feels attentive, full of reciprocal energy. The Iroquois call that energy orenda - a power inhabiting all living things sometimes described as a kind of voltage or static electricity that can be accumulated through ritual and then used (44).

This personal history of and strong connection with place is of relevance when one considers the manner in which artistic endeavour can reflect on and perform as the social advocate for a location. Building associations and familiarity with place can lead to an increase in our understanding of and respect for it. Within the thesis exhibition, working with considerations of place, personal history, lived experience and embodiment on both a practical and philosophical level, I seek to act as a social advocate for the locations I include in my media.



Figure 2. Annette Mangaard. On location filming in NFLD. Photo: Paddy Lamb, 2016

### 2.3 Landscape/Seascape And The Horizon

In *What is Landscape?* John Stilgoe analyzes the origins of the word “landscape” and how its meaning is formed through oral histories, memories, and associations with our surroundings. He discusses the acts of seeing, walking within, and close observation of our surroundings that lead to the development of language and naming in landscape terminology (2015, xiii). This form of personal engagement builds deep associations, fostering a relationship of caring that encourages stewardship of those environments.

Much of Stilgoe's first chapter relates to water and the sea, and the relationship to the land, with the littoral or meeting point offering a predominant theme. The author notes that every beach and shore, tamed or wild, carries with it the connotation of landscape for the casual viewer (1). This experience is intensified in being on the sea, the effect of the elements and, significantly, the enduring and "near timeless" quality encountered when one is on the open water. With the vanishing of the sighting of land mass and its replacement in our line of vision with only water, there occurs a shift in temporality and with it an intensity of the experience of seeing (18). Within my thesis exhibition the filmed imagery of the iceberg embodies these qualities of temporality and timelessness, situated in a frame that utilizes the horizon and symmetry as visual framing devices. Positioned, as an isolated floating object on a moving swell of sea, the iceberg appears ephemeral, otherworldly. These characteristics are seen from a different vantage in the underwater footage through its extensive enlargement combined with radically altered motion. The revelation of millions of tiny microcosms of floating particles of phytoplankton moving in a frame without horizon exposes a mysterious scene of instability and shifting possibilities.<sup>4</sup>

My own familiarity of being on the water was gained through years of sailing with my father. I discovered a deep connection with the properties of instability, temporality and

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<sup>4</sup> Tidal pools are home to a variety of marine life including phytoplankton an important source of the earth's oxygen, as well as seaweed, barnacles, sea urchins, mollusks, snails and kelp. Canada's department of Fisheries and Oceans notes, "Climate change is expected to affect ocean currents and may interfere with the exchange of water between the sea surface and deep-ocean. Predicted higher sea-levels and more intense storms will result in increased erosion and flooding of coastal land" (Butler et al, 67).

ephemerality, and carry within me the encoded mental form of being on a sailboat. Being on a constantly shifting and moving surface requires the ability to continually resituate oneself in relation to the water and the deck of the vessel. This facility for maintaining balance within a position of ongoing and unpredictable movement is defined as having one's sea legs. This embodied knowledge allows for the ability to move quickly within a continuously shifting location, while holding the constant prospect of disturbance, the possibility of imminent danger. The act of sailing carries with it the condition of timelessness especially when out of sight of land. Fluctuating horizons and a steady rhythmic wave action produces the perception of being removed from the past, present or future, in a mutable no-mans land. The experience of sailing on the open water with no land in sight, and a continuous wave action instills a transformative, transitory quality. With its promise of escape and the potential for seeing new worlds, notes Stilgoe, the horizonlessness sits as a limitless vista offering the possibility of liberation and independence (2015, 19).

Hito Steyerl discusses the horizon—“*In Free Fall: A Thought Experiment on Vertical Perspective*,” [e-flux journal](#)—and its early use by sailors as a tool for navigation to locate or situate a vessel on the open sea. Together with the notion of vanishing point, it was also crucial to the development of linear perspective. It is through the lens of linear perspective that we ascribe stability, linear time, predictability and a potential future (2011, 14-19).

The mass of the iceberg I filmed is ripped from its place of formation in Greenland and resituated in Iceberg Alley (an ecozone extending along the coasts of Labrador and Newfoundland, into which icebergs drift down from Greenland), a constantly shifting, precarious position thousands of miles from its place of genesis. Steyerl describes the current state of the world as being one of groundlessness caused by fluctuating values, transitory states and disorientation. This condition generates instability and uncertainty, disturbing the political standard. There is no clear outlook to either the future or the past, proposing a sense of repetition, recurrence and looping of time. Likening such a state to that of being in free-fall, Steyerl associates it with loss of perspective, equilibrium, and a moving towards inertia. This shattering of the precision of the illusion of stability plays host to confusion and disorientation and is exemplified when filmed through the lens.

Referencing new technologies and their ability to capture aerial and other forms of imagery, the author aligns them with the contemporary state of disorientation. Such technologies as drone cameras and Google Earth lead to the modification and alteration of the relative scale, duration and placement of captured imagery; the result is one of conflicting and contradictory truths. These new technologies, notes Steyerl, have increased the likelihood of a gaze that is disconnected, often remotely controlled, actively

mobile and frequently operating under the guise of surveillance, creating a disembodied state (2011, 14-19).<sup>5</sup>

Discussing the importance of horizon in maintaining a sense of stability in geographical relationships, Steyerl notes that horizon is a key component in our ability to situate ourselves. New forms of surveillance, aerial and other photography, she argues, provide tools for the creation of illusions and increase the possibility of a deceptive message. If, as Steyerl observes, the horizon is paramount to our understanding of time and space (14) and as discussed by Stilgoe, the landscape when viewed from the sea provides a sense of stability and structure (2015, 1), our ability to view the earth through the lens of new technologies such as Google Earth results in a dislocated vision of unpredictability that carries with it the potential for volatility. With our loss of horizon writes Steyerl, comes an associated loss of linear perspective and predictability, carrying with it the threat of a world lacking the ability to consider a view into the future (2011, 18). Might this lack of a foreseeable future lead to new forms of thinking? Working with the new technology of an underwater camera with microscopic lens, I endeavored to film an unfamiliar world, full of complexities and without horizon. These views from beneath the oceans surface might open a space for mixed feelings including uncertainty and anxiety at viewing a sea world churning across a twelve by twenty foot wall, or evoke wonder at miniscule barnacles projected to a scale of massive proportions opening their tiny tendrils to feed.

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<sup>5</sup> Aerial photography allowing scientists to document the receding of the polar cap shows a reduction in the ice mass of approximately 8.6% per decade between the years of 1979 to 2007, with a 24% decrease in the year 2007. The Northwest Passage was clear of ice for the first time in recorded history in the year 2006 (Thompson 2010, 153-170).

## 2.4 Close Reading and the Heksebrev

In *The Forms of the Affects* (2014) Eugenie Brinkema points to the act of close reading of formal properties as being central to understanding, textual interpretation and analysis of film, media and affect (xvi). In *Intermittency, Embarrassment and Dismay*, she references the Danish Heksebrev, a folding card featuring images of people and animals cut in half that can be reconfigured in a multitude of ways to compose an infinite array of new characters. This ongoing multiplicity of options is analogous to the condition of anxiety, a future state, one in which the “nothing” that exists between the present and the future is conceivable as possibility but also as a finite (182). Relocating the argument from being an interior to that of an exterior intensity, Brinkema identifies affect as “an outside force on the surface of the body” (186). Within the thesis installation, I work with moving images that rotate with the air currents. This creates a situation with a multitude of shifting, fragmented images. Brinkema’s definition of affect is an outside force that “carries with it the ability to affect itself creating a continually shifting, disruptive array of influences.” Within the gallery, I have constructed an environment that continually affects itself and spectators within it, through a fluctuating, troublesome, continuously redistributing range of influences and impacts.

If, as Brinkema proposes, anxiety and affect are directly connected with concepts of possibility and future, then they hinge on the forms in space and time (187). This constant cycling and recycling of the state of waiting for possibility induces temporality and instability. It also allows for the possibility of the new (188). Brinkema compares the way

that the form of the Heksebrev can shift and reorganize to the properties associated with interactivity and new media. Such forms of the unpredictable and unreliable offer the potential for manipulative, fraudulent, deceptive or what Brinkema calls “magical movement” (188). The underwater imagery in the gallery strives to elicit an affective state of drift, of dream-like weightlessness where previously unseen, alien life forms proliferate, where documentary and science fiction formally converge.<sup>6</sup>

Working with notions of repetition and recycling through the use of looped media projections in a gallery setting situates the spectator in a constantly shifting and unsettling space.<sup>7</sup> As discussed by Steyerl, this continuous and unpredictable immersive environment opens up the potential for disruption, chaos and mystery. Brinkema’s proposed links between a state of anxiety, affect and instability, positions our contemporary global situation as being one of continuous mystery, uncertainty and flux. This opens up an opportunity for an embodied uncertainty and a heightened state of awareness viewing nature images, distancing, upsetting and surprising the viewer.

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<sup>6</sup> Alex Wilson and Eugenie Brinkema both note the impact of images of invisible (extreme close-up) underwater worlds in contemporary nature movies.

<sup>7</sup> In *Nothing/Will Have Taken Place/But the Place: Open Water Anxiety*, the author’s close reading of Chris Kentis’s film *Open Water* (2003) and discussion of the effect of the horizon on the film frame, Brinkema notes that the device of situating the viewer within a shifting horizon also positions them within a shifting narrative (221-222). Arguing notions of temporality Brinkema refers to treading water as the physical reality experienced by the films two protagonists, as also symbolic of their continuous looped cycle of entrapment (209). This temporal structure of cycling and recycling narrative carries with it the structural device of beginning at the ending, further confusing the timeline. Positing that the film is about nothing and as such does not lend itself to critique, Brinkema then discusses the possibility of the analysis of its form as being feasible through its anxiety ridden state of being nothing (216). I believe that such a place is filled with not only anxiety but also fears of being forgotten, as occurs within the film, of going unnoticed and ultimately of non-existence.

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

As an independent artist-filmmaker for over twenty years, I have developed a personal filmmaking language and set of methodologies for the collection, capture, transformation, and exhibition of my films. The thesis project seeks to extend this creative process into cinematic installation. By manipulating imagery, juxtaposing it, and experimenting with new techniques of spatial projection, I rethink and reconfigure elements of time-based linear filmmaking into the architecture of the gallery. The research methodology considers my research-creation studio practice, undertaken alongside the investigation of works by other artists working in the medium, and scholarship in academic art theory, art history and criticism. The artist's residency undertaken at Duntara, Newfoundland provided a research platform within which I was able to capture video images depicting subtle effects of climate change in the nearby ocean. The grounded iceberg proved to have a magnetic attraction for me, with its stately appearance and its shifting and settling in a constant state of flux. When I saw it melting, in a shimmering cascade of thawing water, I experienced sensations of a strange and disturbing magnitude. These affects shifted to an apprehension of evidence of the global temperature rising, and feelings of fear and sadness that I had to share.

The work of Pipilotti Rist, Bill Viola and Andy Goldsworthy have provided reference points for formal considerations for the presentation of cinematic installation including time, embodiment, architectures of space, and the ephemeral.

### 3.1 Materials Collection

Land artist Andy Goldsworthy utilizes logs, twigs, rocks, reeds, leaves, stones, mud, icicles and other elements from the natural world to construct ephemeral, site-specific, outdoor sculptures. In an interview with David Matless and George Revill, Goldsworthy speaks of gaining a deep knowledge of his materials through prolonged periods of engagement and embodiment (1995). He references the lengthy processes involved with walking, feeling, touching, gathering, being present in, and translating his collected elements as a method for knowing and gaining a deeper comprehension of the materiality of his processes (Hurley, 2003).

The interview with Goldsworthy reveals how his artistic choices were shaped by prolonged time spent in the field, where he paid close attention to the sensory experiences of his materials. While Goldsworthy works with raw physical materials sourced from his fieldwork my process is one of collecting visual and audio recordings. In filming, I spend extended periods of time walking, being present, observing and locating myself, outdoors in wilderness, natural, and garden or park environments. This method of fieldwork involves being present, frequently for hours, days and sometimes longer extended periods in wilderness, natural, and garden or park environments.



Figure 3. Annette Mangaard. On location filming in NFLD. Photo: Paddy Lamb c. 2016

This is a way of finding a sense of place in order to undertake close observation of the surroundings. Decisions are made around viewing through the lens and viewfinder, resituating the frame, and a constant pattern of shifting, modification and repetition of this cycle, working with precision, detail and miniscule increments.

My studio work begins in the field where I have constructed small temporary shelters including: a rock or plank to act as rudimentary seating, a stable site for my film apparatus, apparel to shield against inclement weather, a thermos and food. This was the method during the recent artists residency in Newfoundland where I chose three sites for

daily filming of the iceberg media for my thesis exhibition. So protected, I was able to observe and record variations in light and shadow. Attention was paid to near and far, to macro and wide-angle or panoramic forms of viewing and capturing. Audio and its capture were important elements included within these considerations. These included sounds of the near and far wind, water, wildlife and other wilderness elements. When realizable, touch is also valuable to my understanding of texture and the density of potential subject matter.

My surroundings, the atmosphere, their shifts and turns, reveal insights to me about duration, weather, flora and fauna and their interactions over time. In close readings of my environment, I am sensitized to subtle shifts in the wind against my skin, the dampness carried in the air from the sea, a tingle of salt slapping against my lips and eyes. A raven caws and I instantly hear a multitude of sounds. Crackles of brambles underfoot, small rustlings indicating the presence of other wildlife, unseen, though their presence is felt.<sup>8</sup>

My footage of the iceberg, collected from various vantage points over a two-week period, revealed the affect of fluctuations in light, temperature, precipitation and other factors. I filmed every day from three vantage points in the closest proximity attainable via foot to the West, East and South of the berg. These site visits, sometimes from precarious

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<sup>8</sup> As noted by Goldsworthy, "When I'm working with materials it's not just the leaf or the stone, it's the processes that are behind them that are important. That's what I'm trying to understand, not a single isolated object but nature as a whole" (Hurley, 2003).

perches, happened three to six times a day for one or two hours. The duration of recording time varied depended on the position of the iceberg in the harbour, the action of the weather, and other associated sightings of sea life, boats and peripheral or calved icebergs.

Working with the underwater camera in frigid, surging and choppy seawater I experienced instability in the filming operation. Distinct and different from the action of filming on a tripod, this mode of media capture involves the dual actions of viewing from above (the lens of my eye looking down through the moving surface of the water) as well as below the surface of the seawater (the lens of the camera focusing on the moving kelp). This action requires strength and a good sense of balance in addition to a memorized familiarity with the specialty lens of the camera.<sup>9</sup>

### 3.2 Materials Processing

In a 2013 interview in *Art in America*, Bill Viola discusses the role of the retina, of seeing, of the camera, and of its technology as being the manifestation of the human lens, a tool for communication that allows for a profound investigation into meaning. Through the use of technology for slowing down the videotaped material, time and passage of time are altered in a manner that cannot be replicated via still images notes Viola. This ability to break down the image, slowing down the action and movement, permits a deep

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<sup>9</sup> The camera has a function referred to as microscopic, which captures imagery in extreme close-ups and has the ability to focus at one centimeter.

extended examination. Much of cinema's power derives from this ability to both represent and modify time (Xin, 2013). The durational aspect of Viola's imagery in conjunction with its architectural spatiality influences my own practice of playing with temporality, elongating certain passages of film, stretching, condensing and bending the material to disrupt the narrative. Working with the erratic movement the footage the macroscopic camera captures, I reconsider and manipulate it frame by frame in post-production, where the strategic stretching and elongating of specific passages is used to reveal detail and intensity.

Due to the high the volume of videotaped material that I collect, my cataloguing system is personal, eclectic and has been developed over many years. After uploading all the footage onto an external hard drive I collect it in a Master folder identified by location, which holds sub-folders named by date and subject. Within each subfolder the clips are subsequently named and ranked in order to identify potential uses, special qualities and aesthetic appeal. Clips that are particularly useful receive multiple asterisks. My visual memory bank is a deep one and holds thousands of clips that I can locate through this complex system via the location and date of filming. The embodied experience of filming in tandem with my visceral memory of the weather and other conditions are brought to the selection process. The emotional impact of my experience during filming is evoked when considering which clips to work with for the installation. Because I sit with the camera, filming the iceberg for long periods, the nuances of the footage are easily recalled. I bring the most interesting and complex of these moments to the installation

with the aspiration that elements of my personal embodied experience might be communicated to the spectator in a personal and meditative yet disruptive experience.<sup>10</sup>

In 2001, I experienced Viola's *Five Angles for the Millennium* exhibition at the Guggenheim in Bilbao, Spain, an intense experience of movement and sounds wherein each shimmer, flicker, and glisten sucked me into the vortex of the ephemeral. This affective aspect of Viola's work alludes to the shifting, rustling, myriad of potentiality discussed by Brinkema (2014, 188).

Working with my imagery captured with the underwater camera enables me to conduct a concentrated investigation into editing techniques of slowing, holding, and stopping motion. This experimentation with software permits a deliberate deceleration of the original chaotic force of the water, opening up the organic subject matter, permitting the observation of an underwater world, normally inaccessible to the human eye. Viola referencing the use of extreme close ups states, "even the smallest fragment of human emotion has infinite resolution-the more you magnify it, the more it keeps unfolding" (Xin, 2013). Utilizing the device of the close-up through the use of a microscopic lens, within the course of studio post-production practice, I can make radical alterations in relational scale of the images. The impact of the close up as an emotional device is a

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<sup>10</sup> As demonstrated in Viola's *Angel of Birth*, from *Five Angles for the Millennium* (2001) the extreme slowing down of the artists imagery breaks down visual barriers creating a sense of the unknown, of dislocation and disruption. Viola's installations as described by William Judson (1995) have the ability to transport the viewer to a deeply private space that is meditative and terrifying all at once. Judson notes that while the physicality of the environment remains fixed, each person's encounter with the work is an experience that is intensely and uniquely personal (31).

staple of conventional dramatic cinema. By using this technique in post-production processing, I experiment with the associations it provokes. As discussed by Brinkema, these might include fear, anxiety or wonder and awe given the opportunity for such a close reading of the material. By laying a section of my video footage on a timeline in Final Cut Pro, I am able to splice out miniscule sections of several frames, alter the duration and reinsert them for a seamless looped narrative. Reminiscent of Optical Printing with celluloid, a process I worked with often in the past, this method allows for the selection and manipulation of the footage frame by frame. This procedure is repeated many times until a two-minute length is achieved.

### 3.3 In Reference to 'Installation Room'

In this project, I capture imagery that is often intentionally imperfect in either focus or movement, but responds to a sense of aesthetics developed through years of shooting. Choices are made with regards to the edge of the frame and what is included and excluded. My familiarity with the camera lens that has developed over time, visually divides the frame into third or half sections reminiscent of the Golden Mean I learned in art composition courses. I consider horizon and its placement. I lead the eye of the viewer by situating less information, often in the form of open space, to one side. Symmetry is an important visual tool as demonstrated in the placement of the iceberg imagery in the centre of the frame. When using a tripod I spend time experimenting with frame by moving both the camera and my body seeking an image that provokes a startle, a sense of

affect in me. My embodied experience of capturing the material is transferred within the gallery environment creating the potential for the affective response of the viewer.

In *Pipilotti Rist*, Peggy Phelan speaks to the affective and notes that “Rist has suggested that the human body itself is a metaphor for the camera’s technology: Our eyes are blood operated cameras” (2001, 48). Referencing her experimentation with the lens and technology, Rist declares these investigations as resulting in “faulty or chance” images that reference subconscious processes and reveal the hidden within our minds and thoughts (2001, 108).

Discussing her creative process, Pipilotti Rist speaks of collecting an overabundance of imagery and the lengthy, time-consuming route to selection, manipulation and commitment, a meandering path that celebrates imperfection and disorder (2001, 124). Employing a similar method, I have an obsessive relationship with the lens of the camera and the collection of filmed material wherever I go. This has led to building an extensive database of film and video clips and sequences. Within my editing process and through actions of compositing and the use of specialized software, my post-production studio practice follows a repetitive path of experimentation, examination, assessment, analysis, restitution and continued investigation.

In her Artpulse review of Pipilotti Rist’s *Pour Your Body Out*, at the MoMA, Maya Horn writes of how Rist has effectively broken out of the construct of the flat screen to work

within the architecture of space (2016). *Pour Your Body* situated in a large open atrium surrounds the viewer with giant, larger than life, sensuously colorful, shifting visuals of flora, fauna, body parts and other organic imagery within an immersive exhibition. Through her use of scale and positioning, Rist explores, redefines, spatially opens up and reconstructs the environment.<sup>11</sup>

Working with spatiality and scale, I resituate the underwater video footage in a larger than life, shifting visual presentation. Conversely the iceberg imagery is rendered in a minute representation of the actual artifact. Audio of water, wind and electro-acoustic elements resonate throughout the space. The thesis installation invites the viewer to connect with the material, by moving through it and creating air currents that shift the hanging discs and hence impact the artwork through the visitor's movement through the space. Thus the insertion of the suspended moving acrylic discs results in the inclusion of real-time animation within the thesis exhibition.

### 3.4 In Reference to 'Documentary Room'

The observational documentary is in the form of a linear narrative, taking the viewer through the process of harvesting growlers, or smaller pieces broken off from the main iceberg. The fishermen work with ropes, hooks and picks previously used to catch fish,

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<sup>11</sup> Altered time is a formal device explored within the work of Pipilotti Rist. Massimiliano Gioni, artistic director of the New Museum, notes that Rist's interests lie in the construction of immersive environments that allow the viewer to both lose and then to find themselves. "This experience of communion and alienation, of being immersed in a sense of the sublime and in the ecstasy of communication pervades all of her work" (2016).

tossing their nets from a small skiff, lassoing the massive chunks of ice. Towed back to the larger vessel, the ice is then winched up onto the boat and guided into the cold storage hold, which would once have contained hundreds of codfish. The ice is later transported to the southern side of the Bonavista Peninsula, given a rinse and melted down for use in the making of designer vodka.

In his chapter *Looking at the Non-Human*, in *The Culture of Nature*, Alex Wilson describes the translation and transformation of landscapes and wilderness, and our comprehension and understanding of them, as being organized through portrayals and depictions that are experienced in films and seen on television (155). The short documentary depicting the collection of water from the iceberg is shot and assembled in cinéma vérité form, utilizing wide shots to establish the world the film exists within, medium shots to relay the story and the actions of its characters and close ups to convey emotion and add detail, with cutaways to move between scenes.

The onboard filming expedition occurred when, while filming the iceberg with a tripod from a stationary position on the pier, a cod-fishing boat, repurposed as a vessel for the collection of iceberg water, docked beside me. The captain Ed Kean, agreed to take me out on an expedition in exchange for my expertise in shooting with and demonstrating



Figure 4. Meltdown. Installation view. Photo: Eric Chengyang

how to use a new digital camera he had received as a gift. Thus I filmed all of the action once with my HD video camera, and once with Mr. Kean's new camera, all supplemented with stills, shot on my iPhone.

Years of filmmaking practice have made the technological aspects of filmmaking habitual to me, as is my personal style for framing and camera movement. These embodied processes render working with the camera as “knowledge in the hands”<sup>12</sup> that

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<sup>12</sup> “To know how to touch type is not, then, to know the place of each letter among the keys, nor even to have acquired a conditioned reflex for each one, which is set in motion by the letter as it comes before our eye. If habit is neither a form of knowledge nor an involuntary action, what then is it? It



Figure 5. Filming on the ice harvesting boat. Photo: Mangaard, 2016

is familiar and habitual. Of significance is my ability to film handheld while moving as a human dolly, a crucial skill for filming on the ocean. The contemporary documentary film has taken on the structure and language of many aspects of dramatic film production. These include a narrative arc and the use of characters to depict a story. My post-production process is initially determined by conventional cinematic devices of cutting clips together in chronological order to convey the story. Beginning with an assembly,

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is knowledge in the hands, which is forthcoming only when bodily effort is made, and cannot be formulated in detachment from that effort" (Merleau-Ponty 1962, 144).

rough cut, fine cut and finally locked picture I work through the gradual process of either eliminating or editing clips to create a tight storyline and strengthen visual, thematic and creative facets. The audio is the location sound with no additional treatments. There are no supplementary sound effects or added music.

My filming of the fishermen demonstrates aspects of their work in a linear story; my eye sees events as they occur and I quickly make decisions based on experience and learned processes. A documentary is made in the edit room and it is important that I consider how the footage might be utilized concurrently while filming. The action takes place on a multiplicity of levels of which I, as director/artist present only one view. I give the audience no indication of what action might be occurring behind, above or below me. The timeline of the film is finite with a beginning, middle and end over which the spectator is given no control. Hence the documentary presents a singular directed point of view to which the spectator has no alternative. The film is short and given its narrative structure the viewer must stay for the entire four-minute duration in order to view the story in its entirety. In contrast to this, the media based installation presents an embodied experience in which the spectator is free to wander in a time frame of their own construction, lingering or moving on as they please. The viewer is presented with a multiplicity of options. They may linger and closely observe or move to and fro, considering and reconsidering various aspects of the installation. These aspects shift point of view away from that of the directed cinema to give spectators an element of control over their experience by moving or standing still, entering or leaving, listening and

viewing for the amount of time they themselves determine. Thus the viewer is responsible for creating their own narrative devised by their ambulatory path. Attention is variable. The viewer can attend closely, or quickly apprehend surface impressions and leave.

#### 4. Meltdown - The Thesis Exhibition

##### 4.1 Landscape

In his essay *Thought and Landscape*, Yi-Fu Tuan writes, “landscape, like culture, is elusive and difficult to describe in a phrase” (Meinig 1979, 89). My own experience of landscape is one of a visual and an embodied presence. As stated by Emma Waterton, in *The Routledge Companion to Landscape Studies*, “Practices of landscaping and experiences of embodiment are not...comprised entirely of intentionality, rationality or conscious and continuous deliberation – affects, feelings and emotions are also always invariably shaped in the ways we move through landscapes and, in turn, allow them to flow through us” (2012, 70).

I use images of landscapes I have travelled to and developed an emotional relationship with, affected and been affected by. In a manner similar to that discussed by Waterton, this unique embodied experience, often lacking in intentionality, shapes my memory of the land and informs my perception of the visual material I record. Thus the act of seeing is not only one of vision; it encompasses attention with the entire body. When I am

exploring a location to film, a reflexive action transpires. Through close observation and the passage of time, I develop an awareness of the location that contributes to the positioning of the camera and the frame and thus my affective experience of the landscape dictates the manner in which I document it. Of further consideration is the affective impact that comes of my seeing evidence of global warming on the landscape.

My history of both living in and filming the arctic informs my concern for the melting of the polar ice cap. In *Landscape visualization and climate change: the potential for influencing perceptions and behavior*, Sheppard discusses the use of depictions of landscapes as a factor in people's awareness of and behavior to mitigate climate change, noting the ability of visual stimuli to set off people's feelings and emotions and, citing Zajonc (1984), speaks of its affective power (2005, 637-8). Through the use of visual stimuli in the form of altered landscape imagery in the exhibition I strive to create an awareness of environmental changes.

## 4.2 Horizon

Horizon, of consequence in my learned film language, is an integral part of the thesis exhibition and figures prominently in several of my past works. In the ten-minute experimental film *The Tyranny of Architecture*, I speak of the affective experience generated through embodied knowledge of a location: "Standing on the edge of an Oasis in Nefta and looking out onto the Sahara Desert makes you feel as if you are on the rim of the world. You become the horizon" (Mangaard, 1987).

In my film *Let Me Wrap My Arms Around You*, I discuss the land and its personal impact on my way of seeing.

The land all looks the same it makes no difference if its day or night, it all looks the same. Sometimes several families would go off together to hunt or fish. We would spread across the tundra in a long line of skidoos dragging the wooden sleds called kamatiks behind (Mangaard, 1993).

The Inuit hunters with whom I travelled via skidoo would mention oral histories, and memories of events when describing a route through the surrounding area. While my stay in the tiny isolated hamlet of Baker Lake, NWT lasted only one year, this was a time of great influence and impact. Because there were no trees and few hills, the horizon was always there, always central to my viewpoint. This embodied memory lives within me still, an unseen force informing the camera frame.

#### 4.3 In the Exhibition

The installation takes the form of an expanded cinema, seen by spectators via their chosen ambulatory path. The viewer moves about attending to changes in spatiality and temporality which allows for a close reading and a more leisurely, intimate observation, or alternately, for a cursory brief walk-through. The shift that occurs when the spectator

moves between the two rooms of the exhibition gives the opportunity to consider differences that arise when viewing a directed documentary projected within a cinema setting, juxtaposed with an installation projecting from multiple sources onto a variety of surfaces. In *Between Cinema and the Exhibition: Documentary Within The Gallery Space; The Filmic Installations of Clarisse Hahn, Manon De Boer and Omer Fast*, Anne-Sophie Dinant speaking of the differences between viewing the forms of documentary and those of the gallery installation, notes that the experience of the cinema is a shared one with a fixed time frame while in the gallery the spectator's physical movement creates the narrative and the time frame within which it takes place (2013, 60). In *Black Box, White Cube, Installations and the Film Experience*, Babette Mangolte refers to the viewer as a flâneur, and discusses the value of the experiential quality of their presence. Here the author notes that it is through the presence of the spectator that the artwork gains value and intentionality (2013, 197).

Expanded cinema moves beyond the flat screen of theatrical audience experience to encompass a range of media and film projections and their positioning on multiple screens and surfaces. In his seminal text *Expanded Cinema*, Gene Youngblood discusses the power of such a medium to provide a framework for society to better understand itself and its values. Referring to the shortcomings of language as a tool for communication the author notes that “the only understanding mind is the creative mind”, and speaks to the power of art to educate humankind about itself (1970, 116, 419). The exhibition alludes to the subtle effects of global warming on the ocean. The spectator free to wander

through the gallery is given the opportunity for a close reading of the imagery and to further consider its implications if they so choose.

Re-situating the macroscopic and often hidden imagery derived from filming underwater elements of the natural world, in the white cube of the gallery imparts a weightless, dreamlike quality, blurring the boundaries of reality. Within a gallery setting, utilizing continuous loops of the thesis exhibition's unsynchronized audio and visual media creates the illusion of a suspension of time, furthered by the darkened space, the closed door. The audio comprised of field recordings, location and ambient sound, is heard from several speakers alternately. Playing in a random pattern of unsynchronized water, ambient and electro-acoustic sounds the audio is heard from first one and then another speaker. Moving deeper into the practical and aesthetic aspects of locating the media in the gallery, I explore relationships between images, colours, movement, spatiality and scale. Gradually patterns emerge, as do similarities and differences, while juxtapositions and contradictions reveal themselves in the translation of the imagery from three to two dimensional forms, and back again. The installation interrupts the architecture of the gallery space whilst concurrently melting into it<sup>13</sup> insinuating the projected images onto the walls, ceiling, corners and other elements of the space, in a molding of the visual material into the nooks, crannies and corners of the gallery. This concept is sustained via

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<sup>13</sup> An article by architectural theorist Silvia Lavin, (2009, 9) in the architectural journal LOG, quotes Rist, "The basic concept was not to try to destroy or be provocative to the architecture, but to melt in." Lavin remarks on the intense affective sensibility produced through the melding or interruption of the white cube and of architecture in general, with video creating spaces of ephemerality and consilience (10).

the projections of the iceberg onto the slowly turning acrylic discs that splay their reflected images across the walls of the space.

#### 4.4 The Iceberg

The iceberg that I filmed grounded in the small bay of Duntara is approximately 10,000 years old and most likely floated down from Greenland after slipping off a glacier on its western coast, at a rate of 0.7 kilometers an hour, through the Davis Strait and the Labrador Current. Approximately 40,000 icebergs break off these glaciers every year, a number that is increasing rapidly. Of these, 400-800 float down Iceberg Alley to the Bonavista Coast of Nfld.<sup>14</sup> The iceberg that I filmed was about the size of a cubic fifteen story building measured above sea level. Icebergs typically have 90 percent of their mass hidden beneath the surface of the water.

The melting iceberg image projected onto the acrylic disc was filmed whilst I was on the shore using a tripod. This was my first time seeing an iceberg firsthand and the sheer size of it was overwhelming and personally affective for me, instilling a sense of awe, wonder and transcendence. The experience was one of feeling small and insignificant next to such a massive natural structure seen in a foreign environment. This encounter was particularly affective given my interest in global warming and its effect on the polar ice

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<sup>14</sup> Iceberg Facts (Accessed January 2, 2017. <http://icebergfinder.com/iceberg-facts.aspx>).

cap.<sup>15</sup> My collected media imagery evoked sensations of loss, disappointment, wonder, and anger in me, and I later sought to transfer some of these affects to the installation.

Within the installation the enormity of the iceberg is reduced to a series of small, contained images. The iceberg imagery is projected onto five fourteen and sixteen-inch sandblasted clear acrylic discs, suspended from the ceiling allowing for the slow revolutions instigated by breezes caused by the movement of the spectators. Sandblasting gives the discs disparate levels of opacity and the ability to receive and reflect projected imagery across the surrounding environment. In a manner similar to a lunar eclipse the imagery creates cycles through partial ellipses in a continuously revolving series of reflections indicative of the many phases of the iceberg. The video material I collected demonstrates a variety of weather scenarios and their influence on the iceberg.

Temperatures varied by fifteen degrees Celsius and had tremendous impact, resulting in a waterfall cascading off one side of the iceberg on a particularly sunny day. On other days rain, wind and fog enveloped the coast and the iceberg resulting in an ancillary set of images depicting the iceberg in flux. My recorded observations are projected onto the smaller set of suspended discs.

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<sup>15</sup> In spite of the strong evidence to support global warming and its increasing effect on the polar ice cap we as a society refuse to take clear action to mitigate the problem and carbon dioxide emissions continue to rise. The sea level would rise by approximately seven meters should the Greenland ice cap melt and about 64 meters if the Antarctica ice cap were also to succumb, causing potential flooding worldwide (Lemke et al. 2007).

Working with a video clip of the iceberg in post-production I applied a circular mask to the footage, which is edited to a two-minute looped duration. This loop is projected onto a three-foot diameter acrylic disc that I have constructed. The disc is clear with a manila paper backing on one side, and a hole drilled into the top. Suspended from the ceiling via



Figure 6. Installation View. Five small discs. Photo: Eric Chengyang 2017

a rod affixed to a small motor the disc turns one full revolution per minute creating a kinetic sculpture. The circular masked image of the iceberg projected onto the circular acrylic disc, turns in a steady rhythmic motion rotating the image around the room in a fractured pattern of eclipse-like reflections. The circles of the projected iceberg image

and the circles of the disc repeat and recycle in an infinite series of shifting images, resurrecting the circles of the camera diaphragm, the lens and my eye.

When situating the iceberg imagery within the gallery I scale down the size transforming the original. This relational adaptation reduces and converts the impact that a spectator would derive through the enormity of the iceberg seen in a real life scenario. A closer inspection of the iceberg imagery that I place in the gallery reveals the relentless flow of melt water that cascades forth from one side. This image depicting the melting iceberg, as an index of the melting polar cap, is central to the thesis exhibition. I argue that such a



Figure 7. Meltdown. Installation view. Large disc. Photo: Eric Chengyang

reduction in the imagery of the grounded iceberg allows for an affective investigation as discussed by Steyerl and Brinkema by permitting the spectator the opportunity for an uncanny observation revealing an alternative perspective.

#### 4.5 The Tidal Pools

Blown up to immense proportions, the underwater footage becomes a foreign world of moving colours and shapes full of unfamiliar creatures. The tidal pool sits between craggy rock cliffs and is a constantly moving, at times violently, body of water. Waves surge in and out with powerful force pulling sea creatures, kelp and anything else in the water with them. The macroscopic camera lens I hold beneath the surface of the sea functions like an eye peering into a foreign world and gives the spectator the opportunity for close examination, which as discussed by Brinkema unlocks its potentiality (xv). Without horizon or any other point of reference, the dramatically enlarged imagery functions as a world without stability, one that I, referencing Steyerl, argue dislocates the spectators, leaving them with an inability to orient themselves (2011, 1-2).

Gene Youngblood wrote *Expanded Cinema* (1970) in the days of analogue experimental film using celluloid and emulsion, but the vocabulary of experimental film is relevant still in today's digital conditions. Experimental film processes included Optical Printing – an analogue technique of re-photography of a section of film, where the film image is degraded in sometimes beautiful and organic ways. Rather than diegetic editing where

the sounds and movement from close to long shots are seamlessly sequenced, experimental film often used looping and repeating images, similar to the loops one finds in the gallery where expanded cinema is displayed now.

In *The Forms of the Affects*, Eugenie Brinkema addresses the forms of cinema and their abilities to shift, deceive, alter, turn, fracture space, manipulate, and referencing Jonathan Crary, produce a “vertiginous uncertainty about the distance separating forms,” and in so doing, coins the term “magical movement” (2014, 187). Through the manipulation of the underwater imagery I situate a mass of shifting forms within the gallery, creating a scene of chaotic movement into which the spectator enters. Stilgoe referencing the experience of being on the turbulent waters of a rough sea speaks of the inchoate sensory realization evoked when emotions rise (2015, 20). The strange quality of the installation imagery with its darkened images of underwater flora and tendrils of unrecognizable snakelike shapes might harken to the illicit, to horror and disgust or conversely to the magical and the fantastical. The images evoke strong sensations, unleashing potential affects and feelings that are mixed, complicated, contradictory and uncertain.

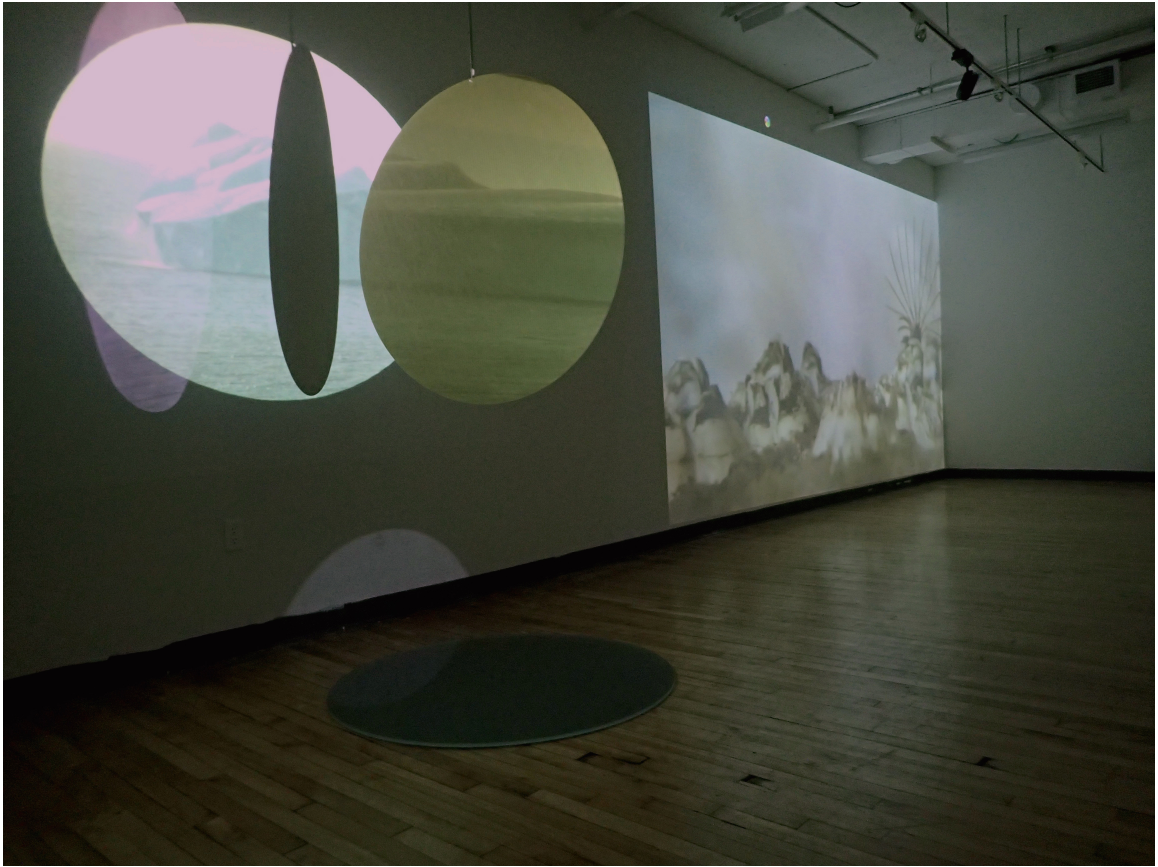


Figure 8. Meltdown. Installation view. Photo: Mangaard, 2017

#### 4.6 The Documentary

In the adjacent screening room is the time-based documentary on the labour of ice-harvesting for water. This four minute film invites viewers to watch from start to finish from fixed seated positions, customary when watching screen-based media. The duration of the film reveals the community and cultural impacts of global warming, as well as the resourcefulness within traditional fishing communities. A recent interview with Catherine Beaudette, Director of Two Rooms Artists Residency and Art Gallery, Duntara, indicates

that there are only two ice harvesting boats in Bonavista Nfld. of which the *Green Waters* is one (2017). The film initiates consideration on the value of finite natural resources, on community longevity, and sustainability.

The depiction of an iceberg, its commodification as a tourist attraction and its harvesting as an object of trade, position it as a symbol of what Wilson refers to as our “shift from a pastoral approach to nature to a consumer approach” (Wilson, 24).<sup>16</sup> This shift is clearly demonstrated in the documentary depicting the assessment, selection, harnessing, winching and storage of iceberg chunks to be sold for water in the production of designer water, beer and vodka. The fishing boat repurposed to harvest ice proposes a new economic opportunity for local fishermen in the wake of environmental warming. The spectator confronted with such a scenario might pause to consider the associated implications - what is an iceberg doing so close to the shore so late in the season? Is this a ‘new normal’ now, with ever increasing masses of icebergs leaving Greenland annually and floating down to Newfoundland, as this fishing for ice activity implies?

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<sup>16</sup> For 30 years Ed Keen has spent 16 hours a day every June and July on his boat Blue Waters working with sonar and GPS technology to scour the Eastern coast of Newfoundland for icebergs (Scarrow 2014). Blue Waters holds 100 tons of ice, netting 1.3 million litres of water per year, for use in the making of vodka, beer and wine (BBC Travel). The sole supplier of ice to Iceberg Vodka, Kean employs locals, owns his boat and makes approximately \$500,000 per year (Witte). Using a 55 meter freight barge that holds 1.2 million litres of water they tow the captured ice to Port Union, where in 2013 Iceberg Vodka restored a former salt cod factory, the Fishermen's Union Trading Company property for the production of products associated with their brand, employing a number of local townsfolk. Iceberg Vodka founded in 1995, is a Canadian owned company (Witte, Hiscock 2013, Scarrow 2014). The company has a new partner in Guus Backelandt of the Netherlands who is bottling 75,000 to 100,000 bottles annually of the iceberg water for sale in Europe at \$21 per bottle (Casale et al 2014). In Anchorage, Scott Lindquist of Alaska Distillery harvests 10,000 to 20,000 pounds of iceberg water annually and has revenues of over \$1 million (Kushner 2013).



Figure 9. The ice boat with Mangaard onboard filming. Photo: Paddy Lamb, 2016

In the making of the documentary I balance fact with artistic storytelling. The tradition of capturing material in *cinéma vérité*, direct cinema or observational documentary is a long one and includes masters such as Frederick Wiseman and the Maysles brothers, both of whom gained prominence in the 1960s. This practice involves the capturing of footage handheld, often moving with the subject in order to provide a narrative representation of the everyday reality that took place. Events are filmed as they occur without interference from the camera crew or post-production voiceover as is omnipresent in television nature documentary's. Unlike dramatic film production there is no repetition of actions for the camera. My filming on the iceboat was an unplanned expedition, spontaneously filmed *cinéma vérité*, and resulting in a key component of the thesis.

The documentary orients the viewer on a large fishing boat on the ocean and depicts the embodied actions of the crew. The viewer witnesses the unspoken communication that comes of habitual movements, the men working quickly, indifferent to the lens of the camera and with safety as a primary concern. The viewer may have seen such actions on television or in films (albeit with voiceover explanation) however it is likely that the men were fishing for cod and they are now fishing for ice growlers. The gestures of the crew working in a small skiff on the open sea conceal the dangers of the frigid water, the turbulent rocking of the boat caused by rolling waves. My hand-held camera adjustments onboard the boat mask its dramatic movements as it shifts and rolls with the waves. This embodied awareness of the movement of the boat and my actions to mitigate its lurching while filming speak to my filmmaking experience as it serves audience expectations.

While the conventional documentary format conveys important information, it is a directed linear form and the viewer must stay for the duration in order to see the narrative in its entirety. In contrast, the expanded cinema thesis installation allows for an embodied immersive experience. The spectator may wander through the exhibition surrounded by its form creating their own ambulatory path, and may enter or leave at any time. This allows for a close reading of the colours, shapes, duration, movement and formal qualities of the projected material. Through the devices of removing the horizon, reconfiguring the relational size of the imagery, and reshaping the material spatially, my installation disrupts and destabilizes. In a manner similar to the embodiment described by Annie Dillard, *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*, the viewer is presented with the opportunity to look

deeply and to feel the exhibition (1974, 14-34). This may have the benefit of affording the viewer a chance to immerse in the imagery, and consider the subtleties and implications associated with environmental changes, reconsidering their own role within such a world.

## 5. Conclusion

By placing two cinematic forms side by side, the exhibition draws attention to the kinds of knowledge that documentary and installation each afford, and how they might collaborate to create a third way of knowing.

The studio-based and academic research for my thesis exhibition and supporting paper afforded me the time to conduct a fulsome exploration of the forms of cinematic production and installation, and how to consider these in terms of their affects. The practice-based research was divided between exploration and image capture in the field, post-production montage and compositing, and experiments with projections in the gallery setting.

My participation in the Two Rooms Residency Program in Newfoundland was crucial as the site of the source material for an install in January 2017 in the context of a group exhibition, as well as in the final thesis exhibition. During the Residency, the imagery I captured seemed a provisional form of observational research and field recording. It was

only after I returned and revisited the footage that I came to the conclusion that a close reading and presentation of images from this specific site would be the best option for approaching the wider themes of environmental precariousness now, and of the juxtaposition of forms of cinema as a way to generate affective impact.

*Meltdown* is one in a series of my ongoing creative investigations into water, its forces of attraction, its relation to sight and perception (both extremely close and infinitely far) and its deeply affective qualities, especially in the forms of experimental cinema.

Discussing the power of an expanded cinema, Youngblood posits that it provides the framework for an increased consciousness; the experimental filmmaker is creator of the conditions for this consciousness (1970, 41-54). *Meltdown* strives to prompt such a broadening of consciousness by including gallery conditions of spectator mobility and open-temporality that allow for a close reading of the imagery. In *Meltdown* I seek to leverage the affective qualities of the form of expanded cinema, drawing upon my experience as an experimental filmmaker, to open up an unpredictable new consciousness of the environmental message of the work. By giving the opportunity for a close reading I hope that my audience might take from the thesis exhibition a memory of the imagery to which they have been exposed, and a consideration of its implications.

By situating expanded cinema in the gallery with a short durational verité documentary in an adjacent screening room, I invite spectators to consider the impact that climate change has on the ocean from two points of view, including a document of community life, and a

cinematic installation that prompts personal mobility and response from viewers. In conclusion, through the juxtaposition of different forms of cinema eliciting different yet intersecting affects, there is the potential for new embodied knowledge of the impact of environmental changes on water, a key issue of our time.

## 6. Addendum

### 6.1 Audio

For the thesis installation audio I invited a young sound artist, Paul Geldart, to work with some of my source material as well as his own. I am not an audio artist and felt the installation required a more fulsome experimental approach, and Paul was recommended to me. Our discussions focussed on creating an environment that worked with the moving imagery of the installation, and with the experience of moving through the architecture of the gallery. Location sounds were interspersed with electronic effects. Source material included water in a variety of forms heard from different distances, from intimate to afar. Paul Geldart designed the audio to play from two speakers, positioned at opposite ends of the large gallery space. Each played a different yet complementary soundtrack. Although the two sound sources are heard out of sync with each other, and the start time of each is random, the sound is designed so the overall affect is harmonious and complementary both between sound sources, and with the different visual elements. Within the installation the audio was kept at a consistently high volume level to enhance the immersive aspects of the exhibition. While each projection is an autonomous agent

within the overall gallery space, the audio flows between them, fulfilling the crucial role of galvanizing the space into a unified composition.

## 6.2 Black and White Stills

Two large-scale black and white prints on archival paper were affixed to the wall with small magnets in the hallway joining the two rooms of the exhibition. The images are still frames from the underwater footage of the tidal pool filmed in Duntara. These enlargements are printed in low resolution, with expanded pixels, depicting ambiguous forms of vegetation. The prints were conceived to operate as a bridge or a pause between the documentary screening room and the cinematic gallery installation.

## 6.3 Audience Response

The overall response to the exhibition by spectators was one of lingering contemplation. Visitors to the gallery were inclined to stay and observe the installation as a whole, but particular elements held their interest for longer periods of time. The five suspended sandblasted discs and their refracted and reflected images were of particular interest to many attending the exhibition. More than 120 people visited the Meltdown thesis exhibition from the dates March 11 to 18, 2017. Spectators used terms such as hypnotic, melancholy, a powerful reflection on scale from different vantage points, fills me with sadness, loss and serenity, to describe the affective qualities of the exhibition. Several

visitors commented that the experience of seeing the documentary and then the installation gave the opportunity for a close, durational viewing, making them more aware of issues around water.

#### 6.4 Future Thoughts/Exhibition Conclusions

My artistic process for the exhibition included a curatorial response to the architecture and timeframe afforded for the Thesis presentation, in consultation with my advisors and peers. Future iterations of the installation offer the possibility for new adaptations to specific sites and curatorial circumstances. For example, Meltdown could be adapted to a smaller scale, or one or several of the exhibition elements could be reconfigured. As a visitor pointed out, it could be potent to display the four-minute documentary on a monitor, incorporated into the same space as the other iceberg images. The suspended discs would function well as solo elements on their own, or within a larger exhibition. In the future I am interested in working with underwater macroscopic photography as both video and still imagery. In my past practice over 25 years, I developed a deep and extensive database of imagery collected from natural environments. During the Thesis, I was able to substantially grow this database as well as explore new modes of projecting and juxtaposing images, enhanced through the cohesive power of audio. In the future I will continue to juxtapose cinematic forms, including some of those that appeared in this exhibition, in order to generate new affective meanings.

7. Database of elements included in Thesis Exhibition:

*MELTDOWN*

Single channel documentary video

HD video, 4 minutes.

*SEASCAPE # 1,*

Pigment ink on archival

cotton rag paper

*SEASCAPE # 2,*

Pigment ink on archival

cotton rag paper

*TIDAL POOL DUNTARA,*

HD video looped projection

*TIDAL POOL GROS MORNE*

HD video looped projection

*MELTING BERG,*

HD video looped projection, plastic disc with manila paper backing, smoked glass disc, motor, metal rod.

*FIVE VIEWS OF THE ICEBERG*

HD video looped projection, five sandblasted plastic discs, fishing line, wooden dowel.

PAUL GELDART

Sound Design, Two single channel audio loops

8. Accompanying Digital Materials

The following digital elements are included in the research repository under digital materials.

1. A 6 minute documentation video of the expanded cinema in the gallery.
2. The 4 minute documentary depicting ice harvesting.
3. 15 digital stills documenting the exhibition.

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