

RETROSPECTIVE SCENOGRAPHY

a scenographic strategy for translating
the everyday into art

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If Cecilia was the "Little riding hood"
the story would go like this:

She would approach the wolf and say:
*"Apparently, because the music plays more
dramatically and the light is shading to red,
you are about to eat me".*

- Aina Roca Mora

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AUTHORS NOTE

When this research began taking the form of a written document I realised that it is not entirely for you (the reader). Unlike other subjects of research, conclusions made from the arts can never be hard-earned facts and instead always maintain a connection to the author/reader that is personal, poetic, and even disagreeable. When I say this is not entirely for you what I mean is the research is as much for me as it is for you.

With this in mind, the following text has been structured with some things in mind. There is what I do, and what I want this document to achieve.

What I do

How can I use scenography to communicate the concept of an atmosphere? Writing, photography, film, architecture are all mediums people use to show atmosphere. This research then is as much about exploring the medium of scenography as it is about one particular research question. This is what I do as an artist.

As a researcher, I want to share my methodology, the tools in the creative process.

As a scenographer, I want to challenge the way we perceive and look at the environment around us.

These versions of myself come across (for the reader) as an artist trying to deal with the paradox of writing about atmospheres. The versions of myself act in a very similar way to how I make, which is, using collage as a method of showcasing the atmosphere of a space and time. Like classical stage or set design it is a practice of compiling and designing the aesthetics of a space in order to communicate an atmosphere. Modern definitions of Scenographer cause me to challenge the space outside of the void of the stage

What I want this document to achieve

For me

To gain a deeper understanding of my position as a maker by looking at theories within the form of scenography. Throughout the research, I have continuously trusted my intuition during all phases of working. The process of writing and formatting the research has allowed me to reflect on the reasoning behind this intuition. More importantly, writing has forced me to be honest. To effectively communicate my practice I needed to honestly ask myself "what and why am I doing this." This allowed me to make clarifications such as; memory being a method of making rather than a source of making.

For you

To come away with the process, not the product. Ideas on how to expand your own process of making, as well as defining your opinion as a maker. I invite you to disagree with my personal aesthetic and beliefs but still come away with possibilities of what is essentially adapting source material. I think research is a way to share information and enter into a dialogue. My perspective from dancing for 25 years is that time in the studio is inherently more important than the product you put on stage. The product doesn't exist without the process.

At the very least I want to share with you the fun of being curious because curiosity is something innately human. For me, the process of putting together the pieces, of figuring something out, is a way of connecting with people.

For this reason, the document is structured in a way that it will: 1. introduce the theoretical concepts I am discovering. 2. Present open-ended options for ways of translating inspirations/ideas into a variety of mediums. 3. Have my views on spectatorship scattered throughout.

The elephant in the room. I hope I can make these concepts clear by using real examples of how I am implementing this practice during the spring of 2020 whilst we are all social distancing in the times of a global pandemic.

In summary, I hope you go away with an idea of the many possibilities in using scenography as a medium to communicate a mood and challenge the way we perceive the environment around us. This is what I enjoy doing, what drives me, gets me out of bed, and motivates me to be creative and talk about creativity.

Cecilia Berghäll

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GLOSSARY

Archiving	Using scenography to package different interpretations into collage/montage/sequence to describe the environment by its atmosphere. An archive itself takes up space.
Atmosphere	The aesthetic mood of a space. Hard to describe, but intensely present. Both personal and collective. The feel of a room that can only be retold through sensory descriptors. A theme.
Observing	Surveying the environment and paying attention to what and how you notice. Observations are documented using photography, writing, and videography.
On-site	Presenting a translation in the original environment it was observed/inspired by.
Positioning	The specific placement of the observer/spectator. Distance, eye-line/height, and movement all impact the viewing experience.
Re-located	Presenting a translation in a new environment.
Spatial Relations	<p>The idea that everything we experience has a logic. Positioning, structures and objects, movement, and time are ways of describing this logic. Cause and Effect.</p> <p>i.e. The sun at 10am in the morning of my south facing window caused the light in my bedroom.</p>
Translating	Finding a creative way of describing what has been observed. Using different mediums to render what I notice into a personal understanding/sensitivity. Variations span multiple disciplines from sound, tactile material, to physicality. The research explores methods of generating these variations.

Retrospective Scenography

A Scenographic strategy for translating the everyday into art.

Cecilia Berghäll

PREFACE

An inquiry of self becomes an inquiry of space.

The sun shines fiercely in the morning. Without many tall buildings and hardly any variation in elevation the Netherlands is a wash of light that penetrates any window, including the one in my bedroom, which on the ground floor faces only small gardens and more houses. This light coming through my window reminds me of snow, I can almost smell the cold. *

I moved countries for the first time when I was two years old. Now at the age of 27, I have lived in four on rotation. Finland, England, the United States, England, the United States, The Netherlands. For me, home is not a place, but my sensorial memories of places make up a large part of my identity. Home is not Finland, it is the smell of firewood. Home is not Oregon, it is my father gesturing for me step outside and inhale. It doesn't come as a surprise either that what I fixate on, the thing that exists without borders or language, are these sensory experiences. I can tell you that Oregon has the cleanest air you will ever smell, its wind in march is warm, and I have never seen more gold in the golden hour. I can tell you that Finland is a land of extremes; the darkest dark and the lightest light. And, for some reason, part of England is having a warm meal, sore muscles, and wet chlorine hair.

These are the shortest moments that have affected me the most. Moments that can never accurately be documented. They thrive as a memory, a taste, fleeting . . .

"Fading even as they were generated. No basis on which to inch out across your life, and yet all you have" - Jerry Koh

*

As a scenographer, my work is an outlet for me to translate my personal, sensorial, experiences of the environment around me. These experiences are overtly phenomenological moments in time. Perhaps I am grasping for places I have left, or embracing my past through my senses? The topics that fuel this process are light and moment, framing the quotidian, challenging the physicality of perception, and designing cohesive montages. All to compose narratives through space and time and not script. I frame the everyday world to create a stage, I use atmosphere to tell a story, and my performers are light, objects, and time.

The research supporting these topics, at its core, is a specified interpretation of the traditional creative process; generating material, selecting material, and creating a sharable sequence. The research gives insight into multiple forms of interpreting the material to shape and develop a body of artist work.

Our sensorial experiences are a massive part of how we understand the environment around us, they connect to memory, mood, and overall our connection with what is around us. Think of your home or your childhood bedroom, or your secret place to escape to read and watch the clouds. They are environments that linger so clearly with us but can never be done justice to by simply describing them to someone else. When something can't be said it becomes art; photography, painting, fiction, film, dance, are all descriptions of something. This research starts with the question, how do I use scenography to describe an environment? How do I share my perspective on what I experience and how I experience it?

Can I describe an environment by sharing an archive of creative interpretations of what I observe, to share the atmosphere unique to my personal experience?

I was finishing my B.A. in dance, and performing for a repertory company. Repertoire (performing mostly old works) requires a huge amount of learning from archived video footage. One thing led to another and I became increasingly frustrated with how dance on film - as well as on stage - struggled to connect viscerally to the audience. My graduating work experimented heavily with changes in light, the dancers velocity, and costumes to get the audience to experience something closer to the experience of the dancers on stage. This was my first step towards scenography. The experimentation on the audiences experience was in hindsight an early example of what this research looks into, challenging perception. Currently, the research and the work (I make) itself deal with **perception** based on it's simplest definition: the identification and interpretation of our ability to see, hear and become aware of something in our environment through our senses. Whereas before my "materials"/actors were people (bodies), the material of scenography is space and everything in it. It is our perception - the what and how we perceive - of our environments that contain the memories, descriptions, and lived in experiences that are so hard to just talk about. Thinking from the perspective of a scenographer trying to describe a space; if our materials are space, light, sound, smell, bodies, objects, an architecture then the narrative that ties them together to form a specific understanding is **atmosphere**.

To present this research, the structure of the contents is my methodology. The structure and methodology both act as an anchor. The constants of **observing**, **translating**, and **archiving** allow the practice to stay flexible whilst still keeping on a specific path, with the goal in mind to find a way of describing an environment in a way that reflects our perspective. The structure will follow me as I carry out the methodology whilst observing the 2020 quarantine. The environment I will attempt to describe is my home. The structure is:

Observing - surveying the environment and paying attention to what I notice.

Translating - finding a creative way of describing what I have observed. Using different mediums to render what I notice into my understanding/sensitivity. As a researcher coming from a background of dance and cinema analysis my method of translating from observations is comparative to making variations based on a theme. However, as a scenographer, the variations span multiple disciplines from sound, tactile material, to physicality. The research explores methods of generating these variations.

Archiving - Using scenography to package the different interpretations to describe the environment by its atmosphere. I want to share my perspective on my home, not photos and blueprints, but creative interpretations that share a feeling rather than anything exact.

By allowing the Cartesian and the phenomenological to coexist within the same artistic research, the research becomes both analytical and emotional. It spends as much time investigating the reason for the light coming through my bedroom window as it tries to adapt the emotions of it into the material - be they paper, movements, or pacing. What is the logic behind the chance performances of light in our bedrooms? What is the colour of the atmosphere? At the end of the day, the art and the research are searching for a way to communicate lived-in experiences that are both extremely personal but recognisable by anyone.

The artistic work, and the research stand at a paradox. How can I structure a process of topics - such as atmosphere - that by nature resists categorisation? How can I share an authentic experience with a form codified as theatre? What for? These ephemeral topics often have a way of slipping through the fingers, and can't be packaged into a neat conclusion. I want the structure to show the research as a **process** supported by the theories I attach to it. I want to generate a way of appreciative way looking that quietly draws attention to the un-noticed, mundane, and fascinating phenomena around us.

Part 1: OBSERVING

Observing an environment is a process of collecting materials, taking photos, videos, and paying attention to the things you notice that you find inspiring, and essential to the character of an environment. For this, it is my current home. Observing is a way of not only documenting but also analysing why we notice what we notice, how were we able to notice it in the first place. Observing is a bit like collaging a mood board and then asking questions like

Is a quality of light noticed because it reminds you of a memory? To see a shadow, Which position do you need to stand in? The small happenstances like light, shadows, ambiance, and all things ephemeral are exactly the aspects of environments that are hard to describe, and tied to individual perspective/perception. They are a huge part of finding the atmosphere of an environment.

A quick interjection on the senses: This research focuses mostly on visual observation, whilst taking into account the other senses - especially tactility/physicality - but sound and smell, in particular, appear in part two and three of the methodology. It



ATMOSPHERE

Finding the tonic

To create a dramaturgy - something sharable to an audience - we also need a narrative. Analytically investigating the documentation is only one method of approaching inspiration as a designer. It provides practical and interesting tools for spatial composition and inclusion of the spectator but has little to say about tone. It is an act structure, not a story. Atmosphere, in this research, is a method for creatively dealing with the moods and emotions sourced from the observations. As a term [atmosphere] is fitting due to the nature of the observations. It is not in a vacuum that we experience the world around us but instead as an intersection of accumulated knowledge, the present state of mind, and past experiences. These experiences are like memories or dreams, what we remember is selective, and they can often be hard to describe. Yes, the observation of light can be dissected into a strictly compositional format but it can also . . .

*

On April 8th, 2019 - the day her sister turned 33 - whilst overseeing a mellow workday at a restaurant near the north of Utrecht, C stepped outside to check for new customers. As she breathed in the cold, clean air that only spring can produce she was confronted with the Dutch Sky. All week the sun had been diffused behind clouds and buildings, peaking out and warming up the city, after a seemingly endless winter. All week this spring evening had been hinting at its arrival and finally, here it was on a lazy Monday evening.

*

The transition between winter - seemingly endless, and the spring air - clean. The lazy Monday evening, and being confronted with the sky. These are states of mind as much as they are elements of design. Philosopher, Gernot Böhme writes

"Atmospheres are involved wherever something is being staged, wherever design is a factor - and that now means: almost everywhere. Now, this matter-of-fact way in which atmospheres are talked about and manipulated is extremely surprising, since the phenomenon of atmosphere is itself something extremely vague, indeterminate, intangible. The reason is primarily that atmospheres are totalities: atmospheres imbue everything, they tinge the whole of the world or a view, they bathe everything in a certain light, unify a diversity of impressions in a single emotive state"(Böhme, 2).

They are phenomenological, related to individual experience. Atmosphere, in a theatrical study, can attempt to interpret these both vague and powerful emotions, because it is in transition between atmospheres (such as the restaurant and the sky) that we recognise them as lazy or as a confrontation of spring. Atmospheres resist categorisation which is why they are essential to interpreting observations.

"Seen in this way, atmospheres have something irrational about them, in a literal sense: something inexpressible. Finally, atmospheres are something entirely subjective: to say what they are or, better, to define their character,

one must expose oneself to them, one must experience them in terms of one's emotional state. Without the sentient subject, they are nothing. And yet: the subject experiences them as something "out there", something which can come over us, into which we are drawn, which takes possession of us like an alien power"(2).

As Böhme has so accurately described, is the emotional tinge of a space, they bathe everything in a certain light, unify a diversity of impressions in a single emotive state. In a theatrical context, atmosphere is how to compose light and space to influence the mood of the spectator. In traditional theatre, atmosphere is a supportive element for the performer/script. I find scenography so interesting because it is a design-led approach where spatial functions and elements of space, light, sound, and objects inspire audience engagement - to paraphrase Richard Shearing. It is Theatre designed first from the construction of atmosphere to create a mood.

In essence, atmosphere is broadly understood as an environment, or perhaps the character of the environment. the quality of the light, the texture of the sound, the way objects in the space relate to each other. It is through designing the qualities of an environment that a theatre-maker constructs an atmosphere.

"The matter looks different if approached from the side of production aesthetics, which makes it possible to gain rational access to this "intangible" entity. It is the art of the stage set which rids atmospheres of the odour of the irrational: here, it is a question of producing atmospheres. This whole undertaking would be meaningless if atmospheres were something purely subjective. For the stage set artists must relate them to a wider audience, which can experience the atmosphere generated on the stage in, by and large, the same way. It is, after all, the purpose of the stage set to provide the atmospheric background to the action, to attune the spectators to the theatrical performance and to provide the actors with a sounding board for what they present. The art of the stage set, therefore, demonstrates from the side of praxis that atmospheres are something quasi- objective. What does that mean. Atmospheres, to be sure, are not things. They do not exist as entities which remain identical over time"(Böhme, 3).

Atmospheres are by nature aesthetic, emotional, and most vivid when they transition from one to the other. So how do atmospheres function within the process of this research the "rational side of production aesthetics".

In dance, we call it a motif, in cinema a logline. A central theme or conflict that makes the story we are about to watch worth the watch. The glue that holds the narrative together. It is the lighthouse guiding us back to why we make what we make in the first place throughout the chaos of the creative process. A theme, a motive, the tonic (home key), the home base of any type of composition. This one - very classical - the technique of being able to return home whilst in the very depth of work be it film, dance, or music is fascinating to me. The infinite amounts of variations one motif can process while remaining tonally in harmony. In the context of this research, I use atmosphere as my theme, the leitmotif, my red thread.

Many contemporary attempt to deal with the notion of atmosphere, and often find themselves describing their practice in ways that are just as cryptic and analogy ridden as the subject matter. James Turrel has referred to his curiosity as the same wordless thought that comes from looking at fire. Peter Zumthor has been quod comparing his work with the feeling of the back of a spoon, and Agnes Martin paints about that happiness we feel without reasons. What they share and what is research is the feeling that what we experience is non-vicarious (as turrel often describes it) not able to be experienced without actually being there.

Documentation can also be a creative form of interpretation. Observing and documenting is a way of gathering the atmosphere which means it doesn't need to be accurate, as long as it is source material that can be used to later to make with.

31 Adriaen Beyerkade.

stories. photos. videos. materials of what I am doing right now

Sliding her fingers between the blinds she gently cracked open a view through the window. C did this most mornings, looking out to the bike lane in front of her living room to survey how the morning commuters were dressed for the day. Jackets that had been zipped all the way up for months were slightly more open today, and cuffed

jeans showed a slew of pale ankles

“hmm, it must be a little warmer today”

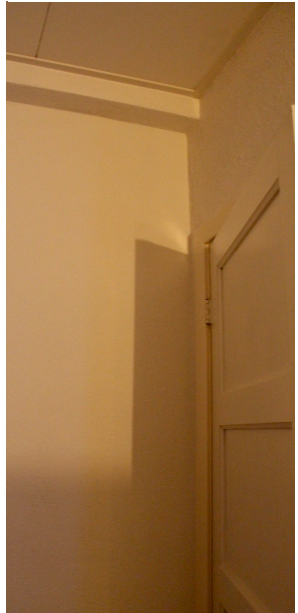
Peering to the left a gold puddle caught her eye. It had rained yesterday, there were many puddles scattered along curbs and dips but only this one was gold. Why?

Taking in the scene this tranquil pool of gold was simply the sun bouncing off a tall yellow building. The yellow, being illuminated by the sun, had caused its reflection in the puddle to appear gold. She took a photo just before the traffic light turned green and a heard of bicycles came streaming through the intersection, unaware of the golden puddle they were running over.

“I guess it only looks gold from here”

She went to brush her teeth.





By far the most interesting phenomenon in my home is the play of light. Such as the golden puddle.

Directly outside my living room are a sidewalk, bike lane, four lanes for cars, another bike lane, and another sidewalk. On top of that, my small first story apartment sits on the corner of a four-way traffic light. The reflections on the cars, the headlights at night, and the constant motion of commuters might seem annoying at first however I don't get any sound pollution, instead, I watch a constant light show which I attempt to photograph and get videos of. Through observing these lights two concepts have become important to my documentation, **positioning**, and something I like to call **Spatial Relations**, both of which are an inquiry into the cause and effect of what we observe.

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“Do you see it?”

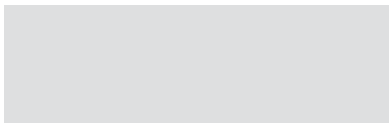
C asked, pointing towards the rock that sat motionless in the puddle. She had placed it on the reflection of the sun causing a momentary eclipse.

“No” They replied.

C wrinkled her nose.

“Maybe I need to bend my knees,” They said, “after all, I am taller than you.”

They could then both see the eclipse.



POSITIONING

Positioning refers to the specific placement of the onlooker - for the observations it is me, and for the scenes, I create it is a spectator. Distance, eye-line/height, and movement all impact the viewing experience of a spectator.

The light coming through my bedroom window may have looked different were I not just waking up and in the bed.

The view of the golden puddle was only possible from my living room.

These notes present the possibility (and need) to carefully consider the spectator's physicality when presenting work. The Eclipse is an example of a short walk I created in spring 2019.

Subjective experience is dependant on spatial relations, especially positioning. The body is not an isolated object and is always understood in relation to space or structures. The observer/spectators' position and other objects(ephemeral or not) align to create a moment of Scenography.

The observer/spectator is an essential part, not simply a passive onlooker to an event that would happen anyway. The specific time of the observation immerses the spectator. This scenographic research is dependant on being observed - as quantum as it may sound.

As mentioned, positioning looks at the view of the spectator as something inextricably linked with the moment of observation. i.e. immersed. The trouble with immersive experiences is they are a popular method for attracting audiences of any variety. "Interactive" museums offering art controlled by the motion of touch of the spectators turn people into light switches, and although physically in motion, I argue that this interaction is incredibly passive. Richard Shearing in his 2015 Ph.D. *Audience Immersion and the Experience of Scenography* agrees that the term immersive dangerously suggests the body as a saturated or engrossed concept, when in fact true mental and physical immersion is the subjective experience of a set of specific conditions.

"The sensation of feeling when immersed in the rain, for example, would depend on the fluctuating forces of the wind or the size of the raindrops; it is their distance, force, and speed that give way to particular feelings and emotions... What is needed in the current discourse on immersive practice is a more nuanced understanding of how a participant's body is situated and bound up within a rich complex performance environment"(11).

I do not want to be a light switch. A more nuanced understanding - within this research - is that each spectator, being of different physicality and different proportions, must actively search for their positioning to experience the scenography. This nuanced understanding is not so different from a more traditional view of the actor. A body in theatre is understood with the space. Researcher Yana Meerzon at the University of Ottawa gives examples of this view in her essay on Chekov.

"As Fischer-Lichte comments, 'the location of the stage space depends, in other words, on understanding the overall layout of the space, and in particular on the space assigned to A [actor] and S [spectator] and the resulting, set definition of the relationship between A and S' (Fischer-

Lichte 1992: 101). Similarly, Chekhov sees atmosphere in the hands of actors, in the way their bodies interconnect within the circumstances of a given space, rhythm of the action, the objectives of each particular character, and the psycho-physiology of each stage mask” (261).

From the perspective of scenography, this idea puts the observer in place of the actor when it comes to relating to the space around them. Positioning and physicality also invite the spectator to consider the hierarchy of what they see. A straight forward example would be the position of my desk at home. The makeshift studio space I have created in quarantine, severely limiting my husband's access to a normal dinner table. It's considered bad Fengshui, but my desk faces away from the window. I am inspired to create when I look at the play of light rather than a normal road. It is a simple example that speaks volumes about why I am so curious about atmospherically documenting my environment. Just like the archived dance videos I have a desire to challenge the perception of the everyday spaces we move between and inhabit. What would we notice if we looked at all whilst laying down? What would we see if we looked around the focus of the picture? Being upside-down yourself is different from seeing someone who is upside down.



In this experiment the “art” point of focus was on a small black mirror on the floor. Their instinct was to look forward at the blank curtain. Once finding the mirror they had to shift their eye-line and sway with the moving curtain. SPRING 2019



In this experiment a mundane street corner became the backdrop of a short performance. One response was “I will never look at that section of the street in the same way again.” AUTUMN 2019.

The experiment was also a response to the issue of immersion. Techniques were used such as water dripped off the umbrella on a clear day.



In the WINTER of 2019, I was part of a group given a room where we were to produce and experiment with scenography relating to sound. We turned our gaze outwards and use the windows to frame the visual experience. The room itself became our backstage.

The spectators themselves sat on chairs placed parallel with the windows, so as if on a train or bus, they needed to turn their heads in orders to see out.

To Summerise

- Part one of my methodology is in taking a survey of a space; that is too view in detail in order to ascertain character (that is is atmosphere of a space).
- **Atmosphere** is our wordless thematic feeling of a space. What we will use to keep a cohesive mood through the next parts of the process.
- The examples above detail different ways of looking at my home (using photography, videos, and stories/memories) in order to create a comprehensive collection of the observable atmospheric qualities.
- Through **observing** in order to collect atmosphere we can also challenge the hierarchy of perception. How and why does the spectator notice something? This is important because it represented the individual nature in how we each experience a space that is important to us. What you notice in your home is bound to be different than what others notices about your home due to your lived in experience in that environment.



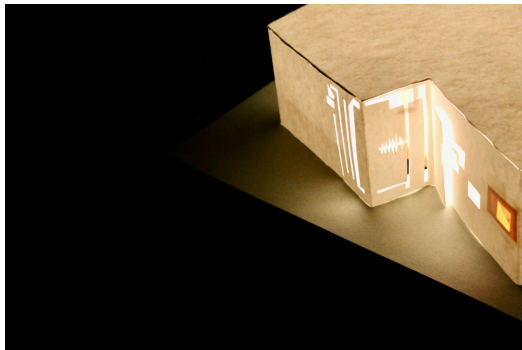


Part 2: TRANSLATING

Towards the end of Part 1, we covered term **positioning** and encountered **spatial relations** as different ways of observing cause and effect in an environment. Spatial relations, are as much a way looking as they are a way to understanding what translating is. So, to continue with part two we need to know what is translating? What are spatial relations? And how can we use these concepts to interpret what I documented in my home?

*Tell all the truth but tell it slant —
Success in Circuit lies
Too bright for our infirm Delight
The Truth's superb surprise
As Lightning to the Children eased
With explanation kind
The Truth must dazzle gradually
Or every man be blind —*

Emily Dickinson



TRANSLATING

Creatively generating material

My scenographic method of creating variations. The rendering of something into another language (here meaning medium or material). I use the word translation instead of recreation when I attempt to scenographically present an observation that I have documented. I find translation a more accurate word choice because recreation assumes a level of accuracy that I am not trying to meet. It is looking at the photo of light on my wall and wondering how to do the same thing with mirrors, it is searching for a color palette of paper that matches the mood, it is making a map of the pathways I walk.

But why are we translating? Remembering that our goal is to find a way of describing a space through scenography translating is easily understood through the analogy of film. If a space is a story, an atmosphere is its theme. Translations are all the details that build upon the theme, costume, light, color, editing style, framing, POV. These elements seen separately each give an aesthetic mood put them together and you get a story - in this case, aesthetic representation of an entire space. To make things even more tangible we need to remember the goal is to find a more emotional/personal/aesthetic method of describing a space. The idea is to get someone who has never visited to receive your interpretation of the atmosphere, the goal is simply, like with all art, to share.

If the atmosphere is our theme, then translating is our variations. Translating is a way reiterating, and reinventing what you documented. Not only does translating collect the material to describe a space, but this form of experimentation allows a continued investigation into material and theoretical understanding of what atmosphere means within the context of spatial design. Translating is a way of refining my methods but more importantly, it is fun. It is a playful process of creating from inspiration. Like observing atmospheres, they are an amalgamation of material, perspective, memory, and images that speak for themselves. To reiterate Böhme, the emotional tinge of a space.

SPATIAL RELATIONS

The logic behind perception

Spatial relations are a method of translating based on an analytical way of observing, looking at space as a study - a Cartesian bird's-eye view of the whole observable scenario. The idea that everything we experience has a logic. **Positioning**, previously mentioned, is one way of making this analysis - the cause and effect (logic) of what we see. The sun at 10 am of my south-facing window caused the light in my bedroom. What can poetically be described as an eclipse becomes a tight inquiry into our environment's composition. Spatial Relations seeks to ask the why and the how of our performative environment.

Where spatial relations are exact ways of composing: Positioning, movement, time, structures, and objects.

Translating, generally, is a creative interpretation: adapting from memory, collecting materials, abstracting, changing scale, repeating, accumulating, and many more options.

The most useful way to describe both is through sharing examples and methods, which I will do through sharing an example from past work, and the translations I am making in my home. The first examples are there to prove past tests and theories since the process of observing is not directly present. The examples from my current situation are hopefully more tangible to an understanding of how translation is simply interpretation.

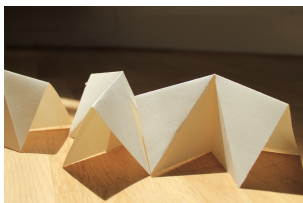
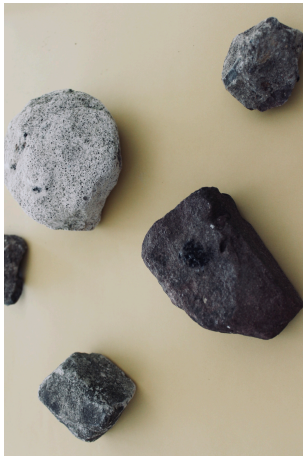


EXAMPLE : Material research

A form of collecting materials, sources, and samples, that give me that tinge of emotion.

I intuitively collect materials without a particular scene in mind to have a library of choices when I do start constructing an atmosphere.

This collection is a research into the aesthetics of the atmosphere as they relate to materials and personal experience. It is also a way to try to understand the balance between subjective intuition and tangible materials. An example of this practice can be found in OASE Issue 91 “Building Atmospheres”



“Since the questions we want to raise in this issue, such as how atmosphere is present in and through architecture, and how architects can construct atmospheres, cannot be answered in a mere rational sense, we have felt that the best way to prepare for the conversations is to investigate our own intuitive associations with atmosphere by collecting photographs and words from our own memory and experience. We started to collect, roam around, and read. We gradually sketched around the topic, in words and images, and only slowly did things fall into place. Old places visited, the reflection of water, a tree, stacked stones and a lady in a flower dress. The memory of movement in sand, chairs in a dark place, a curtain. A concrete house designed by Belgian architect Juliaan Lampens, hidden between trees; the tree-filtered light in the interior landscape. What intuition revealed to us, through these images, was an emphasis on material, texture and tactility, as well as on light, shadow and aging, or to put it differently, the images showed ‘experiences’, evoking sensory perceptions, and stirring the mind” (Harvik, Teerds and Tielens, 5).

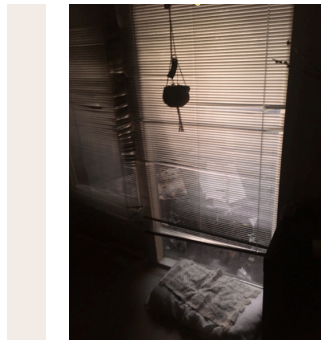
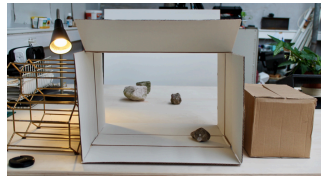
I am incredibly inspired by papers, stone, and other natural materials. Often when being to translate a space I go to the art supply shop for paper. Visit the discard bins of wood and metal workshops, and wander around outside.

EXAMPLE: : Structures and Objects
(Spatial Relation)

Objects and structures are a mapping of space. A topography of what is in the environment that is blocking, reflecting, or refracting light. Concerning the golden puddle objects and structures refer to; the puddle, the yellow building, the sun, and the distance from my living room window. These practical observations can be translated in several different ways be it colour, scale, classical compositional formats such as aspect ratio, leading line... Looking at objects and structures within this research is linked to creating environments within a story. What are the key structures needed for the spectator to make sense of and understand the environment we place them in? It is a logical decision that becomes a foundation for emotional and ephemeral storytelling devices to stand on such as atmospheres and memories.

"Notice that the physical story world acts as a "condenser-expander" for the storyteller. You have very little time to create a massive amount of material: characters, plot, symbols, moral argument, and dialogue. So you need techniques that can allow you to condense meaning into the limited space and time you have. . . Gaston Bachelard, in his classic book The Poetics of Space, explains 'the drama that attaches to the dwellings of men.' Meaning is embedded in all kinds of forms and spaces, from shells to drawers to houses. . . 'Two kinds of space, intimate space and exterior space, keep encouraging each other' . . . when you create the right world for your story, you plant certain seeds in the hearts and minds of your audience that grow and move deeply within them" (Truby, John. The Anatomy of Story, 146).

The example on the left shows how documentation of the light in my bedroom window was translated onto my by looking at desk using the architecture, and objects.



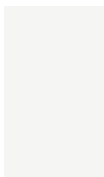


EXAMPLE: Time (Spatial Relation)

Time - as an actor - refers to the circadian. Time addresses the realistic consequence of working with light which when dealt with in a site becomes time specific. Some of the scenes within this research are co-dependant to time, be it morning light, a day where the sun is shining, or after it has rained. Within light-driven site-specific scenography, time-based bodies such as seasons, the sun, and the moon become actors - they need to show up for the scenography to work. The scenes I make require, the reflection of the sun in a puddle, the ability to catch the sun with a mirror, or a puddle to appear overnight.

One such example involves a literal frame made to visualise rain. A fishing line was sewn through the black foam board. In early experiments, a headlamp on the spectator activated the reflective quality of the fishing line. However, in performances - due to the location - random cars and bike lights also activated the fishing line. The location became a chance performer and time dictated when it could take place - evening, or a cloudy day.

A non-discrete example of this form of scenography can be seen in scenographers who work with time as an actor. Some work with specific start times of the day, others with the setting of the sun. In reality, this practice is in line with ancient forms of theatre where one needed real darkness to perform with "theatre lights".



The first example is of a miniature scene I "lit" by reflecting the sun. It would not have been possible on a cloudy day. The second example is of a project where I tracked evidence sun through hallway windows.

EXAMPLE: Framing

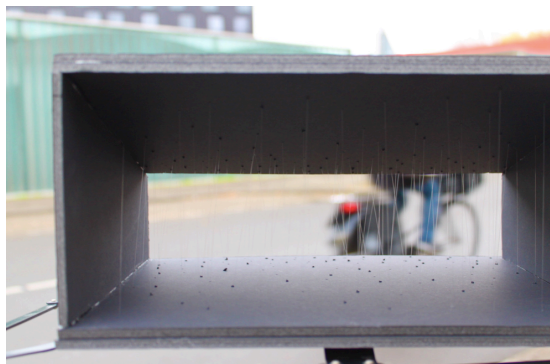
Film techniques such as aspect ratio can be used to frame spectators perception. Aspect ratio is the proportion of the height and width of the frame.

Numbers, technology, and marketing aside, aspect ratio conveys the atmosphere. It can be the atmosphere of the environment:

A John Ford western glorifies the expansive character of Monument Valley through a proportionally wider ratio - we get the same effect for David Lean's *Lawrence of Arabia*.

The feeling of our protagonists can also be conveyed through aspect ratio. Are they claustrophobic, squeezed inside a tight frame? Or do they feel lost? Small inside a large frame with the environment competing for our attention.

The examples of framing speak for themselves, what does a specific view of a scene convey?





EXAMPLE: Movement

Movement exists within, outside, and around objects and structures. Balance, lines, colour, and shape are all aspects we fundamentally recognise in images and what live art (and film) adds so clearly to this list is movement. Movement of nature (snow, rain, wind, smoke, water), movement of people, gestures, singular things, and crowds of things, and time. Movement is one of the primary ways we take stock of the imagery around us. Movement gives us a sensory mapping of our environment. The sun - be at an object or a body - is not stationary, nether is rain nor people. The sun's movement gives a sense of time because of light, shadows, and heat.



The movement of rain gives the sensory perspective of being inside vs. outside. The beauty of scenography is that it can go a step further than film and approach movement as multi-modal. Referring again to Shearing the feeling of immersion depends on fluctuating forces; direction, distance, and speed change. Within the research, the study asks what in the observation is still? In motion? Which direction? What velocity? What rhythm? All of which are compositional information. Choreographers are addicted to chairs, tables, and anything that is thrown around. I could write the thesis "Throwing things around and why it's great." Water, straw, rice, etc. are all visual motion, they enhance the view of space by strikingly showing velocity. A chair is an object that movement can be seen against. Movement be it visual or physically immersive is inherently sensorial and maps the three dimensionality of our environment. Movement should always be considered when studying space or any moving image. So what is a multi-modal approach?

EXAMPLE: Multi-Modal Spectatorship

Multi-modal spectatorship is giving the spectator a multi-sensorial experience. Theatre, at it's most basic, gives a visual and auditory approach with the senses being treated as coincidental or environmental. When searching for ways of translating an atmosphere they senses are incredibly triggering to memories and environments. Sharing, within this research, is giving the spectator fragments of a space so they can build their own understanding based on the sum of its parts. Smell, sound, and tactility are all possibilities of translating and ways of sharing an atmosphere. Why not let the spectator feel, or smell an idea rather than see one.



Finland is the smell of firewood.

INTERJECTION

When developing multi-modal translations I look at sensory elements as framing devices. The senses - especially sound - are integral and extensively researched subject matters in their own right. I do not claim to possess a foundation of theory to my sensorial experiments. Therefore I situate the other senses into detail work, that one extra layer of production to enhance an atmosphere.

SOUND: Approached from cinema perspective. diegetic and non-diegetic. What we can hear vs. What is a score. From a scenographic perspective this could be seen as, the sound that is present passively vs. The sound created by the presence of a person.

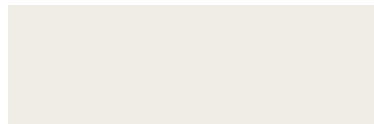


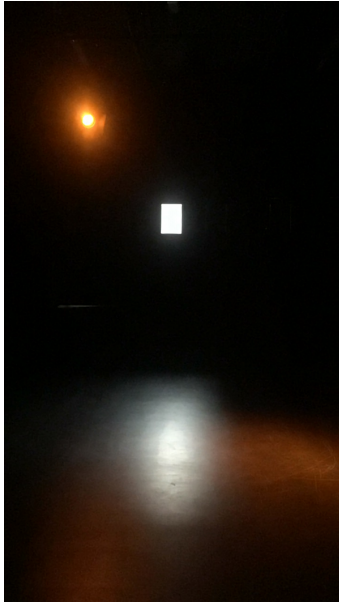
The Sound of Snow

SMELL: Approached from a personal perspective, smell inextricably linked to memory.

1part Cornstarch + 1part Cereal
(suggestion: All Bran)

TACTILITY: Can be connected to sound, but belongs, for me, in Material Research,





EXAMPLE: Documenting from Memory

Because atmospheres are so undefinable they depend on the practice of translations to be adapted aesthetically and into usable material. Translation/variation lies on the outer limits of adaptation and even further away from recreation.

The process of documenting through memory is for me a practice of abstraction. It is a more open method to dissecting the core of an atmosphere.

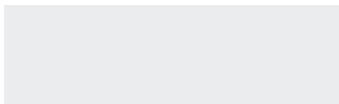
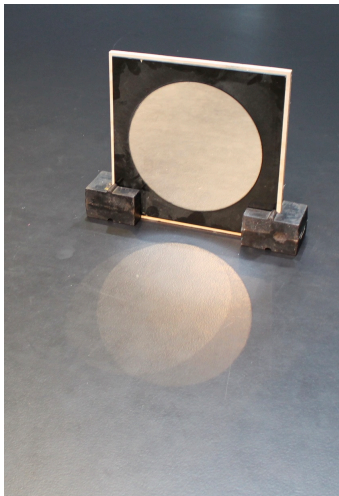
The process of documentation through memory is free, quick, and dirty. It is drawing, writing, dancing, sculpting, etc. anything that can act as a creative supporting statement for an atmosphere. One striking example of how this is achieved is with Director Alex Garland in his adaptation of *Annihilation* (2018).

"Garland stated that it was the "very, very powerful strange atmosphere" of the novel that he was drawn to above anything else. "The reading of the book is a little bit like having a dream," he says in an interview with Google. Thus, a writing method as unpredictable, automatic, and spontaneous as a dream allowed him to create something as original as the source material, whilst still respecting and capturing the dreamy, hallucinatory atmosphere of the novel. Applying the faux-randomness of memory and the mind to his process, Garland juices his film with a wild and unique dream logic that undulates through its peculiar narrative" (Fedyk).

By adapting the film from memory and not re-reading the book, Garland was able to capture the atmosphere of the story. Far more interesting and honest than a direct adaption.

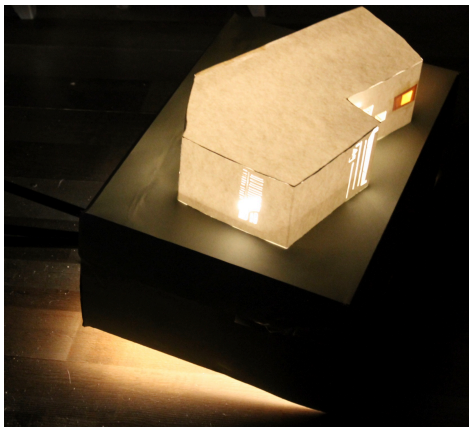
Indirectly adapting my documentation supports my hesitancy to the word re-creation. It is in my philosophical opinion that re-creating. Indirect adaptation is so much richer with feelings, questions, and possibilities.

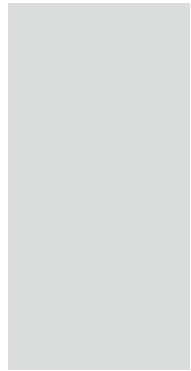
The examples are translations that have been pushed to the boundary of what they once were.



31 Adriaen Beyerkade.

stories. photos. videos. materials of what I am doing right
now





In a paradox of its own, Virtual reality theorist Michael Heim's statement compels me. [a] world is not a collection of fragments, nor even an amalgam of pieces. It is a felt totality or whole. You cannot make a world by patching together this part and that part and the other, because the wholeness, not so much its particulars, makes the world exist [...]. The world is not a collection of things but an active usage that relates things to each other that links them [...]. World makes a web-like totality [...]. World is a total environment or surrounding space. (Heim 1998: 89-91)

Although technically, fragmenting and patching together is exactly what this creative process is doing, I always want to make clear that it is not a formula. Taking into account how things relate to each other in space - rather than just being in a space - offers a sense of liveness to describing a space. A house is not a diorama it is lived in. In the things I translate, I always try to keep a sense of liveness be it about time or playing with a spectators' perception of what is choice and chance. In some of the examples above the sun, passers-by, rain all play a role in turning the translation on - for lack of a better phrase. Letting spectators question what is random or constructed aids in the atmosphere of a space being connected to the here and now. It existed. The artificial is pushed to the point where it becomes performative. The spectator must wait for a moment of gratification, a spark of alignment where the window of perception is open. This is the process of composition the translated observations into something atmospherically descriptive, and sharable.

"There is no autonomous work of art, just. As there is no autonomous viewer who can independently 'compile' the performance. Using his knowledge, life. Experience, and background information. The performance and the subjective spectator meet somewhere halfway, and walk along together for a while"(Unknown).

To summarise:

- Part 2 of the methodology is about **translating** the documentation sourced in Part 1.
- Whether using an analytical way of observing (**spatial relations**).
- Or intuitively interpreting. (Making **Variations**)
- The goal is capture the essence of an environment's atmosphere, to then present them as fragmented evidence of that environment.
- A feeling of liveness caused by the relation of space, time, movement, and people are important to conveying an environment that exists as a lived in real space. Namely to share you individual perspective.

Now with the generated material (translations) how do we present the pieces in a way the reflects the intention? How do we disseminate what has been made?





Part 3 ARCHIVING

Revisiting my disciplines of dance and film, when presenting fragments of an idea you end up with a sequence or a montage, a collage of separate elements then when put together form a whole. Approaching this idea from the perspective of a scenographer we come to the physical and conceptual practice of archiving. An archive is simply a montage/collage that takes up space.

Archiving is not just a way of storing information, but also a unique tool shares a thematic collection, a way to communicate about an atmosphere.

Physically, archiving offers multiple forms of presenting work. Theoretically archiving, can be looked at from the perspective of how the spectator processes the visual information given to them.

Firstly I want to point out archiving as a system of free association by diving briefly into montage theory. This theoretical understanding supports the physical ways I have attempted to use the archive in sharing my work. So, secondly, I want to offer three



ARCHIVE THEORY

Archiving as a system of free associations. Since the characterise of atmospheres is that they resist categorisation, archiving provides a method of constructing atmospheres through association. This is essentially montage theory: “dog+mouth=bark. Water+eye=weep. heart+knife=sorrow” (Taylor, 28). a study with a considerable amount of research, response, and discourse on its own. To dive in full would be to exacerbate this research paper, so I offer only a few examples of how montage is free associations

Dziga Vertov: “The Cine-Eyes. A Revolution.” (film theory)

“ . . .

The coffins of popular heroes are being lowered into their graves (in Astrakhan in 1918), the graves are covered (Kronstradt, 1921), a gun salute (Petrograd, 1920), eternal remembrance, the people doff their hats (Moscow, 1922). . .

Montage in Time and Space

The System of
Consecutive
movements

Example: filming a boxing match not from the point of view of the audience witnessing the bout but by the shooting of consecutive movements (the methods) of those fighting

“As a result of this kind of cooperative action between the emancipated and perfected camera and the strategic brain of man, directing, observing, calculating, there emerges an unusually fresh and tense interesting representation of even the most ordinary objects . . . (92).

The Brain

Simply, it is offering the view parts and trusting that they will see the whole “there emerges an unusually fresh and tense interesting representation of even the most ordinary objects . . .” The system of free associations also exists within the methodology of the work. Translating is seen as adaptations of my (the maker) own associations i.e. I choose a color because a light reminds me of a place, which then triggers a smell, which aesthetically determines a texture etc. Free associations for the maker are intuitive decisions. This system when seen from the perspective of a spatial practice is archiving.

Archiving aligns with the larger intention of this research, the what for: “In order to generate a way of looking that quietly draws attention to the un-noticed, mundane, and fascinating phenomena around us.” An archive of the translations is evidence of the natural performativity of our environment which seems paradoxical at first because unique moments get enveloped into a collection. Ernst Van Alphen writes “The unique, singular object ‘is supposed to express its uniqueness in relation to other, similarly unique objects,’ ... at a certain point, the individual components are deemed to be only another expression of these objects that surround it. Uniqueness, specificity, and individuality are destroyed within the process of archiving (104).

Archiving, within this research, is not geared to highlight the uniqueness of performative light but precisely to highlight their abundance. To strike a realisation that fascinating natural performances are noticeable everywhere, all we have to do is change our perspective.

SCENOGRAPHIC ARCHIVING

I am experimenting with three methods of presenting a scenographic archive. Most likely, there are more ways than what I have discovered (that is the beauty of process-driven research).

1. Performative sequence: experimented with before lockdown.

This method is performative and aligns with the archive due to its connection to a sequence of free associations.

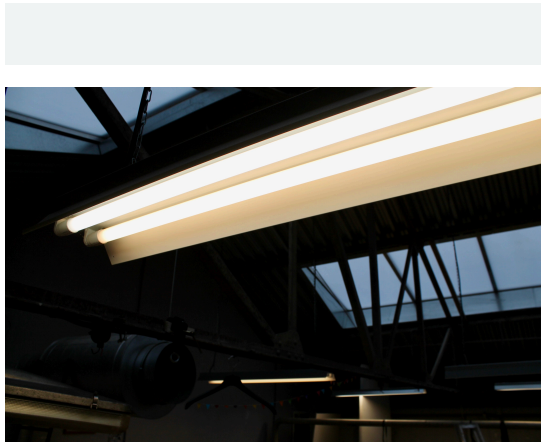
With performative sequences I present an atmosphere as a sum of all its materials: sound, light, movement, texture, etc in a theatrical or narrative style. Visually: The scene involves framing a pre-existing space. Literally with a frame, and with other devices framing devices (music, additional spatial decor, a performance, and other sensory input for the spectator (whether it be smell, shade, the feeling under their shoes, etc.) Think of a scene in a film and everything that goes into producing that one scene, I simply dissect and separate these elements so instead of being on film they become live. The sound is with the spectator, the frame separates the spectator from the performer, and the performer is in the location. This style of presenting my translations in a scene allow me to maintain a the ability to collage different elements but in a way that looks more like a production design.

The process of this type of showing involved location scouting, choosing the materials, and then inviting a spectator. I made them by intuitively associating the translations together: If the atmosphere of a scene is at a certain location, what does it smell like, what does it sounds like, what is the material made of?

For these scenes I would start at a meeting point - like my desk or the middle of a room - then with the spectator (one on one) we would walk to the specific location carrying all the materials needed. At the location, slowly precisely - and with some help from the spectator - I would build up, perform, and tear down the scene in less than 15 minutes. We then walked back together, having experienced a short connection between ourselves and the environment, It was in one of these performances where I received feedback like "I will never look at the street corner in the same way." "I feel I have been invited into your view of the world." I experimented with several of these scenes, eventually having my starting point be a small box (and archive) of materials and photos the spectator could take time with before inviting them to continue. I feel like there is more to look into about this method fo showing work, especially regarding questions on what is constructed and non-constructed. By framing existing locations there are some elements that are chosen and some that are chance.







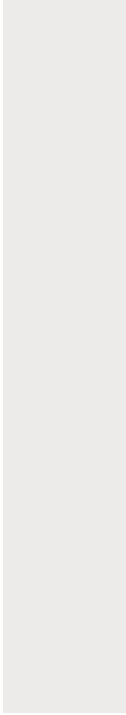
2. ON-SITE/RELOCATED GALLERY

Can the lights, the models, the collections I create from an environment be shown as art in their own right. A gallery of this collection is both an archive and an exhibition. To explain this idea we need to look at either presenting on-site or re-locating. Again let's look at my home to describe these, specifically the moving lights from the traffic.

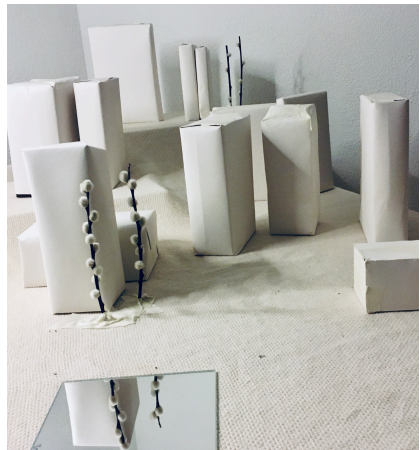
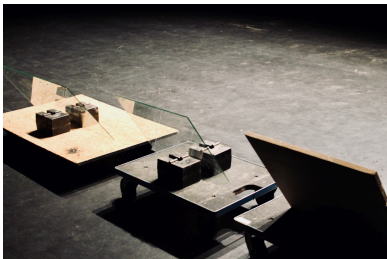
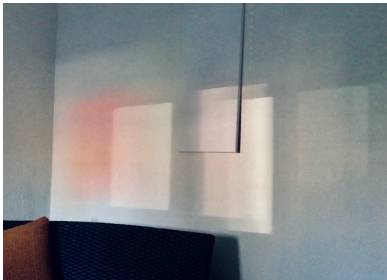
On-site, refers to sharing the translations in the space that inspired them. Imagine re-organising my house so that it becomes an exhibition. In one of my translations, I used the space as it was to cast city-like light on white cubes. Observing and translating are both presented for the spectator. On-site can bring new awareness and poetry to a pre-existing space that they may not have noticed otherwise. On the other hand, inviting people into my home during the quarantine. . .

Relocated, is exactly as it sounds. How do I present the translations in a blank space - be it the white cube or the black box, opening up the possibility to play with collage and montage sequence respectively? Relocating is the rendering of the translation using scenographic tools in a different space from which it was first observed. Easy enough with a model, but what of this one which depends on the light? Relocating can display an otherwise individual experience in a way that gives it the attention it is due, and it Can open up a new curiosity in-line with re-creating and understanding the mechanics or physics.

The performative sequence (1) used both on-site and relocated spaces, often in on-site location, but with the technique of relocating - diving into a theatrical montage.



Trying to understand the physics of the lights by recreating them in a theatre.



2. THE INTIMATE ARCHIVE

The third way Archiving functions within the research is in response to the current quarantine situation. Whilst reading artists' responses to the quarantine I stumbled upon the research of Moe Zhao who looks into the impact of digital art especially in the time of the pandemic.

“ The Covid-19 pulled us all in an isolated, disconnected situation where anxiety hovering overhead. The unemployment and mental uneasiness both started to crash every body's life including that of the artists. However, instead of depicting the pandemic as an ordained apocalypse, artists and art practitioners regard it as a chance to for connection, appreciation, cultivation through sharing their intimate vulnerabilities and the engagement with the online community”.

Digital platform aside, the quote pulled a string in considering how my research - which is so closely tied to individual interpretation, finding meaning in the ordinary, and opening up to sharing the mundane that fascinates me - can remain honest, and engaging. Sharing the seemingly ordinary is sharing a vulnerability by stating “hey! My home can contain and make art.” How can I continue to share? The above methods are currently conceptual due to the circumstances. How can I make connections rather than conceptual promises?

Rather than uploading my archiving (full of smells and textures) to a platform, can I package the translations and documentation, and send it to people so they can experience the multi-sensorial atmosphere of my home. . . in a box? I don't know. But I will try. As long as they still get a sense of the indescribable tinge of the space I send to them, I have successfully been observing, translating, and archiving an atmosphere.







CONCLUSION

To close this research paper would defeat its purpose: that it is structured to promote continued curiosity and creativity. It is a process, open to evolving. Revealing the work itself as an inquiry of space is, for me, an entry point. An attempt to erase the boundary of the “trained artists” by opening up different ways of looking at the environment around us. So, to “conclude” I will offer a summary of the methodology that invites you the reader to interpret the steps for your practice.



RETROSPECTIVE SCENOGRAPHY

a methodology

IDENTIFY

What for: The concept you want to challenge, the thing that drives you to keep making.

What for: I am driven by the how and the why of what we experience. Challenging the physicality and perception of the spectator. Drawing attention to the interesting aesthetics of seemingly mundane quotidian spaces. Research the paradox of atmospheres.

Intention: What is it you want to share with your spectator?

Intention: Can I use atmosphere to describe a specific environment in a way that is unique to my personal experience?

PART 1: OBSERVING

Observing an environment is a process of collecting/documenting source material and paying attention to the things you notice, find inspiring, and are essential to the character of an environment.

1. Choose a space **My home**

2. What are your tools for documenting? **Photography, videography, writing in the third person.**

3. Questions to keep in mind:

Why do you notice something?

- Do you notice a light because it reminds you of a memory?
- What position do you need to stand in to be able to see that shadow.
- Would anyone but you notice this when entering the space?
- If you change your position, or placement, would you still see it?
- What senses are you using to observe?

Let yourself be free in making associations, assumptions, and mental jumps. Then challenge them. If a light reminds me of a memory, write that down. If a shadow mimics the work of another artist find a picture of the work and add it to the pile. If you hum a tune while looking at the wall there might be a reason for it, write that down!

4. Composing the atmosphere

Whilst observing and documenting think about what the atmosphere could be? The theme. The aesthetic logline describing the space.

If you compiled the documentation into a production design what mood and/or tone would it convey?

PART 2 TRANSLATING

This is the fun part. Creative freedom to make interpretations, and adaptations based on your observations.

Using the same system of associations can a light be a color, a smell, a model.

What if you turned your photo into a model? Your memory into a way of sitting?

Can a smell be framed?

Generate Materials whilst considering spatial relations (cause and effect) of what you observed.

PART 3 ARCHIVING

How can you compose a sequence with the material you have generated? In what order, format, and space and they be placed in for others to experience?

Short performative scenes.

On-site, and relocated exhibition space.

Archive the translations as evidence of the space which can be sent in a box.

PART 4

Keep accumulating material, keep finding interesting spaces, keep being curious.

Research, refine, and redefine your craft.



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REFERENCES OF ARTISTIC WORK

I, the writer (Cecilia Berghäll) certify that all images and videos used in this paper are my own. All other photos are variations of of the above works, or experiments/ research material which have not been shared as a “finished” product.

pg. 15, *Eclipse*, spring 2019.

pg. 18, *Sunset on the day my sister turned 33*, April 2019.

Futility in the rain, November 2019.

A conversation between two cities, (in collaboration with Astrid Muijderland and Chih Hua Huang), January 2019.

pg. 24 *Melancholy variation 2*, December 2019.

pg. 25 *Tracking the sun through a hallway*, April 2019.

Variation in lavender, March 2020.

pg. 27 *Melancholy version 1*, November 2019.

pg. 42 *Zoom in Zoom out*, Culemborg May 2019.



“Art is the concrete representation of
our most subtle feelings.”

Agnes Martin

Dear instructors,

I have here for you the printed version of my final research document. I would like to thank you and acknowledge your tutorship throughout the process. Thank you for continuing to challenge and support me both intelligently and artistically.

On the form. I chose the binding very specifically as in theory the unfolded pages, and sewing technique allows for future addition and editing. Conceptually I felt this reflected my research and artistic ethos. The aesthetic you can keep on your coffee table, with a size you can slip it into your bag.

I hope you enjoy reading as much as I have enjoyed writing.

Varma hälsningar,

Cecilia