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## Perversion of the Reel

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the completion of  
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Hannah Edmunds  
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For Miles x

# Abstract

Through the use of masculinity as a visual language this research aims to unravel the divide between the role of the act and the acted. French actor Julien Boisselier operates as the male manifestation of the actor in question and functions on multiple levels of performance, both as male and as an actor. Boisseliers depictions of major, medium and minor acted characters offer another level to the performance variable.

The aim to highlight the visible triggers of a 'pure performance' (a performance where the actor may slip or falter out of acted character and into default human performance) as shown through the choreography of his physiognomy is the experience underpinning this thesis.

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This research situates itself within an area of complex overlapping histories of the relationship between Contemporary Art practice and the cinematic medium. These histories have provided a catalytic platform from which the work has evolved. The conventions of each visual medium enable me to use a versatile research language, one that can facilitate the area in question with a degree of fluidity and in turn offers both conceptually and aesthetically the diversity that I require as an artist.

Interconnected partnerships have heavily prevailed throughout Cinematic history, such as the man and his relationship to the city. My research focus began with this as its focus. After realising that the intention had been blinded by the dominance of such a partnership, its focus was too narrow, my research shifted towards the simplicity of movement and form found within the visual language of masculinity within cinema, where I found my true interest lay.

Through the opening of new, or reinventing discourses founded within the cinematic realm has enabled me to map out new and engaging terrain within the medium of contemporary video art. Video art has long drawn on other time-based influences such as television (initially anyway). Over time the prominent nature of cinema within a cultural framework has influenced all areas of contemporary art practice. The prevalence of the entertainment quality of the medium has nurtured the nature of the celebrity within the industry. Both areas of entertainment and celebrity mythology are evident within this research offering a degree of diverse rhetoric on the subject. It is this area or point of conflict that enables the research to unpack the liminal areas situated between what I consider to be real of the reel.

When appropriating from another mediums history you appropriate the standardised conventions of that particular medium. It was from doing earlier research into historical partnerships between the male, cinema and the city, that my research was able to mature into this area of intrigue.

This research is specific to that of contemporary French cinema and the ways in which I can perhaps offer a differing perspective on both contemporary French cinema and French actors and how they can offer insight into the Eurocentric variables of male physiognomy. I am interested in provoking Francophilia as a subject in New Zealand contemporary art scene. The tough sourcing of the resources, directly from France has enabled me to question more acutely and look more pertinently for the moments of pure performance, through the use of an emerging (or perhaps more simply B-Grade) French actor, Julien Boisselier. Although my research may have a somewhat modernist desire in place within it ( a search for purity of vision), the postmodern aesthetic re-evokes this purist methodology within a conceptual framework.

Perversion of the Reel as research is placed in the arena of feminist critique of film theory or as an illustration critiquing Mulvey's arguments on the gaze. Notions of female desire toward the male body are addressed yet are not the exclusive path of this research.

My work operates as filmic still life using masculinity as a visual material that explores major/minor character discrepancies. Also, and how an actor can become an autonomous character devoid of traditional cinematic character hierarchies is a crucial component of this thesis.

The key concepts of this research are elements of confrontation, containment of imagery and the components of self-reflexivity within notions of the idealized male. Focus is also placed on the qualities that aid the 'grey areas' of male characters fabrication within cinema.



Fig 1. Hannah Edmunds, Supporting Act, 2009, Installation image