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STAGING PHANTASMAGORIA:  
THE UNCANNY PLAY OF LIVE  
AND MEDIATIZED PERFORMANCE

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of the requirements for a degree of  
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# Staging Phantasmagoria

## ABSTRACT

Multimedia designers working in the theatre often produce work that fails to recognize the fundamentally different spatiotemporal vocabularies of live performance and the moving image, and how they can be productively utilised to enhance theatre's inherent virtuality. This thesis argues that instead of mixing or hiding the differences between the virtual and the physical in theatre, performance design can 'play' with the two languages to produce an uncanny experience that re-establishes the strangeness of 'phantasmagoria' - technologies of vision that project ghostly doubles. In consumer culture, disembodied images screened by contemporary phantasmagoria such as television, cinema and the computer interface, habitually engage the spectator in a process of identification and disavowal. Integrating live performance and the mediatized image has the potential to change the spectator's response to these images. When the live performer is confronted with his or her mediatized double, the dissonance between presence and absence, materiality and immateriality, animate and inanimate is marked by 'disconcerting logic' and 'doubt' rather than identification and disavowal. This doubt opens up ambiguities in the spectator's preconceptions about self-identity, and particularly the belief that the phantasmatic body image is simply an immaterial copy of the body. Instead, the relationship between the body and its image becomes indeterminate and reversible, actual and virtual. Embodied research was employed to develop this hypothesis, through three site-specific performance installations, *Theatre Ghosts* (September, 2006, Circa Theatre), *Ghost Runner* (November, 2006, Wellington), and *Futuna* (December, 2006, Chapel of Futuna), that tested the potential dissonance between the projected image and the performing body in order to provoke uncanny spatiotemporal experiences. These experiments, presented through conceptual drawings, still and moving images, are used as vehicles to consider how the ambiguous clash between live and mediated performance suggests new ways of extending the performing body, its phantasmatic double and spaces of inhabitation.

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# Staging Phantasmagoria



staging phantasmagoria

## *Ghosts of Phantasmagoria*

If no audience faints in horror at the ghostly appearances on the screen, it is all the more taken in by the screen's images. Technology has provided the means to make ghosts an ordinary part of consumer culture but in doing so has familiarized and inured the culture against the absences and losses that the medium projects.

Alice Rayner (2006) *Ghosts: Death's Double and the*

*Phenomena of Theatre*, p. 157.



Fig. 1: (above) Illustration of nineteenth century "Fantasmagorie" (Castle, 1995, p. 145).

Fig 2: (right) Futuna Chapel haunted by the shadow of the Storyteller, December 2006.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* describes 'Phantasmagoria' as "(a) name invented for an exhibition of optical illusions produced chiefly by means of the magic lantern, first exhibited in London in 1802" (Castle, 1998, p. 27). When phantasmagoria



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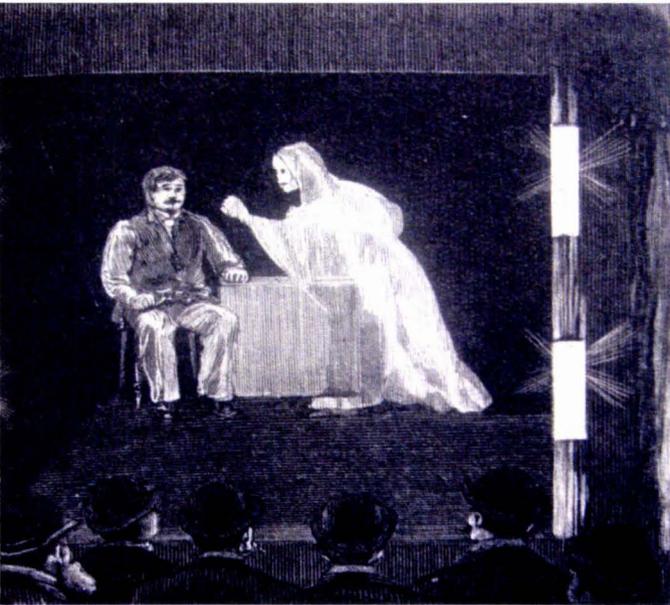


Fig.3: (above) Illustration of the Pepper's Ghost illusion circa 1860. Pepper's Ghost was an apparatus consisting of mirrors and lenses capable of projecting a live body on stage so it could interact with physically present performers (Castle, 1995, p.153).

first appeared in early nineteenth century Europe, spectators were introduced to a world of ghostly doubles and ghouls. Audience members would shiver and swoon as one by one, mysterious luminous shapes surged overhead and flitted close enough to touch (ibid, p.33-36). Phantasmagoria operated through a combination of a technological apparatus and the imagination of the audience but no matter how 'real' these phantasms appeared they were nothing more than deceptive illusions -proof that the mind could play tricks and the imagination was untrustworthy. This led 'phantasmagoria' to develop a second meaning -"a shifting series or succession of phantasms or imaginary figures, as seen in a dream or fevered condition, as called up by the imagination, or as created by literary description" (ibid, p.27).

Today the progeny of phantasmagoria, the cinema, the television and the computer interface continue to invoke "ghostly appearances" in our public and private spaces. Every week people go to the cinema to watch

ghosts on the big screen, and every night television haunts our living rooms with the 'dead.' Because the ghosts invoked by these devices are ubiquitous, they never produce an appropriate sense of fear or dread. Instead, the powerful combination of optical device and subjective projection, along with the photorealistic images, creates such a powerful illusion that the spectator engages in a psychological process of belief and non-belief called disavowal (Lapsley & Westlake, 1989, p.85). Disavowal immerses the audience in the screened doubles and frees the spectator's mind from the body, allowing it to roam through space and time within a blink of an eye. But this belief in the power and control instigated by vision comes at a price because phantasmagoria still only provides the illusion of freedom, and the simulation of control. The result, according to Theodor Adorno, is that phantasmagoria denigrates simple pleasure as it is put on display, and thus "is infected from the outset with the seeds of its own destruction. Inside the illusion dwells disillusion" (Adorno, 1981, p.94).

It seems imperative that we reinstate the uncanniness of phantasmagoria, and remind the audience of the ghostly "absences and losses that the medium projects" (Rayner, 2006, p.157). In contrast to the immaterial mediatized image, the materiality of theatrical performance can arguably reestablish the relationship between ghosts and the body. Similarly, the theatrical event suggests a social dimension much needed when communication is defined by illusion and disillusion. But given the ubiquity of phantasmagoria, can theatre hope to frame the mediatized image differently? Can staging phantasmagoria really establish new ways of regarding the media apparatus or are our viewing habits inured entirely to the strangeness of these ghostly doubles?

This thesis, *Staging Phantasmagoria* examines how live performance and the projected image can be integrated to change the spectator's response to these images. When the live performer is confronted with his or her mediatized double, the dissonance

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between presence and absence, materiality and immateriality, animate and inanimate is marked by an uncanny “disconcerting logic” (Freud, 1919).

The most exhaustive effort to rationally explain the uncanny feeling provoked by fiction and lived experience remains Sigmund Freud’s pivotal essay of 1919 titled “Das Unheimliche,” or, in English “The Uncanny.” In it, Freud foregrounds the distinctive nature when an individual has feelings of uncertainty, in particular regarding the ‘reality’ of who one is and what is being experienced (Freud, 1919). The uncanny is provoked by the return of the dead, doubles and doppelgangers, *deja vu*, and specifically when something familiar becomes strangely unfamiliar. At the beginning of his essay, Freud unpacks the etymology of the German word “unheimliche.” *Heimliche* means familiar, homely, “arousing a sense of agreeable restfulness and security as in one within the four walls of the house” (Freud, 1919). But what is secretly tucked away is also hidden, “kept from sight . . . withheld from others.”

Fig. 4: (right) The *Ghost Runner* haunted Karori and Wellington City for three nights during November 2006. It consisted of a projector operating out of a moving car giving the illusion that the figure running on the spot was running on buildings and trees. (Footage: Andy Chappell).



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By extension what is hidden is also threatening, “uncomfortable, uneasy, gloomy, dismal . . . ghastly” (Freud, 1919). It is the irresolvable connotations of the “homely” and “unhomely” that Freud applied to the uncanny. When this fleeting feeling of homeliness and unhomeliness is conjured up by the disjunction between the vocabularies of theatre and media it has the potential to remove our habitual response to the ghostly doubles of contemporary phantasmagoria. Beyond this, the uncanny experience opens up the audience to ambiguities in their preconceptions about self-identity, and particularly the belief that the phantasmatic body image is simply an immaterial copy of the body.

The rest of the chapter discusses the impact contemporary phantasmagoria has on the spectator, society and our spaces of inhabitation. It considers the difficulty in producing subversive performance design strategies that combat the ubiquity of phantasmagoric culture.

In the following chapter 'Ghostly Doubles,' I use film and performance theory to read case studies of different live encounters with the mediatized image, concentrating on the performing body, its phantasmatic Other, and especially the uncanny affect on the collective body of the audience. While 'Ghostly Doubles' starts with a psychoanalytical study of the 'mirror stage,' it hopes to displace the privileged place of the mind in current discussion of media, and suggest that the body is interchangeable with its double. Psychoanalysis continues to perpetuate the mind/body split and leave the body out of debates over the impact of the mass media. Performance, both live and mediatized, has the capacity to go beyond valorizing the material body to challenge very notions of 'embodiment,' "the rotations, convolutions, inflections, and torsions of the body itself" (Grosz, 2001, p.32). The 'disconcerting logic,' that occurs when mediatized bodies and material bodies, objects and spaces come into proximity replaces the audience's belief in the phantasmatic image with

doubt. Consequently, when the audience doubts, they experience the mediatized image differently. It is no longer a representation or shadow but an indeterminate and reversible actual and virtual body. This performing body has no defining ontology, and is instead a machine capable of producing 'virtual' images that reveal the process of time.

The last section, 'Haunted Houses,' tests the strategies of the first section with three 'hauntings' –site-specific staged encounters between live bodies and mediatized doubles designed to reveal the uncanny qualities of familiar spaces and habits. By disturbing the ontology between body and ghostly double, the uncanny also estranges our usually familiar conception of architecture and inhabitation:

As articulated by Freud, the uncanny or unheimlich is rooted by etymology and usage in the environment of the domestic, or the Heimlich, thereby opening up problems of

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identity around the self, the other, the body and its absence: thence its force in interpreting the relations between the psyche and the dwelling, the body and the house, the individual and the metropolis (Vidler, 1992, p.x).



Fig.5: (above) In the performative memorial *Futuna* numbers were placed on various objects in the Chapel to suggest that they were archived and catalogued.

Fig. 6: (right) The Cabinet of Curiosities was an uncanny method of remembrance. A series of objects from the Pacific including a video-recorded performance of the *soke*, the Futunan dance of penitence were locked up as if they were collectables.

The uncanny not only makes 'unhomely' the body and its phantasmatic double, but also sites of inhabitation, be it the cinema multiplex, the living room, or the modern metropolis. When people feel an ongoing sense of placelessness, when the shopping mall seems to stretch forever, an uncanny encounter between mediatized and live performance can create a sense of temporal dissonance to recover the memories of a space. For several weeks in the spring of 2006, a series of ghosts haunted familiar places in Wellington. In *Theatre Ghosts* (September, 2006), phantasmal actors stared from theatre windows turning the traditional performance venue inside out. In *Ghost Runner* (November, 2006), the

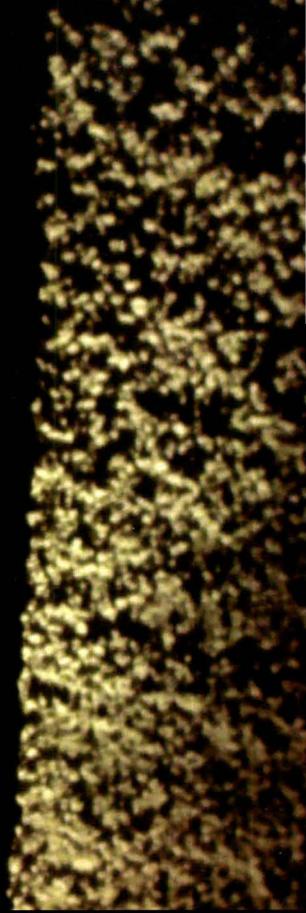




Fig. 7: (above) Audience viewing an IMAX film, a contemporary equivalent of Plato's Cave, ([www.boxoffice.com/boxoffice\\_scr/boxoffice\\_story.asp?terms=2582](http://www.boxoffice.com/boxoffice_scr/boxoffice_story.asp?terms=2582), retrieved 20.9.06).

technologically duplicated spectral body raced an exhausted performing body through the streets of Wellington. In *Futuna* (December, 2006), the dead pervaded the abandoned Chapel of Futuna in Karori, remembering the trauma of the martyred body through a performative memorial. Each 'haunted house,' or 'unhomely home' is a study of the ghostly double as an affective force of the abstract qualities of time and memory; remembering the significance of the body in a culture dedicated to forgetfulness.

## ***An Uncanny Archive***

As an exegesis, *Staging Phantasmagoria* is also an act of remembrance, a photo album and record of the 'hauntings.' It recognizes that media, including the time-based image, can never hope to capture the fleeting uncanny experience of performance. How do we capture disappearing acts but still allow the disappearing acts to be everything that they can be: ghostly, ambivalent, and uncontrollable? In

*The Archive and the Repertoire*, Diana Taylor explains performance, the 'repertoire,' encompasses cultural memory in disappearing acts, while video belongs to the fixed and disembodied 'archive.' She notes, "A video of a performance is not a performance, though it often comes to replace the performance as a thing in itself (the video is part of the archive; what it represents is the repertoire)" (Taylor, 2003, p.20). The same difficulty in establishing performance with *logos* haunts the uncanny. The uncanny is never simply a statement, or definition but always engages something performative, or unpredictable, unfixed and disappearing.

My design research attempts to break down any binary divisions between the archive (the mediated, the fixed) and the repertoire (the performative, and the embodied) by using media in relation to the performing body to produce an uncanny effect. This act of remembrance does the same by acting as a haunted archive of suggestions, questions, and potentialities,

while the collection of 'spirit photography' and moving images provide uneasy evidence.

### ***Phantasmagoria and Society***

Over two thousand years ago, Plato heralded phantasmagoria with his Parable of the Cave, where shackled prisoners stare at shadows on the wall and mistake them for real objects:

. . . human beings are condemned to sit facing the rear wall of the cave, manacled with their heads locked in place so they can see only shadows cast by a fire behind them onto this wall. They cannot see their neighbours in this darkened auditorium, but think they see them in the shadows opposite. Other shadows are created by people behind them carrying effigies of animals, people, and objects' (Wiles, 2003, p.209)

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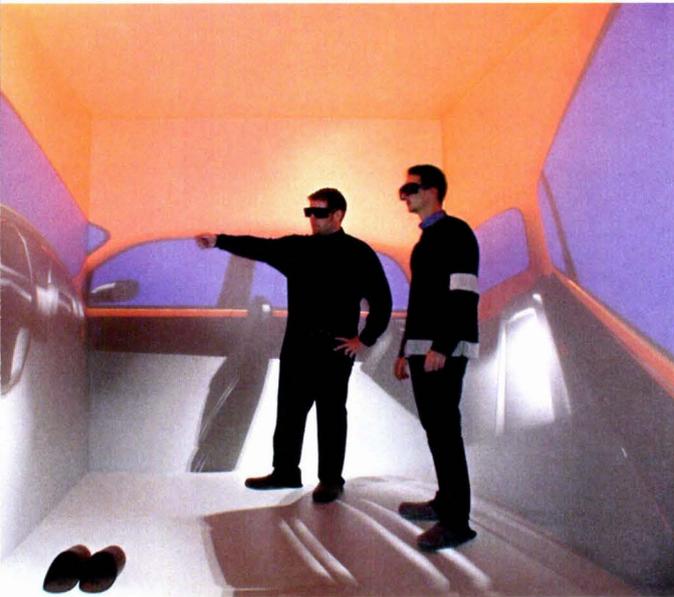


Fig.8: (above) Immersive vision technology reaches its zenith with 'virtual reality,' ([www.tu-berlin.de/uebertu/fotogalerie/forschung\\_lehre/VirtualReality\\_BerndBresien](http://www.tu-berlin.de/uebertu/fotogalerie/forschung_lehre/VirtualReality_BerndBresien), retrieved 20.01.07).

The Parable of Plato's Cave could be extended to all technologies of vision from the cinema to virtual reality. In each case, these contemporary phantasmagoria unify the psyche with projected light and persuade the spectator that they can become god-like via vision. The spectator is convinced that the subject's eye is unfettered to a concrete body situated in a specific time and space, and roams freely, switching viewpoints, angles and jumping across time (Braudy, 2004, p.357). Like Plato's Cave, the apparatus serves the viewer's unconscious archaic satisfaction, returning the spectator to a time when the subject believed his or her body to be inseparable from the world.

Transcendence supposedly unfetters the psyche from the body, and encourages the spectator's belief that they have dominance and control over the images. This rids spectators of their bodies, turning them into spectres (both from the root word *spectere* meaning 'to look.')

Technologies of vision make the

blood, work, pain, stress, and inevitable death of the body superfluous. Consequently, champions of 'new media' such as the virtual interface argue 'alternative realities' emancipate the mind from the social, cultural, and sexual boundaries implicit in the body (Grosz, 2001, p.43). Transcendence is the ultimate goal: the culmination of centuries desiring a utopia evoked by spirituality. Academic Roland Fischer argues, "Utopian desires and dream had religious, that is, transcendental, foundations and were projected into immeasurably distant spaces . . . .Departing from distant, untouchable, fictitious places utopia at last arrived at the virtual reality of 'cyber space'" (Robins 1996, p.14-15). Despite the debate between detractors and champions of these new 'alternative realities' we have become accustomed to disembodiment. The spectator is so familiar with phantasmagoric ghosts they have become second nature, and this habitualization further removes the materiality, fragility and mortality of the body from sight. As Victor Shklovsky, the Russian formalist,

states, "habitualization devours works, clothes, furniture, one's wife, and the fear of war" (Gunning, 2003, pp.44-45).

But habit in and of itself is not negative. *The Oxford English Dictionary* defines 'habit' as "a settled or regular tendency or practice" (Allen, 1991, p.529). 'Habituation,' the process of inhabiting the sheltering home, allows the body to grow accustomed to its environment, and then produce artifacts that articulate its interior state. Elaine Scarry in *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (1985) discusses the relation of the sheltering habitat to civilization, the collective imagination and material making of human societies. Scarry explains, "It is only when the body is comfortable, when it has ceased to be an obsessive object of perception and concern, that consciousness develops other objects, that for any individual the external world (in part already existing and in part about to be formed) comes into being and begins to grow" (p.38-9). This is the building block of

civilization and the ultimate condition of being with others - the foundation of sociality. But what if the habitat is Plato's Cave and our 'habit' is an 'addiction' to the illusions of the phantasmagoric apparatus? What materials can the prisoners produce and what happens to sociality?

According to sociologist Jean Baudrillard, Plato's Cave is everywhere and objects are being replaced by simulacra:

The relation between them [identical objects] is no longer that of an original and its counterfeit. The relation is neither analogy nor reflection, but equivalence and indifference. In a series, objects become undefined simulacra of each other. . . . We know now that on the level of reproduction, of fashion, media, advertising, information, and communication (what Marx called the unessential sectors of capitalism) . . . that is to say in the sphere of the simulacra

and the code, that the global process of capitalism is held together (Kelley, 2004, p.49).

Therefore, 'phantasmagoria' no longer only applies to bodies in thrall to the mediatized image, but becomes a metaphor for commodity culture (Adorno, 1981, p.85-96). This 'dream world' or 'magic delusion' conceals the machinery of production, just as the mass media conceals the commercial transaction with stratagems of marketing. Phantasmagoria disconnects the spectral inhabitants not only from their bodies, but also from the methods of extending the body through creation and production. The 'magic delusion' perpetuates the alienation and deathliness of the body and the artifact. Bodies and objects are turned into commodity fetishes and people live out their relations via these commodity forms rather than directly (Marx, 1972, p.176).

Added to this is the way the spatial design of

'Plato's Cave' perpetuates our alienation. Our habitats are becoming decidedly 'unhomely.' The city consists of labyrinthine spaces constantly changing in an obsessive drive towards Progress. According to Anthony Vidler in *The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely* (1992), the city produces a sense of temporal malaise, a spatial estrangement, and a feeling of the "fundamentally unlivable modern condition" (p.x). Walter Benjamin articulated the phantasmagoric quality of the city in the late nineteenth century, when mental and spatial compartmentalization collapsed. Courtyards and arcades transformed exterior facades into interior spaces; "Arcades are houses or passages having no outside – like the dream" (1999, p.407). The contemporary city repeats this same sense of spectral inhabitation. The consumer is lost in vertiginous shopping centres with endless escalators, and through city streets lined with display windows and mannequins. As Celeste Olalquiaga describes in her book *Megapolis: Contemporary Cultural Sensibilities*

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Fig.9: (above) Because of the ubiquity of contemporary phantasmagoria, audiences are familiar with mediated images mixing with live performance. Here is an example from Pink Floyd's recent 'The Wall' Tour (2005), ([www.pani.com/referenzen/event/e\\_wall.html](http://www.pani.com/referenzen/event/e_wall.html), retrieved 20.01.07).

(1992): "Spatial and temporal coordinates end up collapsing: space is no longer defined by depth and volume, but rather by a cinematic (temporal) repetition, while the sequence of time is frozen in an instant of (spatial) immobility." (Lovejoy, 2004, p.80)  
The design of the urban maze creates a feeling "of being in all places while not really being anywhere" (ibid).

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The ubiquity and habitualization that render phantasmagoria invisible in our day-to-day lives makes it difficult to develop strategies that estrange ways of experiencing mediatized culture.

In *Unmarked* (1993), Peggy Phelan argues live performance can resist mediatized and reproducible culture; "Performance's only life is in the present. Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations of representation" (p.146).

According to Phelan, live performance is capable of producing a subversive community because it engages in disappearing acts. In *liveness: performance in a mediatized culture* (1999), Philip Auslander disputes Phelan's non-negotiable, essentialist argument, especially her polemic that live performance somehow operates outside of the mediatized and market-dominated culture. Live performance, he argues, is saturated with mediatization. Television has changed forever our way of watching Broadway Shows and even small venue theatre.

Both these arguments reveal the challenges performance design faces when placing media on the stage today. The designer working in theatre needs to find performative strategies that elude the seductive quality of phantasmagoria on stage. At the same time, a practitioner cannot ignore the way media has changed the audience's methods of watching and experiencing theatre. Therefore, performance design needs to find new ways of presenting media

in a theatrical framework to change the audience's perception and experience of phantasmagoria.

Surprisingly, to explore the possibilities of convergence between phantasmagoria and theatre, we need to turn to an essay that criticizes the use of media on stage. Professor Arnold Aronson argues in "Do theatre and Media speak the Same Language?" (2002) that audiences have developed different ways of reading the projected image and live performance and this creates perceptual and symbolic confusion:

I would like to suggest that with some notable exceptions, projected scenery, and especially film and video, does not work – does not function- on the stage. . . What I am suggesting is that such projections and images draw upon a fundamentally different vocabulary from that of the stage; it is not a scenographic vocabulary . . . the placement of such technology and imagery on the stage

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is tantamount to carrying on a conversation in two languages. Communication is still possible, but content is overwhelmed by form (Aronson, 2002, p.86-7).

Aronson explains that in the presence of live, dynamic, material theatre, the projected image is immaterial, undynamic, and a 'dead' fetish object. He argues that theatre is concrete. A chair is an object on the stage. A body is there before us, and cannot evaporate into thin air. Projected imagery, on the other hand, "has no corporeality, no presence, and no permanence, it is only a trick of light and shadow" (p.93). The materiality of theatre - volume, space, and presence - implies time. When the audience enters the theatrical space, they know intrinsically that no matter whether the production is illusionist or presentational, the spatiality of the stage and the performer's body exists in real time (p.88). In comparison, the mediatized image edits images collected by a camera eye. The edited images form



Fig.10: (above) A video still from Dumb Type's *memorandum*. Takao Kawaguchi live, and mediatized on four screens, ([www.dumbtype.com](http://www.dumbtype.com), retrieved 19.01.07).

a sequence, but both camera and editing can create different viewpoints and angles, and jump around in time. When the two vocabularies come into close proximity, the clash produces temporal dissonance and spatial dislocation. The audience is incapable of comprehending what time the performance is representing: the real/fictional time of the live performance, or the past, and 'illogical' time of the video images (ibid). Because the projected image is recorded in the past, says Aronson, it is 'dead,' but it provides the illusion of living - the audience member invests or projects life onto the dead image, thus producing a fetish object (p.89).

Aronson is talking about illusionist theatre, which he typifies as "literary dramas with conventional décor" (p.95) and a particular form of virtual scenography, "projected scenery" that uses video technology instead of traditional three-dimensional sets. Realist, proscenium arch theatre and contemporary phantasmagoria are read in a similar way; both trying

to conjure up a representational and immersive world that pretends to be 'real.' However, when the two types of illusion are placed on the stage, the powerful 'more-real-than-reality effect' produced by the mediatized image, and the entirely different 'unreal reality' effect of theatre, jostle for perceptual and psychological acceptance by the audience, causing confusion. What undoes the two 'realities' is the very physical presence of the stage. Framed literally by the theatre, the moving image becomes only one element among many and cannot disembody the audience member effectively.

But what if these two 'realities' are intentionally clashed? In the Kyoto-based Dumb Type's audiovisual and dance performance *memorandum* (2000), a dancer (Takao Kawaguchi) occupies a living room. Four video screens appear behind him and play the action on stage at four different speeds: sped up, slow motion, regular, and near still. The event consists of a bear entering the living room, offering Kawaguchi an

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orange, and then knocking him to the floor. The 'real' event concludes and the stage goes to black out. When the lights come up, the live bear lies on the floor. The audience is left wondering which version of events is true. *memorandum* explicitly shows how the vocabulary of media can clash with that of theatre. The moving image creates a phantasmal illusion of reality, but has the capacity to rearrange time and space completely. Live performance also operates through imaginary or virtual time, but uses material bodies and real space in the present, and therefore engages in a dynamic contradiction. When both spatiotemporal languages occur on stage simultaneously, the overt differences between these two vocabularies are capable of estranging our preconceptions about phantasmagoria *and* theatre. The audience does not believe the live performance is more plausible. Instead, the disruptive logic of the screens and the live body has worked in conjunction and collision to produce an uncanny experience that resonates like déjà vu.

This thesis explores how the clash between the live performer and mediatized double can be designed to evoke an uncanny experience. The ambiguous collision between the material and immaterial, animate and inanimate, technological and biological, past and present, and real and imaginary are folded into a disconcerting logic that can unsettle audiences, dislodging the habits associated with phantasmagoria. Instead of confusion, there is disturbing dissonance, instead of self-identification; there is a sense of something Other. The elusive ghosts of theatre reinvigorate 'dead' phantasmagoria, and in turn, phantasmagoric ghosts introduce a disturbing sense of temporal displacement. Beyond this, these ghostly doubles provide an affective force, re-sensitizing the audience to their experience of time, relations between bodies and objects, presence and absence, and quite simply, the uncanniness of their selves.

The value of evoking this uncanny experience is twofold. It articulates the underlying anxiety and modern

malaise evoked by phantasmagoric culture. At the same time, the special condition of the uncanny, its indefinable liminality means it refuses to establish a simplistic ontology of some 'reality' that existed before phantasmagoria: a material body that never needed an image. Instead, the uncanny aesthetic questions our preconceived Cartesian notions of reality and imagination especially that the phantasmal double is nothing more than an imitation or illusion:

Constitutive for the uncanny is not the alternative: reality-imagination, for this alternative presupposes the identity and meaning of whatever it thus questions, and seeks only to fix its ontological status. Uncanny is a certain indecidability which affects and infects representations, motifs, themes and situations, which . . . always means something other than what they are (Samuel Weber, 1973, p. 1132).

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However, to establish performance design strategies that re-invigorate ghostly doubles with the appropriate sense of unfamiliar familiarity and unfixed identity we need to look closely at the different vocabularies of theatre and the projected image, and especially uncanny methods of staging phantasmagoria.



ghostly doubles

## ***Ghosts of Disavowal, Ghosts of Doubt***

The *Oxford English Dictionary* describes the double as “a counterpart of a person or thing who looks exactly like another” and “having two different roles or interpretations esp. implying confusion or deceit” (Allen, 1991, p.350). It comes from the Latin ‘duplus’ the root word of ‘duplicate;’ “to make a copy of an original” (Allen, 1991, p.364) and ‘duplicity’ meaning “double-dealing and deceitfulness” (Allen, 1991, p.365). The history of theatrical and mediatized performance is often considered a litany of duplicitousness. Performance can potentially produce doubles of a very different nature, however, doubles that affect the audience bodily, activate the senses, and remember what society casts aside.

The ‘mirror stage’ is the first moment when the body and the phantasmatic double meet, and the self is split between spectator and performer, subject and object. The psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan explains

how the child, in order to differentiate itself from the world, imagines an identification with the self in the mirror. Unfortunately, the mirror image is only illusory, and therefore the child's identification produces misrecognition and an alienated, divided subject (Lapsley & Westlake, 1989, pp.67-69). According to Lacanian psychoanalysis, the subject will play out this drama of identification and misrecognition for the rest of their lives, either by identifying with others, or projecting what it fears on the Other (ibid). This process of identification is integral to ego construction. Lacanian theorist Mladen Dolar describes how, "The shadow and the mirror image survive the body due to their immateriality – so it is that reflections constitute our essential selves" (1991, p.12). But the mirror image also signifies lack and absence. The double is proof that the material body will die; it is a *memento mori*. Therefore, it can be a source of uncanny anxiety for the subject. Performance, live and mediated, have always presented us with ghostly doubles but the question

is how design can transform the ghostly double of misrecognition to the affective ghostly double of the uncanny.

The ghostly doubles of 'realistic' representations immunize the audience from any sense of anxiety whatsoever by promoting identification and fulfilling the spectator's need to strengthen his or her identity. When live performance engages in illusionist staging it is just as susceptible to replaying the drama of misrecognition in the audience as any immersive technology. Indeed, the 'fourth wall' of proscenium arch theatre was a precursor to the cinema screen, as theatre practice since the Renaissance sought to dematerialize the stage and reproduce faithful illusions. The director Bertolt Brecht compares the film industry to live performance when he describes the passive audience of representational theatre:

Hollywood and Broadway's methods of manufacturing certain excitements and emotions may possibly be artistic, but their

# Staging Phantasmagoria



Fig.11: (above) Cinema audience wearing 3-D glasses. The effect of 3-D cinema is almost total immersion and disavowal, ([www.greatmodernpictures.com](http://www.greatmodernpictures.com), retrieved on 22.02.07).

only use is to offset the fearful boredom induced in any audience by the endless repetition of falsehoods and stupidities. The technique was developed and is used in order to stimulate interest in things and ideas that are not in the interest of the audience (Willett, 1964, p.160).

But as many film and theatre theorists have pointed out there are fundamental differences between the two art forms. The ontology of live or mediatized performance revolves around the presence or absence of the body in space and time. To be present, a person or thing needs to be here now. By definition, theatre takes place in the present. The performer and the audience are physically present at the same time and space. On the other hand, film, and other pre-recorded media, makes the absent present. The spectator is not present during the performance, and the performer is not present during projection. This suggests mediatized and live performance invokes

two different audience receptions. Contemporary phantasmagoria engages the audience in the complex interaction of belief and non-belief called disavowal: 'I know very well but all the same . . .' (Lapsley & Westlake, 1989, p.85). Although these doubles lack the presence of actual perceptions, we are encouraged to believe what is seen is effectively present even if we know it is not. Film theorist Christian Metz surmises, "Every film is a fiction film" (Braudy, 2004, p.821). In comparison, the combination of bodily presence in theatre and the fictional world it presents provokes something else, a sense of "disconcerting logic," or "intellectual uncertainty" (Freud, 1919). Alice Rayner in *Ghosts* (2006) explains, how the material condition of theatre produces something that 'is' and 'is not', disrupting any traditional dualistic interpretation that argues the double of theatre is only a copy (2006, p.xii). This leads the audience to doubt what they are witnessing. Rayner compares the doubt experienced by the theatre audience with cinematic disavowal and disembodiment when she says, "By failing to recognize

the force of the technological apparatus, even though it is formative, we are more easily seduced by the power of the image that has none of the distractions or limitations of the real body. . . Film turns into a projection of self that can absorb the differences between human psyche and nonhuman apparatus, whereas theatre with its embodied community maintains difference and otherness because of bodies" (2006, p.163).

Representational theatrical practice seeks to dull down this sense of doubt by pretending that what occurs on stage is 'real.' Characters, psychology and text, and 'realistic' staging gives action an air of stability which contributes to the idea that an entrenched identity cannot be altered. Director and theorist Antonin Artaud passionately argued, "for the theatre to become aware once and for all of what distinguishes it from written language" (Drain, 1995, p.267). Likewise, cinema subsumes its incredible virtuosity to bend time and space by adhering to

# Staging Phantasmagoria

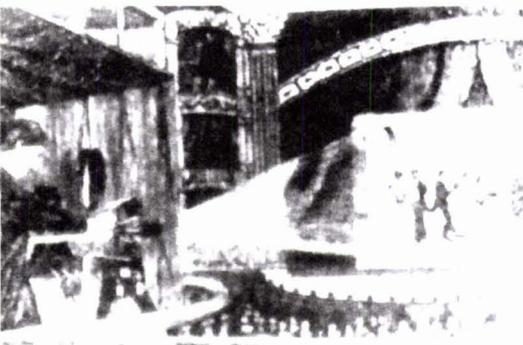


Fig.12: (above) A poster and publicity sketch for early cinema exhibition: Edison's Vitascope projection in a music hall, c.1896 (Cook, 1996, p.12).

psychological characterization and devotion to the word. Both the mediatized image and the theatre need to draw on their ontology, and free audiences from the Cartesian fascination with duality: mind and body, original and copy.

The performance designer can deconstruct 'representation' and 'realism' by presenting the material conditions of theatre and the material conditions of the mediatized image on stage. Indeed, it is the vocabulary of theatre, the orchestration of physical bodies and objects in space that emancipates media from its adherence to narrative and its audiences from the thrall of immersion and identification and gives them instead "the physical knowledge of images" (Artaud, 1938, p.61). The spectator's psyche cannot project itself into the illusion of three-dimensional space when phantasmagoria is staged. Instead, the mediatized image is one element amongst many; an overtly two-dimensional image of bodies that are palpably absent.

This dissonance disturbs the audience's process of mirror identification and misrecognition. Instead of belief and disavowal, the audience experiences the disconcerting logic of the uncanny. Ghostly doubles of disavowal become doubles of doubt that interrogate our source of identity, our mirrored body image, and therefore our preconceptions about presence itself.

We can find examples of the uncanny play of media and live performance in the roots of cinematic exhibition. Before narrative took hold of the medium, early cinema shocked audiences with its uncannily 'real' representation of the past. But audiences never mistook the cinematic double for 'reality.' Instead, the 'Cinema of Attractions' (Braudy, 2004, 866-869) was a performance, more akin to a magic show. Typically, a film would be exhibited first as a photographic still before, in a masterstroke of showmanship; the photographs suddenly began to move before the observer's eyes. Georges Méliès describes his first encounter with this new type of

magic:

A still photograph showing the place Bellecour in Lyon was projected. A little surprise, I just had time to say to my neighbour:

"They got us all stirred up for projections like this? I've been doing them for over ten years."

I had hardly finished speaking when a horse pulling a wagon began to walk towards us, followed by other vehicles and then pedestrians, in short all the animation of the street.

Before this spectacle, we sat with gaping mouths, struck with amazement, astonished beyond all expression (Braudy, 2004, 866-869).

Méliès' experience is not immersive. Pre-classical cinematic exhibitions had the power to disturb the

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Fig. 13: (above) A video still from *Jet Lag Part One: "Roger Dearborn"* presented by The Builders Association and Diller + Scorfidio (1998) (Chapple & Kattenbelt ed. 2006, p.57).

physical body of the audience. Rather than getting lost in a cinema of representations, narrative action and identification, the early audiences of the 'Cinema of Attractions' were extremely conscious and curious of the film image. As film theorist Tom Gunning states in "An Aesthetics of Astonishment," the "spectator does not get lost in a fictional world and its drama – but remains aware of the act of looking, the excitement of curiosity and its fulfillment." This cinema of attractions even overpowered disavowal: "The audience of the first exhibitions exists outside of the willing suspension of disbelief, the immediacy of their terror short-circuiting even disavowal's detour of 'I know very well . . . but all the same'" (ibid, p.863). When performance design frames the moving image on the stage it is returning cinema to its original material conditions.

Contemporary performances that marry the moving image with live performance revisit the uncanniness of these magical displays. *Jet Lag* (1998) by the New

York-based Builders Association in collaboration with architects Diller + Scofidio is a recent example. *Jet Lag: "PartOne: Roger Dearborn"* is about the eponymous Roger Dearborn making a video diary of his solo voyage around the world. The narrative is based on an actual event in 1969 when the British yachtsman Donald Crowhurst sent reports home plotting his apparent progress during a round-the-world race. Authorities eventually discovered Crowhurst faked the reports; according to his ship's logbook, he never left the Atlantic (Chapple & Kattenbelt ed. 2006, p.58). The spatial design of *Jet Lag* is simple, yet it is the design of the performance that sets up a temporal dissonance, and questions concepts of the body and its double. A performer sits on a stool, in front of the audience. Behind him is the sea and horizon back-projected onto a screen. Centre-stage is a video camera on a fixed one-legged stand. The composite image fed from the camera appears on a screen at the back of the stage (Chapple & Kattenbelt ed. 2006, p.57). The mix between live performer and past, mediatized image

remediated by the live feed, causes a perceptual clash that is disconcertingly logical. Mediated by the camera eye the scene is convincingly real; it looks as though Roger Dearborn is in the middle of an ocean. Dearborn places his hand on real wires so it looks like he is steadying himself on the rigging. Before a single word is spoken the design of the performance has spoken volumes about media, authenticity and fabrication.

Live theatre frames this mediatized performance but there is no confusion between the two vocabularies. The problems that Professor Arnold Aronson identifies in "Can Theatre and Media Speak the Same Language?" (2002) become virtues when they're consciously played off each other. Aronson explains that the projection screen "within the larger frame of the stage with its pictorial and architectural elements" brings the perceptual reality of media and theatre into direct conflict (p.91). In *Jet Lag*, the differences between stage space and video space

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challenge and extend the body of the performer and its double. The audience does not believe the remediated performance is real. At the same time, the ontology of the live body is also questionable, as it is part of a carefully orchestrated mise-en-scene, defined by the recorded image of the ocean. Aronson also argues that with the live video feed the ontology of performance is brought into question: "is the real image the one on the video monitor or screen, or is it the object or person being captured by the camera?" (p.89). In *Jet Lag*, this is the point. The combination of the live feed, performing body and pre-recorded media destabilizes any dualistic belief that the body is the original and the mediatized image is simply a copy. 'Presence' and 'identity' are questioned and the virtual and actual exist in an indeterminate and creative encounter.

In *Jet Lag* the 'present' body and the 'absent' ghost become interchangeable, one cannot exist without the other. Their relationship is not 'original' and 'copy'

but the far more ambivalent 'virtual' and 'actual.' As Elizabeth Grosz explains the virtual and the actual can never be separated, the real is divested of its 'reality' so that it becomes almost real, a "reality which is at best virtual" (2001, p.80). Elizabeth Grosz, citing the philosopher Gilles Deleuze, captures this conceptual shift in her reinterpretation of the 'mirror stage.' The first encounter with the virtual other is not simply a moment of identification and misrecognition. It is also, she argues, proof that the phantasmatic double is inseparable from the body that imagines it:

Lacan specifies that only through an encounter with a virtual counterpart, the double, do we acquire an identity; moreover, this identity remains irresolvably split because of an incapacity to resolve the differences between the real and the virtual body and because, in a certain sense, the real contains the space of the virtual image to the degree that the symbolic overcomes

or supersedes the specular. In short, Lacan both affirms and undermines the reliance of the real on the space of virtuality, showing the necessity and impossibility of their separation. In a strange and rare congruence if not agreement with Lacan, Deleuze too, in his writings on Henri Bergson and the time-image, affirms that the real is only functional as such, exists in time, through its immersion in virtuality and saturation as the space of virtuality (Grosz, 2001, p.80).

The fundamental difference between Lacan's and Gilles Deleuze's conception of the 'mirror stage' is that the former regards the 'mirror stage' as the primary moment of misrecognition; the subject's identity will always be synonymous with lack. Deleuze argues 'identity,' 'subjectivity,' 'image,' and the 'body' are all intrinsically part of the "undecidable reversibility" of virtuality and actuality (ibid). Live and

mediatized performance always produce an interplay between the virtual and actual but the uncanny mix of mediatized image and physical bodies presents an overt sense of the temporal dissonance in the paradigm. When the 'presence' of the performing body and the 'present absence' of the mediatized double comes into proximity our familiar sense of 'identity' in relation to time becomes unfamiliar. The strangeness, the alterity, and the potentiality of time is revealed to the audience.

## ***Ghosts of Time***

The performance designer creates through time because theatre is a time-based art form. Simultaneously, the performance designer can transform our perception and experience of time by clashing theatrical time with mediatized time. Aronson defines time spatially when he explains that the body moves in 'real time,' "The actors we see are like us: they have volume, they move through space, and thus they move

through time" (p.88). The mediatized image on the other hand "captures and preserves something from the past for re-presentation in the present" (p.89). The time of the mediatized image is not anchored to any 'reality' and consists of sequences of shots from different times and different duration that can be rearranged infinitely. As we have noted, theatre and media theorists use the temporal distinction to differentiate the mediatized image from live theatre. Video artist Bill Viola states the "basic material" of media is time, "(A)wareness of time brings you into a world of process" (Viola, 1995, p.168). Theatre is also capable of shifting the body through past, present and future, but it often takes the uncanny presence of media to consider the body in this way. Rather than causing confusion, if temporal dissonance is designed consciously, then it can allow us to rethink the body and its virtual doubles as processes in time.

Gilles Deleuze used Henri Bergson's essay titled "The Memory of the Present and False Recognition" (1908)

to formulate a theory of time as an indeterminable reciprocity between the virtual and actual. In his essay, Bergson examines the uncanny phenomena of déjà vu, in order to reconsider the 'mirror stage' as a condition of the dependency actuality has on virtuality. Bergson explains that this unfamiliar yet familiar sense of having already experienced a present event stems from the fundamental difference between memory and perception, and concludes that there must be a "'memory of the present,' a virtual memory-image that co-exists with each perception-image in the present. The virtual double is like a reflection in a mirror: 'our actual existence, as it unfolds in time is then doubled by a virtual existence, by a mirror image'" (Bogue, 2003, p.118). According to Bergson and Deleuze, the present is immediately double, an actual present perception and a virtual memory of the present so that it becomes that "fleeting limit between the immediate past that is no longer and the immediate future that is not yet" (ibid). Time becomes a "mobile mirror" (ibid) that is the ongoing

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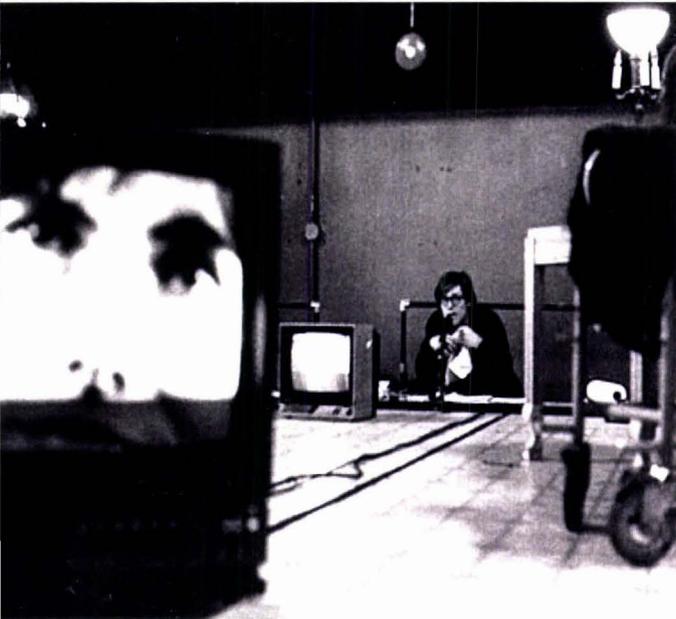


Fig.14: (above) A photograph of *Brace Up!* (1991) showing the prominence of the mediatized double. Anna Kohler (on video), Willem Dafoe at the microphone, ([www.thewoostergroup.org/twg/projects/braceup](http://www.thewoostergroup.org/twg/projects/braceup), retrieved 20.01.07).

splitting and coexistence of the actual and virtual, perception and memory. This means that it is not just the projected image but also theatre that is a site of virtuality. Theatre conjures up a past in collusion with the present, revealing an unspecifiable future, an open-endedness, a virtually real.

This has ramifications for any consideration of 'identity,' or 'presence' in relation to mediatized *and* live performance. For Deleuze, 'subjectivity' and 'identity' are not the first and last points of entry for time or the body. The psyche is only one element in the body's multifaceted condition of cultural, biological, psychological, technological, and temporal condition of becoming. 'Being,' 'subjectivity' and even 'the body' are just relatively stable moments in the flow of images the body produces.

Both the New York-based Wooster Group and Kyoto-based Dumb Type are committed to incorporating video in their live performances, in order to play with

the virtual potential and “undecidable reversibility” of the mediatized image and the performing body. Wooster Group productions use a combination of live and prerecorded media to present the live performing body on the stage. One example occurred in *Brace Up!* (1991) when the actor Ron Vawter was both seen apparently weeping onstage while a video simultaneously showed him applying the glycerine tears and commenting on their appearance. This destroyed the illusion, replacing disavowal with doubt, and the performer, like his mediatized double became a “picture machine with an endless reservoir of images, feelings and sounds” (Schwabsky, 2004, p.79). After Vawter’s actual death, productions continued to show the video of his preparation. The presence of his mediatized double only emphasized the absence of his live body and provoked a deeply uncanny experience. Similarly, Teiji Furuhashi haunted the production of *S/N* (1994) after his death from AIDS-related illness in 1995. A live performer continued to interact with Furuhashi’s immortal yet palpably absent double.

In both cases, the mediatized image thickened the temporal and spatial presence of ‘here and now’, with the absent ‘there and then’. This uncanny play between presence and absence recalls Alice Rayner’s statement that in the theatre; “Ghosts arise not from the idea of the double but from the perceptible presence of an absence that the double outlines and gives shape to” (2006, p.xxii).

Both *S/N* and *Brace Up!* have resurrected the dead. They incite a palpable feeling of loss and mortality, but this is not the loss incited by Lacanian misrecognition in the mirror image. It would be a travesty to describe the mediatized Ron Vawter or Teiji Furuhashi as simply reflections or imitations. These ghosts reveal in their otherness, the virtual potential of time. The memory image of Teiji Furuhashi coincides and is interchangeable with the present perception image of Teiji Furuhashi giving the audience a direct experience of time. The interruption of the sequence of time by the virtual shows how time always has a

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Fig. 15: (above) Teiji Furuhashi in *S/W* (1994), ([www.dumbtype.com](http://www.dumbtype.com), retrieved 13.07.06).

virtual element, a past that can disturb the present and a future that is always open to the potential of otherness, difference and alterity. Deleuze compares this process of memory and perception with actors watching themselves on stage though when he does “he is not suggesting we are *like* actors, but that we *are* actors” (Bogue, 2003, p.121).

The animated mirror reflection, the virtual reflection of the actual present, breaks down the clear distinction between an object or body and its semiotic representation. Therefore, all the world is a stage, not in the sense of disavowal, that all life is an illusion but in the sense that the world becomes a theatre, or film consisting of “a play of images in which virtual and actual are indiscernible because they coexist in the real (and not just ‘in our heads’)” (Bogue, 2003, p.121). Theatre is a ‘memory machine,’ a place where the body, objects, and architecture are all haunted by their virtual potential. However, this only proves how all bodies, all objects, and all architecture are

constantly negotiating between the virtual and the actual. The actual death of Furuhashi and Vawter shatters any boundaries between 'real life' and the virtual worlds of theatre or media. The actual and the virtual occur on the stage, and equally exist beyond its confines. Media clashing with liveness produces 'hauntings' - remembrances that make visible what often remains invisible: the otherness of time, the unfamiliar familiarity of memory and perception, and the unfixed potential of bodies inhabiting spaces.

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The image is a dark, blurry photograph with a vertical wood-grain texture. In the center, there is a faint, ghostly figure of a person in a white, sheet-like garment. The background is dark with some out-of-focus light spots in shades of green and orange. The text "haunted house" is overlaid in white, lowercase letters.

haunted house

# Staging Phantasmagoria



Fig. 16: (above) A preliminary drawing of *Theatre Ghosts* at Circa, September 2006.

Fig. 17: (right) Two of the windows of Circa Theatre haunted by the cast of *Picture Perfect*.

If a house, a building, or a city is not palpably haunted in its architectural features - if the earth's historicity and containment of the dead do not pervade its articulated forms and constitutive matter - then that house, building or city is dead to the world. Dead to the world means cut off from the earth and closed off from the underworlds. For that is one of the ironies of our life worlds: they receive their animation from the ones that underlie them.

Robert Pogue Harrison (2003) *The Dominion of the Dead*, p.36.

Time can intervene in our experience of space, and change our experience of inhabitation, making it 'unhomely.' Performance design can rethink time by clashing our perceptions of media and theatre, and therefore our process of identity (the body and its phantasmatic double). Gaston Bachelard in *The Poetics of Space* (1969) notes the relationship between the



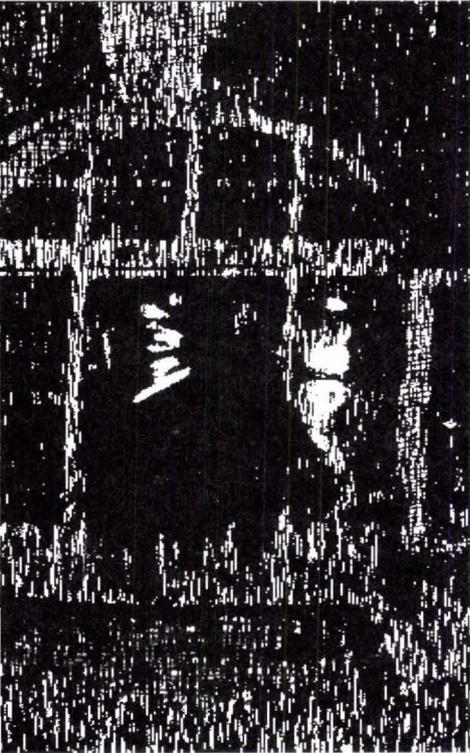


Fig. 18: (above) Another preliminary drawing of the *Theatre Ghosts* at Circa, September 2006.

Fig. 19: (right) *Theatre Ghosts*: The virtual daughter repetitively turning towards and away from us.

indeterminate condition of identity in relation to the memory stored in houses. He says, "At times we think we know ourselves in time, when all we know is a sequence of fixations in the spaces of the being's stability - a being who does not want to melt away, and who even in the past, when he sets out in search of things past, wants time to suspend its flight" (Bachelard p.8). Performance design works outside of the theatre venue in the everyday, allowing the uncanny intervention of time past, present and future to make familiar sites of inhabitation strangely unfamiliar. Performance design operates inside the gallery, in the suburban street, in cafes, everywhere.

The three 'hauntings' I conducted in Wellington all responded to the placelessness and disembodiment of city living by reestablishing the uncanny presence of time. What they shared was a sense of precariousness, a sense of their actual conditions but also their virtual possibilities, past, present, and future. Each of these hauntings challenged the comfortable notion of reality,



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Fig.20: (above) A preliminary 'spirit photograph' produced from video footage shot of the actress and a photo of Circa Theatre.

Fig.21: (right) The phantasmatic father endlessly buries his head in his hands .

disrupted the body's delicate certainties, by holding a magnifying glass to inhabitation as a relationship between time and space, rather than time dictated by space.

## *THEATRE GHOSTS (SEPTEMBER 2006, CIRCA THEATRE)*

The first 'haunting' occurred at Circa Theatre during the opening nights of Ken Duncum's *Picture Perfect* (2006). In *Picture Perfect*, a New Zealand family who has recently lost their son gets the opportunity to resurrect him with the arrival of new technology, called the 'hol-life.' The mother reenacts her son's history with the holographic automaton and then endeavours to use the 'hol-life' to hypothesize how he would have lived if not for his tragic death. The play deals with similar themes as those discussed in this thesis: the familiar is invaded by the mediatized Other and memories, presence and immediacy are



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Fig. 22: (above) Another preliminary 'spirit photograph' attempting to capture the uncanny feeling of a haunted space.

Fig. 23: (right) Because the virtual performers were projected on windows they gazed inside and outside at theatregoers.

under threat from virtual technologies. Unfortunately, the realistic execution of Circa's production of *Picture Perfect* retained a linear narrative path, logical space and time, and humanist themes. The play's conservative finale featured a family huddled together communicating their 'real' memories. Apparently, the only threat to subjectivity, or sociality, is poor family communication and the solution to these uncanny space/time machines is simply to turn them off.

*Theatre Ghosts* consisted of three projectors placed opposite the ground floor windows of Circa theatre. The performers in *Picture Perfect* were projected on these windows, interspersed with live and delayed images of the audience entering and socializing before the play started. The video installation was not simply a representational extension of the play. Instead, *Theatre Ghosts* tried to expose the social conditions of theatre-going itself.

In *Theatre Ghosts* the virtuality of bodies and



architecture came together. As Elizabeth Grosz states, "The capacity of walls, boxes, windows, and corners to function in more than one way, to serve not only the present functions but others as well, is already part of the ingenuity and innovation of the virtual in the real" (2001, p.90). The ghostly doubles on the windows revealed how theatre venues attempt to contain the virtual. It was fitting therefore that their haunting used the architecture to reveal the strangeness of theatre-going.

Windows relate to states of projection and invasion. They allow the body inside the building to take pleasure in viewing the environment while remaining safe inside. Windows also allow bodies outside to invade the privacy of those inside with their gaze. The phantasms at Circa looked out and looked in, watched theatergoers enter, gazed at people socializing. Their "dead" eyes played out the closeness of absence in their ghostly presence. Indeed *Theatre Ghosts* proved that the principle source of uncanniness of the phantasm is

Fig. 24: (right) A theatregoer watches their delayed projection. People socializing in the foyer of Circa Theatre became part of the virtual performance. The delay operated from a live camera feed into a VCR and a four channel mixer.



precisely the gaze. As Mladen Dolar says "Lacan uses the gaze as the best presentation of that missing object; in the mirror, one can see one's eyes, but not the gaze which is the part that is lost. But imagine that one could see one's mirror image close it eyes: that would make the object as gaze appear in the mirror" (1991, p.13).

Theatre spaces often appear to be safe containers of imaginary worlds, but they efface the social conditions and coercions that are part of their structure. *Theatre Ghosts* defamiliarized the audience with the invisible rituals associated with "a night at the theatre," by remembering the process of time in the audience's transition from outside the theatre to inside. Gay McAuley in *Space in Performance: Making Meaning in the Theatre* discusses how the architectural form of the theatre venue is inseparable from the invisible coercions inherent in theatre-going, "The architecture itself constrains the theatergoers experience in very definite ways" (McAuley, 1999, p.52). Circa Theatre's

Fig. 25: (right) The theatregoer and her double during *Theatre Ghosts*.



architectural structure completely delineates the realm of illusion and the 'real world.' As McAuley explains the experience for the theatergoer entering the building is "one of penetration further and further into the building until one reaches the points beyond which one cannot go, the point that Iain Mackintosh does not hesitate to designate as a "magical area," the place where 'the worlds of audience and actor interconnect'" (ibid, p.50). The foyer, the restaurant and the bar are safe transitional spaces that contain the theatre ghosts and eliminate the materiality of the theatrical event. Because this transition is so familiar it is invisible.

Many mistake decoration for architecture. Others put the architecture, along with the ease of getting a drink at the bar, of parking or of buying a ticket, as a necessary adjunct to the evening, not central to the event (ibid, p.51).

Fig. 26: (right) The theatregoers continue to haunt the window after their physical bodies have left.



# Staging Phantasmagoria

*Theatre Ghosts*, blurred the line between the exterior and interior, the illusion and the real, by invading the comfortable, familiar ease of getting a drink, or buying a ticket with visible and virtual doubles of the performers from *Picture Perfect*. The “themes” of *Picture Perfect* that would remain part of the illusion inside the auditorium space became an embodied experience in the exterior and interior of Circa Theatre. As the audience drank and talked, the virtual doubles of the ‘mother,’ ‘father’ and ‘daughter’ erupted from the auditorium onto the windows, haunting the familiar with the uncannily familial. The father appeared to be grieving, the daughter repetitively turned to face us and away again.

A live feed running to the projectors interrupted the pre-recorded performers. Anyone who expected to look outside instead saw his or her mediatized double. This split the theatergoer into a performer who plays a role, the performance of going to the theatre, and the spectator who observes. There was another

uncanny surprise; the theatergoers suddenly found themselves not only relayed but also delayed. Their actions thirty seconds before returned to haunt them. All of a sudden, the lived experience of time was made present, breaking down the traditional spatial representation of time associated with visiting the theatre.

In *Ghosts* (2006), Alice Rayner explains that the designated time for a performance (usually 8pm) is an agreed upon time "simply part of a modern social cohesion, a conformity that lubricates mechanisms of social order" (p.2). This representation of time converts "theatergoers" into "audience members." *Theatre Ghosts* removes this arbitrary separation by making the "theatergoer" an "audience member" before the designated time and, even more disconcerting, makes the audience member see him or herself in the past. In *Theatre Ghosts*, the theatergoer was haunted by the phantasm of their own recent memory. Their 'presence' consisted of images subject to cultural

rituals. The theatergoer was a theatre ghost, a body producing the image relegated by structures imposed by the theatre space.

## *GHOST RUNNER (NOVEMBER 2006, WELLINGTON)*

The body phantom is the link between our biological and cultural existence, between “inner” psyche and our “external” body, that which enables a passage or a transformation from one to the other.

Elizabeth Grosz (2001) *Architecture from the Outside*, p.33.

*Ghost Runner* consisted of a mediated double of a runner, who ‘competed’ with a live body in the city and suburban streets of Wellington. A data projector, pointing out from a back window of a car, projected an image of a young man running on the spot. The motion of the car propelled the runner forward generating an uncanny performance from the car’s movement, the mediatized image, and the different array of surfaces the image touched. Over three nights the ghost runner and its double chased each other through the



Fig. 27: (above) A preliminary sketch evoking the fragmented condition of the ghost runner projected on different objects in the city.

Fig. 28: (right) *Ghost Runner*: The physical body attempts to keep up with his virtual double. November 2006. (Footage: Andy Chappell).



# Staging Phantasmagoria

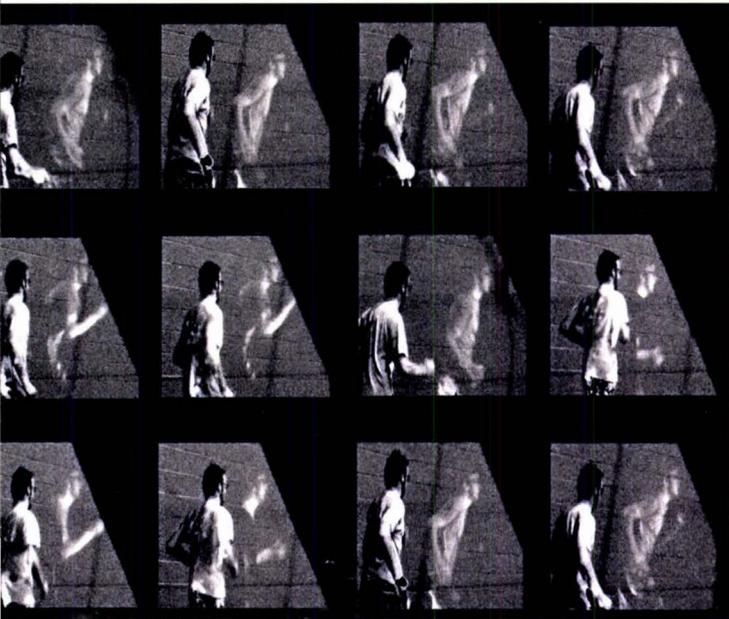


Fig. 29: (above) A photo montage in the style of Eadweard Muybridge's series photography. Muybridge's attempt to dissect motion heralded the cinematic apparatus in the nineteenth century. *Ghost Runner* attempts to deconstruct and reconsider the same cinematic apparatus.

streets of Wellington, accompanied by a looped audio recording of the performer's breathing.

In *Ghost Runner*, the virtual body was stretched and racked across the space of the city. 'He' was not simply a symbol of the city, but something that haunted and inhabited the city, defamiliarizing our relations to urban spaces while also operating as a shifting projection of the metropolis, endowing it with characteristics. 'He' was the meeting place of the doubled "imaginary city" and "imaginary body": both sites of individual and collective fantasies and social controls.

As Anthony Vidler notes, the city produces spatial dislocation and is an ongoing site of "social and individual estrangement, alienation, exile, and homelessness" (1992, p.ix). These conditions continue to clash with the positivist and modern associations of the city: reason, control, and the promise of a future utopia. Like the home, the city is often compared to the body.

According to Donatella Mazzoleni the city is "the body's double" (Robins, 1996, p.132). She explains, "We can speak of a city . . . as long as the totality of those who live in a collective construction constitute a collective anthropoid body, which maintains in some way an identity as a 'subject'. The city is therefore the site of an identification (ibid).

Contrary to the functioning model of the city, is a city where the projection of the body is impossible - such is the sense of alienation produced by spatial estrangement. *Ghost Runner* is the 'virtual embodiment' of the fragmented and erased body in the phantasmatic city determined to turn bodies into spectres.

The ghost runner deconstructs the phantasmagoric apparatus where mirror-stage ego-projection, identification, and mediatized image. meet in the cone of light. Confronted by this shifting, fluid combination of corporeality, technology and culture, the absences

incite a threat in the viewing body, and the reflected projection of bodily empathy produces the shiver of the uncanny. The phantom body in *Ghost Runner* questions the body as "the originating point of a centred projection" (Vidler, 1991, p.78) and reveals the capacity for subjectivity to integrate with tools, machines, and buildings by literally being rearranged by its environment. Vidler quotes Jean Paul Sartre who, in *Being and Nothingness*, articulates the uncanny threat to the body projected by the ego, from objects in the world:

I live my body in danger as regards menacing machines as well as manageable instruments. My body is everywhere: the bomb which destroys my house also damages my body insofar as the house was already an indication of my body (Vidler, 1991, p.81).

The world defines the body; "far from the body

# Staging Phantasmagoria



Fig. 30: (above) Another collection of series photography revealing the different motions of the physical body and phantasmatic double.

Fig. 31: (right) The ghost runner comes apart as 'he' runs over trees and shrubs.

being first for us and revealing things to us, it is the instrumental-things which in their original appearance indicate the body to us" (Ibid), From here, Vidler explains that when Sartre talks about the bomb that destroys the house, destroys the body itself, he is not applying a metaphor, comparing two different signifiers in a single image. He means the bomb destroys the body itself, "because the house is needed for the body to project it" (Vidler, 1991, p.82). Similarly, the mediated body in *Ghost Runner* does not reflect the body on the city, it is the body defined and defining the city.

The ghost runner's body does not exhaust, yet is inseparable from technology; it is reliant on the conditions of its environment in constituting itself. This body elongates and compresses over houses, roads, fences. 'He' shatters into thousands of flitting particles when 'he' runs over trees and bushes. This dismembered, inexhaustible phantasm provokes our unconscious fear of the double. For, like the double



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Fig. 32: (above) Filming the *Ghost Runner* in the studio at 77 Fairlie Tce. This image was cropped and looped, while the actor's breath was recorded separately (Footage: Andy Chappell).

Fig. 33: (right) The phantasmatic runner's size depended entirely on the distance of the lens from the projection surface (Footage: Andy Chappell).

of uncanny literature, it is a readable symbol for the preservation against extinction but it dooms the body to failure. The live body flayed its arms around erratically, stopped for breath, while the videated double was proof that the live body will exhaust, and eventually must stop. What we may see in the dismembered doubling is the negation of solidified identity, the mortality implied in the double, the promise of death to life. Yet, because of the virtual double's proximity to the body this is not a site of loss and lack, it is in an ongoing process of renewal and transformation. "It is through this separated form of himself that the being comes into play in his effects of life and death, and it might be said that it is with the help of this doubling of the other or of oneself, that is realized, the conjunction from which proceeds the renewal of being in reproduction" (Lacan, 1978, 107).

The phantasmatic double replicates, distorts, and restores. It heralds the return of the body from



# Staging Phantasmagoria

contemporary disavowal and denial. The *Ghost Runner* is not simply a symbol for all that has been lost in the modern metropolis, but also considers the potential of the phantasmagoric city: reconsidering the body as constituted by, and transforming, the city.

Fig. 34: (right) The phantasmatic runner looks back at the physical body in pursuit. (Footage: Andy Chappell).



# Staging Phantasmagoria

*FUTUNA (DECEMBER 2006, CHAPEL OF FUTUNA,  
KARORI)*

In theatrical space, performance does not inter the past so much as raise the dead, in a ghostly repetition that is the same insofar as it is mortal. That is, it raises the dead from within the paradoxical space of sameness and repetition, sameness and difference. It must be haunted if it is to be effective. It must take the ghosts from the tombs of written memorialization and return to an audience the affective sorrow of experience rather than the sealed tomb of memorialization that leads not only to forgetfulness but also the further violence of congealed nationalism.

Alice Rayner (2006) *Ghosts: Death's  
Double and the Phenomenology of  
Theatre*, p.61.



Fig. 35: (above) Futuna Chapel before it was sold by the Marist Brothers in 2000 (Walden, 1987, p. 35).

Fig. 36: (right) Futuna Chapel today. The retreat no longer exists. Instead, townhouses surround the Chapel.



Futuna

# Staging Phantasmagoria



Fig. 37: (above) The interior of Futuna Chapel before it was sold by the Marist Brothers (Walden, 1987, p. 117).

Fig. 38: (right) Futuna Chapel as the design team found it, (Photo collage: Sven Mehzoud).

The Chapel of Futuna in Karori commemorates the martyrdom of the missionary Pierre Chanel on the French Polynesian Island of Futuna in 1841. The performative installation *Futuna*, staged in the Chapel of Futuna, sought to remember this traumatic past by invoking ghosts into the space. Being a Catholic space its memorializing function is to solidify belief in the transcendental. In *Futuna*, the memorial did not invoke God or Jesus Christ but instead ghostly Others, doubtful doubles. Neither did *Futuna* attempt to produce a definitive reading of Futuna Chapel, nor the “sealed tomb” of the permanent memorial. Instead, *Futuna* presented the stories performatively, allowing the paradoxes of time and memory to emerge from their telling.

The Chapel of Futuna has been standing unobtrusively in Karori, Wellington since 1961. Originally designed as part of a non-denominational spiritual retreat, it was sold by the Marist Brothers in 2000. Developers tore down the retreat buildings surrounding Futuna



# Staging Phantasmagoria



Fig. 39: (above) A shadow hand draws patterns in the shadows of breadcrumbs. Part of the ghostly haunting that occurred in *Futuna* (Photo: Lucy Arthur).

Fig. 40: (right) The striking Perspex windows. Silhouetted in the foreground are the two projectors that lit the breadcrumb beaches every evening (Photo: Lucy Arthur).

Chapel to establish a new development, but the Chapel remained; a symbol of the past, incongruous with the banal, repetitive townhouses that surrounded it.

People visiting *Futuna* had a very different experience to any traditional representation of history. By navigating through its hidden recesses, they chose the sequence in which they engaged with the content. In the middle of a suburban street littered with identical buildings, perfectly tarred roads and clipped burns stood a decaying sacred space. The roof was in disrepair, the Perspex windows were shattered. Inside, detritus filled the offices, the carpets were waterlogged and rotted, the pounamu floor scuffed, the Christ figure stolen from the cross. This sad, lonely building spoke of abandonment. Only as the moving daylight filtered through the multi-coloured grid of the iconic windows, could a visitor perceive the potential of the space. The body of the building had been exhausted, but the light and its effect remained untouched. But far more uncanny incongruities were to be discovered. Two



# Staging Phantasmagoria

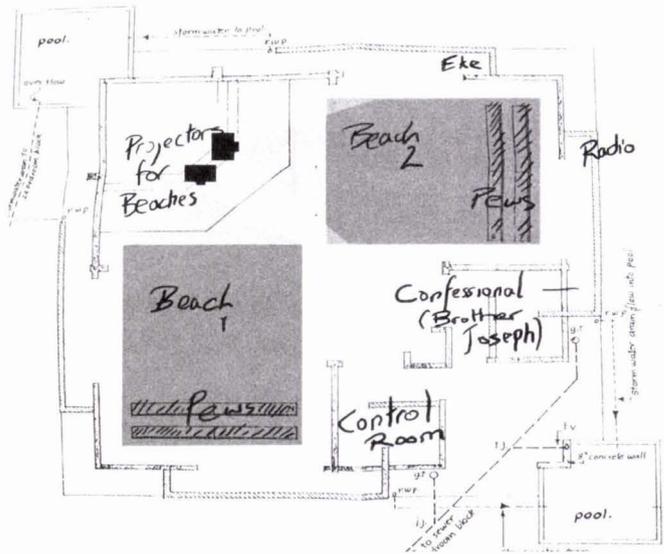
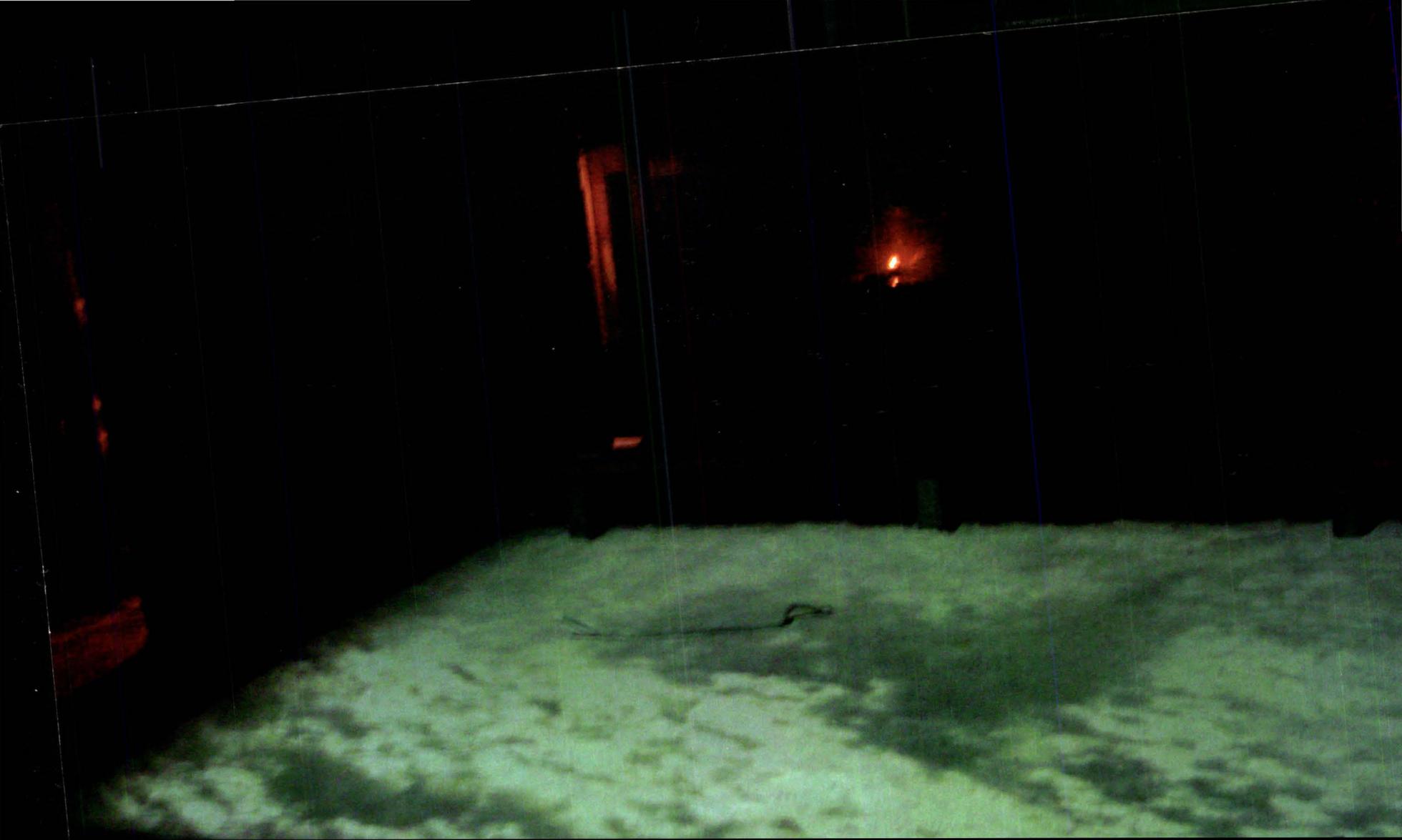


Fig. 41: (above) Plan of Futuna Chapel with suggested video installations sites (Original plan: John Scott).

Fig. 42: (right) The beaches at night were haunted by images of the Pacific - either footage of the deep sea or maps and catalogues of the territory (Photo: Lucy Arthur).

beaches made of breadcrumbs lay either side of the sanctuary. Constructed on the beaches were four of the Chapel's pews, remembering congregations of the past. The pews appeared to be excavated from the breadcrumbs but were discordant with the untouched stillness of the beaches. In alcoves, cupboards and dusty side offices, the visitors found more remnants of the past; yet these objects were haunted by the disconcerting presence of mediatized ghosts. In a cupboard filled with shells and driftwood, a tiny Polynesian troupe danced, appearing to be just one more 'thing' in a 'cabinet of curiosities.' A live goldfish swimming in the font at the entranceway was mirrored by a phantasmatic double swimming beneath the altar. In one of the alcoves, a shadow hand drew in shadow breadcrumbs. A broken radio - unplugged - played Billy Holliday's 'Gloomy Sunday.' The disembodied voice of a Marist Brother haunted a confessional booth, recalling the difficulties and triumphs of constructing the Chapel.



# Staging Phantasmagoria



Fig. 43: (above) Futuna Chapel already evoked an uncanny affect without any intervention from the design team. This mosaic and sculpture of Jesus Christ looks directly at the cross from which the Christ figure has been removed (Photo: Lucy Arthur).

As evening drew, the space became even more 'unhomely.' Projectors attached to the rafters of the chapel were ignited, and the beaches came alive with static in preparation for another type of haunting. A storyteller entered, a new body corporate congregated in the space, and as evening shifted to night Futuna Chapel became a vessel traveling through time. The storyteller embodied ghosts from the past by acting out two journeys: the design and building of Futuna Chapel from 1958 to 1961, and the journey of Pierre Chanel's body. The latter encompassed Chanel's missionary work and martyrdom on Futuna Island, his canonization in Rome and finally the return journey of his relics through the Pacific. Each stage was haunted by the uncanny use of mediatized ghosts, shadowing the storyteller at every turn. The Islands of Wallis, Futuna, and Fiji were evoked by water dropped on an OHP, a massive hand conjured up Futuna Beach, the storyteller was doubled by his deathly shadow, and 'guardian' fishes of the Pacific guided the storyteller as he returned to Futuna Island, traversing the entire

structure of the Chapel.

*Permanent Memorial of Belief, Performative Memorial of Doubt*

The goal for *Futuna* was not to rebuild or represent the permanent memorial of Futuna Chapel, but to revisit the process of memorialization as a performative activity. This specific method of remembrance would have ramifications for the cultural memory associated with Futuna Chapel, a space demanding recognition of a suppressed and sacred past, a trauma-driven cultural expression.

“The permanent memorial, the remembrance of violence on the body, is where the dead lie still. It is “a substitute for grief . . . It is the marker of a trauma that stands in place of what cannot be spoken of, and it presents to sight what cannot be seen or witnessed: death. The memorial object tries to escape time by being timeless, but over time, engenders forgetfulness”

(Rayner, 2006, p.67). Futuna Chapel, like all Christian buildings, is a space of communal worship, and a permanent memorial containing a consecrated relic. Consecrated places emphasize that the presence of the body is not simply a metaphor but a condition of faith that the spirit of Jesus Christ, and the martyred and memorialized saint, reside in the building. The shard of bone, the relic of Pierre Chanel, is a fetish object that extends its significance to the sanctuary and altar that represents the sacrificial quality of the supper where Christ offered his body and blood to the twelve apostles. The relic is evidence that the space is sacred. It is part of an architecture built entirely on belief. \*

Catholicism produces permanent memorials such as Futuna Chapel to remember the martyred body in order to instigate belief. Elaine Scarry in *The Body in Pain* (1985) positions violence on the body as intrinsic to Judeo-Christian scripture, defining belief itself. “The problematic scenes of hurt . . . tend to occur in

# Staging Phantasmagoria

the context of disbelief and doubt: the invisible (and hence periodically disbelieved-in) divine power has a visible substantiation in the alterations in body tissue it is able to bring about" (p. 183).

Catholic belief conjures up an Other, be it God, Jesus Christ or the spirit of the martyred saint. By performing the past, Futuna conjured up a different type of ghostly Other. Instead of a transcendental Other of belief, Futuna Chapel was haunted by the ghostly Other of doubt:

Deep doubt and its extremity in the confrontation with nothing that is something, with the unintelligible mystery of death, is more than a conceptual position for theatre. The artfulness of theatre needs to raise the hackles of doubt and produce the pleasurable pain of tension between what is and what is not comprehensible, what is and is not living. (Rayner, 2006, p.xxvi)

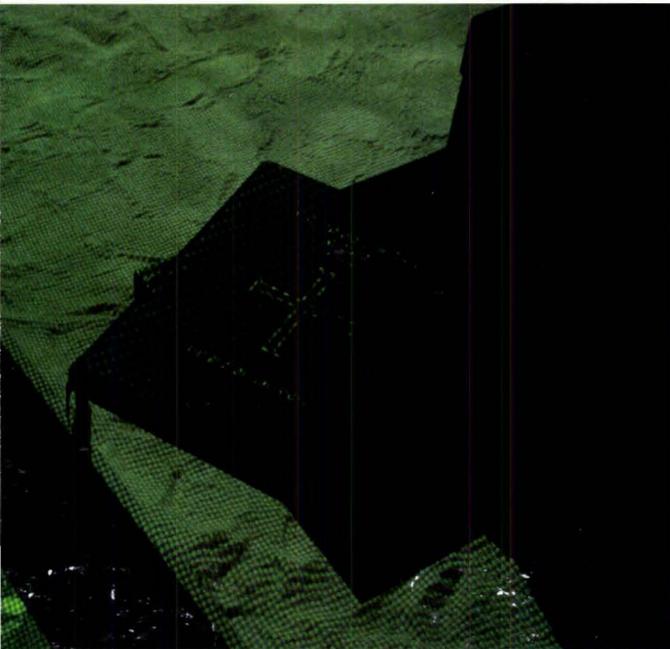


Fig. 44: (above) The Chapel's liturgy is coloured by the mosaic pixels of the mediatized image (Photo: Lucy Arthur).

Fig. 45: (right) The four channel mixer shows the absent Christ figure that was projected on the cross every evening before disappearing from sight as the storytelling began (Photo: Lucy Arthur).



# Staging Phantasmagoria

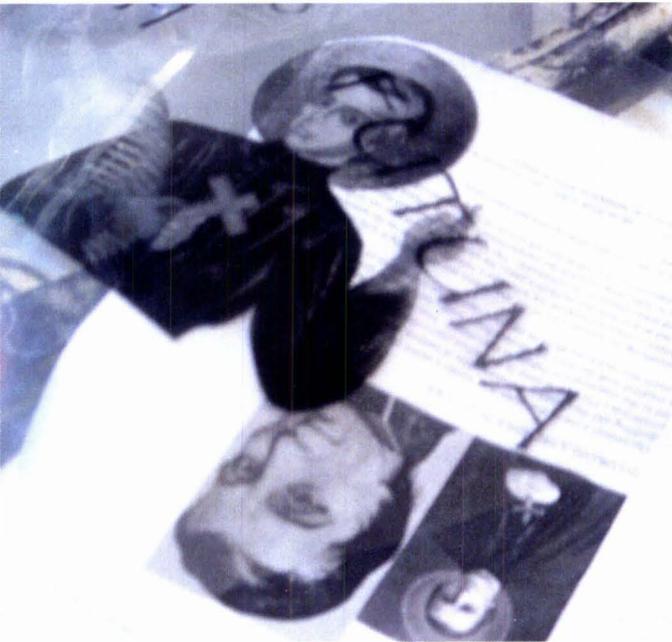


Fig. 46: (above) The various OHPs used during the storytelling (Photo: Lucy Arthur).

Fig. 47: (right) The Storyteller provokes the Virtual Eucharist by pouring breadcrumbs from the nautilus shell symbolizing Chanel's baptism of Meitala.

Doubt is the opposite of belief. Doubt engages 'intellectual uncertainty' that deconstructs fixed structures of control. Echoing these differences, Rayner explores the potential of the performative memorial. These disappearing acts are "not assembled to combat the forgetfulness over time, they speak in the present of an otherwise unutterable sorrow. They are a means of doing something with the grief, a means of acting it out ritually than containing it and solidifying it" (2006, p.67). Performance can relinquish the control and forgetfulness that the permanent memorial attempts to fix. In *Futuna*, the uncanniness of theatre and phantasmagoria in collusion tests the boundaries of a rational separation of static, mediated remembrance and transformative embodied cultural memory, and to the relations between material objects of the present and the effects of absence.



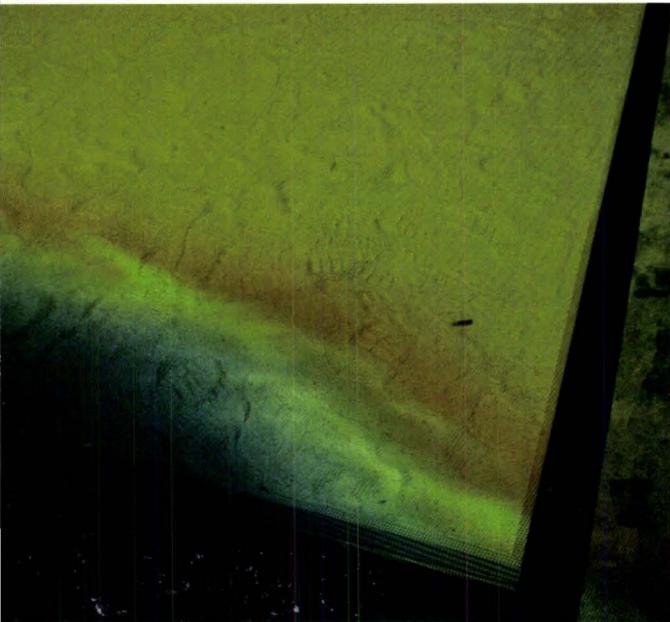


Fig. 48: (above) Close up of the breadcrumb beach on the banks for the pews (Photo: Lucy Arthur).

## *The Virtual Eucharist*

By choosing the materials bread, wine and fishes, the design team consciously introduced objects and Catholic symbols from the outside into the found space, so that the stories from the chapel would invade the objects. Reciprocally, the symbolic associations of the objects would transform the reading of the chapel. These objects imposed a bodily experience, and a symbolic frame of reference, that was implicitly theatrical - though in each case the objects operated within the pre-existing frame of the chapel; the altar, the banks for the pews, the Stations of the Cross, and the confessionals.

The interaction between the breadcrumb beaches and the mediatized light performed a 'Virtual Eucharist.' The Eucharist is a performative act of cultural memory in which the act of transubstantiation makes the body and blood of Christ literally present in the wafer and wine that has passed through a designated

representative of the church. It establishes belief through the pain and regeneration of the body. Because it involves the doubling of something that is and is not, the Eucharist is filled with theatrical and virtual potential. In *Futuna* the action, and materials of this 'Virtual Eucharist' acknowledged the uncanniness of the process by evoking doubt, rather than the transcendentalism of belief.

We designed the breadcrumb beaches to appear to be unified with the banks for the pews. The breadcrumbs formed a memorial to the beaches on Futuna Island and simultaneously implied the body of Christ. This meant that even before the mediatized image was laid over the breadcrumbs they were mediated through performative structures and codes (Taylor, 2003, p.20). The substance of the breadcrumbs was 'transubstantiated' by becoming a physical beach, possessing the real qualities of a beach whilst invoking the absent qualities of Futuna Island. Each morning I brushed the beaches so they appeared untouched,

and reverential. During the day the beaches, like real beaches, recorded the footprints, inscribed messages and 'sandcastles' created by visitors to Futuna Chapel. At night, the mediatized images performed another form of theatrical transformation. During his performance, the Storyteller poured 'water' onto the beach to invoke the baptism of the king's son, Meitala. When grains of sand prompted the projection to spread red light over the breadcrumbs, the death of Pierre Chanel at the hands of Musumususu was foretold. This was a moment of doubtful transubstantiation - the materiality of the breadcrumbs and the materiality of light invoking the trauma of a culture-clash.

### *Virtual Fish*

The goldfish, traditionally associated with the suburban home, was split into a live performer in the font at the entranceway and, a virtual double residing underneath the altar. In both cases, the domestic animal was transformed into something decidedly

# Staging Phantasmagoria

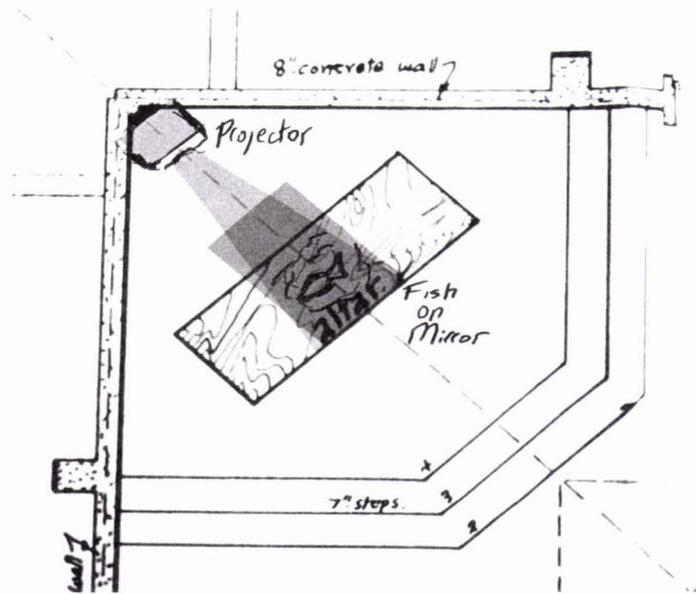


Fig. 49: (above) Plan of the projection of the virtual fish on the mirror underneath the altar (Original plan: John Scott).

Fig. 50: (right) The result: the fish appears to be swimming underneath the altar.

'unhomely.' The fish was purposely associated with another material object that emphasizes belief by its presence - the altar. Scarry explains that the altar in Judeo Christian belief connotes the body turned inside out. Therefore the altar manifests the body, and in particular the interiority of the body, its "capacity to endow interior physical events with an external nonphysical referent" (Scarry, 1985, p.190). The altar's intended purpose is to encompass something unfathomable, and unspeakable, in the imagination. The fish hidden beneath the altar did the same. Projected onto a mirror, the fish was reflected onto the underside side of the altar so the substantial granite of the artifact was locked in an uncanny embrace with the perceptual disconcerting logic of the rippling water and the upside down roof. The altar and the fish became an embodiment of the interchangeability between the virtual and actual at play in every mirror image, "a reciprocal interaction between the virtual and the real, an undecidable reversibility, as if the image could take the place of the object and force the



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Fig. 51: (above) Conceptual drawing of the Storyteller with his torch. Originally many of the visitors were to be given torches so they could explore Futuna Chapel in the dark.

Fig. 52: (right) The Storyteller journeys with the 'relics' of Pierre Chanel through the Pacific, guided by special fish, Catholic symbols of protection.

object behind the constraint's of the mirror's plane" (Grosz, 2001, p.80). The strongest connotation of the altar is sacrifice. Sacrifice, considered a meeting place of violence and belief, became open-ended in *Futuna*, allowing a new way for visitors to see the altar, the chapel, and their memorializing function.

The virtual fish also appeared in the storytelling performance. When the storyteller embarked on his journey around Futuna Chapel, invoking the return of the relics of Chanel to Futuna Island, a school of flickering and translucent fish accompanied him as if to guard the relic. The fish, like the beach, had two connotations: Christian protection and a virtual memory of the Pacific. A second performing body, the projectionist, operated a tripod-born projector so these 'guardian fish' traveled around the rough, rock-like walls of the whole chapel. Meanwhile, the storyteller carried the seashell relic of Chanel and used a torch, a tiny 'projector,' to light the Stations of the Cross one by one. During this journey, Futuna



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Chapel retained its material condition but was also immersed in the Pacific Ocean by the trajectory of the fishes.

## *The Cabinet of Curiosities*

In the alcoves of Futuna Chapel, on each side of the Stations of the Cross, were hidden objects waiting to be discovered by the visitors. The 'cabinet of curiosities,' - a strange, playful take on the traditional museum display - catalogued the objects associated with the virtual Futuna Island; the breadcrumbs, driftwood, and conch. It also contained a tiny projection of a Tongan group performing the soke, a song and action ritual in penitence for the martyrdom of Chanel. This incongruity turned a collector's paradise into an uncanny 'archive.'

Taylor argues in *The Archive and the Repertoire*, the 'archive' is part of a structure of violence and control which colonial power inflicts on cultures that favour

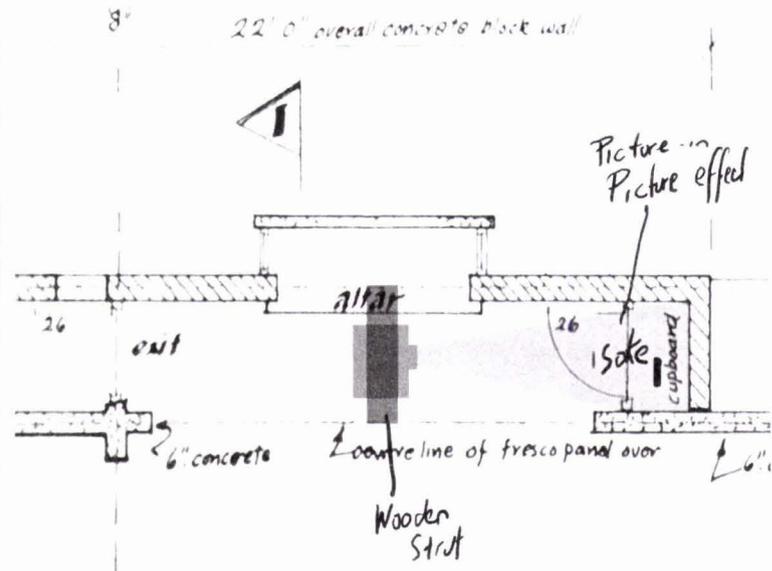
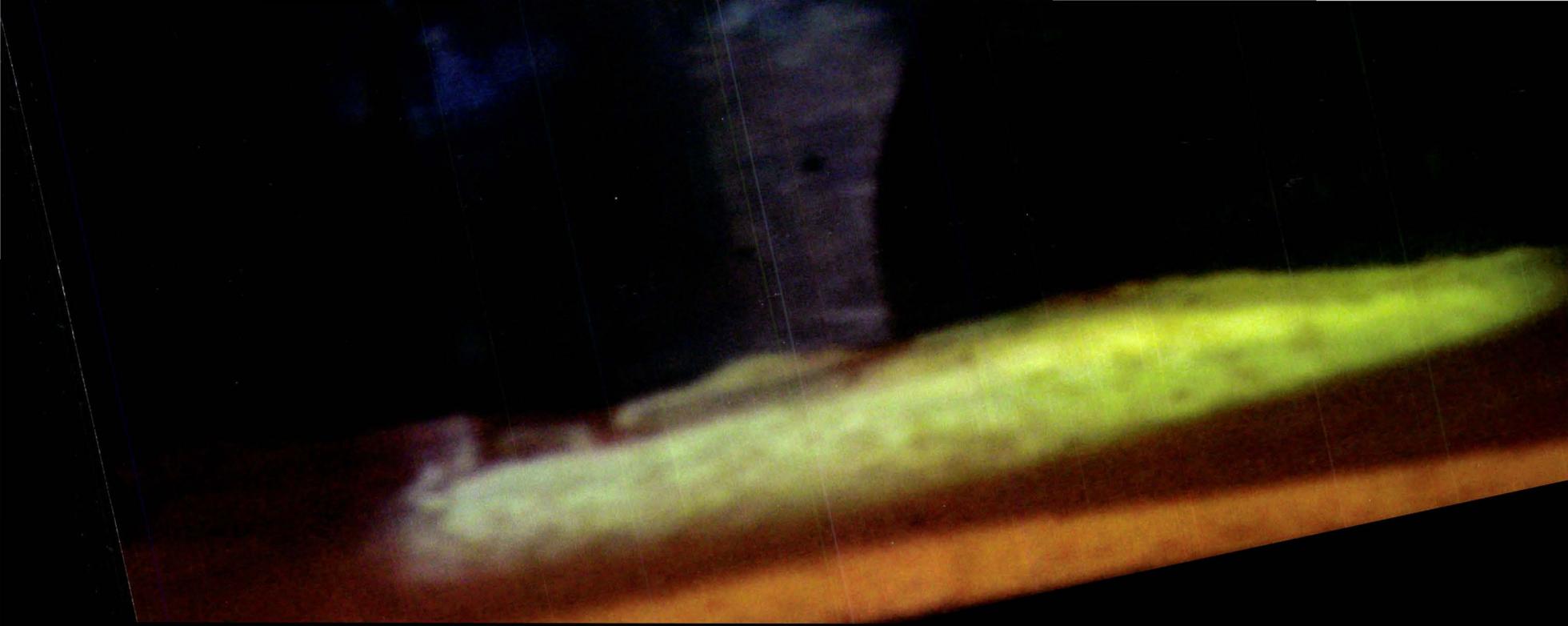


Fig. 53: (above) Plan of the set up for The Cabinet of Curiosities (Original plan: John Scott).

Fig. 54: (right) Close up on the soke haunting the 'uncanny archive' of the Cabinet of Curiosities



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Fig. 55: (above) Original footage of the soke performed in Futuna Chapel on December 14. Three days before the performance. The soke was projected on the beaches at the end of the storytelling performance.

Fig. 56: (right) The pews emerging from the breadcrumb beaches (Photo: Lucy Arthur).

the embodied cultural memory that she calls the 'repertoire.' The 'archive,' consist of the material traces of a culture, "items supposedly resistant to change." (Taylor, 2003, p. 19) The 'cabinet of curiosities' embodied the ambiguous space between the 'archive' and the 'repertoire.' The soke was an embodied performance ritual over 160 years old that we video recorded at the site of Futuna Chapel itself. However, as Taylor explains, "the video of a performance is not a performance" (2003, p.23). By placing the archived 'repertoire' in the cabinet we emphasized the rationalist desire to control disappearing acts with technologies of vision, but the uncanny disjunction between the cabinet and the tiny mediatized image enlivened the archive to become something unfamiliar and performative.

## *Ghost Objects*

Even without the assistance of the mediatized image, objects revealed their ghostly doubles. The



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Fig. 57: (above) The pews before the Chapel was deconsecrated (Walden, 1987, p. 142).

Fig. 58: (right) The pews are filled with a new 'congregation' awaiting the storytelling to begin.

pews acknowledged the past role of theatre and congregation as well as providing seats during the storytelling. Once built, the pews transformed the space immediately. When the Marist Brothers built Futuna Chapel, two platforms for the pews had been set either side of the diagonal relationship between the entrance porch and the altar. Without the pews, the banks appeared to be like unanchored, empty stages, with no relationship to the altar. The moment we built the empty seats we had a strong sense of an absent congregation, and the direction of their gaze. The pews spoke of a loss, but also anticipated the nightly performance. When visitors arrived for the storytelling, they implicitly knew that was where they would sit. The design and location of the pews also had an effect on the storytelling experience. The single chair implies the individual body, but the pew, because it is made of one single seat that traverses the width of the bank, implies the body corporate. Because architect John Scott had positioned the seats diagonally opposite each other, people were



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located in relation to one another, with a degree of aggregation and separation. The pews as found object, theatrical device and audience seating, allowed visitors to read the storytelling as part of a communal tradition, where the body corporate meets for spiritual, ethical, and social reasons.

Another object was the nautilus seashell we brought into the space. We transformed the implicit violence of the memorial by using the nautilus shell to represent the body of Pierre Chanel. Instead of the 'relic,' the material evidence of the body connotating belief, the seashell was an ambivalent and doubtful theatrical prop. During the performance, the storyteller discovered the nautilus on the beach and poured breadcrumbs from it to symbolize the baptism that became the 'virtual Eucharist.' By the end, the shell became the relic that journeyed from Rome to Futuna Island in 1977. During the day, we placed the shell carefully on a mirror laid across the altar so that people could read it in association with the mirrored



Fig. 59: (above) The nautilus shell

Fig. 60: (right) The Storyteller embodying the character of Pierre Chanel on Futuna Island listens to the shell. Later the shell will also symbolise the relics of Chanel.



EXIT



'guardian' fish beneath the altar. Rayner notes that props usually sit backstage, "suspended between both worldly and fictional uses" (2006, p.75). The seashell remained in the public space and therefore was read as another of the strange ghosted objects haunting cupboards, confessionals and offices.

## *The Storyteller*

Every evening the storyteller inhabited the chapel. By embodying the different characters of his stories, he invoked multifarious ghostly doubles. In illusionist theatre, the curtain separates the actor from their character so that the transformation from performer to incarnation remains hidden from sight. In *Futuna*, the material presence of Futuna Chapel was never hidden and was transformed by the storyteller's contact with it. At the entranceway, the storyteller was already in the theatrical frame performing 'Nick Blake the lecturer.' He introduced the 'congregation' to the recent history of the Chapel and its significance

Fig. 61: (right) The Storyteller illustrates the Islands of Futuna, Wallis and Fiji by dropping water onto the OHP.



# Staging Phantasmagoria

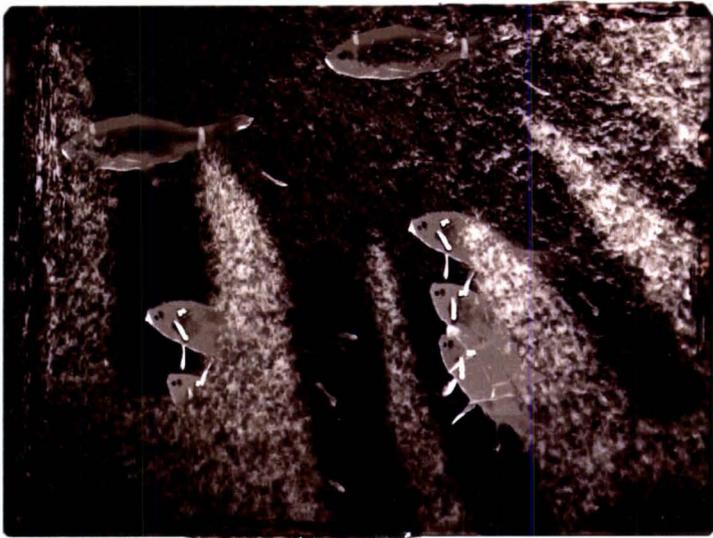
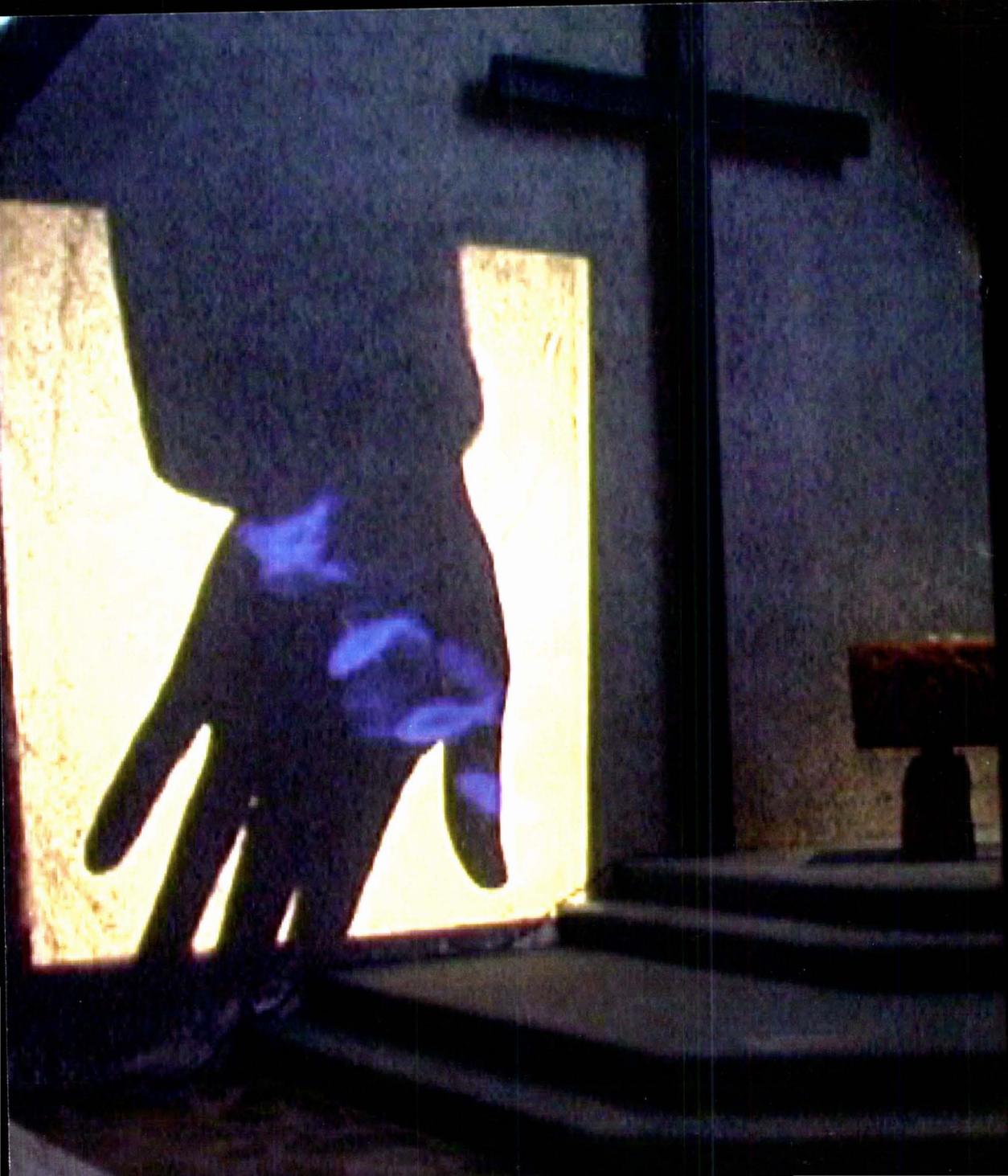


Fig. 62: (above) A preliminary photographic collage imagining the virtual fish emerging from the shadow of the Storyteller's hand.

Fig. 63: (right) The same moment in performance.

as bicultural architecture. But as the story developed, his body shifted spatially and temporally while he interacted with the mediatized images, and the architecture of Futuna Chapel. When he began to use the OHP playfully, dropping water to create the islands of Futuna, Wallis and Fiji he became God, providing us with a God-like viewpoint (with none of the attendant 'belief'). When his hand rubbed across the islands, he revealed the guardian fish that would guide Chanel's remains on their way to Futuna Island. Simultaneously, the double of the shadow hand conjured up the Island of Futuna. With three steps, the 'lecturer' became Pierre Chanel pacing the breadcrumb beach and the limited boundaries of Futuna Island. On the second breadcrumb beach, he became vengeful Mussumussu martyring Chanel. He transformed into the clergy in Rome inspecting and tending the relic at the Chapel's altar, and finally he became the emissary, walking the parameter of the Chapel, and the Pacific, with his tiny projected light. In each case, the process of doubling occurred before the audience's eyes, allowing the



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virtuality of body and space to occur simultaneously.

The central moment for the performance was when the ghost of Pierre Chanel (embodied in the Storyteller) met the phantasmagoric ghost. The storyteller placed the date of Chanel's death on the OHP. After the storyteller turned off the OHP, his own (projected) shadow remained. Rather than simply an imitation or representation of the performing body, this double was an ambiguous bridge between liveliness and deathliness, a performative memorialization. The Storyteller went on to describe ways in which the light designed by architect John Scott and artist Jim Allen provoked a sacred experience. The phantasmagoric light from the projector provided a very similar feeling, only it was defined by doubt, not belief. The shadow was a body with no real dimensionality, but it revealed infinite depth in its absolute flatness, for the Storyteller's shadow was the void.

The projections on the beaches during the storytelling

Fig. 64: (right) The Storyteller inspects the 'relics' of Pierre Chanel at the altar of Futuna Chapel (where Chanel's relic was stored before the Chapel was deconsecrated.) Meanwhile the Storyteller's shadow, the *memento mori* of Chanel's death, looks on.



were less successful. The golden surfaces worked to absorb projected colour from the windows and projectors marking a passage between real space and evoked place but eventually became scenographic rather than performative. What these images failed to do was properly engage with the materials they were projected on. The beach was a discrete object, just like the walls, the cabinet, and the shell. For the mediatized image to open up the virtual potential of objects it needed to renegotiate the past and present of the object, before it could ever hope to surprise, or disturb. The projections on the beach, bar the sacrificial blood, were predictable, and therefore not virtual, for they did not engage a disconcerting logic, or sense of the potential of something other than the actual. At the end of the storytelling performance the soke, the dance of penitence, saturated both beaches and turned them into screens. This emphasized the absence of the embodied performance and typified the sort of colonial viewpoint practiced by the 'archive.' Rather than a 'realistic' depiction of the soke perhaps the projection should have turned the

dancers into a play of colour and light, mirroring the Perspex windows.

### *Conclusion*

*Futuna* was a collaboration consisting of embodied site-specific research into projected performance strategies. Like *Theatre Ghosts* and *Ghost Runner*, this 'haunting' channeled an uncanny affect born from the collision between the body and its mediatized double, to develop new ways of experiencing phantasmagoria and the places we inhabit. Beginning with the natural light on the bread beaches to the small installations, to the performance itself, *Futuna* allowed the audience to piece together a range of fragmented doublings as a discontinuous spatiotemporal experience. The temporal and corporeal engagement of spectators clashed with the intrusion of virtual time on the space in the form of the phantasmagoric doubles. These ghosts reenacted cultural memory performatively, and imagined the memorial function of Futuna Chapel

differently.

*Futuna* tapped into the potentiality of a designated sacred and communal space and reconfigured it to produce an uncanny feeling that retained secular relevance. The purpose of *Futuna* was not to explicitly critique Catholicism but to use the symbols, and materials - bread, wine, fishes, the Cross and the altar - of Catholicism to invoke an unfamiliar and ghostly Other. By using materials associated with Christianity, we haunted the rituals and objects of belief with the doubtful ghosts of spatial, temporal and social potentiality. In a city where social relations are under threat by deadening phantasmagoria, *Futuna* instigated the uncanny Other as a method of sorting through the recesses of colonial trauma to instigate social replenishment.

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## ERRATA

Page 16, fig. 6: Replace "A series of objects from the Pacific including a video recorded performance of the soke," with "A series of objects from the Pacific including a video recorded performance of the soke,"

Page 24, paragraph 1: Replace ". . . while the sequence of time is frozen in an instant of (spatial) immobility." (Lovejoy, 2004, p.80)" with ". . .while the sequence of time is frozen in an instant of (spatial) immobility" (Lovejoy, 2004, p.80)."

Page 33, paragraph 1: Replace "This process of idetification is integral to ego construction." with "This process of identification is integral to ego construction."

Page 33, paragraph 1: Replace "Performance, live or mediatized, have always presented us with ghostly doubles . . ." with "Performance, live or mediatized, has always presented us with ghostly doubles . . ."

Page 33, paragraph 2: Replace ". . . by promoting identification and fulfilling the spectator's need to streghthen his or her identity." with ". . . by promoting identification and fulfilling the spectator's need to strengthen his or her identity."

Page 34, paragraph 2: Replace "The ontology of live or mediatized performance revolves around the presence or absence of the body in space and time." with "The ontologies of live and mediatized performance revolve around the presence or absence of the body in space and time."

Page 34, paragraph 2: Replace "In comparison, the cobination of bodily presence in theatre and the fictional world it presents provokes something else . . ." with "In comparison, the combination of bodily presence in theatre and the fictional world it presents provokes something else . . ."

Page 41, paragraph 2: Replace ". . . but the uncanny mix of mediatized image and physical bodies presents an overt sense of the temporal disonance in the paradigm." with ". . . but the uncanny mix of mediatized image and physical bodies presents an overt sense of the temporal dissonance in the paradigm."

Page 42, paragraph 1: Replace "Theperformancedesignercreatethroughtimebecause theatre is a time-based art form." with "The performance designer creates through time because theatre is a time-based art form."

Page 69, paragraph 3: Replace "The ghost runner deconstructs the phantasmagoric apparatus where mirror-stage ego-projection, identification, and mediatized image meet in the cone of light." with Replace "The ghost runner deconstructs the phantasmagoric apparatus where mirror-stage ego-projection, identification, and mediatized image meet in the cone of light."

Page 70, paragraph 1: Replace ". . . which in their original appearance indicate the body to us" (Ibid)," with ". . . which in their original appearance indicate the body to us" (Ibid)."

Page 86, fig.45: Replace "The four channel mixer shows the absent Christ figure that was projected on the cross every evening before disappearign from sight as the storytelling began (photo: Lucy Arthur)." with "The four channel mixer shows the absent Christ figure that was projected on the cross every evening before disappearing from sight as the storytelling began (photo: Lucy Arthur)."

Page 92, paragraph 1: Replace "Projected onto a mirror, the fish was reflected onto the underside side of the altar . . ." with "Projected onto a mirror, the fish was reflected onto the underside of the altar . . ."

Page 94, fig. 51: Replace "Originally many of the visitors were to begiven torches so they could explore Futuna Chapel in the dark." with "Originally many of the visitors were to be given torches so they could explore Futuna Chapel in the dark."

