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***Liquid Contemporeality***  
***Cybernetic waves emerging from the currents***  
***of time***

*Exegesis*  
*submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements*  
*for a Masters of Fine Arts (MFA) degree*  
*at Massey University,*  
*Wellington, New Zealand*

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*October, 2014*

## ***Acknowledgements:***

*Many thanks to*

*David Cross for developing and contributing great ideas to this program and being an inspiring teacher,*

*Heather Galbraith for her commitment to COCA and support,*

*my supervisors, Roy Parkhurst and Max Schleser for guidance and support,*

*Marcus Moore for teaching, encouragement and support*

*Julieanna Preston and Maddie Leach for their commitment to the program, teaching and provocations.*

**Abstract:**

This exegesis outlines the metanarrative that builds the conceptual background relevant for my artistic practice. It is centered towards some of the relevant issues and the impact that the digital mediascape has on current human culture. Furthermore I discuss the multiple artistic histories and influences framing my research practice in the field of *new media art* and *moving image* work. In addition I analyze the processes and experiments leading towards the decisions about my final work. The audiovisual installation *Forces* installed in 'The Pit' is a poetic interpretation of the multiple dynamic energies impacting on the flow and upheavals of the current technological transformation:  
*cybernetic waves emerging from the currents of time.*

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## *Chapter 1*

### ***Introduction***

I coined *contemporeality* to describe the complex contemporary reality associated with current technological transformation. In its core we can experience the emergence of a new perception created by the increasing technification of our world independent of the material reality. "... if what one perceives is perceived in and through one or an other medium, then the invention and widespread use of technical media make it possible for perception to take place almost exclusively in technified fictional domains" (Boehme, 2012, p. 141). This is also opening up a space for critical engagement for artists with the current technified digital mediascape. Artists are always challenged to be on the forefront and critically respond to new technologies and developments in our culture, which is requiring the contemporary artist to be informed, work across multiple disciplines and embrace collaboration with others specialized in diverse fields of knowledge.

Considering this makes *Cybernetic*<sup>1</sup> an important concept, which I use here to refer to the intricacy of the metanarrative conceptualizing my research practice. I employ the term with the understanding of the overarching interdisciplinary meaning as outlined by Paul Pangaro. The term can than equally be applicable to my research contents as well as to my creative practice evolving in association with it. Pangaro defines the meaning of *Cybernetic* in essence as an intelligent goal orientated system of research, which is using the self-correcting feedback loops, trying, acting, seeing the difference, changing, acting, seeing, sensing, comparing, self-correcting and steering towards the goal, while continuously responding to new information or realizations (Pangaro,

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<sup>1</sup> "Cybernetics" comes from a Greek word meaning "the art of steering. Cybernetics is about having a goal and taking action to achieve that goal. Knowing whether you have reached your goal (or at least are getting closer to it) requires "feedback", a concept that comes from cybernetics". "The term itself began its rise to popularity in 1947 when Norbert Wiener used it to name a discipline apart from, but touching upon, such established disciplines as electrical engineering, mathematics, biology, neurophysiology, anthropology and psychology. Wiener, Arturo Rosenblueth, and Julian Bigelow needed a name for their new discipline, and they adapted a Greek word meaning "the art of steering to evoke the rich interaction of goals, predictions, actions, feedback and response in systems of all kinds"(Wiener 1984). "Cybernetic descriptions of psychology, language, arts, performance, or intelligence (to name a few) may be quite different from more conventional, hard "scientific" views—although cybernetics can be rigorous too. Implementation may then follow in software and/or hardware, or in the design of social, managerial and other classes of interpersonal systems." (Pangaro)

What is Cybernetics?, 2012). My goal is to work with new media and experiment with different responses to Contemporeality. Specifically I like to explore new possibilities to use visual abstraction in a conceptual context.

My creative practice focuses on developing immersive video projections as critical engagement with the omnipresence and the liquidity effect digital media has on human society and culture. Responding to the replacement of the physical material with the immaterial metaphysical culture specifically in art, sound, text and communication is at the center of my research. This process involves the shift from the physical domain described by physics, chemistry, biology and engineering to a symbolic domain explored by computer science (Lister, 2003, p. 16).

The terms liquidity or fluidity have a relevant presence in modernist social, philosophical and political discourse, which is analyzing and describing the effect of technological developments in human society. Significantly Karl Marx (1818 – 1883) already described the economic, social and cultural instabilities in the emergent capitalist society driven by profit maximization with the famous phrase that ‘All that is solid melts in to air’. In 2007 the sociologist Zygmunt Bauman described contemporary society as ‘living in an age of uncertainty’ and as a ‘liquid phase of modernity’ (Bauman, 2007). The *technological momentum* as defined by T.P. Hughes is transforming our society with accelerated speed, creating the perception of *technological determinism* in human culture.

For the first time in history, technology, the invention of digital media and communication networks has made it possible for the transformative power of the *technological momentum* to spread almost instantly around the planet, driven forward by the capitalist corporate imperative without real checks and balances by established democratic institutions (Zuboff, 2014). These will be discussed, plus some core effects, relevant for human culture, in some more detail in chapter two. These issues are the metanarrative which is infusing my practice with concepts.

In my creative practice I often use video footage of water movements as a metaphor for ‘liquidity or fluidity’, as a different approach or possible way to understand and experience our current cultural instability and transformations. The digitalization of

our life is immersive and omnipresent and like the flow of water difficult to control. I will further explain the personal and conceptual reasons why I chose to work primarily with water as a metaphor in chapter three. I also introduce some philosophic, poetic and artistic influences. The use of water is for me not about direct representation of issues, it is more about allowing recognition and meaning to arise and to make associations possible.

In chapter four I will critically discuss developmental stages of my own practice towards finding my own voice in experimental video projections. I experimented with creative writing, performance work, visual abstractions, sound and installation in my attempt to use *new media art*<sup>2</sup> as critical response to the effects of the digital *mediascape*<sup>3</sup>. I chose to work in the field of *new media art* since it is the medium most people are now engaged in or familiar with. It is dominating the cultural landscape of current and future generations.

In chapter five, I will discuss a series of experiments and the exploration of different settings for my work like galleries, cinemas and test spaces in the development of my practice. Importantly, I will evaluate my experiences with video installations in different exhibition formats as well as some cinematic screenings.

In chapter six I will discuss in more detail the inspiration from innovative artists and writers in the field of moving image production including Len Lye, Hans Richter, Bill Viola, Pipilotti Rist and discuss how they have influenced my work and how my work differs. I will further outline the art historical context, Dada, Surrealism, Neo-dada, Fluxus and concept art, which have had a significant influence and meaning for new media artists working today. It is crucial for contemporary artists working today to be aware and conscious about the rich history and influences on our perception, which are framing our work today.

Dada was the most influential radical movement, which attacked art conventions through breaking down media specificity in the arts using collage, photomontage,

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<sup>2</sup> “Mark Tribe and Reena Jana define new media art as ‘projects that make use of emerging media technologies and are concerned with the cultural, political, and aesthetic possibilities of these tools’ (2006: ‘Defining New Media Art’)” (Hope, 2014, p.5)

<sup>3</sup> “The world as presented through, or perceived by, the mass media: ‘the vast, ubiquitous mediascape we inhabit today’ (Oxford Dictionaries, 2014)



assemblage, performance, appropriation and installation. This was accelerated by the fact that many of these artists had to flee the war and repressive governments in Europe and where taking with them their radical ideas into different centers of artistic discourse. These artists developed new approaches to performance art through audience participation in Cabaret Voltaire and later other major artistic centers. Dada artists also started to use communication technologies for social and political commentary and moved on to inspire the *Surrealist* movement, *Fluxus*, *conceptual art* through personal influence and/or influence of ideas. In particular Marcel Duchamp (1887 – 1968), whose influence throughout the history of the 20th century art is well known. He was a central influence in shifting the arts from pictorial representations towards conceptual investigation. On the basis of this knowledge can we make informed conceptual and aesthetic decisions, which have the potential to add a unique voice to the current artistic landscape.

In chapter seven I will review the elements and ideas, which lead to the decisions I made about my final exhibition, the audiovisual installation '*Forces*' installed in *the Pit*.

My conclusion builds on my practice and emphasizes again the crucial importance of research and critical discourse for artists as a possibility to move away from media specificity towards interdisciplinary and trans-disciplinary collaboration. In the face of the threat of a global human monoculture caused by the current technological momentum (Boehme, 2012, p. 130ff), artists will have a core role to play in helping people to understand and cope with the developing changes of unprecedented magnitude for human society. To think beyond disciplinary borders is a crucial skill and enable artists to play a meaningful role in the process of cultural shifts.

## *Chapter 2*

### ***The current 'technological momentum' is a contested space between seduction and dystopia***

After the initial wonder and many amazing benefits of the digital technology we have or are now in the process of losing valuable analog cultural infrastructures and associated skills. We have created new dependencies and have moved our lives into *simulacra*<sup>4</sup>, 'the shallows' in the process. Many people experience a sense of disempowerment and have or are likely to suffer job loss and economic insecurity as a result of digital technology. A 2013 Study at Oxford University predicted 47% job losses in the next two decades, affecting particularly many skilled professions and middle management, which is a conservative estimate.

Rachel Buchanan, a Lecturer in Journalism and long-term Journalist in Australia and New Zealand, wrote the insider book, "Stop Press – the last days of News Papers". This book documents the complex implications, which the disappearance of analog news media has on quality journalism, our society and individual lives and how it affects human culture as a whole. Similar stories could easily be written about the disappearance of the analog film industry and soon maybe book publishing and libraries. The effect this has on our perception and the arts is already visible but in its entirety it is difficult to predict. More and more people appear to feel a loss of control over their time and struggle not to *drown* in a constantly shifting sea of digital

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<sup>4</sup> "...The simulacrum is never that which conceals the truth--it is the truth which conceals that there is none. The simulacrum is true" (Baudrillard, "Simulacra and Simulation").

The concept of *Simulacra*, or *Simulacrum*, was not invented by Jean Baudrillard, and was a reappearing concept in French philosophical thought like that of Deleuze, for example, before the publication of Baudrillard's "Simulacra and Simulation" in 1981. In its lexical ordering, *simulacra* is a material image which appears as something else without having that something's features or essence. This is somewhat reminiscent of Plato's objection to representations, which come to replace the "real" to which we lose access.

In "*Simulacra and Simulation*" Baudrillard asks what happens in a world that is ultimately denied all access to the real and in which only simulacra and simulation exists. For Baudrillard, this is in fact the world in which we live. Simulations take over our relationship with real life, creating a *hyperreality*, which is a copy that has no original. This *hyperreality* happens when the difference between reality and representation collapses and we are no longer able to see an image as reflecting anything other than a symbolic trade of signifiers in culture, not the real world.

In the chapter "Precession of Simulacra" Baudrillard describes three orders of simulacra. The first, in which reality is represented by the image (map represents territory). The second order of simulacra is one in which the distinction between reality and representation is blurred. The third order of simulacra is that of simulation which replaces the relationship between reality and representation. Reality itself is thus lost in favor of a hyperreality. (Cultural Studies Now, 2012)

realities. This feeling of loss is real and largely absent or underrepresented in contemporary discourses about technology. Even in the relative short time span of my MFA I encountered many substantial changes in that field which needed to be negotiated. These included the shift towards centralized access to software through 'cloud' services, increasing dominance of algorithm in the internet, the abolishing of DVDs as data transport medium for videos and the fast change in camera technology able to shoot HD video and editing software. The speed in which these developments are occurring is staggering. In less than one generation the global IT giants have emerged into an uncontested space and formed previously unseen monopolies destined to abuse their power in the process of accelerated grows.<sup>5</sup>

With almost visionary foresight Herbert Marcuse argues in his book *One-Dimensional-Man* (1964), that "... appeals to enlightened self-interest, freedom, and autonomy have come to appear quaint and irrational. We are stripped of our individuality by a technological rationality that makes conformity seem reasonable and resistance seem unreasonable. The one-dimensional society has eroded the capacity for individuality and critical thinking" (Kaplan, 2009, p. 3). These realizations are particular current when analyzing the recent election results in NZ and Australia, which both exposed, beside other things, a very limited ability for critical thinking in the general populace and a tendency towards disengaged apathy. This is also endangering informed democratic control over current and future technological choices.

Also still relevant in this context is Immanuel Kant who is regarded as a central figure for much of the nineteenth and twentieth-century discourse in critical philosophy. He has developed in his three works, 'Critique of Pure Reason' (1781/1787), 'Critique of Practical Reason' (1788), 'Critique of the Power of Judgment' (1790) his fundamental ideas about *human autonomy*. According to his philosophical realizations *human*

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<sup>5</sup> Mathias Doepfner, an influential German media CEO, has described this situation and our dependencies with unusual strong words as a '*brutal information capitalism*'. Also Sigmar Gabriel the leader of the Social Democrats in Germany is describes the underlying business model as totalitarian idea, "of turning every detail of human behavior, human emotion and human thought into an object of capitalistic marketing strategies" (Gabriel, 2014). According to him absolute profit maximization is not a sustainable model and seldom produced real progress. Already we can see clear signs how IT giants and particularly Google is abusing its position of power. Google is manipulating its 'search engine' to benefit its very own businesses and in the process hinder innovation and free market competition. Nineteen Lawsuits against Google concerning these issues are filed at present in Europe at the 'European Wettbewerbskommission'. However, the real Number of antitrust lawsuits has not been made public (Franfurter Allgemeine, 2014).

*autonomy* equips people with the freedom to make their own laws. This only makes sense when considering his assumption that humans who are guided by self-awareness, the knowledge of and the understanding of the laws of nature, and equipped with autonomy and freedom of choice, should act naturally guided by moral consciousness. Freedom is important here, since autonomy applies only to free agents, who can control their actions and who have the power and necessary knowledge at the time of their actions to act rightly or otherwise (Rohlf, 2010).<sup>6</sup>

Our culture and society is in flux, catapulted forward by unprecedented speed of the *technological momentum* driven by very rich and powerful monopolies, which are channeling all of the world resources into their own orbit (Bauman, 2007).<sup>7</sup>

Many people feel either enthusiastic and/or powerless, facing the *technological momentum*, a term introduced in to the debate by Thomas P. Hughes. With this term Hughes opposes the viewpoint of *technological determinism*, which claims that key inventions shape human development and also *social constructivism*, which proclaims that human need is shaping technological developments. Hughes argues for a more complex approach and says that *technological momentum* is time dependent and “infers that social development shapes and is shaped by technology” (Hughes, 1994, p. 102).

Importantly T.P. Hughes also explains, that what he calls *system builders* are taking over *technological momentums* with huge interdependent systems or networks, involving powerful industries, political institutions, specific interest groups and now

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<sup>6</sup> Considering for a moment how much *autonomy* and free agency we give up, when we create dependencies of the mind through our new tools and surrender our *memory* to the ‘cloud’, which is in reality nothing else but a supercomputer in a bunker in America. Who has access too and can manipulate these data? Who safeguards our collective *memory* in form of the e-book market and with which imperative? These questions are helping to evaluate future possibilities. The current *technological momentum* is driven forward with the help of questionable and confusing terminology and is creating unprecedented dependencies for human society. Just reflect on terms like ‘Android’ for a mobile phone, ‘Memory’ for a computer chip, ‘Autonomous’ for some computer software. IT jargon and marketing strategies dilute and corrupt meaning in our language over the years. Established terminology infused with meaning evolved over thousands of years of human experience and philosophical discourse like *Autonomy, Intelligence, Memory and Cloud*, are essentially diluted and confused through two-dimensional digital concepts. These contribute to the sense that our current culture is *liquid* without any stability.

<sup>7</sup>Bauman describes “the passage from the ‘solid’ to a ‘liquid’ phase of modernity: that is, into a condition in which social forms (structures that limit individual choices, institutions that guard repetitions of routines, patterns of acceptable behavior) can no longer (and are not expected) to keep their shape for long, because they decompose and melt faster as the time it takes to cast them, and once they are cast for them to set.” (Bauman, 2007, p1)

even universities. Those propelling *technological momentums* forward often overrun critique or ignore possible problems and establish it in the center of human society, giving it the appearance of an independent force. However he points out: “we must remind ourselves, that *technological momentum* like *physical momentum* is not irresistible” (Hughes, 1994, p. 113).

The sociologist Zygmunt Bauman defines the current situation in our contemporary society as ‘living in an age of uncertainty’ where we experience an increasingly ‘liquid phase of modernity’ (Bauman, 2007). Neoliberal politics, the *technological momentum* and a monopolized global economy are implementing fast changes and restructurings in all areas of our contemporary societies (Hassan, 2008). These changes concentrate power and wealth in the hands of a few, while the rest of society suffers job insecurity, youth unemployment and disintegration of social values. This development ultimately threatens our autonomy and freedom to make decisions based on awareness and knowledge that recognizes the interconnectedness of all people in a global context and promotes actions with moral responsibility. Franco “Bifo” Berardi writes: “Full employment is over. The world does not need so much labor and so much exploitation” (BIFO, 2011, p. 150). What the world needs “is a redistribution of existing goods and intelligent application of technology” (BIFO, 2011, p. 141) Bauman wrote that never before modernity could people imagine to “replace the world-that-is with another different world, a world entirely of their own making” (Bauman, 2007, p. 98).

As a critical thinker I reflect about the meaning and the effects of a system which gives Google the power to influence our search spectrum through the use of algorithms or when Facebook and Twitter can control and manipulate our social networks. These mega monopolies also now buying numerous startups emerging to relevance, like the recent Instagram or Oculus, while at the same time undermining public and social institutions with systemic and organized tax avoidance on their worldwide earnings.<sup>8</sup> The fast increasing income gap between the rich and the poor is not sustainable.

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<sup>8</sup> The powerful influence of global IT monopolies on human society is visible when we observe the organized taxation dumping and other harmful practices to outrun legal and moral responsibilities to civilian society. Sigmar Gabriel the leader of the Social Democrats in Germany writes in a FAZ article that Apple has exploited this method to pay only 1% tax on its earnings abroad, Google paid 3% and Amazon 5% on their earnings abroad (Gabriel, 2014, p. 5). For example in 2012 Apple paid only a mere 0.4% tax on its earnings in NZ (‘Dominion Post’ 20/07/13).

The chilling irony is that the dependencies created, because we are trying to improve our lives, is remaking society in ways very few if any understand or have chosen. Business without the Internet is barely possible now and for the average user, the World Wide Web gets more and more complex and impenetrable behind its shining façade.

Jaron Lanier a Silicon Valley insider, who wrote the book *'You are not a gadget'*, warns with increasing urgency about the diminishing choices in the Internet through hidden manipulating algorithms. He warns of the creation of what he calls a *hive mind* in human society. If we do not address the development of the monopoly power structure created, the current 'lock in' of the workings of the Internet, will deliver widespread destruction of analog human culture, create potential digital sweatshops, and economic insecurity (Lanier, 2010). The 'Economist' notes that only four of the biggest companies Google, Apple, Amazon and Facebook, have already a combined value of over one trillion dollar.

All of these bring to my mind Plato's allegory of the cave in his *Republic*, Book 7. Plato is describing the possibility and danger of a manipulated human mind. The digital screen, which most people now use to receive their knowledge, is comparable to the 'shadows' in Plato's cave. Like the shadows, images on the digital screen are also negotiated experiences of life, transmitted through images. Like the shadows in Plato's cave, human experiences communicated through images on the screen are incomplete and can easily be manipulated. If I look at one of Apple's or Google's promotional events, when releasing a new product to the world on my computer, I cannot help be transported straight back into Plato's cave allegory.

Already many people live life now in an image dominated reality, which is difficult to transcend or to interrupt. Can we still imagine an alternative future, or take serious times of the 24/7-network? People seeking a break and raising questions about the intense image overload and exposure are often seen as neo-Luddites. I chose the advertising image for Google glasses below because it shows a person extremely happy to been told that the Sunday transport service has been suspended while being guided through life by a Google algorithm. The euphoric extreme shown here is

symptomatic of the tech industry and its promotional drive. The image would be well worth analyzing in more depth in a different essay.<sup>9</sup>



Google Glasses – Image Courtesy Best Android Lookout

1. Google-Glasses-Image-Courtesy-Best-Android-Lookout, (Cole, 2013)

Our dependencies are already immense and are set to increase with inventions like ‘cloud computing’, google glasses and self-driving cars. Plato already realized the powerful influence of visual imagery on human consciousness, his autonomy and his will to freedom. Modernity has a well-researched history, showing how vulnerable many people are and how easily they can be influenced by visual propaganda.<sup>10</sup>

Of additional concern is that the leadership of these companies is displaying an immense arrogance and authoritarian attitude towards human rights, civil society and its gains, achieved under great sacrifices. Google is trying to move part of its business outside any legal jurisdiction, which is not a sign of critical self-reflection or a change

<sup>9</sup> “The production of illusionistic representations has become the domain of mass culture and media technologies – photography, film, and video. The creation of illusion has been delegated to optical and electronic machines. Today, everywhere, these machines are being replaced by new, digital illusionist generators – computers.” ....“The massive replacement is one of the key economic factors that keeps the new media industry expanding. As a consequence, these industries are obsessed with visual illusionism” (Manovich, 2001, p. 177-178).

<sup>10</sup> Constant exposure to *this* artificial world can affect us like constant propaganda and limit our awareness and *manipulation by algorithm* is reducing our knowledge. Even Martin Schulz, the President of the European Parliament warns after the Edward Snowden revelations: “Either we defend our freedom and change our policies, or we become digitally hypnotized subjects of a digital ruler ship” (Gabriel, 2014, p. 3).

of direction. The major forces and tools used towards even more corporate globalized control are the use of algorithm for private and governmental data collection, the closed centralized controlled networks through expensive cloud services, stringent copyright laws and the attempted introduction of super communication highways favoring large multinational companies. These are eroding the original promise and founder spirit of the Internet for more democratization.

Governments, with a few exceptions, do not challenge these companies but force restructurings on humanities, specifically in education and force surrender to a tunnel vision concept of competition and profit maximization. Libraries around the world are digitalizing their collections. Education programs get computerized as they are forced to cut costs for wages on people and human educators. Which public institution still has the time and is allowed the finances to conduct serious risk assessment? All this is happening in times where we are in greatest need for social innovations, increased education and reassessment of values in a globalized world.

However, as T.P.Hughes points out, momentums are resistible. And certainly multiple *forces* of resistance have been developing over time and are often trying to undermine or push against the *forces* of established power structures. Except for cybercrime the most influential opposing groups promoting transparency, free access to information and education as a foundation for a democratic, people centered development of technology.

- The 'open source' networks that are creating mostly free software with transparent accessible source code, which can be adjusted for personal needs by anyone with the help of a community network. The intention is to create attractive alternatives to expensive closed software systems like Microsoft, Adobe and others.
- 'Creative Commons' CC copyright system, with a range of options is guided by the overarching idea that harsh copyright laws benefit mostly industry monopolies and hinder fair and free creative use and developments. This is the result of the realization that artistic developments are not happening in isolation but primarily developing out of cultural context.



- P2P networks are often sharing copyrighted material information and software to undermine industry monopolies and are often legally targeted because of that.
- *White hacker* groups developing software programs for *net activism* and community participation and developing *encryption* systems with the intention of protecting people from mass surveillance and authoritarian regimes like in the *Arab spring* movements. To date the most effective and respected one is the *Tor*.
- Often people with a different focus come together to initiate and support local and global *citizen activism* or *net activism* to defend freedom and democracy against global monopolies and political conservatism. AVAAZ a web-based movement with currently over 38 Million members in 194 countries is one of the most successful (AVAAZ, 2007).

This research is the conceptual background of my aesthetic investigation. The main points are that current *technological momentum* causes a dissolving of our culture, a fast and massive change, which by some key theorists is described by using the metaphor *liquid* or *fluidity*. I have also shown how some powerful players or **forces** emerging from seemingly nowhere, are trying to influence the flow and direction the *technological momentum* takes. The cards in this struggle seemed unevenly distributed and already it has some serious early casualties, the most famous one is probably the computer programmer Aaron Schwartz(1986 – 2013).

“ The picture that technological modernity presents us with 400 years since its inception is astonishingly ambivalent: It has lead to both an intense intensification of human existence and at the same time to the very real annihilation of humanity – nothing less than a qualitative destruction of what it once was to be a human being” (Boehme, 2012, p. 224) In my practice I try to negotiate the space between seduction and dystopia in the digital sphere in a form of audio visual representation.

Nobody seems to be in control or seems to be able or willing to formulate a long-term vision, which could be easily interpreted as technological determinism. However it is important to remember that humans are driving this process forward, not machines. People decide where to put the resources for research and support. My writing about the issues raised has to be constrained to a few relevant issues and current trends. To give the complexity full consideration requires writing a book.

### *Chapter 3*

## ***The metapoetics of Water and me***

Water is, beside the obvious association with fluidity, a complex medium with multiple characteristics. It holds obviously strong attraction for people and artists, since artists have often created artworks with water representations and/or were using it as a philosophical *metaphor*<sup>11</sup>. The artist Roni Horn, who often used water photographs in his work, said in an interview with Franziska Beatchke:

*“Sensual experience is something intrinsic, something you take with you wherever you go. It is like the experience of water, nobody needs to talk about that. You know what it is. It is a less articulate area of experience that is deeply human and potentially very individual”* (Neri, 2000, p. 140).

Water for me has many fascinating characteristics and contrasting forms. It can be still or very violent; it is liquid but also can be solid like ice, or soft like snow, or ethereal like fog, steam or clouds. Even more relevant for my creative practice is that it has the most beautiful and sometimes wild surface reflections of light. Furthermore it has also depth, which is largely a representation of the unknown and danger. It also inspires poetry and mythology.

Gaston Bachelard (1884 – 1964) wrote in his book ‘Water and Dreams’:

*“We shall anticipate the transition from poetry of waters to a metapoetics of water, a transition from plural to singular. For such metapoetics, water is not only a group of images revealed in wandering contemplation, a series of broken momentary reveries; it is a mainstay for images, a mainstay which quickly becomes a contributor of images, a founding contributor of images. Thus little by little, in the course of ever more profound contemplation, water becomes an element of materialized imagination”* (Bachelard, 1982, p. 11).

I refer to Bachelard here since my work has actually emerged from long the observations of the material of Water and it has evolved from there into an immaterial space as a conceptual *metaphor*. This makes Bachelard interesting again in contemporary context of the digital sphere, were the material source gets

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<sup>11</sup> Metaphor is a “Figure of speech in which a word or phrase denoting one kind of object or action is used in place of another to suggest a likeness or analogy between them. A metaphor is an implied comparison in contrast to the explicit comparison of the [simile](#). Metaphor is common at all levels of language and is fundamental in poetry, in which its varied functions range from merely noting a likeness to serving as a central concept and controlling image” (Merriam \_ Webster ).

transformed into an immaterial product. In my life I always had a very complex relationship with water, some conscious some not. There is my endless joy and fascination when meditating on a flowing stream or watch the constant flow of the ocean tides. I love water, particularly the ocean and the places where a river meets the ocean, because they are in constant flux. In Aotearoa I often looked out for or lived near places with this characteristic.

Because of my deep fascination with water, there are many stories ingrained in my memory, some of pure joy, when I first felt confident enough to play with the powerful forces of ocean waves on the shore. However, there is also the experience of danger from near drowning stories as a young child to near drowning experiences as a young adult. I still maintain the same love for the ocean in particular, but I am also now very cautious and aware of its deep and lurking dangers, which are often invisible.

On an isolated beach in Portugal and a beautiful summer day I went into the ocean, playing with its dangerous undertow in a cautious but ultimate reckless way. As a fast swimmer I felt safe to do so. Suddenly a wave lifted me off the ground and I lost my imagined position of control, only meters away from safety and about 50m from shore. I could not fight the current, the flow of the water. This realization put my mind into temporary overdrive and I found an intuitive survival strategy. Only through fully realizing the danger, stopping an unwinnable exhausting fight and preserving my energy for a longer journey through the unknown I could survive. There was no more control. I only could try to influence the outcome in this situation. And this could well be a valuable allegory to navigate the new technologies.

Also if I can perceive a danger of dystopia behind the seductive new technologies, there is no way I could control its flow through our culture. I can only influence and learn a sustainable way of navigating it. The philosopher Marshal McLuhan (1911 – 1980) perceived early on the omnipresence and seemingly overwhelming societal changing powers of new technologies and he compared it in a dream analogy with being sucked into a whirlpool and only through transcending fear, jumping out of his ship (ego) and clinging to his suitcase could he float out and survive. He was inspired to this story by reading 'Finnegan's Wake' by James Joyce.

## *Chapter 4*

### ***Concept art meets new media art***

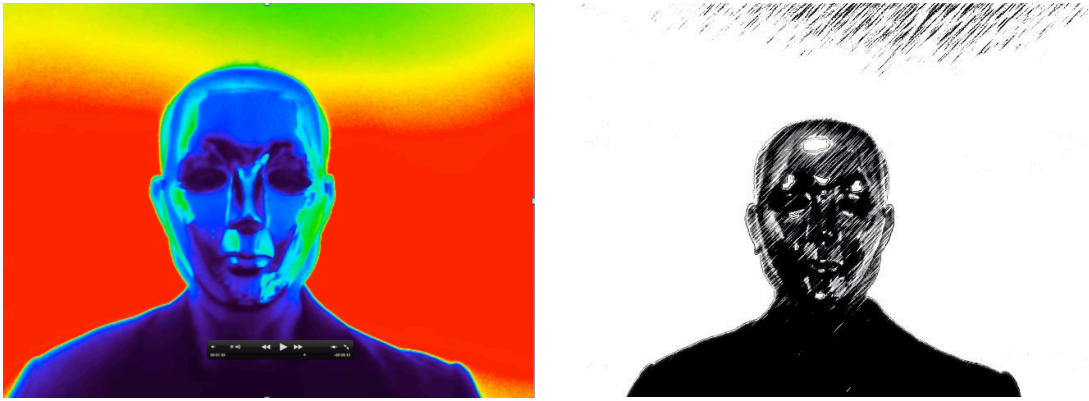
The guiding poetic ideas for my creative research have emerged from my research in the fields of humanities in particular computer science, philosophy and art:

*Fluid seduction fills the space*  
*There is no control only influence*  
*Dystopia sits on the threshold of perception*

I started out with a series of experimentations in creative writing, performing, using a mask, inbuilt laptop camera, computer voices, iPhone camera and several video cameras to create a range of video footage. I made videos where I was documenting myself using a mask to perform fictional news speaks. I wrote some text negotiating the space between truth and fiction, which referenced a range of issues related to increasing surveillance and the recent media campaigns for 'Google Glasses' etc. I also experimented to use computer code and error messages to be spoken by different computer voices from the computer text program. The format was partly inspired by video messages from the hacker group 'Anonymous'. I found out through 'critiques' that this approach would have only a specific audience. In contrast I wanted to make people pause and reflect about digital media and the *technological momentum*. In my research into different forms of video art I found that this approach related to the practice of artists like Hans Richter<sup>12</sup>, and more recently Hito Steyerl, who both used the 'video essay' as method to communicate specific political research outcomes in an imaginative narrative format mixing fact and fiction with interesting visual experimentations.

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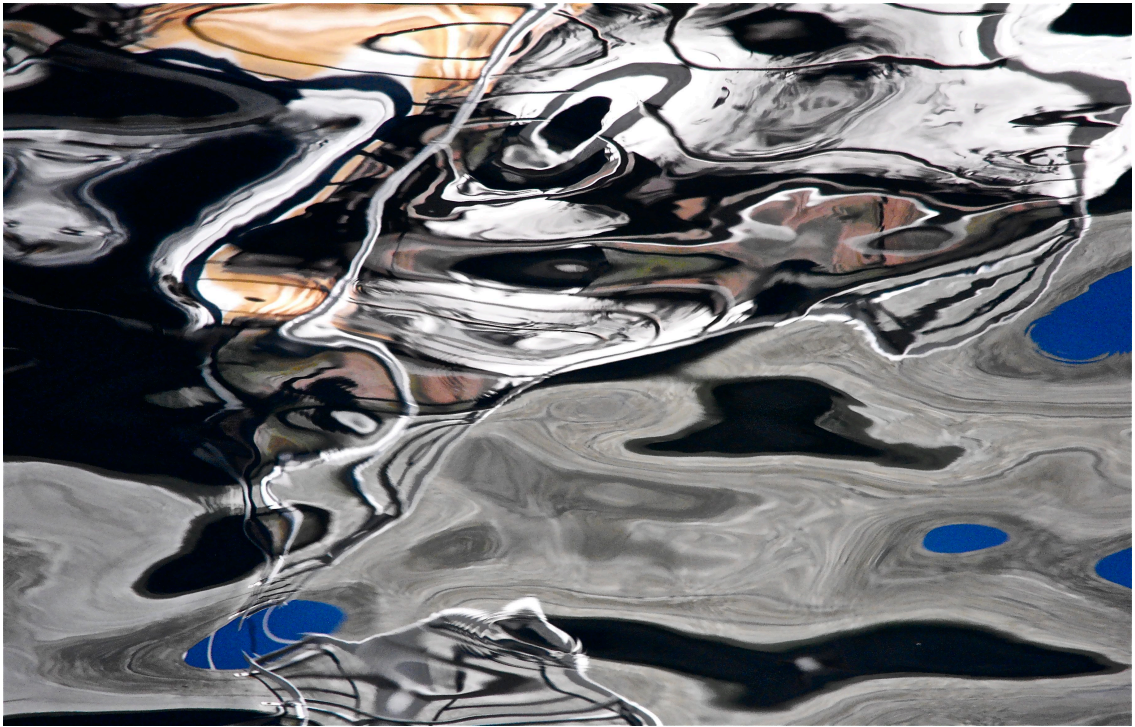
<sup>12</sup> Richter cherished the film essay for its freedom in the use of visual and acoustic material as an argument. Liberated from the reproduction of external appearances or chronological procession, the filmmaker can move freely in time and space, "from an objective rendition to fantastic allegory, for example and from this to enacted scene; one can reproduce dead living, artificial and natural things, use everything that exists and that can be imagined – if only it can serve as an argument for the visualization of the basic idea." This abundance of means, Richter argues, makes even what he called "dry" thoughts and 'difficult' ideas "diverting and entertaining enough for audiences to enjoy the content (Benson, 2013).



2. 'Newspeak, Googledegum' 12/18, video stills, Mica H. Mick, 2013

The more narrative element of the work, which was performing fictional news speaks or used appropriated text, data or computer voices did not feel right to pursue. As a concept or method I found these interesting but the outcome was not really satisfactory and failed to engage audiences. I realized that to make really good contemporary *video essays* a la Hito Steyerl I probably would need more time, resources and people than I had currently available for this project. Further creative experimentation was needed to push the work forward.

Meanwhile I was filming a diverse range of natural water movements and interesting surface reflections, thinking about fluidity as concept. This was initially triggered by my ongoing fascination with water, which is a product of my personal and complex relationship with water as described above. I was starting to make close to one hundred little video clips of water movements and reflection over a period of time. Artist Roni Horn says about the mystery in his water images '*each how takes you one step deeper, beyond appearance, beyond simple visibility*' (Neri, 2000, p. 38). I create my work with similar ideas in mind. I can feel that visual abstraction based on water as source is well suited to allow for and even stimulate the imagination, the sensing of different layers of meaning beyond the actual surface appearance.



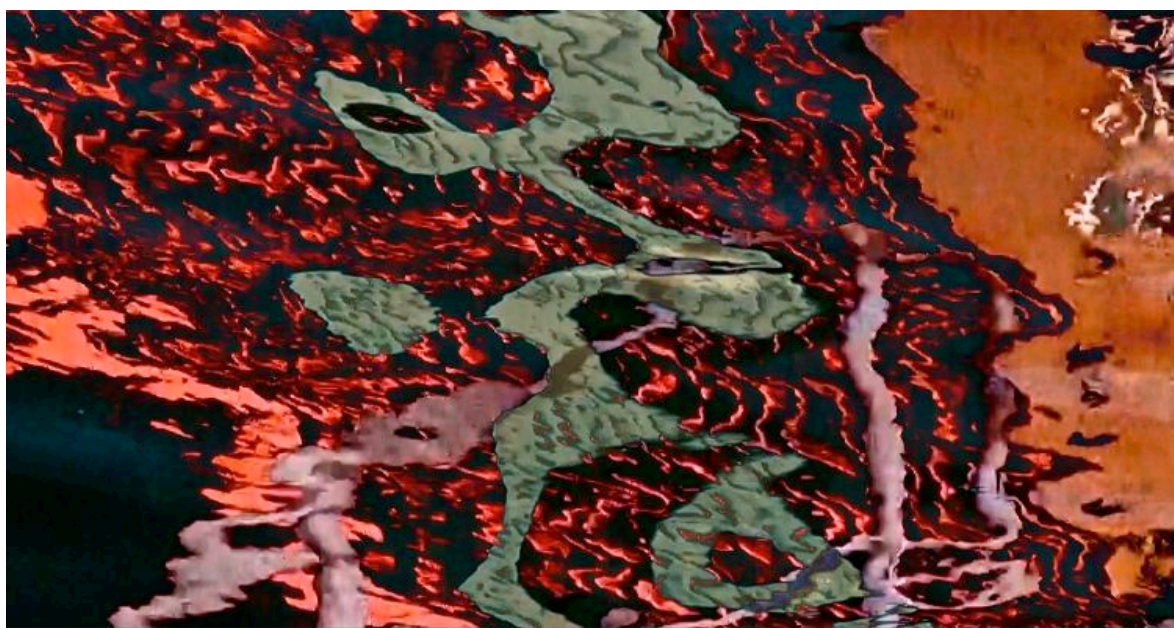
3. Water, test experiment 3, video still, Mica H. Mick, 2013

Following that string of experimentation I was creating video recordings of movements of people and cars in city environment. This was in part inspired by my observations in Melbourne, where I experienced a shift in people, who were starting to engage primarily with new media devices in public spaces, in particular when using public transport. Creating video recordings of people in public spaces is documenting a particular moment in time in our very fast changing cultural environment. Using a small compact camera with zoom function and capable of producing HD footage allowed me to create clips observing authentic street scenes. This was the idea behind the production of a series of experimental videos.



4. "Contemporary History" and "Meditation on Live", video stills, Mica H. Mick, 2014

These are video still images from two more narrative video experiments. Even so I liked the outcome and got good feedback for this work in 'critiques', I felt they did not express the complexity of my ideas. In some ways it was too specific. I processed all my videos through Adobe video editing software. In the editing process I started experimenting with layering, changing time and speed of movements, distortions of reality through applying effects. This was the beginning of more abstraction in my work.

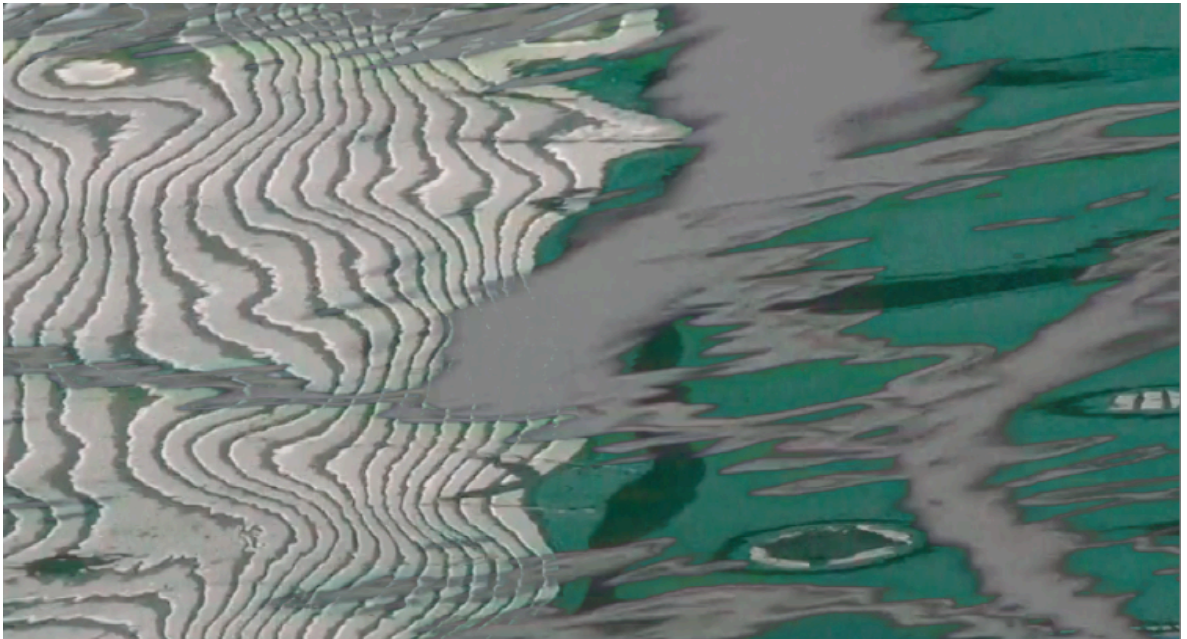


5. 'Liquid times' 7, video still, Mica H Mick, 2013

Roni Horn said "It is the Idea of letting something be what it is, while at the same time exploring it through specific and subjective artifice" (Neri, 2000, p. 35).

What fascinated me most was that I seemed to be able to create a sense for different dimensions and experiences of fluidity. There was surface reflection of light as well as constant movement and change underneath. From hour to hour, from day to day, from season to season and at different locations you could get a diversity of source material, which could be digitally transformed into abstract kinetic paintings. I find it particular intriguing that often beyond the beautiful seductive surface there exists a depth, different consistency and movement, which is a representation of the unknown. I intended to strengthen these effects through interruptive sound experiments. To get this right remained a constant challenge throughout the program.





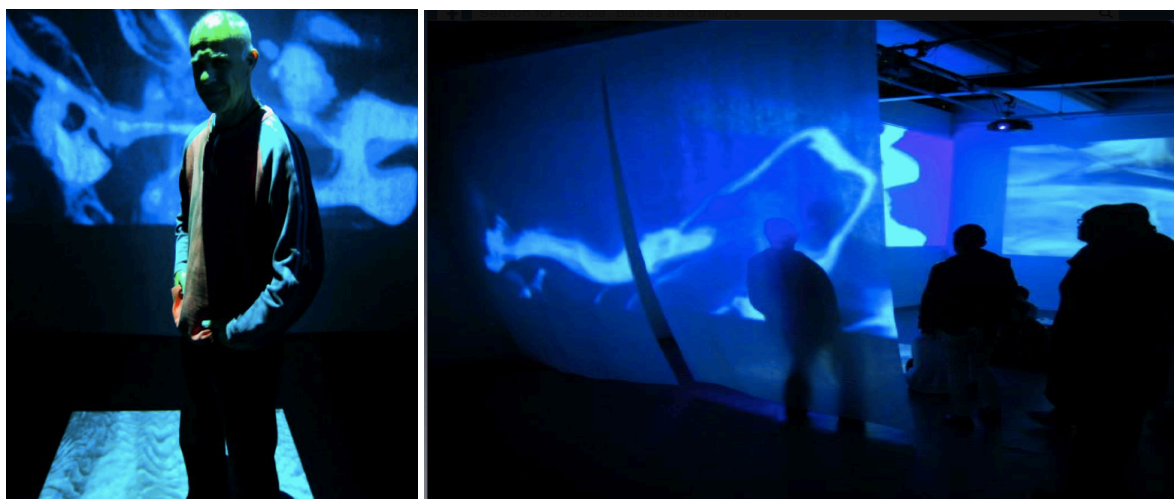
6. 'Truth or Fiction' experiments 15, Mica H Mick, 2013

I tested a range of the resulting video works in different 'critique' exhibitions throughout the study program. At one point I was showing three different works as projection and on a widescreen display unit in the same space. This raised the question whether I would be interested to move my work towards video installation to express more complex ideas and feelings, a suggestion I kept in my mind and explored in a range of exhibitions and tests.

## *Chapter 5*

### ***Towards a practice of video installation***

Here I will discuss some of my different exhibitions testing video installation. My first major exhibition using video installation was at the end of 2013 in the Engine Room Gallery with four different projections creating an immersive explorative space. The space was divided or enclosed by a loosely floating semi-translucent fabric, which allowed the projection to be seen from both sides. It could be seen from outside of the gallery through the windows and pull people in. They could then move around into an enclosed immersive space, with projections on three sides and on the floor. This gave people many creative ways to interact with the installation and people took it up. Some of the projectors were on the floor and produced shadows of the people moving through space and included the audience in the artwork, which I enjoyed.



7. Liquid Times, video installation, Engine Room Gallery, Massey University, Mica H Mick, 10/2013

In 2014 a video work from 2012 was selected for cinematic screenings at the 'Wellington Underground Film Festival' (WUFF), I took up this opportunity to see my work in different context than the black box Gallery setting and to get reactions from a different audience. The work 'Autonomous' fitted well with the program of WUFF, whose aims are to be a platform for individual filmmakers "who have an original, radically artistic approach and are producing work outside mainstream film production and distribution" (WUFF, 2011).

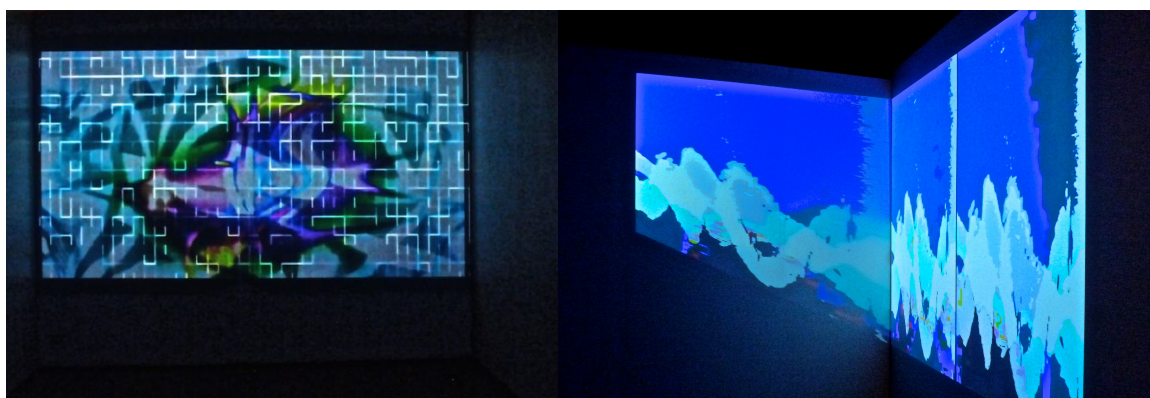
After that four other diverse experimental video clips of mine were selected from a 'NZ Film Society' - subcommittee for a screening of NZ short films at the Paramount

Cinema. At this screening my work had a mixed reception. For some it was too abstract and challenging for their understanding of short film; for others it was a welcome and interesting interruption between the more highly produced narrative short films. This comes as no surprise since the work was produced for the Art Gallery and not the cinema. These institutions are historically poles apart, “because they belong to distinct ‘public spheres’, with different constituencies, popular and elite, collective and individualized...” (Elsaesser, 2011, p. 110). However there is a trend for increasing cross overs of filmmaker like Jean-Luc Goddard producing for the art museums, for example his amazing ‘Histoire’s du Cinema’. Likewise particularly since *Kassel Documenta X* artists like Bill Viola, William Kentridge, Pippilotti Rist, Tacita Dean just to name a few who produced work with film as a medium for the museum circuit (Elsaesser, 2011, p. 110).

A further interesting extension of my practice was possible when I was accepted to exhibit and present at the interdisciplinary ‘Unnatural Future’ conference hosted by the University of Tasmania (UTAS) in Hobart (University of Tasmania, 2014). At short notice the ‘Plimsoll Gallery’ at the University became available for the art exhibition alongside the conference and I was generously offered the ‘Tall Gallery’ section for a video installation.

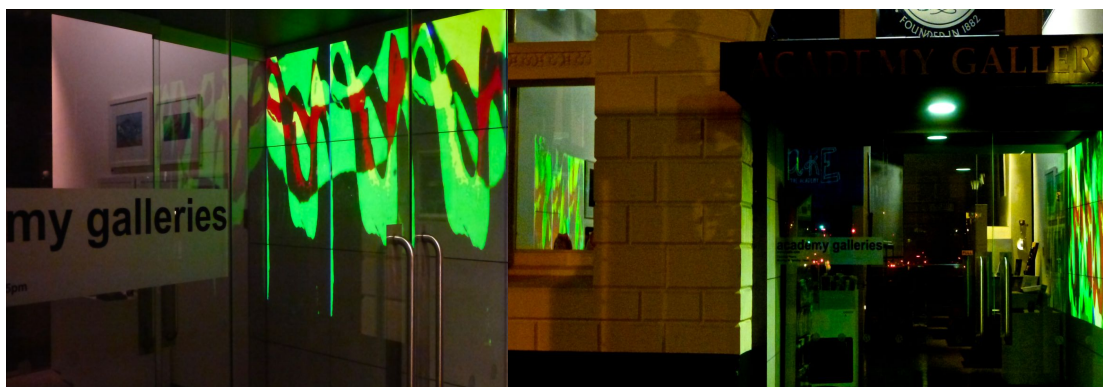
I decided to go a day early and develop the installation on location after I had assessed the space and projection condition. Because of the limited time available, I decided on two projections, one leading in to the space when you approach from the other sections of the gallery and one on the opposing wall. The latter was a compilation of relevant video works. Photographs from the two projections are below. It was a great opportunity to test some of my artwork alongside a connected presentation at the academic conference. This made the mostly abstract work more easily accessible for the academic audience from different disciplines occupied with the intense conference schedule. The feedback was overall positive. However, I learnt again that the sound plays a pivotal role for the interaction with the work and needs much attention to pitch it right. People are more easily attracted to negotiate interesting images, but can also very easily be disturbed by sound. This is an important realization from all the public showings, since the sound plays such a pivotal role in my work with its

intended function to alert particularly to the idea of ‘dystopia on the threshold of perception’.

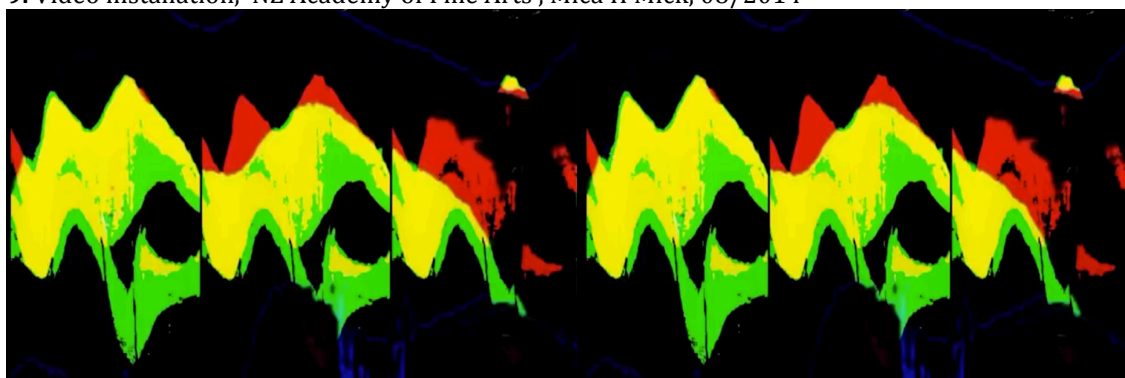


8. 'Unnatural Future', Conference Exhibition, Plimsoll Gallery (UTAS), video Installation, Mica H Mick 07/2014

After that I was asked to provide the 'NZ Academy of Fine Arts' (NZAFA) gallery with some abstract video work for their entrance to attract attention to the Academy. I agreed and used some suitable video test clips for that. It was an interesting experience and showed that the visual esthetics on its own can be quite seductive, which fits with my concept. Even though it was a good test to try, it was not the right context for the work, because the space was cluttered and the work could not engulf the audience.



9. Video installation, 'NZ Academy of Fine Arts', Mica H Mick, 08/2014



10. Mysterious Liquidity, video still, Mica H Mick, 2014

*“When you drive in Paris at night, what do you see? Red, green, yellow lights. I wanted to show these elements but without necessarily placing them as they are in reality. Rather as they remained in the memory—“.....” I wanted to recreate a sensation through the elements, which constitute it”* Jean Luc Godard (Adam Art Gallery, 2014).

To conclude, I realized through the different exhibitions and cinematic shows that video installation can be a very effective and attractive format to mediate complex ideas with abstract audiovisual work. However, the work has to be adaptable to different spaces, which is not always possible without an experienced support infrastructure.



**11.** 'Forces', video installation test, The Pit, Mica H Mick, 09/2014

What can be achieved on a truly professional level can be observed in the William Kentridge exhibition 'Refusal of Time' in the Wellington City Gallery this year. Showing the work in a different context gave me the realization that the more visually arresting images attract the audience initially and open up the space for deeper engagement with the work. On this foundation an interruptive soundscape could stimulate very complex and layered experiences. In order to achieve that I started to look out for possible collaborators with more experience in sound work, which did improve my final work described later.

## *Chapter 6*

### ***Artistic influences and context***

First I like to discuss the term ‘digital art’<sup>13</sup>, which came into prominent use for all art forms using digital media from the late 70’s through to the 80’s. Digitality involves the shift from the physical to a symbolic binary system, which have been previously associated with the domain of computer science. Eivind Rossaak explains the relevant aspects of these shifts very precisely in her essay ‘Algorithmic Culture: Beyond the Photo/Film Divide’:

*“While the analog photomechanical process is based on a principle of continuity between input and output, the information processing of the digital image is, ontological speaking based on a separation or discontinuity between input and output.”....“It is the discontinuity between the input and the output that produces a new space for creativity and imagination – and chance and control. This space is addressed, not by light and shadow as in a photochemical process, but by computer algorithms<sup>14</sup>, which carry out alterations and manipulations” (Rosaak E. , 2011, p. 190).*

‘Digital art’ can usually be applied to all art forms incorporating some form of digital media in its process. Beryl Graham defines it simply as “art made with, and for, digital media including the Internet, digital imaging or computer controlled installation” (Graham, 2007, p. 93).

‘New media art’ emerged in the 90’s when ‘digital art’ became too limiting in particular for inter- and trans disciplinary artwork. According to Jana and Tribe it is described as experimental engagement with new media, which includes Internet, social media, video, gaming, surveillance systems, wearable technology and mobile media (Hope, 2014, p. 5). It is especially indebted to historical art movements that questioned the relationship between art, culture and technology, in particular, Dadaism, pop art, conceptualism and the overarching figure Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968). It continued with video art in the 1960s and most influentially Nam June Paik

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<sup>13</sup> “‘Digital art’ is a name that shifts in the sands of digitality, culture, history, science and art. Impossible to define as a single phenomenon, it represents instead a fluid set of artistic techniques, technologies and concepts – often associated with the history of the computer” (Hope, 2014, p.3).

<sup>14</sup> “In mathematics and computer science, an algorithm is a step by step procedure for calculations. Algorithm are used for calculation, data processing, and automated reasoning” (Wikipedia, 2014).

(1932 – 2006) as part of the Fluxus movement, who also has contributed some core ideas for contemporary art and ‘new media art’ (Jana, 2006).

Dada was born in the social upheaval of the First World War, which was nothing short of an immense creative upheaval, which reverberates to today. The Dada artists were starting to dissolve boundaries between art forms, between art and life. Some artists used collage, assemblage appropriation, montage and audience participation, experimented with performance, sound, mail and telecommunication art as well as the creation of immersive interactive environments. Their work was usually regarded as deconstructive and highly conceptual, some beginning with distinctive instructions resulting in an interplay between randomness and chance (Hope, 2014, p. 40). These concepts maintained its relevant influence throughout the recent history of art and also in the digital sphere.

Importantly, there has been a loose group of influential artists in the 50s to the mid 60s, which the American Historian Barbara Rose (b.1938) labels as ‘Neo-Dada’. Regardless of specific labels it is well known how influential artists and like Marcel Duchamp, John Cage (1912 – 1992), Joseph Beuys (1921 – 1986), Nam June Paik (1932 – 2003), Yoko Ono (b.1933) and the philosopher Marshall McLuhan, to name just a few relevant to my area of research, were for the different art movements of the 20s century up to today. They must be seen as an important bridge after the end of the great wars to the new generation of artists, promoting the progressive ideas of early Dada and broke further rules like John Cage with his composition 4’33”. Joseph Beuys helped to start the German ‘Green Movement’, promoting community involvement and politically engaged art and coined the controversial phrase ‘*everyone can be an artist*’. Marshal McLuhan who is famous for his phrase, ‘*the medium is the message*’, promoted also the concept of a ‘*global village*’ as a response to the rampant nationalism of the time (Encyclopedia, 2012).

My practice has emerged from the visual arts towards the moving image, towards visual abstraction and towards audiovisual installation. The research has been focused in particular on how these fields of practice can be developed to respond to a more complex metanarrative as described above. My specific artistic influences are

Len Lye (1901 – 1980), Hans Richter (1888 – 1976), Bill Viola<sup>15</sup> and Pippilotti Rist, who are associated with experimental film, video art and multichannel video installation. “Austrian artist, curator and theorist Peter Weibel states, ‘the video and digital art of today have taken up the lance left behind by the cinematic avant-garde of the 60s and developed one step further the universe of the cinematic code (Weibel and Shaw 2003:125)” (Hope, 2014, p. 72). My practice and related research into the history of the moving image has resulted in the concepts of ‘*visual abstraction*’, ‘*kinetic abstraction*’ and ‘*audiovisual installation*’ using *acousmatic*<sup>16</sup> soundscapes. These ideas emerged and helped to create artworks, which explore fluidity and the emotional space between seduction and dystopia.

### *‘Kinetic Abstraction’*

Len Lye (1901 – 1980) and other artists in the 20’s painted direct on film to create visual abstraction on film often with synchronized Jazz music as sound score. One of his primary interests was kinetics and he went on to create remarkable kinetic sculpture later on, which are still loved and relevant today. From that I chose the term ‘kinetic abstraction’ for my abstract film or video projections. With this I mean specifically a process, where countless abstract digital images create the illusion of movement of colour and light across a projected or displayed surface in a constant flow or change of composition. This opens up the medium to be used as a metaphor for multiple narratives. This should not be confused with the live ‘Kinetic Painting’, where artists like Norman Perryman, painting with coloured fluids on overhead projectors for harmonious music projections, intend to enhance musical experiences.

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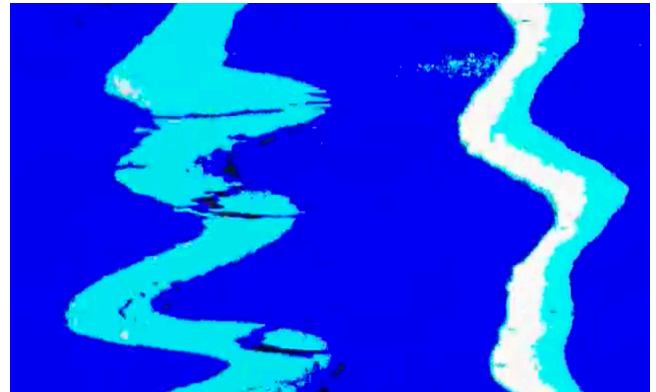
<sup>15</sup> ‘American artist Bill Viola (b. 1951) creates large scale video installations that deal with the central themes of human consciousness and experience, and capture the essence of emotion through recording its extreme display as ultra slow motion, large video projections. His works invite the viewer to almost sink into and connect with the meaning within the image’ (Hope, 2014, p.72).

<sup>16</sup> ‘acousmatic’, is a word of Greek origin, which is theorized by Pierre Schaeffer. “A sound or voice that remains ‘acousmatic’ creates a mystery of the nature of its source, its properties and its powers, given that causal listening cannot supply complete information about the sound’s nature and events taking place. (Chion, 1994: 72)” (Quadraro, 2012, p. 238).





12. Colourbox, video still, Len Lye, 1935  
(Lye, 2012)



13. "Dance", video still, Mica H Mick, 2013

Here is a still image of Len Lye's film *Colourbox*, in comparison with a still of one of my videos, which has some commonality with dancing lines moving rhythmically over the screen. In contrast to his analog method to paint the lines on individual frames to produce his film, I shot a digital video of natural water reflections and movement, manipulated the colour using computer software to transform the natural to the artificial.

### *Visual abstraction:*

"Abstraction is my field; for me it is 'the open', a clearing, where a gift is laid open for the passer-by. Here one who meets the work is free to explore, to invent, to remain open and not closed down. Each time, this 'one' may consider new possibilities" Kim Pieters, 'what is a life' exhibition at the Adam Art Gallery (2014).

Throughout my artistic studio work I have been interested and influenced by very experimental rule breaking movements like 'Dada' and 'Fluxus'. Here are abstract colour compositions without a clear realistic appearance, open for a multiple range of interpretations. Hans Richter (1888 – 1976) in his work 'Dadascope' set an experimental mode to which I aspired in my own video work. I discovered Hans Richter's abstract film work and his central role in an historical context through my research. Poignantly he wrote: "*I regard film as a part of modern art, as above all visual art. There are certain problems and sensations that belong exclusively to film. But there are problems where both overlap one another and even infuse one another*" (Benson, 2013, p. 28).



14. Dadascope 3, Hans Richter, 1961  
(Vimeo, 2012)



15. Dream, digital Photograph, Mica H Mick, 2012

This translates still very well to all contemporary moving image productions. Richter had a strong association with the Dada movement and his work was often politically engaged, plus crossed a range of art forms. Furthermore he became “an influential and diverse maker of abstract and experimental films which explored the visual language of cinema” (Rees, 2011, p. 42). In addition these avant-garde artists developed montage as a tool to work against the grain of narrative editing. Experimental cinema as medium must now be seen as separate from its supporting technology, as the digitalization of the image questions the lucidity of distinction. This is what Lucy Lippard in 1977 referred to as the dematerialization of the art object (Rees, 2011, p. 52).



16. Painting Liquidity, video still, (kinetic abstraction), Mica H Mick, 2014

*Fluidity*, the concept, is communicated and experimented with throughout my video work. I often used footage based on water, which has also been used in film and video work by other artists, because of its symbolic associations. One influential video artist who repeatedly uses water in immersive video projections is Bill Viola. His latest work is of highest production value, using actors and the latest technical equipment, which he is employing to real stunning effect. Importantly, his work has also a complex narrative behind the visual beauty and power of his images. However, such a high production value is not needed to communicate my previously described metanarrative.

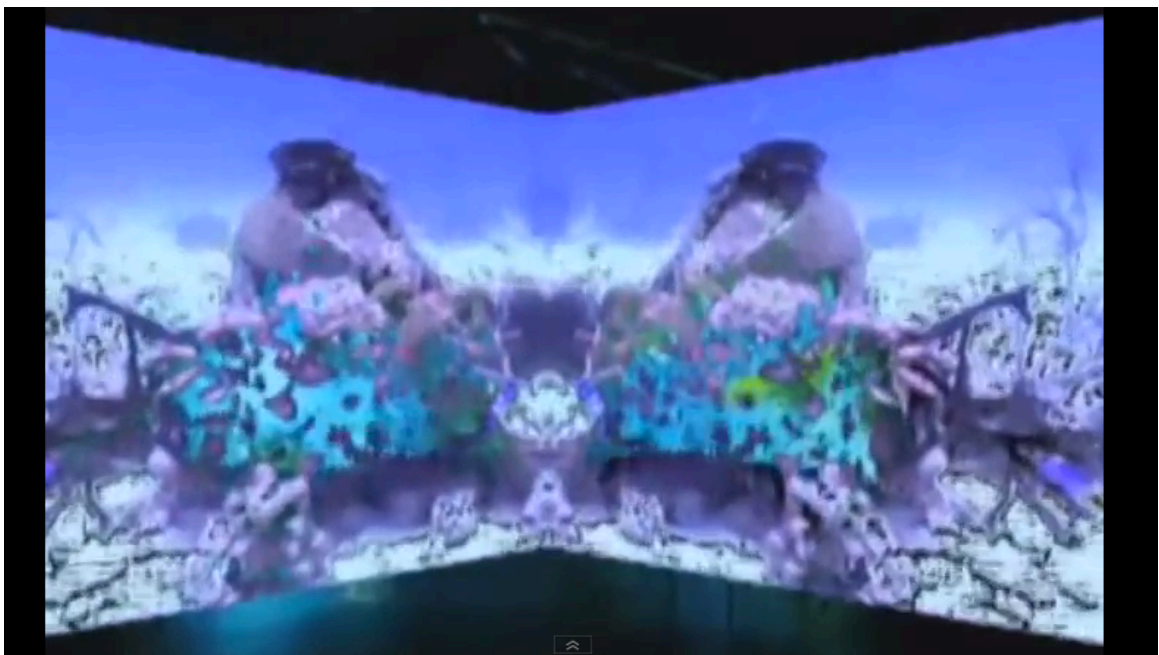


17. *The Messenger*, Bill Viola, 1986 (The Nordic Watercolor Museum, 2012)

### *Acousmatic soundscapes:*

The intended function of acousmatic sound is to create a mystery and to disrupt casual listening and consumer attitude. The nature of the sound and its relationship to the image and the events taking place is not easily identifiable and that opens up the space for creative imaginative interpretations of the audience. Pipilotti Rist is an artist who is working with audiovisual installation and her sound work is very specific and only 'loosely' related to the narrative of the screen. Her intense use of digitalization

and poor resolutions create a greater degree of painterly abstraction in her moving image work. She is also using consumer cameras and software accessible to most people in the west and creates what Hito Steyerl called 'poor image' work in an effective way. That is the reason why I am attracted to her work. Her work has no narrative continuum like commercial cinema. However the narrative aspect of her work is still dominant and also a point of difference to my own current investigations, which is focused on abstraction and open experimental investigations. I like to open up the space, raise questions and do not provide the answers or my opinion in an obvious way.



18. Sip My Ocean, Pipilotti Rist, 1996 (YouTube, 2009)

All the artists mentioned are very relevant in their diverse practices have unique ideas and concepts behind their work and are very inspirational. They stimulated and influenced to some degree decisions of medium, aesthetics, presentation of my work, which is indebted to the rich and diverse history of art. However more and more I come to the conclusion that labels and direct associations are more useful for the theoretical discourse than for the artistic practice, where they can easily build cages.

## Chapter 7

### ***'Forces' an audiovisual installation with subtext***

*"Seeing for a filmmaker is a necessity, even as it is for a painter. But while for the painter it is a matter of uncovering a static reality, or at most a rhythm that can be held in a single image, for a director the problem is to catch a reality which is never static, which is always moving toward or away from a moment of crystallization, and to present this movement, this arriving or moving on, as a new perception"* Michelangelo Antonioni (Adam Art Gallery, 2014).

This citation indicates some of the aspects, which make the moving image so dominant in our present culture. Artists are presented with the challenge to find unique ways to navigate this dominance in unique ways. The moving away and towards crystallization is also representing the current condition in our society well.

For my final work I chose an audiovisual installation of *'Forces'* across the whole screen in an empty 'Pit' ('The Pit' lecture Theatre in Te Ara Hihiko) with a surround acousmatic sound. The size of the projection is contributing to the creation of an immersive experience. The surround sound is suggesting omnipresence. **'Forces'** has a number of elements which function as a metaphor for my metanarrative. These elements are nonlinearity, visible and invisible forces coming from predictable and unpredictable directions, below, above, left, right and bursting out from underneath the constant moving image. These ***'forces'*** can appear sometimes powerful enough to be destructive. Through digital manipulation of the video work it holds some level of abstract artificiality, which highlights the tension. In addition there are very brief emergences of the underlying digitalism as medium and also code, suggesting algorithm, which is linking the work to the metanarrative discussed.

Fluidity of movements function as aesthetic seduction and can be an almost mesmerizing metaphor for the ***'forces'*** competing for control in our contemporary cultural space. The surround *acousmatic* sound is alerting to dystopian undercurrents on the threshold of perception. Because I learnt of the importance of sound throughout my different exhibitions, I decided to collaborate to achieve a better result. For this exhibition I specifically collaborated with Graham Frost, who is also an MFA student and he produced some original sound files for my final project, which I incorporated to achieve a greater impact. All of this created such a strong and specific

metaphor for my metanarrative that additional projection in that space would only create a distraction and could not contribute anything important to it.

The blurred, fuzzy highly compressed video is chosen because of the subversive concept behind it. Shot with a simple digital compact camera and processed with consumer editing software on a desktop computer, it represents the democratic possibilities, inherent and intended in the digital arts. Juan Garcia Espinosa reflects in his manifesto 'For an imperfect Cinema', written in Cuba in the late 60's, on the promise of new media and predicts a video technology which will challenge the elitist position of traditional filmmaking and enable an art for the people (Espinosa, 1979). Even more relevant is what Hito Steyerl writes in her essay '*In Defense of the Poor Image*', that they express a condition of dematerialization, which is not only shared with the legacy of *conceptual art*, but above all with contemporary modes of semiotic productions (Hito Steyerl, 2012, p. 41).



**19.** "Forces", video stills, Mica, 2014 (Mick, Forces, test1, 2014)

The peripheral visual distractions in the space of the final exhibition, 'The Pit', should move into the background in the presence of the overwhelming image projection and the surround sound. More importantly, the audience can move freely through the open space, immerse and explore the work. When some of the audience understand the technologies involved and think 'oh I could have done that' it is a good thing and inspire creative explorations as a democratization process of the arts.

## *Chapter 8*

### ***Conclusion***

Throughout my MFA I have researched the impact new digital technologies with their diverse implementation have on human culture and society. Many researchers in the humanities are convinced that the impact of these very recent developments will overshadow the great technological inventions of the past. I sensed a tension between the seduction of these developments and its dystopian possibilities. The mainstream narrative is still dominated by euphoria and largely ignores the dystopian developments.

The challenge was to create work, which is responding to this tension between seduction and dystopia and alerting awareness. The omnipresence of the digital culture, which is even more centralized and globalized through the digital 'cloud' services, motivated me. I created large immersive projections in exhibition spaces and multichannel experimental video installation to recreate a different sense of omnipresence and to alert to the underlying dystopian issues. An important future challenge for new media artists will be in the face of technological globalization to pay attention to the balance between the global and the local.

With the artistic tools, which have evolved throughout the artistic history of the avant-garde such as no narrative, nonlinear, interruptive, experimental, abstract, activation of audience, interdisciplinary and conceptual art firmly in mind, I developed work as a metaphor for the greater metanarrative described. The visual abstractions I created functioned largely as seductive and an independent disruptive audio work alerted to a sense of dystopia. Through creating nonlinear visual abstractions and independent nonlinear abstract sound, connected to the work only through an overriding conceptual idea, I made a unique contribution to new media art.

In addition the work relies on the active participation of the audience to make sense of or understand the concept behind the work. Furthermore in working mostly with commonly accessible production tools I supported the vision of democratization of the digital culture and art. I agree with Cat Hope and John Ryan who identified the core issues, the future challenges and perspectives for technology, culture and the arts. These are the recognition of the dangers underlying globalization, global

monopolies and monoculture, the need to encourage democratization through accessibility of knowledge and research, to find a balance between the global and the local. The most relevant principles or tools available for artist and researchers are to embrace interdisciplinary and trans-disciplinary artistic practice in collaboration. (Hope, 2014, pp. 13-18) More than ever the future needs to incorporate the principle of change as a core idea of the arts.



## List of Illustrations

1. Google-Glasses-Image-Courtesy-Best-Android-Lookout,  
<http://www.gsmnation.com/blog/2013/02/02/google-glasses-self-realization/>
2. 'Newspeak, Googledegum' 12/18, video stills, Mica Hubertus Mick, 2013
3. Water, test experiment 3, video still, Mica H. Mick, 2013
4. "Contemporary History" and "Meditation on Live", video stills, Mica H. Mick, 2014
5. 'Liquid times' 7, video still, Mica H Mick, 2013
6. 'Truth or Fiction' experiments 15, Mica H Mick, 2013
7. Liquid Times, video installation, Engine Room Gallery, Massey University,  
Mica H Mick, 10/2013
8. 'Unnatural Future', Conference Exhibition, Plimsoll Gallery (UTAS),  
video Installation, Mica H Mick 07/2014
9. Video installation, 'NZ Academy of Fine Arts', Mica H Mick, 08/2014
11. 'Forces', video installation test, The Pit, Mica H Mick, 09/2014
12. Colourbox, video still, Len Lye, 1935, <https://vimeo.com/53129725>
13. "Dance", video still, Mica H Mick, 2013
14. Dadascope 3, Hans Richter, 1961, <https://vimeo.com/42211835>
15. Dream, digital Photograph, Mica H Mick, 2012
16. Painting Liquidity, video still, (kinetic abstraction), Mica H Mick, 2014
17. The Messenger, Bill Viola, 1986, <http://www.art-agenda.com/shows/bill-viola-at-the-nordic-watercolour-museum/>
18. Sip My Ocean, Pipilotti Rist, 1996,  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VJhgIcbSEeM>
19. "Forces", video stills, Mica, 2014, <https://vimeo.com/102578747>

Some examples of test videos can be viewed on my *Vimeo* site.  
<https://vimeo.com/user11940949/videos>

## Exhibitions and Filmography for Mica Hubertus Mick<sup>17</sup>:

- 2013 '*Auto(no)mous, Auto(yes)mous*', Emerging Artist Exhibition, New Zealand Academy of Fine Arts
- 2013 solo exhibition, '*Liquid Times*' video Installation, 'Engine Room Gallery' Massey University, Wellington NZ
- 2014 group exhibition, '*Unnatural Future*', video installation, 'Plimsoll Gallery', University of Tasmania (UTAS), Australia
- 2014 '*Mysterious Fluidity, movement no. 2*', NZ Academy of Fine Arts'(NZAFA)
- 2014 '*Forces*', video installation, 'The Pit', Massey University NZ
- 2014 '*Auto(no)mous, Auto(yes)mous*', Wellington Underground Film Festival (WUFF) NZ
- 2014 four videos: *Conversation with a Tree, Symphony of Contemporary History, Newspeak-Truth or Fiction, Rat Race*, Paramount Cinema, Wellington Film Society, NZ
- 2014 '*Rat Race*', 'All Shorts' Film Festival Takaka NZ

Some examples of test videos are also posted on my *Vimeo* site on the Internet.  
<https://vimeo.com/user11940949/videos>

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<sup>17</sup> Mica Hubertus Mick is the artist name for Hubertus Johannes Mick

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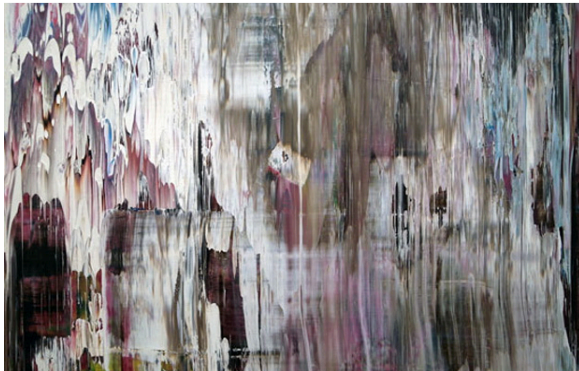
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## *Appendix:*

My interest on 'Visual Abstraction' goes back to my earlier studio work and painting, which was also inspired by Gerhard Richter and his abstractions.

The influence of Gerhard Richter's work is traceable in one of my major video works I produced this year, 'Lamenting a Future'.



Gerhard-Richter-abstract-paintings-exhibition.  
The Marian Goodman Gallery in New York City



"Lamenting a Future", Mica 2014 Video still (Mick, Vimeo, 2013)

Creative writing experiment for:

## ***liquid Contemporality***

*By micahubertusmick*

### **Look at ME, Look .....**

I am a well-balanced human being with many friends on and of line... Be brave; feel free to join me in the 'Clouds'

**"There is nothing to loose, there is nothing to fear"**

Just try it out, follow me and get in line and let the 'cloud' be your friend, says the well-paid, 22-year-old speaker at the catered Google promotional event.

Thundering applause and standing ovation from the well-educated middle-aged middle class audience follows. Nobody wants to be seen as an old dinosaur, opposing 'innovation' through skepticism and questions, opposing the carefully chosen young image of the future .....

All this is happening, while I trying to come to cribs with my 'brand' new iPad and its **'500.000 apps just a tap away'** given to me by a well-meaning friend.

I am planning the night out after I am finished here .....

I am trying to find this gorgeous little Jazz club, to which Robert Lepage introduced me years ago. I will never forget the atmosphere and this amazing band from New York with this fantastic front woman; she played two saxophones and a clarinet at ones in her third encore followed by 4 minutes 33 seconds of silence...

I can't get this out of my head the experience of total excitement and elation followed with the sudden fear to breath, which could have interrupted the silence... before thundering applause and stamping of feet released the atmosphere.....

I know, I know life does goes on and never repeats itself.....

A quick 'google search' for '**Night Owl**' the name of the club, which I still remember after all this time doesn't lead to any results... I am searching the 'net' for a jazz club or an interesting live event, while I am loosing more and more track of the presentation in front of me. There is always time to catch up with that, before I have to report back at the office.... It will be online soon anyway; they can look at it themselves; however I am glad they pay me for this....

Maybe I just try to find it walking to town, I am still vaguely remembering the location of the club.... it may have changed the name and owner by now... It's been almost 7 years after all, almost two digital lifetimes...

A voice next to me whispered, " , try my new *Google's* developer glasses, while you are searching the '*clouds*'. They will help you to see so much better when you out there hunting the streets for adventure...."

It's right, the ruins of the demolitions are rainbow colored now, looking through the Googles, which is leaving me with a feeling not unlike the memory of the emotion I experienced at the performance in the little jazz club back then... Now I remember - Barbara Thompson was her name!

Yes I am '*Elated again followed by the fear to breath for at least 4min and 33sec*'