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Video Activism in the Shadow of Wellywood

An exegesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Fine Arts at Massey University, Wellington, New Zealand.

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Abstract

This creative practice-based research was conducted in Wellington, Aotearoa New Zealand, the home of ground-breaking movie companies Wingnut Films, Weta Workshop, Weta Digital, and Park Road Post. Following the success of director Peter Jackson's *The Lord of The Rings* and *The Hobbit* trilogies, with pioneering special effects led By Richard Taylor, Wellington city has colloquially become known as Wellywood, in honour of our film industry's connections to Hollywood. Parts of Aotearoa have since been renamed by government tourism agencies and businesses to reflect their use as locations in the films set in the fictional world of Middle Earth. Throughout the course of this research, the "Wellywood" movie industry has faced a range of issues including workers' rights and workplace harassment and has attracted criticism for its influence on government policy.

In the Shadow of Wellywood is an experimentally animated video work satirizing the dominant studio system and its ability to shape our national identity and consumerist desires. This tale of celebrity dreams of stardom turning into nightmares draws upon tropes of action, melodrama, and road movie genres to locate the narrative within the artificial world of the production studio. In using movie-themed action figures as stand-ins for Hollywood actors, and animating them using rudimentary techniques, the work considers the celebrity cycle and the technological advances of the industry. The artificial setting satirically suggests that we no longer have a national cinema, but one of transplanted culture. In combining analogue and digital video technologies the creative process reflected upon obsolescence, and the place of handmade animation techniques within an increasingly digital environment.

In continuing to work with obsolete video technology rather than upgrading to the latest format the research has been conducted with the intention of developing an environmentally sustainable method of studio-based production. This research has identified a gap in the field of video art practice through continuing to use equipment that others no longer want and rejecting the latest movie industry technologies as a mode of critical engagement. This research makes an original contribution to the creative field of video activism through using equipment until it literally wears out and accepting the resulting inconsistencies in production.

The creative processes used in the development of the final work explored a methodology of experimentation, collaboration, and iterative testing designed to critique mainstream movie production and distribution systems, and to explore alternatives. Through adapting the situationist principles of détournement, psycho-geography and the dérive, this research demonstrates the continued relevance of Guy Debord's key text *Society of the Spectacle* (1967) for re-contextualizing the movie industry as an instance of the spectacle, an artificial capitalist system designed to manipulate the consumer, and for identifying ways to resist and critique it. A series of expanded cinema collaborations with musicians during the developmental stages of the research allowed for testing the concept of a studio backlot and exploring the notion of special effects. The animation studio built for this research drew upon traditions of repurposing established by pre-digital experimental film and expanded cinema artists. The portable micro cinema designed for screening *In the Shadow of Wellywood* locates the work outside of mainstream networks and within an alternative system of distribution underscoring the project's positioning as a form of video activism.

In the Shadow of Wellywood is available online at:

<https://vimeo.com/545200195/151f941a5a>

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Chapter One: Introduction

The Surrounding Movie Industry

Following the success of *The Lord of The Rings* and *The Hobbit* trilogies Aotearoa has become rebranded as Middle Earth by government agencies playing on connections to the fictional setting of the stories written by Englishman J.R.R. Tolkien, in order to promote the country as a destination for international movie tourism. While these movies have provided new opportunities for our creative workers, they are international co-productions telling stories originating from other places, and as such I would argue that they are *not* New Zealand films. As an independent video artist living in the shadow of Wellywood, my practice examines the complex relationships between technology, creativity, and business that the movie industry is built upon, and investigates the influence it has on our national identity and government policy. Specifically, this research considers the “Hobbit Law” of 2010 effecting film workers’ employment rights, and the taxation advantages recently afforded to *Lord of the Rings* TV series producers Amazon Studios. Chapter Two titled *Hollywood and Wellywood* assists in contextualising my position as an increasingly disillusioned movie fan.

In the Shadow of Wellywood is an experimentally animated work of video art which critiques mainstream movie production and distribution systems through offering an alternative. This research is based on a personal philosophy of resisting consumerist pressures to upgrade technology for environmental reasons as discussed in Chapter Five. The micro cinema designed to screen the work invites viewers to briefly look away from mainstream media platforms and consider how technology has evolved. It considers how watching movies has changed from the community experience of the movie theatre to the familial space of home cinema and the local video store, to the more recent ability to stream content on demand on personal electronic devices.

This exegesis identifies and critiques instances of “soft colonization” in the rebranding of Aotearoa as Middle Earth to promote *The Lord of the Rings* movie tourism internationally. I am using this term to define the secondary or indirect effects of colonization such as the appropriating of cultural narratives and symbols, or the profiting from sales of goods or

experiences created through colonizing practices. My definition is an extension of the term offered by Māori writer Alexander Stronach in his 2020 critique of Wellywood, discussed further in Chapter Three. In response to these issues of soft colonisation, the version of Wellywood I have depicted in the creative practice becomes a non-place and a completely artificial world with no recognizable local points of reference. Through my use of a counter-narrative regarding Wellywood, I am critically responding to the ways the surrounding movie industry has treated its workers and rebranded Aotearoa for its own purposes as discussed in Chapter Two.

My interests in the Hollywood and Wellywood movie industries includes their business models and partnerships with other technological industries. This research explores how these connections may be interrogated as a mode of creative production. I will be intentionally using the term “the movies” to refer to the commercially focused cinematic productions of Hollywood studios such as Universal or Paramount Pictures, and the term “films” to differentiate works made outside of the dominant mainstream commercially driven studio system. In defining the pre-digital era, I am primarily looking at industry and avant-garde film effects artists working before 1993, the year that Steven Spielberg’s groundbreaking *Jurassic Park* movie was released. Containing approximately six minutes of computer-generated imagery, its integration of live action and computer-generated animation radically transformed the ways movies are made. *Jurassic Park* earned the status of “blockbuster” by becoming the biggest money-making film worldwide in the year it was released, grossing over \$402 million. The second highest grossing movie of 1993 was the family comedy *Mrs Doubtfire* earning \$219 million. Disney’s *Aladdin* (1992) and *The Lion King* (1994) were the highest earning blockbusters in the years either side of *Jurassic Park*. While these statistics indicate the ongoing popularity of Disney animation and family friendly movies, the elements of horror and science-fiction signal to me that *Jurassic Park* was designed to reach a wider audience.

As a video artist with a creative and critical interest in film history in pre-digital special effects, my research draws primarily from theorists and practitioners also working in the pre-digital era.

Situationist Guy Debord's key text *Society of the Spectacle* (1967) assists in re-contextualizing the movie industry as an instance of the spectacle of capitalism. I am choosing to largely reference the 1960's as it is a significant time of social, political, and technological change during which the tools of media production became available to the consumer for the first time. The Xerox photocopier was released in 1959, The Philips audio cassette recorder in 1963, and the Kodak Super 8 film camera in 1965, the same year that Sony began marketing its first consumer level video camera in the USA.

For the purposes of this research Debord's theories help to identify ways to critique and resist the capitalist spectacle of the movie industry within my practice as a video artist and activist and I acknowledge that writing in the late 1960's Debord would not have been able to predict our ability to contribute to the spectacle user generated online platforms now offer. My practical research explored working outside of mainstream distribution networks, appropriating movie merchandising, and resisting technological innovations as creative strategies. This exegesis demonstrates how *In the Shadow of Wellywood* satirizes the movie industry through being deliberately unspectacular.

Video Activism

According to media theorists Concha Mateos Martin and Carmen Gaona Pisonero the ideals of video activism were first described in a *Film Quarterly* article from 1968-9 as "a weapon to counter, to talk back and to crack the facade of the lying media of capitalism" (p44). The conceptual and practical aspirations to "crack the façade of capitalism" are central to this research, and I imagine this façade as a spectacular shiny shell surrounding the Hollywood and Wellywood movie industries which hides darker realities beneath. Martin and Pisonero describe video activism as: "an audiovisual discursive practice that sets out to counter a discursive abuse or gap and is carried out by actors outside the dominant power structures. The audiovisual practice engaged in by these subjects of counter power is one of political intervention".¹

¹ Retrieved April 12, 2021 from:
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/298436281_Video_activism_A_descriptive_typology

In the Shadow of Wellywood represents my own desire to act outside of the dominant power structure of the movie industry through its low budget production values which use a recognizably obsolete video format and pre-digital animation techniques. The choice of equipment used for this research considered my environmental responsibilities as a consumer of video technology wishing to move towards a sustainable practice. In continuing to use analogue video equipment, this research explores how one person's refuse can be another's tools for political intervention. The act of refusing to upgrade my analogue video camera technology and related monitors and colour correctors for political and environmental reasons frames this creative practice research as a form of video activism. These production choices are designed to critically distance this work of video art from the surrounding mainstream movie industry and its aesthetics, its politics, and its technical advancements. Distribution strategies for video activists have grown from early closed circuit projects to community television channels, and distributing work via online platforms as technology has evolved. Today the term is often used in reference to citizen journalism and ways protest movements utilize online platforms such as Facebook and Twitter to organize and document events. In 2014 writer Michael Chanan observed that:

every one of the revolutions and popular protest movements that have sprung up in different parts of the world in recent months has taken to the internet in a big way to both organise and express itself. Indeed activists have proved extraordinarily adept in the use of the social media."²

This form of video activism is based on a need for communication whereas I am critiquing the technology itself, specifically the wider political and environmental implications of its use as an artist. In movements Chanan describes the video activists involved are using the dominant means of distribution whereas my research explores acting outside of it, as the pioneering micro cinema and video activism movements established in the USA in the 1960's. The New York alternative video movement's 1971 manifesto *Guerrilla Television* outlined a plan to decentralize television so that the medium could be made by the people for the people.

² Chanan, M. (2014) *Video, activism and the art of small media*. Transnational Cinemas Vol.2.1 Taylor and Francis

Media historian Diedre Boyle explains that “by adopting a sharply critical relationship to broadcast television, they determined to use video to create an alternative to the aesthetically bankrupt and commercially corrupt broadcast medium.”³ Boyles’ definition extends to the use of closed-circuit television installations of televisions and video tape machines at political rallies by activists such as TVTV. In their work *Four More Years* (1972) the group recorded interviews with voters in the Presidential election on video tape and screened them on televisions. Their approach to video activism provided a formative technical and conceptual example for me in choosing to work outside of the broadcasting networks of their era. My research explored the use of closed circuit, or non-networked, video installations to experiment with operating outside of contemporary commercial media distribution systems as the early video activists did. The micro cinema used to screen *In the Shadow of Wellywood* draws inspiration from the independent distribution network established in the USA in creating an artwork which encourages viewers to look away from the spectacle of the internet, and to consider their relationship with screen-based technologies. My research makes an original contribution to the creative field of video activism through considering the wider environmental implications of the new screen-based technologies we use, the ways they are marketed to us, our role as consumers, and our responsibilities for disposal of the equipment once it becomes obsolete.

Research Process

The initial stages of the research process involved exploring the creative and critical potential of a large collection of obsolete video equipment rescued from institutional, business, and private disposal. The test projects undertaken in the development of the final work are discussed in the Methodology section of this chapter. During the filming of *In the Shadow of Wellywood* a series of equipment failures and forced obsolescence led to an aesthetic of adaptation. The resulting inconsistent image qualities helped to create the atmosphere of entropy required for the work in helping to visualize a movie studio system’s decline into disorder. A computer system upgrade forced the professional video capture device I had used

³ Retrieved April 14, 2021 from: https://www.jstor.org/stable/20687964?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents

for many years to become obsolete during production. The low budget replacement recorded noticeable pixilation within the image, but I continued to use it and investigate its inferior properties as a mode of consumer resistance. Noticeable video interlacing and pixilation are embraced throughout the research for their jarring and frustrating effects, and for their ability to challenge the expectation of a spectacular hyperreal image provided by the specifications of the latest format available on the market. 8K video cameras have a 33.17 megapixel sensor whereas the standard definition cameras I used to make *In the Shadow of Wellywood* have a sensor of less than 1 megapixel in size.

My practice responds to the stylistic and conceptual shifts which occur in experimental film and video production once movie industry technologies become available to the avant-garde artist and the amateur through obsolescence, higher education resources, or the consumer market. In working with stop-motion animation and digitally simulating pre-digital effects I am mourning a loss of hand-made and mechanical processes in favour of computer-generated imagery. The visual treatment of *In the Shadow of Wellywood* intentionally stands in critical opposition to current movie industry trends in computer generated imagery, instead drawing inspiration from pre-digital special effects. The moon with a rocket crashed into its eye hovering in the sky over Wellywood acknowledges the influence of the French silent era special effects pioneers the Méliès brothers on my practice.⁴ The less-than-professional aesthetic treatment I have chosen for *In the Shadow of Wellywood* visualizes working outside of the dominant system as dreams of movie stardom turn into nightmares, and the perceived glamour of a film industry lifestyle becomes replaced by the reality of hard work and uncertain conditions. While the phrase “to animate” means literally “to bring to life”, my ready-made figures barely move, because as stand-ins for real Hollywood actors, they have been chosen for conceptual reasons over their level of manipulable articulation or any claims to an actual likeness. The use of readymade figures will be expanded on in Chapter Four in the section on appropriation and copyright.

The style of layer animation references the capabilities of the pre-digital optical film printer, a machine designed to composite multiple layers of film, as used for copying and resizing films, adding titles, and matte work such as bluescreen. In 2019 I met New York based optical

⁴ *Le Voyage dans la Lune* (1902; A Trip to the Moon), directed by Georges Méliès.

printer artist Steve Cossman when he visited Wellington to present his films at a screening organised by Circuit Artist Film and Video, and his description of how this technology relates to the keyframe layer animation of the video software I use greatly informed my conceptual approach to making *In the Shadow of Wellywood*. While the work draws creative inspiration from experimental filmmaking, it is a video work which was made in a production environment which is technically closer to a television studio, and so draws as much inspiration from the independent attitude and distribution strategies of underground video artists as it does from the aesthetics of experimental cinema. Chapter Three titled *The Spectacular Movie Business* examines relationships between the movies and other industries, and considers the attention economy, the economic value the consumer contributes to a chosen media brand in spending time consuming their products; and further contextualizes how these conditions have contributed to the creative development of *In the Shadow of Wellywood*.

A greater understanding of where the raw materials used to make new screen-based devices come from has contributed to my decision to refuse to upgrade and re-purpose where practical. This exegesis positions my creative practice as a form of environmentally conscious video activism which responds to the new materialist writings of theorists Diana Coole and Samantha Frost, and the concept of Ethical Aesthetics formed by Deborah J. Haynes, as outlined in *Chapter Five: A Philosophical Position on Technology and the Environment*. In that chapter I will identify certain connections between political unrest in developing countries containing high deposits of the required mineral resources, and their increased monetary value, and demonstrate how the use of ultra-high-definition television formats such as 8K may be read as politically problematic when used by exhibiting artists. In response to these concerns, I operated an obsolete video equipment library during the mid-stage of the practical research, offering loans of the equipment rescued from disposal.

Key Texts

This section positions the creative research as a form of video activism designed to critique the prevalence of capitalist spectacle within the Hollywood movie industry, and outlines how

adapting Situationist principles of the *dérive*, *détournement*, and psycho-geography contributed to the development of *In the Shadow of Wellywood*. Debord stated that:

the spectacle is both the result and the project of the dominant mode of production. It is not a mere decoration added to the real world. It is the very heart of this real society's unreality. In all of its particular manifestations—news, propaganda, advertising, entertainment, the spectacle represents the dominant model of life. In both form and content, the spectacle serves as a total justification of the conditions and goals of the existing system. ⁵

Debord's feature film of the same name released in 1970 appropriated advertisements, news reel footage and movies to illustrate his philosophies, and provided an influence for the culture jamming artists including Negativland, Craig Baldwin and Soda_Jerk who followed. In making a video work which is technically unspectacular as a critique of the spectacle *In the Shadow of Wellywood* seeks to develop a form of video activism by satirizing the unreal manifestations of the spectacle which Debord identifies. This creative arts research sits within a wider field of scholars responding to instances of the spectacle, and demonstrates how Debord's Situationist theories remain relevant across film and media studies, organizational management, and economics. Key texts framing this research include Mikkel Flyverbom and Juliane Reinecke's *The Spectacle and Organization Studies* (2017)⁶, Leon Gurevitch's *From Edison to Pixar: The Spectacular Screen and the Attention economy from Celluloid to CG* (2015)⁷, Jonathan Beller's *The Cinematic Mode of Production: Attention Economy and the Society of the Spectacle* (2006) Julian Eagles' *Marxism, Anarchism and the Situationists' Theory of Revolution* (2107).⁸ All are connected through an interest in capitalist business systems and how they can be analysed and critiqued, and while my research concentrates on the movies, the notion of the spectacle may be applied to the entertainment industry as a whole. In the text *Disneyworld Corporation* (1996)⁹ French theorist Jean Baudrillard suggested

⁵ *Society of The Spectacle* point 6

⁶ Retrieved April 12, 2021 from:

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/313036163_The_Spectacle_and_Organization_Studies

⁷ Retrieved April 12, 2021 from: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/10304312.2014.986062>

⁸ Retrieved April 12, 2021 from: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0896920514547826>

⁹ Retrieved April 12, 2021 from: <https://journals.uvic.ca/index.php/ctheory/article/view/14846/5716>

that Debord might have referred to Disneyland as "Spectacular Inc." recognizing that the "happiest place on earth" is a business with a spectacular façade.

In *Of Spectacularization* (2003)¹⁰ new media theorist Craig J. Saper identifies two stages of spectacularization in academic thought. Oxford Reference defines the term as "the process of producing a representation in the form of a major spectacle: for instance, television commercials with extravagant budgets and visual effects". The first stage in Saper's view involves ideological analyses that "see through an illusory spectacle world to manipulative apparatuses of social control", while the second stage moves towards synthetic analyses that use spectacles' structure as a basis for investigating "how to produce counter-, or artificial, communication using strategies borrowed from modern forms including scandals, spin, family drama, etc." As a work which is a hybrid of old and new technologies and reference points, *In the Shadow of Wellywood* draws from both stages. Saper's suggestion that "as soon as artificial, or infidel, borrowing starts, parody appears" can be applied to the way my work was made, specifically the strategy of appropriating action figures depicting movie stars to produce a work of counter-communication which sees through the illusion of the spectacle, and talks back to the mainstream movie industry as a manipulative apparatus of social control.

Alongside Debord's work other key texts for framing the practical parameters of this research have included: *Expanded Cinema* by Gene Youngblood (1971), and Stewart Brand's *Whole Earth Catalog: Access to Tools* (1968). Kathryn Ramey's *Experimental Film-making: Break the Machine* (2015) exemplified an essential attitude towards production, while the Incite Journal of Experimental Media's *Issue #4* on the US micro-cinema movement (2014) offered a contemporary strategy for distribution. Ramey cites Debord's Situationist tactic of "turning expressions of the capitalist system against itself" as a central principle of "breaking the machine", a term she uses to describe adapting obsolete technology for creative purposes, as I have also done. (Ramey p.8) Ramey believes that obsolescence frees technology from its commercial constraints and enables a mode of avant-garde criticality. The aim of my research is to apply this principle to analogue video, for as Ramey attests, breaking the machine is

¹⁰ Retrieved April 12, 2021 from: <https://jcrt.org/archives/04.2/saper.shtml>

“about repurposing technology, be it silver-based, analogue or digital image and sound tools and processes, for artistic expression” (p.1).

Film theorist Leon Gurevitch’s writing on the spectacle and the industrialized technologies of its production has informed my understanding of the complex relationships between the movies and other industries, as outlined in *Chapter Three: The Spectacular Movie Business*. Gurevitch’s explanation of how computer-aided design linked developments in the automotive industry with animation and toy manufacturing through the *Transformers* movie franchise is an important point of praxis for considering how my chosen materials are produced, the cultural authority they achieve through these connections, and how they may be subverted. *In the Shadow of Wellywood* explores these complex relationships through appropriating a mix of official and bootleg action figures depicting Hollywood actors, thus responding to Debord’s term pseudocyclical time “a time that has been transformed by industry”.¹¹ The production process resisted pseudocyclical time through making animation in an un-professional manner, the treatment embracing a rough use of techniques which would not be acceptable when working in the movie industry. Debord observed that:

the entire consumable time of modern society ends up being treated as a raw material for various new products put on the market as socially controlled uses of time.

A product that already exists in a form suitable for consumption may nevertheless serve as raw material for some other product.¹²

The readymade models I used to create characters and sets are products which already existed in another form but had been rejected by the consumer (and re-entered into distribution/circulation through discount stores or second-hand shops), in turn becoming raw materials for my work. In his book *Spectacle, Attention, Counter-Memory* (1989) author Jonathan Crary remarked that “modern conceptions of spectacle are distinct for the presence of the definite article” (Crary p.96). The definite articles of the spectacle I am explicitly concerned with include the movie industry, its technologies, and its related marketing and merchandise, for as Debord recognized:

Waves of enthusiasm for particular products are propagated by all the

¹¹ *Society of The Spectacle* point 151

¹² *Society of The Spectacle* point 151

communications media. A film sparks a fashion craze; a magazine publicizes night spots which in turn spin off different lines of products. Those who collect the trinkets that have been manufactured for the sole purpose of being collected are accumulating commodity indulgences ¹³

I consider the plastic models, toys, and action figures which were used in the making of *In the Shadow of Wellywood* to be the trinkets Debord described, and their use in this research project seeks to establish a visual language critical of their means of productions. In butchering official movie themed figures, mixing them with bootleg characters, re-assembling and painting them crudely, then filming them with obsolete equipment I am signalling contempt for the systems which originally produced them. In his text *Comments on the Society of the Spectacle* published in 1988, Debord recognized the growing environmental consequences of the spectacle, further stating that:

The spectacle makes no secret of the fact that certain dangers surround the wonderful order it has established. Ocean pollution and the destruction of equatorial forests threaten oxygen renewal; the earth's ozone layer is menaced by industrial growth; nuclear radiation accumulates irreversibly. It merely concludes that none of these things matter.¹⁴

Situationist Tactics

This research employed the Situationist tactics of the *dérive*, *détournement*, and psychogeography to make and distribute the work. In providing personal working definitions of these well-established terms I am demonstrating how Situationist concepts can inform a contemporary practice of video activism. The Situationists identified the *dérive* as “a mode of experimental behaviour linked to the conditions of urban society, a technique of transient passage through various ambiances” and the “study of the specific effects of the geographical environment, consciously organized or not on the emotions and behaviour of individuals”. Within the context of my own research, the *dérive* became a regular circuit of thrift and

¹³ *Society of The Spectacle* point 67

¹⁴ *Comments on the Society of the Spectacle* point xiii

discount stores and e-waste collection points assembling the various materials and equipment required to create the work. The term “discount store” is a general reference to the \$2 Shop, 123 Mart, Price Busters, 2Cheap, Dollar Ape, Wisebuys genre of retail stores, all carrying variations of the same stock; party supplies and costumes, homewares, toys, and crafts. *Détournement* involves creating a detour or distraction through the appropriation and altering of media to change its meaning, in my research the term specifically applies to the repurposing of movie themed action figures to create an industry counter-narrative. *Psycho-geography* is a re-mapping of the city to suit an individual’s purposes, such as playing on my tenuous connections to the surrounding movie industry. The geographically ambiguous locations of *Wellywood* were limited by the kitses other modelers has disposed of and were deliberately chosen for their ability to create a non-place. The mix of American and European model buildings and tropical foliage indicates that Wellington has become unrecognizable after its transformation into *Wellywood*. Set building decisions are further contextualized in Chapter Eight. The Situationists followed the Marxist tradition of re-evaluating the place of the worker under capitalism; and proposed the notion of play¹⁵ in response to increasing workplace automation. My research approaches play through making a video work which conceptually reduces advances in movie industry special effects to “playing with toys”. *In the Shadow of Wellywood* playfully reflects upon the plight of the film worker through its chosen style of animation, examining the tensions existing between work and play within the creative industries. In these contexts, artists are required to balance personal passions with the need to make a living. Statistics NZ data released In December 2020 revealed that approximately 21,900 screen industry employees earned a total of \$940 million over the 2017-18 period, with an average yearly income of \$42,900, when the median annual income was \$51,800. The total includes investments made by private businesses and the government through the Film Commission and 4,168 enterprises including companies and self-employed individuals were surveyed.¹⁶

¹⁵ Debord, G. (1958) *Contribution to Situationist Definition of Play* Internationale Situationniste1 Situationist International Online. Retrieved April 15 2021: <http://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/si/play.html>

¹⁶ Calculation based on Statics NZ website data retrieved December 10, 2020 from: <https://www.stats.govt.nz/information-releases/screen-industry-employment-data-201718>

In 2012 economic theorist Julian Eagles, a scholar who has researched the influence of Situationist thinking on the anti-globalization movement, described such actions as “playful festivals” organized by “secret societies” to “contest consumer capitalism”.

Eagles’ description shares conceptual similarities with my own desire to create an alternative to the dominant movie studio system and operate at its fringes through screening work in local artist run spaces and independent venues. My decision to work outside of established art galleries was a self-determined means of exploring modes of independent distribution, rather than being a direct critique of these environments. I have explored the principles Eagles’ identifies through locating my practice within independent micro and expanded cinema projects as playful festivals which exist outside of mainstream commercial entertainment. The obsolete video equipment library I initiated as part of my research process operated much like a secret society, promoted by word of mouth and located within an unmarked room in the College of Creative Arts’ basement. While Eagles’ research focussed specifically on earlier groups including the Occupy movement, environmental action group Extinction Rebellion continue to adapt Situationist principles much as Eagles had previously identified.

In 2018, Extinction Rebellion (XR) called upon the BBC to tell the full truth on the climate and ecological emergency. In an open letter published in The Guardian the group claimed that the BBC “as a respected media voice in the UK, needs to play a key role in enabling the transformative change needed”. In 2019, members of XR protested outside the offices of Google and YouTube in London after a Guardian investigation revealed the company has made donations to more than a dozen US organisations who have campaigned against climate legislation. The protestors demanded that YouTube stop providing a platform for climate change deniers to spread their message. At the *CogX Festival of AI and Emerging Technology* held in London in 2018 (a year into the research period) , Dr Gail Bradbrook, a molecular biophysicist and XR co-founder stated that:

You can be at this conference with all this technology around and getting a bit of a hard-on about it, ... but this is not going to solve this crisis, right? We are in the middle of a biological annihilation ...the ultimate cause is over-consumption, especially by the rich

... as we are wanking over technology solutions... and talking about things which mean massive extraction of more resources... or ripping off the global south.¹⁷

Dr Bradbrook's concerns are caused in part by the increased extraction of rare earth metals used in the manufacture of flat screen TVs, smartphones, and tablets. Eagles notes that post-1968, a new form of spectacle could be distinguished, one which featured "a highly developed (Americanized) system of commodity production and consumption, and the need to eliminate an unexpected upsurge in revolutionary activity". As Eagles states, the Situationists expressed "an 'apocalyptic' vision of revolution, claiming that a proletarian uprising, against modern capitalism, would occur abruptly and rapidly overturn spectacular society."¹⁸ The narrative of *In the Shadow of Wellywood* envisions a proletarian uprising as disenfranchised film stars turn against an exploitative studio system.

In his *Comments on The Society of the Spectacle* (1988) Debord stated that since his original text was written we have entered an era of "integrated spectacle" which could be experienced in "diffuse or concentrated forms".¹⁹ Following Debord's observation, Eagles suggests that "incessant technological renewal is a feature of spectacular society in its diffuse rather than concentrated form".²⁰ Portable screen based technologies such as the smart phone or tablet are diffuse instances of the spectacle as they constantly surround us and are integrated into our everyday, whereas going to the cinema is a concentrated experience. The ways that movies are distributed has changed and the collective social experience of watching with strangers in a public cinema at a pre-arranged time is being replaced by the individual experience of streaming content to a smartphone or tablet on demand. This doctoral research presents a challenge to that trend by creating a micro cinema to screen *In the Shadow of Wellywood*. Eagles attests "that if each individual is to achieve self-realization and experience real freedom, this requires, in the words of Debord, a 'conscious creation of situations'".²¹ My engagement with Situationist principles is based on the desire

¹⁷ Retrieved April 12, 2021 from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s0AizkJM3nw&t=205s>

¹⁸ Retrieved April 12, 2021

¹⁹ *Comments on The Society of the Spectacle* point iv

²⁰ Retrieved April 12, 2021 from:

<https://fastcapitalism.journal.library.uta.edu/index.php/fastcapitalism/article/view/262/304>

²¹ Retrieved April 12, 2021 from:

<https://fastcapitalism.journal.library.uta.edu/index.php/fastcapitalism/article/view/262/304>

to create a critical alternative to the dominant capitalist system, specifically involving self-realized movie production and distribution.

Methodology

My research methodology for this doctoral project was informed by the micro cinema movement in the USA (Jonas Mekas' Anthology Film Archive, Craig Baldwin's OtherCinema) the repurposing of equipment demonstrated by experimental filmmakers (Steve Cossman, Pat O'Neill, Emily Boyle) and psychedelic light artists (Joshua White), expanded cinema collaborations (Andy Warhol and the Velvet Underground), and culture jamming (Soda_Jerk, Negativland). The practical research used a creative arts methodology of experimentation and iterative testing to develop a form of video activism critiquing the surrounding movie industry through continuing to use obsolete video equipment. The creative process adapted Situationist principles of the *dérive*, *détournement*, and psycho-geography as discussed in Chapter Two, and involved a series of test projects informing the development of the final video work *In the Shadow of Wellywood*.

Fig.1 & 2. A selection of the video equipment rescued from disposal. Photographs by Mike Heynes



The practical component of this research has explored the creative possibilities and critical potential of refusing to upgrade video equipment. Instead, I continued to use a large collection of obsolete analogue cameras, mixers, and monitors rescued from disposal as a means of resisting capitalism's spectacular influence on my practice. The lenses and sensors of the analogue cameras in the collection still worked, and their live signal output can be captured digitally and edited using computer software. As such, the resulting video work is digitally produced but conceptually framed by the technological conditions of the pre-digital era. In creating a miniature scale movie studio designed around the use of this unwanted equipment, I am questioning the authority of the surrounding movie industry and satirizing its spectacular technological achievements. The test projects conducted during the creative research were designed to explore the conceptual considerations of my chosen technology and materials, to help develop a network of sound artists to collaborate on the movie soundtrack, and to test potential screening options and venues for the final work. The resulting experimentally animated video *In the Shadow of Wellywood* and the micro cinema used to screen the work satirize mainstream movie studio systems of production and distribution. The test projects conducted in the development of the final work explored strategies for resisting the spectacle of capitalism, and all were based upon micro and expanded cinema principles such as repurposing, equipment sharing, and screening work in alternative venues. The projects outlined below are discussed in greater detail in *Chapter Six: Developing Strategies for Resisting the Spectacle*:

- 1) *Wellywood Outsider*: A movie studio created in miniature with obsolete video technology which could be used to satirize a range of cinematic concepts and develop a body of creative work. The studio was based upon the camera, set design, special effects, and casting departments of a Hollywood movie studio. The studio was developed through exploring tropes of Hollywood cinema including the road movie, action and musical genres, and the cult of celebrity. A tour referencing the experience offered by Universal Studios was presented at the confirmation stage of the research. The resulting video work *In the Shadow of Wellywood* was created over three years with the following projects contributing to the direction of the final work.
- 2) A temporary YouTube channel designed to promote the Wellywood Outsider movie studio exploring the Situationist principles of psycho-geography and detournement

through exaggerating my connections to Wellywood and the stars involved in the production.

- 3) A series of expanded cinema projects with musicians including:
 - A collaboration with songwriter Ebony Lamb of the alternative country group Eb & Sparrow for a 13-date national tour celebrating the release of their album *Seeing Things*. Sets from the studio backlot were repurposed to create a video projection as a backdrop for the band during their concerts.
 - Ongoing experimental collaborations that allowed me to test work in progress on a public audience
 - *Barnacles of the Balls of Industry* a collaboration with *In the Shadow of Wellywood* sound composer Simon Cuming
- 4) Building a simple analogue video mixer designed replace a failed piece of equipment
- 5) *Refuse To Upgrade* an obsolete video equipment library designed to encourage my peers to consider their position as a consumer or critic of new video technology.
- 6) *Gentrifier's Delight*, a work of video activism informed by the Situationist principles of psycho-geography and detournement.
- 7) A temporary micro cinema created to screen a test version of *In the Shadow of Wellywood* as a part of a local community video art festival

After exploring a range of video activist strategies designed to critique the capitalist spectacle of the Hollywood movie industry, the micro cinema was chosen to present the final experimentally animated work. This exegesis contextualizes *In the Shadow of Wellywood* as the representation of an independent model of movie production and distribution with the ability to satirize the “real thing”.

Fig. 3. The miniature video studio Image by Mike Heynes. **Fig. 4.** The finished video image from *In the Shadow of Wellywood*



Fig. 5. The true scale of figures and sets. Image by Mike Heynes. **Fig.6.** *In the Shadow of Wellywood* video still



Chapter Two: Wellywood and Hollywood

Our National Cinema

In 1995 actor Sam Neill returned to New Zealand after co-starring in *Jurassic Park*, to present a self-reflective documentary exploring the dark side of our national cinema, which he described as “a cinema of unease” developing over the previous 15 years. Neill describes the collective oeuvre as “people on a journey, escaping somewhere, moving on, a lonely road through an isolated landscape, an indifferent place” and recognizes how the films of this era gave us “permission to dream”, however macabre their subjects may have been. Neill’s first starring role was in *Sleeping Dogs*, a 1977 film adaptation of C.K. Stead’s novel *Smith’s Dream*. Directed by Roger Donaldson, this story of an authoritative police state and an ordinary man pushed to his limits, arguably marked the beginning of our national cinema, and set the tone for the films that followed soon after: *Beyond Reasonable Doubt* (1980), *Bad Blood* (1981) *Smash Palace* (1981), and *Goodbye Pork Pie* (1981). Neill suggests that their collective depiction of “authorities as violent, corrupt, or foolish could ultimately be read as a form of artistic revenge” on our conservative and oppressive political system and societal values. He credits the influence of American films *Easy Rider* (1969) and *Two Lane Blacktop* (1971) on his film-making peers as they were notable for their young directors, low budgets, and an ability to return substantial profits despite their counter-cultural themes. Neill describes these films as “unabashed b-movies in which the central image is the road with its promise of freedom and anarchy, the kind of films that would give the grown-ups the maximum discomfort” (36:15). I saw the road movie *Goodbye Pork Pie* directed by Geoff Murphy at the cinema as a ten-year old when it was released. I went with a friend’s family who were expecting a local version of Disney’s *Herbie* series of films (1968-1980) which followed the adventures of a Volkswagen Beetle racing car with a mind of his own. Instead, we watched the story of an unemployed man who steals a yellow mini from a rental company, and his friendship with a hitchhiker as they attempt to drive the car the length of the country.

New Zealand cinema was an essential force of critique within the tense political climate of the Springbok rugby tour protests, anti-nuclear movement, and homosexual law reform bill, all of which challenged mainstream conservative views. But for me, the excitement of seeing

representations of ourselves on screen became overshadowed as our industry was internationalized, with our landscape used as a fictional setting for telling other people's stories. Following their local successes, some of our most inspiring directors moved to Hollywood and made what I consider to be less than inspirational movies. Roger Donaldson went on to make *Cocktail* (1988) starring Tom Cruise as a bartender. Geoff Murphy directed the Western *Young Guns II* (1990) with Emilio Estevez, and *Freejack* (1992) a science fiction action movie featuring Mick Jagger.

In reflecting upon the internationalization of our film industry during the 1990's, Neill suggests that this is not a uniquely New Zealand issue as "wherever films are made in English the magnetic force of Hollywood is both measurable and problematic". Made 25 years after Neill's documentary, *In the Shadow of Wellywood* reflects upon the influence of Hollywood on our national cinema.

The Uruguay Round

The WTO Uruguay Round of negotiations ratified in April 1994 changed international broadcasting and trade regulations, reduced import tariffs on consumer goods, and opened access to New Zealand for overseas film and television productions. The TRIPs agreement on *Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights*²² opened our national airwaves to international competition, allowing international corporations the same access as previously available to local producers. Through remaking eight American movie studios logos, my video installation artwork *News of the Uruguay Round* (2016) reflected upon how local culture has been overshadowed by overseas productions since the agreement. The Tristar, Paramount, 20th Century Fox, Columbia, New Line Cinema, Universal, Miramax, and Warner Brothers logos were created using a variety of basic stop-motion and animatronic effects.

The deliberately shonky deconstruction and over-simplification of the originals was designed to question the authority of their respective studios, and to suggest that the spectacle of the surrounding movie industry is beginning to lose its sheen.

²² Retrieved April 21 2021 from: https://www.wto.org/english/thewto_e/whatis_e/tif_e/agrm7_e.htm

Fig. 7. *News of the Uruguay Round* (2016) Mike Heynes. Enjoy Gallery Installation view



Following the WTO's Uruguay Round of trade talks, the first \$2 shops also opened in New Zealand, offering bargain-priced imported goods, including some of the same toys I have used to make *In the Shadow of Wellywood*. The NZ customs website states that import tariffs were reduced with concessions being "generally approved for goods where no suitable alternative goods are produced or manufactured locally in NZ"²³ such "suitable alternatives" appear to be based on lowest price rather than product quality. Reducing import tariffs on consumer goods threatened our local manufacturing industries and the skill base of NZ workers, but as an artist with limited financial means, it fuelled my "\$2 production" strategy as a form of video activism, harnessing the ability to create a complete narrative world on a micro- budget. Plastic toys are a physical manifestation of the petrochemical era, and Chapter Five discusses the problematics and critical advantages of their use in the production of activist media. However, I acknowledge that I am implicated in the capitalist developments I am critiquing through my own choice of materials. The TRIPs agreement allowed the US-produced television shows *Hercules The Legendary Journeys* (1995-9) and *Xena Warrior Princess* (1995-2001) to be filmed in New Zealand, proving the viability of international co-productions. The two series' provided opportunities for local crews and international exposure for our

²³ Retrieved April 12 2021 from: <https://www.customs.govt.nz/business/tariffs/>

actors. The success of *Hercules* and *Xena* paved the way for Wellington director Peter Jackson's *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy (2001-3) to be filmed here as a co-production with US studio New Line Cinema. The films grossed \$2.9 billion worldwide and were collectively nominated for 30 Academy Awards, winning 17. The films were ground-breaking both for their special effects, and for Jackson's decision to film all three features simultaneously. Due to the complex nature of international co-productions, I will be using the terms "Hollywood" and "studio system" to describe the mainstream American movie industry including its business model, cultural and political influence, and partnerships with studios such as Weta Workshop.

Contemporary National Cinema

The New Zealand Film Commission was established in 1982 to grow the local film industry and the crown entity continues to fund and promote locally made films, but since the popularity of *The Lord of the Rings* their role has grown to include brokering international co-productions. This research considers the pressures of internationalization including the economic benefits of branded movie tourism specifically relating to *The Lord of the Rings*, and overseas production companies demanding economic benefits for filming here, despite our unique landscape locations. Under the WTO TRIPs agreement overseas companies are entitled to the same access to opportunities as local companies, however the balance appears to have shifted towards the international studio market in recent years. The Commission's website gives some indication of their current economic priorities: The section for local filmmakers provides funding guidelines and the invitation to sign up for an email newsletter containing deadlines.²⁴ The section for international companies wishing to film here contains direct lines of communication to film experts via email and phone with the following invitation: "We offer advice, support and introductions to help your screen production access New Zealand's natural and commercial advantages".²⁵ This section of the website contains a gallery of location images and the proclamation that "with fantasy worlds loved by millions of fans, our stunning and easy-to-access locations also "double as" US, UK, Asian and European settings".²⁶

²⁴ Retrieved May 2 2021 from: <https://www.nzfilm.co.nz/funding-and-support>

²⁵ Retrieved May 2 2021 from: <https://www.nzfilm.co.nz/international>

²⁶ Retrieved May 2 2021 from: <https://www.nzfilm.co.nz/international/locations>

I am not disputing the creative value of the growing canon of films the Commission funds or their contribution to our national identity, but questioning the cultural and economic value of subsidizing the making of commercially motivated movies by overseas companies in Aotearoa when the profits go offshore, instead of developing greater support for local productions when the results are proven. Māori director, writer, and actor Taika Waititi is an example of a practitioner from my generation who established his career with Film Commission funding making New Zealand films, and has since achieved international acclaim for his work. Waititi has a history of using his influence as a form of political activism, as evidenced by the strong anti-racist themes that re-occur in his films. Waititi first directed the award winning Film Commission funded short *Two Cars One Night* (2003), leading to funding for features *Eagle VS Shark* (2007), *Boy* (2010), and *What We Do in the Shadows* (2013). *Hunt for the Wilderpeople* (2016) co-starred Sam Neill and humorously recreated cinematic tropes including the man on the run through the New Zealand landscape. Like Murphy and Donaldson, Waititi moved on to working with Hollywood studios, but with far greater success. In 2017 he directed feature *Thor Ragnarok* for Marvel Studios, and an episode of the *Star Wars Mandalorian* TV series in 2018. His Film *Jojo Rabbit* (2019) won an Academy Award for Best Screenplay Adaptation, and he was the first indigenous filmmaker to be nominated. Waititi's success indicates both the commercial and creative potential of Film Commission funding in the early stages of a director's career. *Jojo Rabbit*, the story of a boy in the Hitler Youth movement was adapted from the novel *Caging Skies* by Christine Leunens. In playing the role of the boy's imaginary friend Adolph Hitler, Waititi challenged the continuation of racist attitudes in contemporary society. In an interview on US television programme The Today Show his response to the question of racist radicalisation was that it felt "weird that in 2019 someone still had to make a movie trying to explain to people not to be a Nazi". *Jojo Rabbit* continued Waititi's approach of writing, directing and acting in his films as previously seen in *Boy*, in which an absent father returns to his son's life and amongst a range of advice discourages him from exploring Nazi ideology.

Soft Colonialism

Where *News of the Uruguay Round* mourns the loss of our culture in favour of international productions from a Pākehā perspective, the concerns run much deeper for Māori. Alexander Stronach, (Kāi Tahu) a novelist and poet, believes that Jackson's *Lord of the Rings* and *Hobbit* films "brought a wave of cultural imperialism that hides our history, our traditions, our people and our language underneath a fantastical blanket. It might be comforting for some, but it's suffocating for us". Stronach recognizes the highly problematic aspects of New Zealand living "under the shadow of three movies that are coming up on two decades old", and sees the problem as having "three strands of an endless garbage braid: the anti-worker laws passed to make the Hobbit movies happen, the fact that Americans and Brits have been bringing LOTR into every single conversation about us for nigh-on two decades now, and the erasure of Māori mana whenua in service of some books written by an Englishman about a fantastical England". He considers the last point worst of all, claiming that it is a "cruel echo of colonialism, a sort of soft colonialism: by making Aotearoa a proxy for England, you say Aotearoa *is* England, and by saying that, you're recreating the mindset of the people who stole our land, who beat our language and culture out of us".²⁷

As a Pākehā male with no iwi affiliations, I grew up with the notion of Aotearoa being a proxy for England, much as Stronach identifies. Three documentary films produced by The National Film Unit show that our government saw the land as a farm for England, and how our nation was promoted overseas. *Farming in New Zealand* (1952), *Wayleggo* (1965), and *Impressions of New Zealand* (1985)²⁸ all contain images of white men working the land, and their wives baking for the farm hands. My father came to New Zealand from England as a merchant seaman working on refrigerated ships used by the meat trade. He settled here becoming a freezing works inspector, and eventually a negotiator for New Zealand's international meat trade. However, growing up in the city I remained disconnected from any real experience of New Zealand's primary industry and its colonizing effects. As a child the dominant imagery of the New Zealand male involved farming, playing rugby and drinking beer, as depicted in the

²⁷ Retrieved from: <https://thespinoff.co.nz/books/03-09-2020/aotearoa-is-not-middle-earth/>

²⁸ All titles available online at <https://www.nzonscreen.com/>

film *Carry Me Back* (1982). The camp aesthetic of *In The Shadow of Wellywood* challenges these limiting and anachronistic notions of kiwi masculinity.

Long before *The Lord of the Rings*, two feature films *Patu!* and *Utu*, both released in 1983, provided an unsurpassed understanding of Māori tangata whenua and historic grievances for my generation of Pākehā New Zealanders. *Utu* (meaning revenge), was set during the land wars of the 1870's. Director Geoff Murphy's re-interpretation of a Hollywood western placed Māori leader Te Wheke (Anzac Wallace) as a hero in the fight against British colonisation. *Patu!* (meaning war) followed the 1981 Springbok rugby tour protests. In 1972 the New Zealand Government signed the Gleneagles Agreement in which Commonwealth countries pledged to boycott sporting events with South Africa due to its racist policy of apartheid. In issuing visas to the South African Springbok team for their 1981 tour our government broke the agreement. The decision was made during an election year and the incumbent National Party were clearly worried about alienating their voter base of rugby fans. At the time of filming, director Merata Mita was the presenter of *Koha*, New Zealand Television's first weekly programme offering a Māori perspective, and has since been widely recognized for "decolonizing the screen".²⁹ The large *Patu!* crew required people with the right political motivation, technical skills and access to equipment. Included in the credits are director Roger Donaldson, cinematographer Alun Bolliger who filmed *Beyond Reasonable Doubt* and *Goodbye Pork Pie*, television cameramen Leon Narbey, Richard S.Long and Allen Guilford, and editor Annie Collins. As a young person, the knowledge that people from the creative industries had assisted in supporting and documenting the anti-tour movement demonstrated the potential of film making as a revolutionary force.

The Movie Themed Experience

A Google search for "Rivendell" shows the imaginary location used in *The Lord of the Rings* film trilogy listed as a real location within Kaitoke Regional Park in Upper Hutt, about 45 minute's drive north of Wellington. While this listing objectively acknowledges the site used,

²⁹ *How Mum Decolonized the Screen* (2018) Documentary by Heperi Mita

the Wellington Greater Regional Council website suggests the experience might be lacking something, stating that:

While it's not quite the mystical setting that Rivendell was in the films, the native bush and sheltered area are just as captivating. And if you need a little helping hand to see the setting in its full glory, we installed a replica elvish archway to jog your imagination.

A Film Tourism case study on the Tourism NZ website shows how the government has continued to capitalize on the Middle-Earth connection:

New Zealand: Home of Middle-earth. Tourism New Zealand has successfully marketed New Zealand as the home of Middle-earth for the past 15 years. The 100% Pure Middle-earth, 100% Pure New Zealand marketing strategy focused on converting the international attention New Zealand drew from starring in The Hobbit Trilogy, into travel. Tourism New Zealand's work through both marketing and PR was designed to demonstrate how easy it is for people to come to New Zealand, experience Middle-Earth's stunning landscapes, embracing people and unique activities. Tourism New Zealand worked in partnership with Warner Bros. Pictures to leverage The Hobbit Trilogy. This included PR activities prior to, during and after each film's premiere.

The Wellywood Sign

In his book *Hollywood Cinema and the Real Los Angeles* author Mark Shiel explains how Hollywood remakes its surrounding city:

As movies about the movies made clear, replicating their physical and social characteristics in their design and construction, and asserting a semi-autonomy of the real city in which they were located and upon which they relied. Because of these characteristics, and their reproduction and amplification of the real world on movie sets, each of the studios came to resemble what Jean Baudrillard called a simulacrum—that is a product of “the generation by models of a real that is without origin or reality” (Sheil p.128).

Shiel's reflection that in Hollywood “movie props, homes of the stars, and movie theatres embodied qualities similar to the studios themselves, if on a smaller scale” (p. 129) is also true of Wellington, although there are fundamental differences between the two cities.

Wellington is a capital city and built around government agencies, it was established more than 100 years before the arrival of the film industry and is much smaller than Los Angeles which grew simultaneously. In March 2010 the Wellington Airport Company announced plans to erect a “WELLYWOOD” sign in celebration of the city’s film industry achievements.

The proposed 30m long Hollywood style sign on airport land would mark the entrance to Miramar, the suburb which is home to Jackson’s movie studios. News of the proposed sign made international papers with *The Independent* reporting that the airport's chief executive, Steve Fitzgerald, claimed the sign would help put Wellington on "everyone's bucket list", and he believed that "to be relevant on the world tourism trail, we need to shout about why we are great. Wellington has already produced two of the top-five highest-grossing films of all time, and there are high hopes that there is much more success to come." According to New Zealand online newspaper *Stuff*, a source working on a current film in Wellington said the sign was “insulting and diminished the city's reputation for creativity. All the guys I know that are working on the film are like, ‘Oh my God, what a cringe’, and that's from people in the industry. We do some very creative stuff; there's some very talented people out there.

For someone to be blowing our horn in an unoriginal way is really a slap in the face." Actor Sir Ian McKellen, who played Gandalf the wizard in *The Lord of the Rings* movie trilogy, told the *Dominion Post* he was baffled by the airport's effort to erect the sign, which would mimic the famous Hollywood version, stating that "I think that would be a very odd sign to put up. Middle-Earth - I'd approve of that". The Hollywood Chamber of Commerce became aware of the proposed sign and threatened legal action, claiming breach of copyright, and the plans for the Wellywood sign were altered.

Fig. 8. The Wellington sign. Photograph by Mike Heynes.



I assert that the resulting WELLINGTON sign is an example of the ubiquity of capitalist imagery Debord referred to as the *Spectacle*. It is a signifier of corporate determination to mark its territory in a way for all to see, despite negative public reaction to their original plan, echoing Debord's comments that "the root of the spectacle is that oldest of all social specializations, the specialization of power. The spectacle plays the specialized role of speaking in the name of all the other activities."³⁰

Weta's Colonizing Monuments

This exegesis argues that the influence Weta Workshop has on Wellington's public art is a form of colonization, as the company's sculptural designs demonstrate a lack of cultural understanding, and a corresponding inability to perceive how the works may be read in situ. By evaluating the partnerships required to bring these projects to fruition and analysing the ways they are reported on in the media, it becomes evident that Weta Workshop are afforded these opportunities based on their technical abilities, along with the desire of those commissioning the work to be associated with the company's movie industry achievements, rather than through a genuine desire to contribute to a more nuanced and complex reading of Aotearoa's national identity. In 2011 Weta installed a sculpture at the edge of Civic Square in central Wellington celebrating the All Blacks and the Rugby World Cup being held in New Zealand. The bronze depiction of two rugby teams in a line-out vying for the ball cost \$350,000 to produce and was a partnership with the Wellington City Council who provided the site. An article reported that "the sculpture was based on a heavily modified lift performed by the players, after Weta Workshop found their regular lineout a bit boring", showing the company's propensity for altering existing narratives to suit their own purposes. All Black Victor Vito, a model for the sculpture described the process of designing the scene saying that "it ended up being lineout lifts with one-legged lifts with a bit of basketball layout jumping. We had to give a bit of everything really, if you look at it, it's terrible technique."³¹ Head of Weta Workshop Sir Richard Taylor acknowledged that the low relief waves on each side of

³⁰ *Society of the Spectacle* point 23

³¹ Retrieved April 12, 2021 from: <https://www.stuff.co.nz/entertainment/arts/5179724/Weta-unveils-World-Cup-sculpture>

the sculpture were influenced by turn-of-the-century Chinese and Russian art movements, but it is difficult to see any direct connection to New Zealand and rugby by referencing those cultural aesthetics as China has never qualified to play in the cup, while Russia qualified for the first time in 2011. Taylor's decision to appropriate imagery from other countries rather than incorporating Māori imagery appears dismissive of Aotearoa's indigenous culture and could be read as an indication of Weta Workshop's ongoing colonizing attitudes.

Political Influence

The influence of the Wellywood movie industry over government policy at both the national and local council levels becomes concerning. In 2019 Peter Jackson and partner Fran Walsh backed mayoral candidate Andy Foster over the incumbent Mayor and arts portfolio holder Justin Lester. In September 2019, a month before the Mayoral election, Radio New Zealand reported that "Weta Digital asked staff to support mayoral candidate Andy Foster". According to journalist Laura Dooney:

Leaked emails show Weta Digital staff in Wellington expressed concern about being asked to go and support the campaign launch of a mayoral candidate financially backed by Sir Peter Jackson. The messages show some replied to an all-staff message - saying they weren't sure it was ethical for the company to be suggesting staff support Andy Foster's campaign launch last month.³²

In a *New York Times* article following Foster's election, "People do talk about it as a company town," said Bryce Edwards, a veteran political commentator and lecturer at Victoria University in Wellington. "The business has a lot of control over the infrastructure and how the town operates." Filmmakers, Dr Edwards added, "have become the strongest lobbyists in New Zealand. They have immense power".³³

³² Retrieved April 12, 2021 from: <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/398456/weta-digital-asked-staff-to-support-mayoral-candidate-andy-foster>

³³ Retrieved April 12, 2021 from: <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/15/world/asia/peter-jackson-new-zealand-wellington-mayor.html>

The Hobbit Law

In his book *Art and Postcapitalism: Aesthetic Labour, Automation, and Value Production* artist and critic Dave Beech notes that “charting the tendencies of capitalism’s hostility to art is extremely valuable as part of a postcapitalist political project – not only for art but for an understanding of capitalism generally.” (p.27) I would argue that a similar form of hostility was expressed by the Wellywood film industry (representing capitalism) in the way it treated its workers (representing art), during the filming of the *Hobbit* trilogy.

The ‘Hobbit Law’ passed by the previous National Government in 2010, banned unionization in the industry, for the specific benefit of Warner Brothers over the rights of local crews and actors working on the *Hobbit* trilogy. I began this research during a time of positive change for our local film industry with the incoming Labour government promising to rewrite the law to allow collective bargaining. As an artist working across a range of media, exhibiting in galleries, online, and in alternative spaces, I believe there is value in understanding the complex relationships between commerce and creativity across our broader professional field. In April of 2018, *The New Zealand Herald* published an article entitled “Is the Hobbit trilogy really that bad? Yes- here’s why”³⁴, reporting the release of a new three-part YouTube documentary series by American film essayist and reviewer Lindsay Ellis, focusing on the problematic production of *The Hobbit* films and the resulting Hobbit law: *The Hobbit: A Long-Expected Autopsy (Part 1/2)*,³⁵ *The Battle of Five Studios (Part 2/2)*,³⁶ *The Desolation of Warners (Part 3/2)*.³⁷ Ellis has been reviewing films through her YouTube channel since 2008, and their popularity and potential influence is reflected in her 30 million channel views. In *Fan Cultures* (2002) theorist Matt Hills “argued that there were structurally different ways of hybridizing academic and fan identities” and discussed “fan- scholars” as fans using academic concepts within their writing, outside the licensed spaces of “pro” academia” (p.15). Ellis could be described as becoming a fan-scholar with her *Hobbit* documentaries, as the politically driven narrative of the films’ production problems took the investigation into far

³⁴ Retrieved April 12, 2021 from: <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/entertainment/is-the-hobbit-trilogy-really-that-bad-yes-heres-why/CKO2ZIXYHUR4WVOVVG4KJRHVHA/>

³⁵ Retrieved April 12, 2021 from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uTRUQ-RKfUs&t=481s>

³⁶ Retrieved April 12, 2021 from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EIPJr_tKkO4&t=326s

³⁷ Retrieved April 12, 2021 from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qi7t_g5QObs&t=230s

more complex territory than the popular criticism of her previous reviews. In the *Herald* interview with Karl Puschmann, Ellis says:

I'd seen some lower profile things on The Hobbit trilogy, but none mentioned the law and the effect it had on your film industry and what Warner Brothers and the Prime Minister did to benefit one production, the fact that news never made it overseas, even in film circles, was really shocking.

An article published in the *NZ Herald* newspaper entitled "Inside Wellywood: How NZ taxpayers forked out \$575 million for Hollywood to film here"³⁸ revealed how the subsidy scheme, originally conceived to facilitate filming of the *Lord of the Rings*, has steadily increased over the past two decades and now sees mostly overseas producers paid subsidies of up to a quarter of production costs.

Movie Themed Branding

Comparing the *Hobbit* film trilogy with the book reveals how the Hollywood co-production of Warner Brothers, MGM, New Line Cinema, and producers Saul Zaentz and Harvey Weinstein, changed the direction of the production to match the look of *The Lord of The Rings*, and stretched the planned two films out to a trilogy, to ensure a return on their investments at the box office, and through branded merchandising. While multi-studio partnerships are common, this situation is very different to the autonomy Jackson had working with only New Line Cinema during *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, in which he had full creative control. Narrative changes to the *Hobbit* films include reducing the importance of the dwarves, and the inclusion of *The Lord of the Rings* characters Legolas, Galadriel, Saruman, and Frodo to connect with existing brand recognition, as the producers manipulated the production to better suit their marketing objectives. *In the Shadow of Wellywood* offers critical reflection on the importance of movie merchandising and branding for major studio profits by appropriating and devaluing their products through alteration.

³⁸ Retrieved April 12, 2021 from: <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/business/inside-wellywood-how-nz-taxpayers-forked-out-575-million-for-hollywood-to-film-here/ZZKYL4RNFKHJAETT2UC3TAWB4U/>

Toxic Weta Culture

A series of news articles during September 2020,³⁹ reported that “allegations of sexual harassment and bullying at Weta Workshop had started a cascade of similar claims across the industry”. The same week Workplace Relations Minister Andrew Little called for Weta Digital to hold an independent investigation after similar allegations.⁴⁰ In June 2020, Layna Lazar a former Weta Workshop artist and model maker posted allegations on social media of bullying and harassment during her time there in 2016. Lazar stated: “When the #Metoo movement started, I wanted to say something but it still felt because Weta Workshop is such a large company that I would never be able to. It was just impossible.” The investigation confirmed that Lazar’s claims of being touched inappropriately, and being made to stay late alone at short notice had been backed up by others in the industry. Equity NZ director Denise Roche told journalists that “harassment, bullying, discrimination are quite widespread in the industry, *Hobbit* laws exacerbated it – they meant people had few rights.”⁴¹ Roche explained that while “it would not lead to collective bargaining as employees it would mean contractors could bargain collectively for minimum standards. It would also enshrine in law what could be done about bullying, harassment, and discrimination”. As a result, the Screen Women’s Action Group started after US film producer Harvey Weinstein’s crimes came to light and the #MeToo movement began, ran “respect at work” workshops for the movie industry with support from the New Zealand Film Commission. Roche hoped these moves would lead to a culture change in the industry. A Queen’s Counsel would be brought in to carry out an independent review of Weta Digital after the allegations, and that a statement from the company said the move was commissioned by the owners of Weta Digital. Online articles described working at Weta Digital as the ‘world’s most beautiful toxic waste dump’, and “dream job turning into a nightmare”.⁴² The Screen Industry Workers Bill is currently going through Parliament and as of April 2021 it is at the Second Reading. The bill introduces

³⁹ Retrieved April 12, 2021 from: <https://www.stuff.co.nz/entertainment/film/122738019/sheen-off-silver-screen-for-those-calling-out-harassment-bullying-in-film>

⁴⁰ Retrieved April 12, 2021 from: <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/122733223/workplace-relations-minister-calls-for-investigation-into-weta-digital-culture> (Sept 10 2020)

⁴¹ Retrieved April 12, 2021 from: <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/122733223/workplace-relations-minister-calls-for-investigation-into-weta-digital-culture> (Sept 10 2020)

⁴² Retrieved April 12, 2021 from: <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/122733223/workplace-relations-minister-calls-for-investigation-into-weta-digital-culture> (Sept 10 2020)

a workplace relations framework that will provide clarity about the employment status of people doing screen production work, introduce a duty of good faith and mandatory terms for contracting relationships in the industry, allow collective bargaining at the occupation and enterprise levels, and create processes for resolving disputes arising from contracting relations or collective bargaining.⁴³

The Amazon Studios Agreement

In September 2019, Amazon Studios announced it would film a TV series of *The Lord of the Rings* in New Zealand after months of discussions with Government, Auckland Tourism, Events and Economic Development and the New Zealand Film Commission. Amazon Studios was established in 2010 and creates a range of media products for cinema and online distribution. Their presence in the market is nothing new, but their intention to film here appears in my opinion to be an opportunity to profit from an existing brand and the taxation opportunities previously offered to overseas companies working here with a connection to Middle Earth mythology. The combined *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit* trilogies earned \$5852 Million profit worldwide. The production costs of the three *The Lord of the Rings* films was \$38 million and made \$2917.5 million profit worldwide, so the potential box office return compared with the investment in production is an indication of the appeal of *The Lord of the Rings* franchise for Amazon Studios.⁴⁴

If Amazon Studios spends \$650 million in New Zealand making the first season of the TV show, the corporation will qualify for a government subsidy of \$160 million, a 5% increase from previous agreements made for filming *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit* movie trilogies. These movies established the business models and conditions for local workers which Amazon is now able to take advantage of. The Amazon deal is uncapped and likely to cost the government \$1 billion dollars from 2021 to 2025, “or an average of \$200 million per annum”.⁴⁵ Economic Development Minister Stuart Nash defended the cost of the subsidy and

⁴³ Retrieved April 12, 2021 from https://www.parliament.nz/en/pb/bills-and-laws/bills-proposed-laws/document/BILL_94845/screen-industry-workers-bill

⁴⁴ Statistics retrieved April 12, 2021 from: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/323463/lord-of-the-rings-films-production-costs-box-office-revenue/>

⁴⁵ Retrieved April 22, 2021 from: <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/politics/300234062/taxpayers-to-fork-out-1-billion-in-film-subsidies-over-the-next-five-years>

pointed to the sheer size and scale of the project stating that “this will be the largest television series ever made”. Nash recognized that “these grants are part and parcel of the international film industry, and without this you don’t get a look in the door”,⁴⁶ indicating the pressure the government faces from movie corporations to offer subsidies, and the fear of losing employment and tourism opportunities should productions move offshore. Official documents revealed Tourism NZ feared the country could lose its identity as “the home of Middle Earth”, and warned a shoot in a rival location, such as the UK, could see NZ’s hobbit legacy “taper off”. A decision paper from the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Enterprise dated November 2019 revealed that “what MBIE really wanted was something else: a relationship with Amazon itself, not just Amazon Studios”. The question of how many local films can be made for \$150 million could be asked at this point, however the benefit of *The Lord of the Rings* for the tourism industry is proven, indicating that the Amazon Studios agreement is designed to benefit the New Zealand brand rather than develop our national cinema. The agreement commits the company to running an innovation programme alongside the films, obliging it to “build a wider relationship between New Zealand and the Amazon group” to be focussed on research and development, and is an example of how the movie industry operates as a leader for other media and related products to follow. Media and marketing journalist Daniel Dunkley claims the agreement has “has raised eyebrows around the world” as OECD nations near an agreement to force the US tech giants to pay more tax. Dunkley questions “is there another beautiful country synonymous with the Lord of the Rings, with established filming locations linked to the story? Did NZ really need to bend so far backwards when completing the deal in December 2019?”⁴⁷

⁴⁶Retrieved April 22, 2021 from: <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/politics/300278243/amazon-may-be-on-the-way-to-new-zealand-as-government-signs-subsidy-deal>

⁴⁷Retrieved April 22, 2021 from: <https://www.stuff.co.nz/business/opinion-analysis/300282656/does-our-amazon-deal-set-a-dangerous-precedent>

Chapter Three: The Spectacular Movie Business

The Sausage Factory

In the Shadow of Wellywood involves a narrative featuring the rise and fall of movie stars, and related dreams of stardom that didn't work out as planned. In *Wellywood* well known Hollywood actors are reduced to working in hospitality and presenting movie-themed experiences. Drawing from the rich history of movies about Hollywood, the tropes of genre movies, and movie themed experiences, the experimental narrative provides critical reflection upon the surrounding movie industry. This chapter considers closely the ways that the movie industry commodifies its audience through fandom, Disneyfication, the attention economy, and our state of "sofalarity", and contextualizes the ways these concepts have informed and contributed to the creative development of the final work. My visualisation of *Wellywood* draws upon American historian David Welky's description of the way the public envisioned classic Hollywood as:

a sort of Venice without the canals, full of glittering conveyances, dazzling maidens, and men of like gods. The film community included both dazzling maidens and men of god-like appearance. The rest of Hollywood's image was a myth, or at least a glamorized version of reality. "Hollywood" as most thought of it, was no more real than Shangri-La or Xanadu. Movie studios were businesses above all else. Employing almost three hundred thousand people and representing a \$2 billion investment, they existed to make money. Most film executives viewed the celluloid dreams they sold as products, not artistic statements. Hollywood was "an assembly-line operation" one screenwriter remembered". The studio system operated "very much like a sausage factory".

(Welky p.12)

In the Shadow of Wellywood satirizes these "sausage factory" production values by making animation relatively quickly and cheaply in an assembly line process using a library of characters and backgrounds. The fabled lands of Shangri-La and Xanadu have contributed a sense of the imaginary to my version of Wellywood, as both explore a dreamlike state and its darker consequences. In the 1816 poem *Kubla Khan*, the English Romantic poet Samuel

Coleridge imagined the fabled land of Xanadu as “a stately pleasure dome” built by Mongolian Emperor Kubla Khan, encompassing a sacred river, caverns measureless to man, caves of ice, and gardens with incense bearing trees. Coleridge claimed that *Kubla Khan* was inspired by an opiated dream, which became interrupted by a person from the town of Porlock visiting about a business matter. For my purposes, the dream of Xanadu can be seen as a moment of pure creativity compromised by the realities of business. Shangri-La is a fictional place described in the 1933 novel *Lost Horizons* by British author James Hilton as a mystical and harmonious valley, somewhere in the mountains of Tibet, where people appear to live for hundreds of years, but also have Western conveniences and familiar brands. *Lost Horizon* follows the plight of four travellers whose plane is hijacked and crashes in the mountains. Following the crash, the survivors are directed to a lamasery where people appear not to age. They decide to stay, but realize that after living in the valley, leaving will result in a person aging quickly and dying. Xanadu and Shangri-La can be seen to represent hedonism and enlightenment respectively.

The theory of capitalism as a spectacular artificial framework that Debord identified was first posited by Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer in *The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception* (1944), a formative academic critique of emerging mass culture. Adorno sought refuge from the Nazi regime, relocating to Los Angeles and his perspective of living with the surrounding movie industry resonates with my research. Adorno stated that:

Under monopoly all mass culture is identical, and the lines of its artificial framework begin to show through. The people at the top are no longer so interested in concealing monopoly; as its violence becomes more open, so its power grows. Movies and radio need no longer pretend to be art. The truth that they are just business is made into an ideology in order to justify the rubbish they produce. They call themselves industries; and when their director’s incomes are published, any doubt about the social utility of the finished products is removed.⁴⁹

In the Shadow of Wellywood challenges the power structure of the movie business and its violence as Adorno identified, through making “rubbish” and invoking its name.

⁴⁹ Retrieved April 12, 2021 from: <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/adorno/1944/culture-industry.htm>

A Cinema Designed

Through tracing the history of animation company Pixar and linking the development of CAD from car design to the *Transformers* movies, film theorist Leon Gurevitch recounts how computer-generated image technology grew from industrial applications. Gurevitch's term *cinema designed*⁵⁰ recognizes that:

visual effects cinema has witnessed the transition to a new form of cinema in which the tools and practices of computer-automated design are now a central feature of both Hollywood movie productions and their narratives. Unlike such products as cinema props, film sets, and costumes which were previously physically constructed and hand-made, cinema designed is a new invention. It never existed outside the framework of industrialized mass production.

These observations have helped inform my theoretical position as a video artist who works outside of the commercial Hollywood movie studio system, but who makes work which references its mechanisms of production, and appropriates its merchandising. Where Gurevitch considers the official economy of movie-themed merchandise, my research started with using bootleg or unofficial versions of action figures depicting movie stars as a means of locating the work outside of the industry. Gurevitch suggests that "if, as Debord argues, spectacle is capital accumulated to the point that it becomes image, then Pixar, premised as it has been upon its prodigious capacity to convert costly skills and technology into image forms directed towards a merchandizing apparatus that accumulates capital, is a striking manifestation of this reality".⁵¹ In appropriating and transforming movie-themed merchandising similar to that produced by Pixar, I am converting the skills and technology of industry into objects capable of critiquing their own spectacular reality.

Gurevitch acknowledges that the origins of computer aided design "can be traced back decades, and should not be characterized as a sudden and revolutionary change".⁵² The use of computer-generated dinosaurs for the first *Jurassic Park* movie was met with scepticism

⁵⁰ Retrieved April 12, 2021 from: <https://reframe.sussex.ac.uk/post-cinema/3-1-gurevitch/>

⁵¹ Retrieved April 12, 2021 from: <https://reframe.sussex.ac.uk/post-cinema/3-1-gurevitch/>

⁵² Retrieved April 12, 2021 from: <https://reframe.sussex.ac.uk/post-cinema/3-1-gurevitch/>

by some members of the special effects industry. Special effects artists Tim Alexander and Dennis Muren, who both worked on *Jurassic Park*, recognised that the film was the turning point in creature animation, with effects artists moving from optical to digital, and that in the early days of production tests the studio knew they had “the fallback of stop-motion”⁵³ if the CGI dinosaurs proved to be unworkable.

Fig. 9. Transformers sequence *In the Shadow of Wellywood* video stills



Purchased from a discount store, the plastic Transformer toy featured in *Wellywood* was labelled *Warrior Deformation*. The deformation branding provided an ironic warning as the toy did not contain the level of articulation required to transform from a car into a robot. The toy was designed to look good in the packet, but fell apart during attempts to transform it, in turn contributing to the narrative development of this scene which predicts the demise of CGI in favour of the real.

Sofalarity and the Attention Economy

Technology critic Tim Wu coined the term sofalarity in 2014 to describe the condition of sitting at home on the sofa in comfort consuming media, but in doing so unconsciously working to increase the financial value of the chosen media brand. Wu stated that “If we’re not careful, our technological evolution will take us toward not a singularity but a sofalarity. That’s a future defined not by an evolution toward superintelligence but by the absence of discomforts”.⁵⁴ In 2016, Wu identified how “attention merchants”⁵⁵ design new ways to keep

⁵³ Retrieved April 12, 2021 from: <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/behind-screen/how-jurassic-park-revolutionized-visual-802332>

⁵⁴ Retrieved April 12, 2021 from: <https://www.newyorker.com/tech/annals-of-technology/as-technology-gets-better-will-society-get-worse>

⁵⁵ Retrieved April 12, 2021 from: <https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/234876/the-attention-merchants-by-tim-wu/>

the audience's attention. Participation in the spectacle ranges from children playing with movie themed toys, to watching YouTube, or liking a trailer for a new movie on Facebook. Such efforts hold the viewer's attention to the movie brand between cinematic releases through related video games and merchandising. For the viewer, participation in screen-based leisure time has moved from the collective experience of watching movies in a cinema, or television in the lounge at home to an individual experience of consuming media streaming to portable electronic devices. The space of the micro cinema encourages viewers to briefly disconnect from online media and consider their relationship to streaming platforms.

The financially valuable role of the mass media consumer was first described as "audience commodity" in 1977 by communications critic Dallas Smythe,⁵⁶ and later as "the attention economy" by film theorist Jonathan Beller in 2006, the same year that Facebook was launched worldwide, and a year after the launch of YouTube. Beller argued that "the term cinematic mode of production suggest that cinema and it succeeding, if still simultaneous, formations, particularly television, video, computers and internet, are de-territorialized factories in which spectators work, that is, in which they perform value-productive labour".⁵⁷ This creative research offers alternatives to the state of sofalarity and participation in the attention economy by creating micro and expanded cinema experiences which cannot be similarly measured as a form of productive labour, as these happenings sit outside of the commercially constructed framework of internet streaming services to avoid the spectacle of capitalism and its advertising strategies embedded within.

Disneyfication

In 1996 theorist Jean Baudrillard described Walt Disney as "the precursor, the grand initiator of the imaginary as virtual reality," and recognized that the company was "now in the process of capturing all the real world to integrate it into its synthetic universe, in the form of a vast

⁵⁶ Retrieved April 12, 2021 from:

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/265034098_Dallas_Smythe_Today_-_The_Audience_Commodity_the_Digital_Labour_Debate_Marxist_Political_Economy_and_Critical_Theory_Prolegomena_to_a_Digital_Labour_Theory_of_Value

⁵⁷ Retrieved April 12, 2021 from: https://www.phil-fak.uni-duesseldorf.de/fileadmin/Redaktion/Institute/Kultur_und_Medien/Medien_und_Kulturwissenschaft/Dozenten/Goerling/Film_und_Transkulturalitaet/BellerKino.pdf

"reality show" where reality itself becomes a spectacle, where the real becomes a theme park". The narrative of *In the Shadow of Wellywood* draws upon Baudrillard's observation in creating uncertainty as to whether Elle and Sam are inside or outside of the spectacular movie studio and theme park. Scholars of organisation transformation and social change Jonathan Matusitz and Laura Palermo analyse the global influence of Disney or Disneyfication, based on the "grobalisation" model, a radical form of globalisation identified by sociologist George Ritzer. Grobalisation refers to the imperialistic goals, desires, and needs of multinational corporations to enter diverse markets worldwide so that their profits can grow. Matusitz and Palermo regard Disneyfication as a spectacle of "theming, hybrid consumption, and emotional labour", stating that

Encompassing both grobalisation and the Walt Disney Company more specifically, the term Disneyfication implies the internationalisation of the entertainment values of US mass culture. It is the idea of bigger, faster, and better entertainment with an overarching sense of uniformity worldwide.⁵⁸

The aesthetic treatment of *In the Shadow of Wellywood* disrupts this expectation of uniformity that media corporations such as Disney have trained their audiences to expect. The micro cinema designed to screen the work questions the consumers' desire for an ever increasingly spectacular entertainment experience and offers an alternative.

The Walt Disney Corporation has a long history of breaching environmental regulations through the unsafe disposal of toxic waste produced in its theme parks and studios. This litany of issues is referenced indirectly within *In the Shadow of Wellywood* through using plastic modelling materials which are toxic, and directly through depicting obsolete technology disposed of in surrounding waterways, and hazardous waste from set painting contaminating the studio backlot. In 1988 Walt Disney World breached Department of Environmental Regulation standards, the report stating that the theme park's handling of hazardous waste was "completely out of control" and had "major potential for harm" to human health and the environment. Reporter Lisanne Renner reminded readers that

the fiberglass trees, the meticulous landscaping, the elaborate props, the crisp costumes and the fleet of boats and trams are not created by the wave of a fairy's wand. It takes

⁵⁸ Retrieved April 12, 2021 from: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1179/1477963313Z.00000000014>

hazardous solvents and resins to create fiberglass trees, pesticides and insecticides to keep shrubbery healthy, toxic paints and solvents to decorate props, detergents and solvents to clean costumes, oil to keep boats and trams running.⁵⁹

In 1990, the Environmental Protection Agency charged Disneyland with 38 violations of federal toxic waste laws and Walt Disney World in Florida with discharging sewage into adjacent marshlands Reedy Creek, fining the corporation a combined total of \$925,000.⁶⁰

This was the same year in which the Disney Corporation posted record profits of 178.5 million dollars⁶¹In 2009 citizens of Burbank, California sued the media giant for allegedly dumping toxic chemicals, including a known carcinogen, in their community since 1998 including hexavalent chromium, the contaminant made famous in the film *Erin Brockovich* (2000).⁶²

In the Shadow of Wellywood visualizes Baudrillard's description of Disneyland as "a space of the regeneration of the imaginary as waste treatment plants are everywhere, and even here. Everywhere today one must recycle waste, and the dreams, the phantasms, the historical, fairylike, legendary imaginary of children and adults is a waste product, the first great toxic excrement of a hyper-real civilization".⁶³ I am similarly recycling the imagination and dreams of consumers in repurposing materials and technology that were once desired and have been used and disposed of.

⁵⁹ Retrieved April 12, 2021 from: <https://www.sun-sentinel.com/news/fl-xpm-1988-03-24-8801180662-story.html>

⁶⁰ Retrieved April 12, 2021 from: <https://www.orlandosentinel.com/news/os-xpm-1990-03-31-9003313076-story.html>

⁶¹ New York Times (April 6 1990) *Disney Posts Record Profits* Retrieved Aril 10 2021 from: <https://www.nytimes.com/1990/04/26/business/disney-posts-record-profit.html>

⁶² Retrieved April 12, 2021 from: <https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2009/06/did-disney-dump-toxic-waste/>

⁶³ Retrieved April 12, 2021 from: <https://journals.uvic.ca/index.php/ctheory/article/view/14846/5716>

Chapter Four: Culture Jamming

Critiquing Consumerism

In 1999 theorist Mark Dery described culture jamming as a form of “media sabotage”, its proponents as “artistic terrorists” and “communications guerrillas” with consumerism as their target. Dery credits the anti-fascist photomontages of John Heartfield; Situationist detournement, the Yippie prankster movement, and the copyright infringements of San Francisco based group Negativland in developing tactics “directed against an ever more intrusive, instrumental technoculture whose operant mode is the manufacture of consent through the manipulation of symbols”.⁶⁴ In appropriating movie themed action figures to make *In the Shadow of Wollywood* I am manipulating symbols of the Hollywood movie industry.

In 2016, the British journalist turned environmental activist George Monbiot described consumerism as “an ideology so familiar and pervasive that we do not even recognize it as an ideology” as it has been “crafted with the help of skilful advertisers and marketers, by corporate celebrity culture, and by a media that casts us as the recipients of goods and services rather than the creators of political reality”. Monbiot recognized that “celebrity isn’t just harmless fun – it’s the smiling face of the corporate machine”, and that “our failure to understand the link between fame and big business made the rise of Trump inevitable”, as a businessman and reality TV show host was elected President of the United States of America.

⁶⁵ By appropriating consumer objects and branded movie merchandising I am visualizing and critiquing the links between fame and big business Monbiot identifies. In *The Spectacle and Organization Studies* (2017) Mikkel Flyverbom and Juliane Reinecke posit that:

Debord’s arguments about appearance, visibility and celebrity are echoed in the way organizations increasingly focus on their brand, image, impression, and reputation.

As the boundaries between fact and fiction, reality and representation, substance and

⁶⁴ Retrieved April 12, 2021 from: <https://www.markdery.com/books/culture-jamming-hacking-slashing-and-sniping-in-the-empire-of-signs-2/>

⁶⁵ Retrieved April 12, 2021 from: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/dec/20/celebrity-corporate-machine-fame-big-business-donald-trump-kim-kardashian>

appearance become increasingly blurred, questions about the production and effects of spectacles seem more pertinent than ever.”⁶⁶

In the Shadow of Wellywood imagines the decline of a spectacular movie studio brand. In appropriating movie merchandising, and making it unclear if the actors are playing themselves or being cast in a role, I am intentionally blurring the boundaries between fact and fiction, and confusing substance with appearance.

The Creative Field

A range of culture-jamming critiques of celebrity by independent film and video artists have informed the conceptual framework for the creative and conceptual development of *In the Shadow of Wellywood*. San Francisco-based collage filmmaker Craig Baldwin's *Mock-Up on Mu* and Todd Haynes' experimental film *Superstar: the Karen Carpenter Story* have informed my approach to creating a mythologised celebrity narrative. The media piracy of audio and video collective Negativland (also based in San Francisco), and experimental animation *Hollywood Burn* by Australian video art collective Soda_Jerk, have contributed to my understanding of how reworking easily available movie merchandising can be used as a strategy of video activism. Where Baldwin, Negativland, and Soda_Jerk cut up found film and video clips I appropriate movie themed action figures, but our work similar in the desire to destroy commercial media objects in order to create artworks which are critical of the industries they sample from and reveal our processes of production. The collective abilities of these artists to create a celebrity counter-narrative using found material as a form of entertainment industry critique is more significant for my research than the way they manipulate their chosen material.

Baldwin's film *Mock Up on Mu* (2008) is a “speculative farce on the militarization of space, and the corporate take-over of spiritual fulfilment and leisure-time”⁶⁷ which connects Scientology founder L. Ron Hubbard, rocket pioneer Jack Parsons, and mother of the New Age

⁶⁶ Retrieved April 12, 2021 from:

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/313036163_The_Spectacle_and_Organization_Studies

⁶⁷ DVD available from: <http://www.othercinemadvd.com/mu.html>

movement Majorie Cameron through their shared passion for occultism. The narrative follows Cameron who is working as an undercover agent in Las Vegas; and seduces a defence contractor named called Lockheed Martin in order to gain information about Mu, a Scientology theme park being built on the Moon and designed to hide military weapons. In naming the character Lockheed Martin after one of the world's largest defence corporations, Baldwin's narrative serves as a reminder of the long history of connections between the movies and weapons industries which have existed since aviation pioneer Howard Hughes began directing movies during the classical Hollywood era.

In his book *Sign Wars: The Culture Jammers Strike Back* (2013), Australian film theorist David Cox describes the San Francisco-based group Negativland as "a kind of cabaret act in the original Dada sense" who "serve to emphasise the absurdity of society itself, particularly social and power relations". Cox notes how the group "use parody and burlesque to create ambiances of absurdity in which the tools of the propagandists are reclaimed as weapons of critique" (p. 133). My approach to animation feigns a naïve approach to create an ambience of absurdity similar to the manner Cox describes. Movie themed action figures are the tools of the propogandists I have chosen to reclaim as a weapon of critique. In their video *Gimme the Mermaid*,⁶⁸ Negativland remove Disney's *Littlest Mermaid* from her original setting and turn her a sickly hue. She rants in a man's voice "I own it, I control it, you can never use this without my permission, and if you wanna challenge me we can go to court tomorrow", demonstrating the group's willingness to attract copyright controversy as a strategy for media attention. In 1991, Negativland were sued by Island Records for their unauthorized sampling of the song *I still haven't found what I'm looking for* by Irish rock group U2, naming their album U2, and using misleading artwork on its cover. The track also used samples of studio outtakes of radio host Kasey Kasem criticising the group. Active since 1981, Negativland were well known as culture jammers by this time and claimed they had received the tape of Kasem anonymously. In the music video for the song *The Greatest Taste Around* from their Pepsi-Cola themed album *Dispepsi*⁶⁹ all instances of the Pepsi logo sampled from TV commercials are flipped horizontally, much like the way a flag is hung upside down as a mark of disrespect, and the result is uncanny. In some scenes cans of Pepsi have been suspended from strings

⁶⁸ DVD available from: <http://www.othercinemadvd.com/neg.html>

⁶⁹ DVD available from <http://www.othercinemadvd.com/neg.html>

and filmed in front of a bluescreen so they appear to fly through the air in a haphazard manner. *In the Shadow of Wellywood* is distinctly different from their approach visually in terms of their sampling of films and television broadcasts, and in the inclusion of 3D computer animation compared to my appropriation of readymade figures. However, my work is informed by their criticism of the power of mass media. Actress Joan Crawford married Pepsi-Cola CEO Alfred Steele in 1955 and became the public face of the company appearing on posters and in TV commercials. In sampling a scene from biopic *Mommie Dearest* (1981) in which Joan Crawford played by Faye Dunaway declares “we have to look great for Pepsi-Cola”, *Negativland* demonstrate the subversive power of culture jamming for understanding historical connections which exist between the movies and big business and re-present them for a new and younger audience.

As a video artist who uses mass produced plastic figures to make work about the entertainment industry, my approach to animation is often compared to Todd Haynes’ film *Superstar: The Karen Carpenter Story* (1987).⁷¹ In using Barbie dolls to tell the story of the singer’s battle with anorexia, Haynes confronts notions of feminine beauty constructed by capitalism. My use of readymade figures as a critique of consumerism was in turn initially inspired by aspects of Haynes’ approach. However, while *Superstar* is an experimental mixed media film that combines puppetry with found educational footage, live sequences, and interviews; *In the Shadow of Wellywood* is closer to traditional cell animation such as Disney’s cartoons in the approach of combining multiple layers of video to create a shot. The film *Superstar* was withdrawn from official circulation in 1990, after Haynes was sued for breach of copyright by Richard Carpenter due to the unauthorized use of the group’s music. By using Barbie and Ken dolls, Haynes was able to add a sense of realism to the production through the fabric of the characters’ outfits, his ability to pose the figures, and the use of other accessories such as tableware, telephones, and lamps; whereas my use of figures with plastic clothes and hair, and props in a wide range of scales is deliberately cartoonish.

In their video piracy epic *Hollywood Burn* (2006),⁷² Soda_Jerk tell a tale of scientists who bring Elvis Presley back to life through a video cloning experiment designed to create a simulated

⁷¹ Retrieved April 12, 2021 from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FmY5mTmrsVI>

⁷² Available online at: <https://vimeo.com/45360616>

copyright fighter. Soda_Jerk use a range of sampling and rotoscoping techniques including digitally cutting the face of Elvis from his original films and compositing him onto action shots suitable for progressing the narrative. The style of fast paced editing Soda_Jerk often employ disguises the complexity of the compositing techniques used to mask and layer multiple films into one shot. Although the treatment differs, similar software and effects were used to create *In the Shadow of Wellywood*. The huge number of samples the artists' use demonstrates both their filmic knowledge and willingness to attract copyright controversy. The wide range of movie, television, and music samples used in the work demonstrates that it is intended as a critique of copyright law as a whole, rather than targeting a specific named entity as Todd Haynes did with *Superstar: The Karen Carpenter Story*, and Negativland did with U2. In casting Elvis as the hero, the artists conflate his celebrity status with being a character as I have done with the actors portrayed in *Wellywood*. As TV super-car *Knight Rider* chases Elvis through the desert of video piracy, he is watched by *Indiana Jones*, until Japanese TV superhero *Monkey* summons *Jaws* the shark to fight him. This sequence employs the cinematic strategy of cross cutting to combine multiple points of view and achieve a level of fast paced continuity, demonstrating the art collective's skill in combining multiple genres to create a new narrative. Eventually the scientists remotely upgrade the simulated Elvis to Incredible Hulk Elvis who engages in a copyright enforcement battle, fighting Luke Skywalker from *Star Wars A New Hope*, *The Karate Kid*, *Maverick* from *Top Gun*, *Rambo*, *Donnie Darko*, and TV vigilantes *The A-Team* before throwing a military tank to crush *Indiana Jones*. The climactic battle at Mount Sinai incorporates footage from the Paramount film *The Ten Commandments*. In re-casting Charlton Heston's Moses as the bearer of copyright law, Soda_Jerk recognize historical connections between Christianity and the movie business. *Ten Commandments* monoliths were donated to churches in the United States to promote the release of the film by Paramount Pictures in 1956, suggesting that the studios saw Christianity as a marketable commodity. In listing this extraordinary number of samples I am acknowledging an appreciation for the work involved in watching, timecoding, pirating, and combining this many media items, and that compared to their creative processes, my approach is much simpler in the act of butchering and filming action figures. While culture-jamming is an essential reference for the conceptual development of my creative work I am not claiming to be part of this movement but remain inspired by its anti-authoritarian attitude.

Appropriation and Copyright

The tactic of appropriating effigies of Hollywood actors used for *In the Shadow of Wellywood* follows Debord's maxim that "a product that already exists in a form suitable for consumption may nevertheless serve as raw material for some other product" (point 151). This research considered movie-themed action figures as an instance of the spectacle, investigating how they could be appropriated as a form of media activism and industry critique. Ramey acknowledges the "inherently critical aspects of appropriation" within experimental animation and how this feature "prioritises the personal experience of making over the quality of the outcome". Ramsey argues that this approach is "about using things for purposes other than intended by their manufacturers" (p.2) as my practice does.

The concept of casting Hollywood actors in my own movie treated official and bootleg products equally, and was based on the actors' "availability" as action figures. The decision to work with movie themed action figures was inspired by the discovery of a bootleg, or unofficial version, of a *Maleficent* playset in a discount store in the early stages of the research process.

Fig. 10. Bootleg *Maleficent* playset. Photographs by Mike Heynes



Maleficent was released by Disney in 2014 but the package shows no company branding. The poor quality of the figures, inconsistencies between the images on the packaging and products within, and price of \$7.49 per set, all lend circumstantial evidence that this product

is a bootleg. King Stefan, pictured on the back of the packet with a beard, crown, and royal chain, doesn't match any of the figures included. Princess Aurora, played by Elle Fanning, is pictured with blond hair and a golden floral crown whereas the figure included has brown hair and no crown. Diaval, played by Sam Riley, is wearing a black shirt in the photo but the figure's garment is flesh toned with a silver trim. Poorly tooled joints and visible parting lines from the moulding process all reiterate that this is a bootleg toy. The arms on the male figures fit poorly, and some were some misassembled with some right arms being used in the place of left. Through their initial bootlegging and my subsequent remaking, the stars become further removed from the context of their original performances, and in my view, they become "themselves" rather than the characters they played.

An understanding of copyright law and working just outside of it has provided a conceptual framework for the development of *In the Shadow of Wellywood*. The Walt Disney Company Antipiracy Statement indicates that they are a strict enforcer of copyright law stating that "Disney takes the enforcement of these rights very seriously. We protect these rights so that we can continue to provide quality entertainment that measures up to the standards that our audience has come to love and expect".⁷³ In repurposing bootleg figures and choosing to retain Angelina Jolie's distinctive *Maleficent* hairstyle *In the Shadow of Wellywood* lampoons these standards. The extrinsic test used in copyright law measures the objective similarities between the two works, focusing on the protectable elements of the plaintiff's expression, including plot, themes, dialogue, mood, setting, pace, characters, and the sequence of events as well as the combination and arrangement of unprotectable elements. Disney's characters may be appropriated under the transformative use law which requires that the character is transformed or changed, to ensure that it isn't an identical copy, as in the way the *Maleficent* figures used to make *In the Shadow of Wellywood* were manufactured by their bootleggers, and then changed further through my alterations. US legal website upcounsel.com explains that:

One example might be an artist who creates an original oil painting of a family, which includes Tinkerbell. In this case, using the Tinkerbell character as a member of the family

⁷³ Retrieved April 12, 2021 from <https://thewaltdisneycompany.com/app/uploads/Antipiracy-Policy.pdf>

may qualify the piece as fair use. Using Tinkerbell in the piece of art could also be considered a transformative use of the character, and the completed painting might be referred to as a derivative work⁷⁴

Copyright Licensing New Zealand state that our country

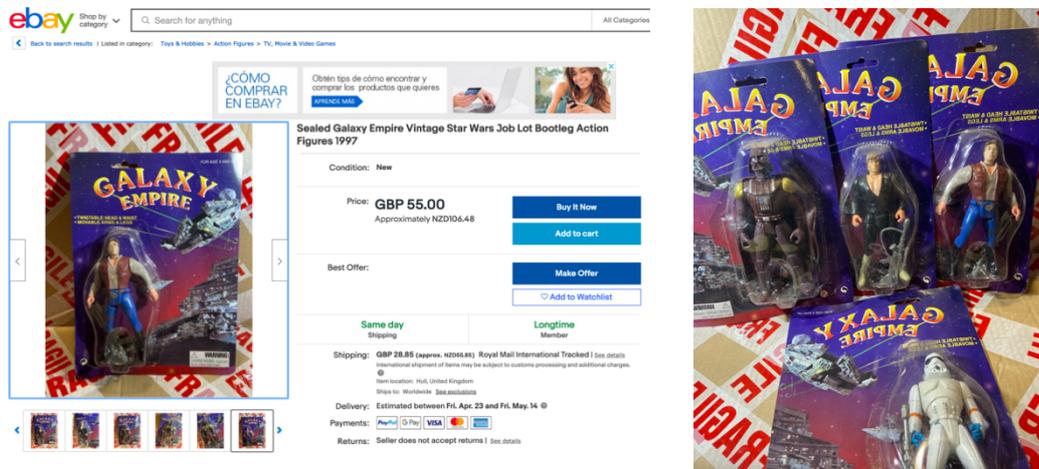
does not have a general “fair use” defence as exists in United States copyright law. In addition, some other countries allow the use of third party copyright material for the purposes of parody and satire. There is currently no equivalent copyright exception in New Zealand.⁷⁵

I will argue that *In the Shadow of Wellywood* is a satirical work and therefore exempt as the Copyright Act (1994) allows fair use without permission for purposes of research, criticism and review. My self-imposed criteria for creating characters was limited to using second-hand or bootleg figures as a means of consumer resistance in spending as little budget money as possible. The differences between official and bootleg superhero figures become easy to identify when both versions are considered side-by-side in their original packaging. The official versions by Hasbro and Mattel are manufactured under license from comic companies Marvel and DC respectively, but the branding on bootleg versions is harder to identify, with the packaging often carrying only the name of the importer, likely servicing the needs of the bootlegger to remain anonymous in order to avoid prosecution. The price difference significantly with discount store figures generally costing \$2 each, while the official products range from \$16.99 to \$24.99 retail.

⁷⁴ Retrieved April 12, 2021 from: <https://www.upcounsel.com/disney-trademark-infringement>

⁷⁵ Retrieved April 12, 2021 from: <https://www.copyright.co.nz/understanding-copyright/copyright-exceptions>

Fig. 11. Galaxy Empire bootleg Star Wars figures. Photo sourced from e-bay listing by seller fraggle-rage⁷⁶



The head of Harrison Ford came from a bootleg Han Solo figure purchased from the \$2 shop in the late 1990's, the figures are currently listed for sale on e-bay, in mint condition still in the packet for approximately \$25 NZ each. Notably, other e-bay listings of official Han Solo figures reveal that the prices between the two have become comparable over time. These "Galaxy Empire" figures carry no Star Wars branding, but they are sold as part of a range in which figures are clearly meant to represent Darth Vader, Boba Fett, Chewbacca, and a Stormtrooper. Photographs on the packets show recognisable Star Wars spacecraft, an Imperial Star Destroyer, and Tie-Fighters chasing the Millennium Falcon. The Sam Riley, Elle Fanning, Angelina Jolie and Johnny Depp figures used for *Wellywood* remain unchanged beyond minimal repainting. The other characters were created by cutting up and reassembling a wide range of action figures, their bodies based on scale and suitable costume. My workings including the visible signs of alteration and poorly applied paint jobs acknowledge a politically motivated desire to deconstruct and redesign the movie industry they represent, and in doing so to develop an aesthetic of critique.

⁷⁶ Retrieved April 12, 2021 from: <https://www.ebay.com/itm/Sealed-Galaxy-Empire-Vintage-Star-Wars-Job-Lot-Bootleg-Action-Figures-1997/2544588968?hash=item3b57b59728:g:ilcAAOSwD6ZfPD1q>

Chapter Five: A Philosophical Position on Technology and the Environment

The developmental projects undertaken during the creative practice stage of the research were designed to consider the place of the video artist as a consumer or critic of new technology, and to question whether a higher definition image is more important than the environmental health of the planet. My philosophical position has been informed by Deborah J. Haynes' concept of ethical aesthetics, and Diana Coole and Samantha Frost's analysis of critical materialist practices. The sections discussing plastic and rare earth metals later in this chapter help to build the case for resisting new developments and repurposing existing materials and technology in light of these theories. The creation of an artificial world made from plastic and filmed using obsolete technology critically reflects upon the environments and eco systems we have lost in the name of industrialization.

Product Stewardship

In April 2021 the New Zealand Government's Ministry for the Environment released guidelines for product stewardship, a move towards environmentally sustainable regulations across six areas including plastic packaging, tyres, and e-waste.⁷⁷ MFE define product stewardship as "when a producer, brand owner, importer, retailer or consumer accepts responsibility for reducing a product's environmental impact". The MFE website states that "regulated product stewardship helps put responsibility for a product's life-cycle and waste management on manufacturers, importers, retailers and users rather than communities, councils, neighbourhoods and nature". The regulations acknowledge that New Zealanders are some of the highest consumers of electronics globally, and follows a shift in government policy around e-waste management, moving and towards the sustainable practices that this research advocates for. The regulations are designed to facilitate the transition from a linear to a circular economy. A linear economy moves from the extraction of natural resources for the manufacture of consumer products to their disposal and the creation of waste.

⁷⁷ Retrieved April 12, 2021 from: <https://environment.govt.nz/what-government-is-doing/areas-of-work/waste/product-stewardship/about-product-stewardship-in-new-zealand/#product-stewardship-helps-us-transition-from-a-linear-to-a-circular-economy>

A circular economy collects e-waste at the point of disposal and reclaims the raw materials. Electrical appliance retailer Noel Leeming is the dedicated product stewardship e-waste collection point nationwide, in partnership with TechCollectNZ a “not-for-profit organisation established by leading global technology companies committed to supporting the development of a regulated product stewardship scheme for electrical and electronic products in Aotearoa”. While the retailer is taking responsibility for reducing their products’ environmental impact, they also have the opportunity to profit from recovering the rare earth metals used in their manufacture.

A Local Perspective on E-Waste

2018 Wellington e-waste data revealed that digital TV screens were being disposed of after only 3-4 years of use, and this research questions whether their longevity was due to technical problems, or the capitalist drive for constant upgrades, and the consumers’ willingness to participate in this aspect of the spectacle. In 2018 Wellington City Council Resource Recovery Manager Rod Boys of The Tip Shop stated they emptied one to two skips a week, amounting to “about a 100 tonnes a year, which is about 3 percent of the e-waste Wellington city produces.” Mr Boys said that “flat screen televisions made up about 60 percent of the e-waste they received, many of which were only 3 to 4 years old”.⁷⁸

The shift in technology came as consumers moved away from DVDs and towards devices capable of streaming media. A study conducted by the Department of Computer Science at the University of Massachusetts in 2010⁷⁹ analyzed whether streaming services or DVDs used more energy and discovered that streaming used 65% of what it took to ship a DVD, but this figure does not account for re-watching once the consumer owns the disc. The study also found that with streaming “greening gains decrease, as the amount of data associated with a movie increases”, further contributing to my desire to resist upgrading to higher definition equipment. As such, the research follows a personal philosophy of continuing to work with equipment until it wears out rather than buying new, as demonstrated in the decision to use

⁷⁸ Retrieved April 12, 2021 from: <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/349753/the-fight-against-e-waste-continues>

⁷⁹ Seetharam,A. Somasundaram,M. Towsley,D. Kurose,J. Shenoy,P. (2010) *Shipping to Streaming: Is this shift green?* Department of Computer Science, University of Massachusetts,

a DVD player and a home stereo system rescued from disposal to screen *In the Shadow of Wellywood*. In keeping with this philosophy the *Wellywood* characters are depicted using older technology.

The ethical disposal of electronic waste is an issue which my obsolete video studio addresses through continuing to use outdated equipment and accepting its low-resolution aesthetic long after the format has gone out of current use. According to the Ministry for the Environment, every New Zealander creates an average of 19 kilograms of e-waste per year and that number is expected to rise to 26.9kg per person by 2030. While this research is a few years old it represents a significant point of technological development in being the era when consumers were beginning to upgrade to 4K and dispose of their high definition screens. In contrast, I am still using standard definition Cathode ray tube (CRT) reference monitors in the obsolete technology studio because they still work. The monitors were a late model from 2007, donated following the closure of the TVNZ training school in Lower Hutt, and they were barely used as they had been purchased shortly before the move to high definition.

In the Shadow of Wellywood is presented on DVD demonstrating a desire to disconnect from online platforms, and to make existing technology last as long as possible rather than buying new. The projector used to screen *In the Shadow of Wellywood* is an obsolete model with standard definition specifications. The experience of cinema involves projected light traveling through the space the viewer is seated in and hitting the screen in front of them, while the backlit screen of the television does not have the same atmospheric qualities, regardless of the resolution. When I started this research in 2017 the 4K video format was the current consumer standard, with the first 4K television being released by Sony in 2012. A manifesto I wrote in the early stages of the research exclaimed “8K? NO WAY!” arguing that video technology had reached its pinnacle with 4K. The 4K format is four times larger than the previous HD standard, and if used in a high-definition project it provides significantly greater ability to zoom, track, and crop the image in post-production. The visual treatment of *In the Shadow of Wellywood* argues that further technological development is unnecessary, when considering the environmental impacts of extractivism and e-waste disposal. This chapter considers the balance between improved image quality, and the environmental issues sustainability created with further technological development. In September 2019 Sony

announced the release of the world's first 16K television. The screen was initially designed for cinema exhibitors with the size specifications customised to suit each space, and luxury products website Robb Report indicated that the 63 foot wide screen was "approximately the size of a New York school bus"⁸⁰ and would be soon be available for consumers at a ballpark figure of \$5 million US.

Extractivism and Sustainability

This section outlines key terms extractivism and sustainability used to position my approach to video activism. In refusing to upgrade, my obsolete video production studio and equipment library advocate for a move away from an economy of extractivism and towards an ideology of technological sustainability. In their article *Cultural Studies of Extraction* Laura Junka-Aikio and Catalina Cortes-Severino⁸¹ posit that "extractivism is usually understood in reference to mass-scale industrial extraction of non-renewable natural resources, most particularly the extraction of oil, gas and minerals, and to the ideologies, discourses and practices underpinning these industries' standing within the society". They assert that the term can be understood as "a paradigm of exploitation rather than in reference to a limited set of specific industries" . My practice responds to these issues of environmental exploitation through an ethos of repurposing rather than supporting the further extraction of minerals by purchasing new materials and equipment. My creative decisions question the standing within society of these industries through rejecting their latest products. The emerging field of "sustainability transitions research" offers valuable insight into ways my practice sits within a larger sustainability framework. In 2019, Johathan Köhler and 28 co-authors published a study into the previous ten years of sustainability transitions research and concluded that sustainability transitions

involve many types of cultural change, including in the legal and normative frameworks that guide the production and use of technology, in the everyday practices of

⁸⁰ Retrieved April 12, 2021 from: <https://robbreport.com/gear/tvs/sony-16k-crystal-led-tv-2869489/> (Sept 20 2019)

⁸¹ Retrieved April 12, 2021 from: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09502386.2017.1303397>

organizations and consumers, in social relations and social structures and in the material culture involving the design choices among products and infrastructures.⁸²

The authors found that “social movements, especially when they are engaged with industrial change, can bring attention to the need for cultural change. The obsolete video equipment library I operated during the course of this research explored social relations and material culture through negotiating the donation and collection of the items rescued from disposal with institutions, private businesses, and consumers, and in encouraging other artists to use them as reflection on their consumer habits. *In The Shadow of Wellywood* uses materiality to critique the movie industry and to signify design choices which are based upon a need for cultural change. The design choices made considered the environmental impacts of the extraction and e-waste disposal my chosen medium requires in order to operate. My engagement with industry involved a regular re-evaluation what equipment continues to work despite the commercial pressure to upgrade. Through making design choices which resisted everyday consumer and industry practices I am expressing a desire for cultural change through continuing to use unwanted products in my creative work.

Repurposing

My determination to repurpose the equipment used in this research was informed by the practices of pre-digital US film artists John Whitney, Loren Sears, Pat O’Neill, and Emily Breer. In the late 1950’s Whitney, a pioneering electronic artist adapted an analogue computer with a punch card reader originally designed for anti-aircraft weapons, to create one of the first computer graphics engines, capable of plotting and animating abstract patterns. San Francisco experimental filmmaker Loren Sears’ design for a table-top DIY optical film printer originally published in the Canyon Cinema News in 1967 was developed further and released commercially as the JK Optical Printer. Experimental filmmaker Pat O’Neill used a navy surplus optical film printer to make his abstract psychedelic work 7362 (1967). O’Neill went on to tutor George Lucas and Steven Spielberg at Cal Arts, and later became a special effects artist on *Star Wars*. O’Neill’s mid-career films from the 1970’s and the work of

⁸² Retrieved April 12, 2021 from: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2210422418303332>

experimental animator Emily Breer during the 1980's have informed the animatic style of *In the Shadow of Wellywood* in deconstructing and revealing compositing techniques.

While O'Neill and Whitney adapted equipment originally designed for the military, and used it for creative projects, I developed *In the Shadow of Wellywood* through the use of repurposed domestic security cameras. In her book *The Post-Snowden Era, Mass Surveillance and Privacy in New Zealand* Kathleen M. Kuehn notes that "surveillance is itself a cultural product, a site of spectacle", and that "the platforms and devices from which data are collected also happen to be the most prevalent tools of cultural production". (p3)

The small analogue security camera I used throughout this research was long obsolete and contains none of the remote networked features of current digital surveillance cameras. Its repurposing represents a desire for distance from the cultural products of mass surveillance and considers how the spectacle encourages the consumer to participate in potentially oppressive and exploitative systems. In continuing to use analogue video cameras and mixers with their distinctive visual qualities and technical limitations I am modelling a critical mode of environmentally sustainable production as a form of video activism. The distinctive visual treatment of *In the Shadow of Wellywood* celebrates of the look of the long obsolete standard definition format, which is recognizable by its 4:3 aspect ratio, low resolution images, and interlaced video signal. In choosing the formal qualities of analogue video over the hyperreal digital imagery of newer formats such as the now standard 4K, this research promotes a shift in thinking around obsolescence, away from an aesthetic of retro or kitsch as visualized by the old film filters available on platforms like Instagram, towards one of resisting capitalism. My technique of simulating the look of an obsolete video camera format is discussed in the Camera section of Chapter Eight.

Ethical Aesthetics

In a 1997 issue of *Art Journal* entitled *Digital Reflections: The Dialogue of Art and Technology* Haynes argued that the field of ethical aesthetics "does not hesitate to engage questions about technology, indeed it seeks to reconnect the aesthetic to the scientific and ethical domains of culture" (p.75). Its purpose is to "encourage critical self-consciousness and creative resistance for those who are already totally immersed in and loyal to the new media and our new world(s)". Haynes' describes the artists working in this field as radical ecologists,

who may be recognized through “their refusal to engage with high technology in a politics that recognizes the way power operates to direct and control technology for some over others”. Haynes notes that “a powerful consumer ethos pervades the academic and art worlds, an ethos that drives processes of global consumption, as well as often-oppressive political agendas.” And that “in both embracing and rejecting newer technologies, artists can deal with significant questions such as who owns and controls access to these technologies and how the development of technology itself is rooted in notions of social and economic progress” (p.81). The strategy of embracing some new technologies and rejecting others as Haynes’ suggests is demonstrated in the production of *In the Shadow of Wellywood* through choosing to continue to use obsolete video cameras and mixers but editing the work using computer software as an ethos of environmental consciousness and mode of consumer critique.

Critical Materialism

Scholars Diana Coole and Samantha Frost associate new materialist theories and practices with “renewed attention to the dense causes and effects of global political economy and thus with questions of social justice for embodied individuals, noting the affinity between the rhythms of materialization discerned in the socioeconomic processes of global capitalism” This area of inquiry “entails sensitivity to contemporary shifts in the bio- and eco-spheres, as well as to changes in global economic structures and technologies” and considers “our material practices such as the ways we labor on, exploit, and interact with nature.” (Coole and Frost p.5). Critical Materialism is the area within this field which explores economic, social, and geopolitical issues, and Coole and Frost note that for critical materialists “society is simultaneously materially real and socially constructed: our material lives are always culturally mediated, but they are not only cultural”. I now self-identify as a critical materialist with an environmental consciousness. I have long been fascinated by what happens to things which have been discarded before they had ceased to function. Critical materialism became my preferred mode of production long before I was aware of the term, previously using consumer critique, or environmental consciousness to situate a pragmatic aesthetic of repurposing and re-using materials and technology, and as a mode of resisting prominent aspects of the spectacle of capitalism.

Rare Earth Metals

This research was conducted during a rapid increase in the mining of rare earth metals used to make new screen-based devices. According to USGS figures, U.S. tantalum consumption was estimated to have increased in 2019 by 27% from that of 2017, and had increased in value of approximately \$30 kg, to \$224, an increase of about 16% from the average price in the previous year.⁸⁵ A greater understanding of where these raw materials come from, and their environmental and political implications, has contributed to the decision to refuse to upgrade my video cameras and reference monitors for as long as possible. Through identifying the connections between political unrest in countries with high deposits of the mineral resources required in the manufacture of new screen-based technologies such as the 8K television, I am applying abductive reasoning⁸⁶ to argue that their use by artists is a form of soft colonization.

The production of lithium-ion batteries (LIBs) has increased in capacity by almost eight fold in the past ten years due to growing demand for portable consumer electronics and electric-drive vehicles.⁸⁷ 75% of the world's known lithium resources are contained within the 'Lithium triangle', the salt lakes of Bolivia, Chile, and Argentina, where the most accessible and highest quality lithium is concentrated. The minerals mined to make new screen based devices are a smaller proportion of the lithium market than electric vehicles, but my research raises the question of what individual artists can do to activate change at a grass roots level through adapting their consumer habits. Cobalt and tantalum are also mined in the Congo and Rwanda, Beryllium, tantalum and cobalt and bauxite from Mozambique. Political instability in these countries increased as the demand for more new technology grew. The USA has 0% tantalum resources beneath its own soil. Under USGS regulations, all companies that sold products containing gold, tantalum, tin, or tungsten were required to disclose whether these minerals originated from Congo (Kinshasa) or adjoining countries. Such companies were also

⁸⁵ Retrieved April 12, 2021 from: <https://pubs.usgs.gov/periodicals/mcs2020/mcs2020-tantalum.pdf>

⁸⁶ Abductive reasoning, or abduction, is a form of logical inference formulated and advanced by American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce during the late 19th Century. It begins with a set of observations and then seeks to find the simplest conclusion from these observations. Although abductive reasoning provides a likely explanation given the set of circumstances it retains an element of uncertainty or doubt.

⁸⁷ Retrieved April 12, 2021 from: <https://asu.pure.elsevier.com/en/publications/socio-environmental-impacts-of-lithium-mineral-extraction-towards>

required to submit annual describing the due diligence measures taken to determine the source and custody of such minerals, and to provide a description of the products manufactured that were not conflict free. The Government of Venezuela exported columbite-tantalite concentrates for the first time in the country's history in May 2018. Socialist President Nicolás Maduro was sworn in to a second six-year term in office in April 2019 and two weeks later a military coup led by opposition leader Juan Guaidó overthrew Maduro, who according to the BBC condemned the move as “a ploy by the US to oust him”.⁸⁹

Video and digital communications technologies have evolved to a democratic level in which most people have a movie camera in their pocket and free distribution networks at their fingertips. While this research recognizes such advancements, it advocates for a halt in the development of new screen based technologies for ecological reasons, and for a move towards more environmentally sustainable devices. Refusing to upgrade confronts the problem of e-waste caused by obsolescence for as Kathryn Ramey attests “with trash islands swirling in the Pacific Ocean it is time for us to find a new use for our debris (including old media) before it consumes us.” (Ramey p.1)

Plastic

Naphthalene⁹⁰, the raw material used to make plastic, is the biproduct of refining crude oil or tar into gasoline. Therefore, plastic is inseparable from oil industry politics, and its use here is a signifier of a necessary engagement with industrialized capitalism. For a model-maker, plastic is an essential material as nothing else offers similar potential in terms of accuracy, scale, and detail. A paradox of creating video art in the way I do is that my process necessitates having to partake in the capitalist spectacle in order to critique it. While the majority of the sets were created using high quality kits produced by railway modelling, most of the props used for *In the Shadow of Wollywood* were sourced from bargain stores between the mid

⁸⁹ Retrieved April 12, 2021 from: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-36319877>

⁹⁰ Naphthalene was first extracted from coal tar English chemist and physician John Kidd in 1819. The resulting solid was volatile and of a white crystal appearance. Due to its molecular structure, Naphthalene can be used in a wide range of products from solvents to hard plastics depending on the level of distillation and combination with other minerals. Steam-cracking, a process in which water vapour is heated to 800 degrees and forced through the naphthalene is used to separate the molecules. Plastic is created by polymerization, through the resulting molecules being heated, and mixed with colour pigments and minerals to vary its properties.

1990's and mid 2000's, and retailers no longer stock the large range of plastic miniatures they once did.

The most common polymer used to make toys and models is Acrylonitrile Butadiene Styrene (ABS) an opaque thermoplastic and amorphous polymer, which can be heated, injection moulded, or 3D printed into complex shapes. Lego and the hard plastics used to make better quality action figures are likely to be ABS, identifiable due to the shine on their surface and high indexical moulding capabilities. The cheapest figures I have used for *In the Shadow of Wellywood* are from the *Maleficent* playset. Made from a softer black plastic with a slightly rubbery texture and matte appearance, they are likely to be carbon black which is produced from half combusted tar, a heavy soot like powder used in everything from car parts to the soles of sneakers. This type of rubbery black plastic is recognizable due to its poorer indexical qualities, softer density and matte finish. The conflicted nature of my consumerism is often based around the amount of packaging I have to throw away in order to use a single figure or a few props. Sometimes not everything in the set is useful and the unwanted pieces are donated to the local charity shop. Due to their low production values, the toys are ultimately unsatisfying as they break easily. At a cost of only \$2 per figure, it is difficult to see how these materials could have been produced without exploitation.

Chapter Six: Strategies For Resisting The Spectacle

A primary goal of my research was to develop a form of video activism designed to resist the capitalist spectacle of the Hollywood movie industry by developing an alternative mode of production and distribution to this dominant system. The creative process explored longstanding practices of re-purposing, equipment sharing, collaboration with musicians, and screening work in alternative venues established during the 1960s. A series of test projects adapted principles of video activism, and micro and expanded cinema practices, in order to explore the critical potential of a collection of obsolete video equipment rescued from disposal. The final work *In the Shadow of Wellywood* is analysed in detail in Chapter Eight.

Wellywood Outsider Video Studio

The first stage of the research involved building a movie studio in miniature with obsolete video equipment which could be used to satirize the real thing. The studio was based around a set of video cameras which had been donated to the obsolete equipment collection and were small enough to film scale models.

Fig. 12. Swann Security camera. Image sourced from e-bay auction. **Fig. 13.** The camera in the miniature video studio. **Fig. 14.** Making a spectacular psychedelic effect. Photographs by Mike Heynes



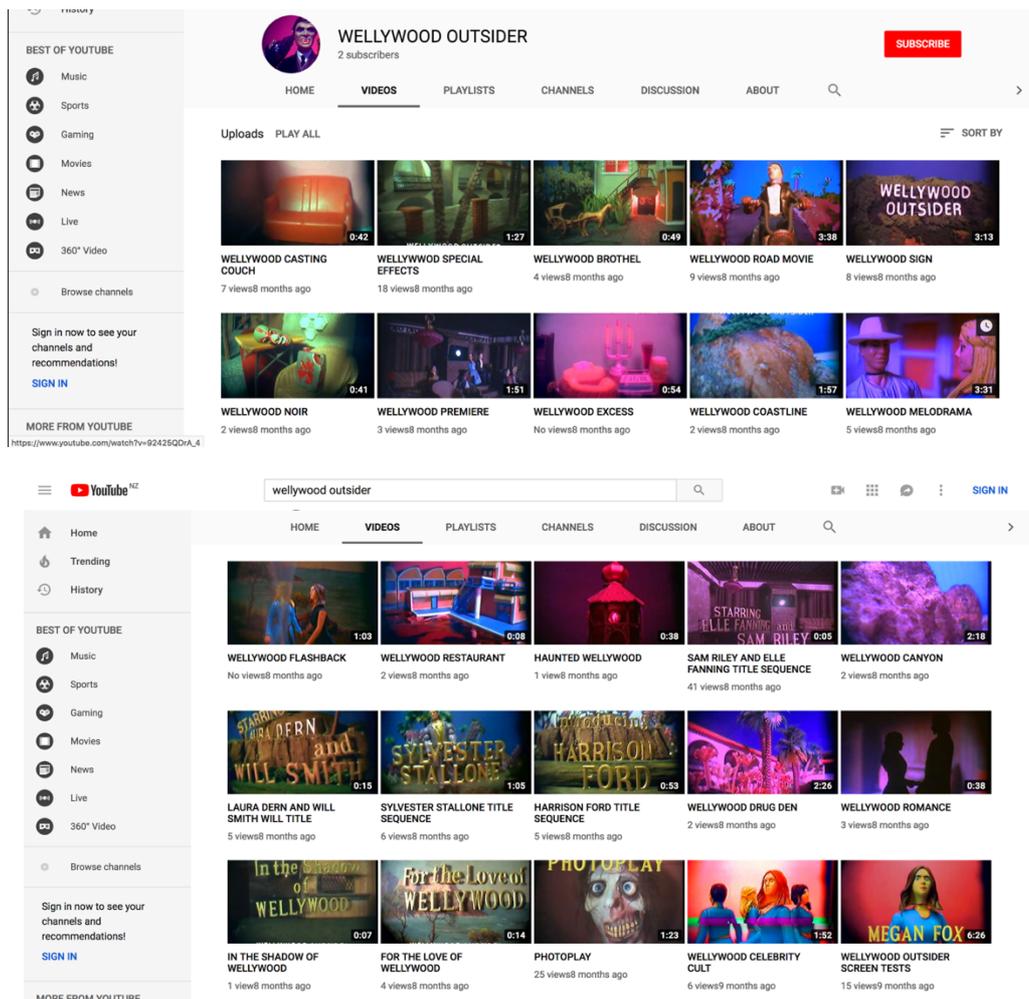
The Swann PNP 90/TL analogue security camera has a body measuring 35mm sq, and lenses with a focal distance of approximately 60mm allowing them to be positioned on set close enough to the “actors” to create the cinematic camera angles of a close-up and mid-shot required to mimic a real studio production. *In the Shadow of Wellywood* uses miniatures in two common modelling scales. The characters and some interior scenes are 1/16th, the same scale as Star Wars action-figures, while the exterior sets are made using HO or 1/87th hobby modelling materials, the standard scale for indoor railways. The scale of the sets required a camera with a live video feed small which was small enough to be placed within this imagined world, enabling a human point of view, and disguising the actual scale of the models. The camera has a 4:3 aspect ratio, and a low-resolution interlaced video signal, so choosing to base the research project around the use of a format with such distinctly obsolete visual qualities positions the work outside of mainstream movie making, and within traditions of experimental cinema and video art. By ignoring what would otherwise be considered technical limitations from the earliest stages of production, I am challenging the way technology companies condition viewers’ expectations of a spectacular ultra-high resolution hyper-real image. Back-up cameras were purchased new via e-bay for \$15 each. The same camera was used to create *In the Shadow of Wellywood*, and the psychedelic imagery for the expanded cinema collaborations. The auto white balance and manual focus controls of the camera encouraged my exploration of psychedelic video art which in turn contributed to the direction of the experimentally animated work.

Wellywood Outsider YouTube Channel

During the early stages of this research, I conducted an experiment to explore how the Situationist principles of psycho-geography and detournement could be applied to my practice of video activism. As the miniature movie studio evolved, I uploaded production rushes including location shots, screen tests, and title sequences to YouTube. The use of over-reaching tags including Wellywood, Hollywood, blockbuster movie, and the names of the stars, had the intention of distracting fans from the spectacle of mainstream movies. As part of this experiment I did nothing to promote the channel to see if fans found their way there via the tags. In playing on my tenuous connections to the surrounding movie industry, I briefly distracted 151 views from official productions. The relatively low number of views over the

nine-month period the experiment existed suggests that very few fans searching for news of their favourite star took the bait. No comments were left. With 41 views the Elle Fanning and Sam Riley title sequence was the most popular, likely due to their previous co-starring role. In comparison, the Screen Test clip listed all the cast members but attracted less interest with only 15 views, while a clip tagged *Wollywood Special Effects* scored 18 views.

Fig. 15. WELLYWOOD OUTSIDER YouTube channel screenshots



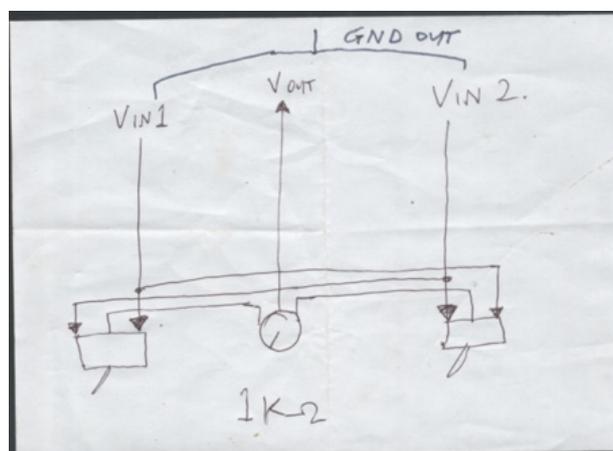
Analogue Video Switcher and Mixer

After a professional two channel radius8 analogue video switcher and mixer in the obsolete equipment collection failed, I was forced to consider the most rudimentary function I needed it to perform, which was switching between two live camera feeds to create reverse shot sequences, as used in a television studio. The equipment failure led me to design a simplified version using components from a hobby electronics store. The radius8 was purchased from a second-hand store in Whanganui cheaply and the problem inspired me to think conceptually about the most basic function I needed it to perform. I had learned about passive audio mixers through collaborating with sound artist Simon Cuming, coming to the realisation that what I needed a video mixer to do was relatively simple, compared to what sound artists are building.

Fig. 16 & 17. Analogue two channel video mixer.



Fig. 18. Video mixer circuit diagram.



Starting with only a basic knowledge of electronic components, my mixer design was adapted from circuit diagrams created by analogue video glitch artists Karl Klomp⁹¹, freely available online. Video glitch art, or signal bending mixers create interference through disrupting the usual image circuit, resulting in pulsating noisy patterns. These mixers are designed with a passive signal, meaning that there is no electrical current passing through the unit, and the image signal from a camera or VCR is manipulated by basic external electronic components. Where these artists degrade video signals, my aim was to straighten-out their bent circuit diagrams to create a mix or switch between two video channels. This circuit allows the mixing of two video inputs into one output channel using a potentiometer, a dial with one video source connected to each end, and the video output connected to the centre where the signal crosses over.

Fig. 19. Sequence of video stills from *In the Shadow of Wellywood* demonstrating use of the analogue video mixer and switcher



The sword fighting scene Kevin Costner and Mark Ruffalo depicts them co-starring in an epic tale of colonisation. Costner, the colonialist in the red coat is defeated by Ruffalo, wearing the more primitive costume. The aim of this sequence was to mimic the shot reverse shot method used for filming dialogue in live action cinematography using the DIY video switcher. While there is no dialogue, the glitches of the mixer visualize the zinging sound of swords clashing, as the shots reverse. This two-camera set-up demonstrates a basic principle of studio production, in which the cameras are positioned at opposing 45-degree angles to represent the point of view of the person listening, and the face of the person speaking. The use of this cinematic technique in a stop motion project with no dialogue alludes to a live studio environment.

⁹¹ Retrieved April 14, 2021 from: <http://dodgystereo.blogspot.com/2013/05/karl-klomp-dirty-video-mixer.html>

Expanded Cinema Collaborations

In his influential book *Expanded Cinema* (1970), media theorist Gene Youngblood suggested that the emerging “intermedia network of cinema, television, radio, magazines, books, and newspapers is our environment, a service environment that carries the messages of the social organism.” (p41). Youngblood participated in and reviewed many 1960’s multi-media happenings, including film-maker and animator Stan VanDerBeek’s *Movie-Drome* (1966), an immersive multi-projection environment based on the geodesic dome. Architect and designer Buckminster Fuller, inventor of the geodesic dome, wrote the introduction to *Expanded Cinema* and this invitation demonstrates the importance architecture played in the development of new screening environments.

Fig. 20 & 21. Expanded Cinema collaborations with The Raskolnikovs and Eb & Sparrow (2017)

Photographs by Mike Heynes



During the early stages of the research, I adapted principles of expanded cinema for a series of collaborations with musicians. Modelmaking and working with stop-motion animation can be long and slow processes so music venues offered an essential live environment for experimentation and testing work in progress. The video works with abstract elements made as part of these collaborations was a new development within my practice. The musicians I chose to collaborate with were pre-existing connections, these collaborations were initiated socially, and we were previously aware of one another’s work. Some of the groups involved had an established touring circuit and pre-existing fan base outside of the main urban centres, which required flexibility around the choice of venues and provided the opportunity to improvise. This research exists outside of the traditional gallery environment, and the ethos

of experimental collaboration fostered by the surrounding underground music community has supported and enriched my practice as a video artist. In the Incite Journal of Experimental Media's issue on the micro cinema network in the USA Film theorist Jonathan Walley describes the "importance of temporal and spatial experience, for artist and audience alike", and his reflection on the new screening conditions of Youngblood's *Expanded Cinema* is relevant to many of the practical considerations of touring a video projection work around a wide range of established and DIY music venues:

Once the traditional arrangement of projector, screen, audience, etc. was abandoned, and new materials (including performers) were introduced into a cinematic work, new decisions had to be made about placement, size, distance, duration, and relative position, with each work inventing its own new cinematic exhibition situation. (p.219)

***Seeing Things* Collaboration with Eb & Sparrow**

Songwriter Ebony Lamb of the Alt-Country group Eb & Sparrow invited me to create a series of video projections for a nationwide tour to celebrate the release of their album *Seeing Things*, and this opportunity allowed me to consider the wider potential of my studio backlog.

Fig. 22 – 29. Video stills paired with fan images of Eb & Sparrow performances sourced from Facebook. Fan image credits clockwise from top left: Chrissi Johnstone, unknown, Menno Huibers, Fleur Thompson.



Our collaboration grew from an improvised gig in 2017, organized at St Peters Hall in Paekakariki supporting The Raskolnikovs, in which my videos of imaginary worlds became

a backdrop for Eb & Sparrow's performance. The *Seeing Things* tour received Creative New Zealand funding, playing in a wide range of town halls and established music venues. Both the mis-en-scene of the videos and the projection set-up for the 13-date tour were defined by the fact that architecture differed so radically in each location. The band played in front of the screen in some venues, while in others it could be positioned above or beside the stage. These conditions required some flexibility and DIY ingenuity around installation, while I would argue providing contemporary instances of expanded cinema. The possibility of the image being obstructed by the band on stage led to a filmic style in which the camera drifts backwards and forwards over the landscape or pans around a bedroom, factory, or town, revealing a small part of the scene at a time, so the audience can see something of the image wherever they are positioned in relation to the band. To create the psychedelic effects for this series of videos I used a Swann security camera to film through the eyepiece of a kaleidoscope. At the ANZAC Hall in Featherston, we carefully removed their framed portraits of founding members of the town from above the stage, to make space for the projected image above the band. Andy Warhol's *Exploding Plastic Inevitable* happenings with the Velvet Underground, staged around New York during the mid-1960's were a formative reference point for all the collaborations. Expanded Cinema theorist Alison Lynn Wielgus describes how in the Film-Makers Cinematheque and the *Exploding Plastic Inevitable*'s alternative networks "the force of live music comes face to face with recording technology and spectacle comes face to face with the banal." Wielgus' description raises the question of what constitutes spectacular, and what is considered banal. Creating an alternative to the spectacle aims to make the official version appear banal. Wielgus believes that Warhol's expanded cinema:

displays technology's potential, creating a futuristic and utopian media environment in which all technologies feed off one another. With its strange cocktail of projectors and amplifiers, dancing and singing, drugs and drone music, the *Exploding Plastic Inevitable* unfolds as a subterranean nightmare that spotlights the complex mid-century relationship between man and machine.⁹²

The notion of a subterranean nightmare is central to my research as it describes space existing beneath the artificial surface of the spectacle, and is visualized in the underground

⁹² Retrieved April 2 2021 from: <https://ir.uiowa.edu/etd/4794/>

tunnels the *Wellywood* characters move through. Wielgus notes that “expanded cinema also places limits on recording technologies, relying on the contingency of liveness for maximum affect.” This is a phenomenon that I have become increasingly aware of as my initial collaborations grew socially and were not documented thoroughly due to the way they evolved. In hindsight, I under-estimated the positive impact these early experiments would have on the direction of the research. Independent film maker and micro cinema pioneer Jonas Mekas’ work with Andy Warhol and the Velvet Underground on *The Exploding Plastic Inevitable* demonstrates the potential of inter-disciplinary collaboration and highlights the importance of underground music in the development of this research. Canadian media-based art pioneers General Idea reflected upon the influence of the surrounding music scene:

There would have been another big group influence – rock and roll. Which in the mid to late 1960’s was obviously the alternative or underground scene, the major cultural manifestation. I think that was the strongest role-model. I think this came out of our mid 1970’s stay in New York. (Our) searches for new forms, new contexts to plug into. And people were looking at rock and roll. Lots of people in sort of bands and sort of clubs. Nightclub performances, Dada magazines all that sort of stuff. So, it was all this, artists looking at other media. Plugging into videotapes. I think we realized at some point that the art scene had become another one of those, it had become part of the media, it was no longer an esoteric little back water, it was in a certain sense, out there competing. (Bonnet pp. 172-3)

As a video artist my practice looks to other media in the manner that General Idea describe, in particular my DIY attitude towards making animation draws inspiration from underground music. The micro cinema designed to screen the work acknowledges the importance of independent media distribution strategies previously developed by punk groups and ‘zine makers in offering a critical alternative to mainstream entertainment.

Psychedelic Light Machine

The Psychedelic Light Machine was an experiment in making live video art without a computer and was inspired by the use of psychedelic projections in expanded cinema happenings and music venues of the 1960's, in particular the way that light artists re-purposed overhead projectors, a common piece of classroom equipment. The first test I performed with the Machine was at Moon bar in Newtown as part of a gig organized by local independent music store Death Ray Records, a long-time promoter of the musicians that have collaborated on this research.

Fig. 30. Psychedelic light machine built using Two Swann security cameras, two motors, variable speed controller, and a 2 channel analogue video mixer and switcher output to a data projector.



Fig. 31 & 32. The effect of the machine in use. Moon Bar Newtown 2018



The Machine followed my usual subversive approach of creating a low budget and satirical version of professional technology, in this case live video mixing equipment such as the Pioneer DVJ 1000 hardware, or VJ software Resolume or Modul8. Joshua White creator of

the Joshua Light Show worked at the Fillmore West in San Francisco and Fillmore East in New York with artists including Jefferson Airplane, the Grateful Dead, Jimi Hendrix, The Mothers of Invention, Janis Joplin, The Doors, and The Who. White's light show required a five person crew simultaneously operating film and slide projectors, alongside overhead projectors on which coloured oil and water could be mixed horizontally in large glass petri dishes. White claimed that he "didn't try to invent anything spectacular" but "simply adapted existing equipment and gave it a cool name" ⁹⁴. The Psychedelic Light Machine mimics these processes through the use of changeable discs containing collages of readymade plastic materials. The decision to make my machine the way I did was a reflection on the continued popularity of overhead projectors as despite technological advances, none were destined for disposal during my collection period.

Expanded Cinema: Barnacles on the Balls of Industry

This expanded cinema collaboration with sound composer Simon Cuming (S.C.Cumuna) developed late in the research period as a result of working together on *In the Shadow of Wellywood*.

Fig, 33 & 34. *Barnacles on the Balls of Industry*. Expanded cinema performance at the Pyramid Club May 2021. Images by Mike Heynes



It is further example of the collaborative potential my studio of obsolete video equipment and backlot of sets offer in their ability to critique aspects of industrialization. Some of the

⁹⁴ Retrieved April 14, 2021 from: <https://www.tate.org.uk/tate-etc/issue-4-summer-2005/tune-turn-on-light>

factories appearing in this work were used to create the *Wellywood* boiler room. *Barnacles on the Balls of Industry* was an exhibition of Simon's print, video, sound, and kinetic sculpture work at Toi Poneke art gallery in Wellington in March 2021. The title of the exhibition and resulting expanded cinema collaboration refers to a saying Cuming's father used to describe the way he perceived the ideals of artists operating as a hinderance to capitalist progress. The expanded cinema performance relating to the exhibition was performed as part of the Cuba Dupa festival. The performance consists of a series of videos of factories and machinery from my studio backlot mixed with a layer of TV static. This interference was created by filming Simon's handmade striped prints mimicking digital signals with the Swann security camera. VJ software was used to remix the videos live in response to the improvised sounds being generated through the flue guitar. These combined elements visualize the industrial sounds and drones created with Cuming's flue guitar, a stringed instrument inside a galvanized metal pipe played using a motor. Following the Cuba Dupa performance we were invited to perform the work at the Pyramid Club in May, a Wellington based artist run venue with an established history of supporting experimental music and expanded cinema projects.

Refuse To Upgrade Obsolete Video Equipment Library

After a few years of working in my AV Technician role in Massey's School of Art, I discovered a Steenbeck 0-1 series 16mm film editing desk in a school storage shed, and eventually facilitated its donation to the Time Cinema, a film club and museum located in the Wellington suburb of Lyall Bay. Aside from a problem with its motor speed, the Steenbeck still worked after being in storage for more than a decade and was a more advanced editing desk than the one owned still used. This experience contributed to the idea of starting a library with the obsolete equipment I had been collecting. One of the reels of film I found with the Steenbeck contained a collection of projects by unknown Wellington Polytechnic students made before its merger with Massey in 2000, and of particular interest to my practice was the logo design for the then-new television channel TV3.

Fig. 35 – 37. TV3 logo by an unknown Wellington Polytechnic Student. 16mm telecine to digital video



At a duration of 30 seconds, the plasticine logo is tilted and rotated in front of the camera in a forward then backward motion to simulate 3-dimensional CAD movement. As a rumination on changing technology, the logo used an old effect to simulate new technological developments, and acts as a reminder for academic institutions to consider the importance of maintaining legacy equipment to achieve a greater understanding of historical developments. TV3 was the first privately owned television broadcaster operating in New Zealand and my discovery of the TV3 logo was a valuable conceptual precursor for the Hollywood movie logos I recreated for *News of the Uruguay Round* (2016).

Fig. 38 - 40. *News of the Uruguay Round* (2016) video stills of the recreated Universal Studios Logo



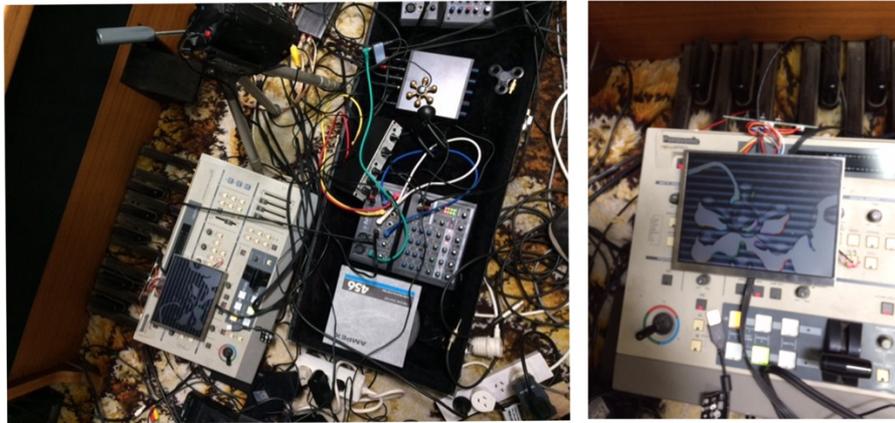
I opened the obsolete video equipment library in the mid-stage of the research, and while it is not part of the project submitted for examination, it has contributed to the visual treatment of *In the Shadow of Wellywood*, as my video studio evolved in response to using this growing collection of donated equipment. My philosophy of engaging with obsolete video technology is based on continuing to work with what remains useful technically, regardless of current

trends in ultra-high-definition image making. The lenses and sensors of domestic analogue video tape-based camera formats such as VHS and Hi8 still work long after recording becomes problematic due to mechanical wear and the reduced availability of tapes. The aim of the library was to encourage other video artists to consider their role as a consumer or critic of new technology, and I admit that there was a certain level of risk and humorous détournement in encouraging others to use equipment this close to the end of its life.

The project's proposal that people could use this obsolete equipment instead was deliberately provocative in promoting its limited technical capabilities and distinctive visual qualities, invoking a Situationist re-evaluation of work and notions of play. During the 18 months the library operated it received significantly more offers of donations than requests for loans, loosely indicating that my peers did not generally share my concerns.

All the equipment offered for loan passed a portable appliance test (PAT) conducted free of charge by qualified members of the university's technical staff who were sympathetic to the sustainable ethos of the project. But otherwise, the equipment was offered as-is, with no guarantee of continued electronic reliability. VHS cameras were loaned in pairs to minimise the consequences of mechanical or electrical failure during an important shoot. As far as I knew, at the time of each loan, the lenses and power supplies on all the cameras worked, but the tape-recording functions remained largely untested. I decided to avoid social media, choosing to promote the library through word of mouth within my creative networks. As a result, I was able to facilitate longer term loans on a case-by-case basis with people I could trust to care for the equipment. Operating from an unmarked room in the College of Creative Arts basement, the library constituted a secret society in the manner Eagles has identified. Loaning equipment the university had tried to dispose of was a mode of critical practice which questioned the institution's commitment to sustainability. The library facilitated loans for two projects which demonstrated the equipment and knowledge sharing potential of the concept: Circuit International Artist-in-Residence Guillaume Cailleau borrowed a Panasonic MX30 Production video mixer for a performance at the Audio Foundation in Auckland. The mixer had a problem with the audio that Guillaume was able to repair.

Fig. 41 & 42. Image: Broken Panasonic video mixer adapted and photographed by artist Guillaume Cailleau



Wellington band Orchestra of Spheres borrowed a VHS video camera to make a music video for the track *Ata*⁹⁵ with video effects by Dan Harris, in which a balloon with human eyes and mouth superimposed morphs into an insect. The cameras I accumulated had no batteries, but the band needed to do an outdoor shoot. As older VHS cameras use the same batteries as heart defibrillators, the band purchased one online and returned it with the camera for future use, demonstrating the attitude of community building which the underground music scene is built upon, and an understanding of the benefits of supporting future creative projects.

Refuse To Upgrade adapted principles of sharing equipment and knowledge exemplified by countercultural visionary Stewart Brand's *The Last Whole Earth Catalog Access to Tools* (1971). The catalogue provided ways to buy tools and access the knowledge required for communal living and became a manual for the emerging DIY culture. Subjects covered in the manual included building shelter, agriculture, growing your own food, making everything from guitar amplifiers to clothes, access to educational films and sound recordings (p400), resources for filmmaking in schools with equipment for recording slides and films for transfer to video (p402). The catalogue encouraged mixing traditional skills with the use of new technologies such as electronic calculators and audio tape recorders. The criteria for listing items in the catalogue involved whether they were deemed useful as a tool, relevant to independent education, high quality or low cost, and easily available by mail. Its purpose was

⁹⁵ Video available on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OmNXq4KSk0E>

to provide individuals an opportunity to respond to the “gross deficits” created by government, big business, formal education, and church, and instead develop the “power of the individual to conduct his own education, find his own education, shape his own environment, and share his adventure with whoever is interested”. Revisiting Stewart Brand’s work in his book *From Counter Culture to Cyber Culture* (2006), communications theorist Fred Turner reveals a “complex intertwining of two legacies: that of the military-industrial research culture, which first appeared during World War II and flourished across the cold war era, and that of the American counter culture” (p.3). John Whitney and Pat O’Neill exemplify Turner’s observation in repurposing military equipment.

In the spirit of *The Last Whole Earth Catalog Access to Tools*, the following section provides product reviews of equipment designed to connect analogue video equipment to a computer, as these pieces of equipment have been and necessary for promoting a model of studio production which prioritizes sustainability over the latest digital camera format. Brand suggests that users “get the cheap tool first, see if it feeds your life, if it does then get a better one. Once you use it all the time, then get the best” (p.4). Following this principle, my review explains the inconsistent image quality of the scenes included in the final version of *In the Shadow of Wellywood*.

Fig. 43. Sony and Startech analogue video signal digitizers. **Fig. 44.** Blackmagic Design analogue video signal digitizer in use.



I began using a Sony digitizer which was donated to the library, it was old and had been functioning without issue for years but stopped working after an Apple system upgrade during the mid-stage of the research. The Startech SVID RCA to USB was the first capture device I tested as a replacement. Purchased from a hobby electronics store for \$49.95, the Startech fulfilled my self-imposed research parameters of using inexpensive equipment as a mode of resisting capitalism, but the quality was disappointing. Pixilation was visible during movement due to the limited compression settings included with the software, but I included these shots for technical comparison, and to contribute to the sense of entropy my vision of a studio system in decline required. While these scenes chronicle a developmental stage of the creative work, for me they also questioned the conceptual parameters of using analogue video equipment. While these scenes express the struggle of continuing to use obsolete equipment, the image quality was frustrating as it confused the visual properties of analogue video with an added layer of image pixilation from the digitization process which was previously unnoticeable. The pixilation problem undermined my argument *for* the visual qualities of the analogue image, so I broke a rule of my research parameters and upgraded a piece of equipment. The professional quality Blackmagic Design Intensity Shuttle continued the viability of my analogue video centred studio for a cost of \$500.

Video Activism: *Gentrifier's Delight*

This two-channel closed-circuit television-based work applied technical strategies established by pioneering video activists as described by Boyle and referenced in Chapter One to a local situation. The project discussed in this section was developed late in the research and made quickly and responsively, given a surrounding situation.

Fig. 45 – 47 . Unlisted video installation for Newtown Open Studios and Neighbours' Day March 2021



In utilizing my usual kit of security cameras and monitors and a set from the studio backlot, this work demonstrates the potential of these materials in developing an original form of video activism. Assembled on a trolley once used for institutional AV presentations, the work was quick to install in a guerilla-like action. The decision to approach the project in this way draws upon Boyle's observation that the primary focus of grassroots community video was "to use portable video to effect social change, not to experiment with a new medium, or dismantle the structure of broadcast television".

I live in a block of old industrial buildings in the Wellington suburb of Newtown containing a mix of studios and living space which is under threat from gentrification. Ours is the last block like this left in the city. Recently the inaugural Newtown Open Studios weekend was announced, and local artists were invited to participate. For a fee of \$50 they would be included on a map, the event would be promoted, and timed to coincide with the already established Neighbours' Day event happening around the city. Many of my neighbours signed up. A ceramicist at the end of the alleyway joined the Open Studios programme, and her sound engineer partner organized a small free music festival as part of Neighbours' Day featuring local bands planned for the Saturday afternoon and early evening. The Open Studios organizers complained about the potential threat of a music festival, and how it was not appropriate for their event despite the number of music studios on our block, and also despite the fact that the festival was promoted as part of Neighbours' Day. Their worry that loud music would either scare away customers, or be a distraction from the other studios, appeared to be commercially driven, and was unfounded as this was a new event. The music festival went ahead anyway, was well attended, trouble free, and the surrounding studios were pleased with their sales. Responding to the ambiguity of what constitutes a studio, and the cross-over of events, I didn't pay the fee but showed my work anyway, in protest of seemingly commercial interests attempting to dictate conditions beyond their jurisdiction. This project was supported by my neighbours' in offering free space and promotion for the work. The title *GENTRIFIER'S DELIGHT* satirizes the type of language used by real estate agents in promoting properties for sale, and its tone warns that potential change to the neighbourhood is unwelcome. It also functioned as a message to the Open Studios organizers that attempting to derail an offering of free music in favour of commercial motivations is un-

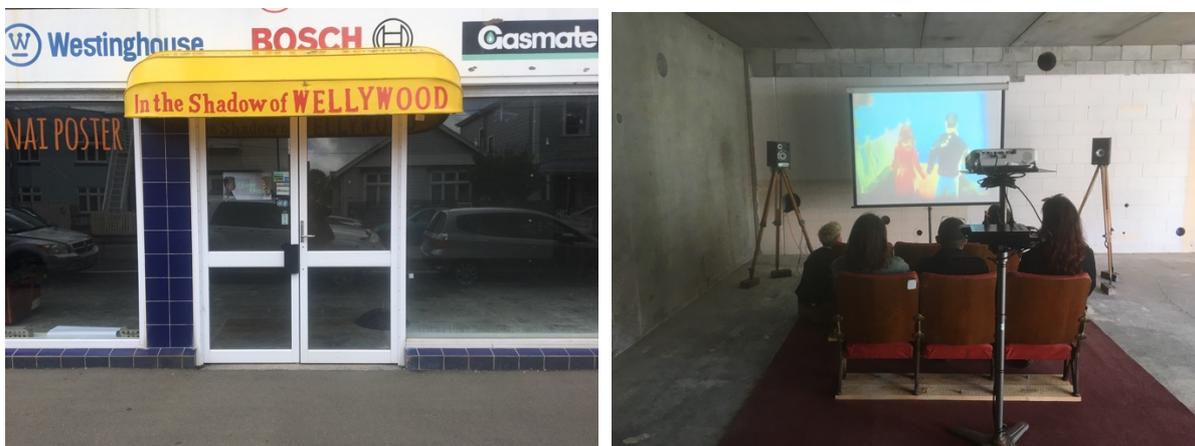
neighbourly. The camera angles chosen for the work are tightly framed to disguise the type of building and its purpose. While the model and cameras are visible next to the TVs, the on-screen framing creates a disconnection which asks visitors to consider the true nature of the surrounding space.

The Micro Cinema

The Circuit Aura Community Video Festival held in Newtown in 2019 provided an opportunity to screen a test version of *In the Shadow of Wellywood* during development. A key concern of the festival's theme was highlighting the issues of gentrification facing our local creative community as affordable studio and workshop spaces become increasingly scarce.

I created a six-seat micro cinema to screen the work in an empty commercial building generously loaned to us by its owners free of charge for the purpose of the festival.

Fig. 48 & 49. Temporary micro cinema installation 2019. Photographs by Mike Heynes



This version of *In the Shadow of Wellywood* was presented as a concept pitch for an upcoming feature; and edited as a loop for viewing in an installation context, closing with a cliff-hanger chosen to enrage audiences. The design of the micro cinema demonstrated my commitment to a pragmatic aesthetic of reuse and repurposing. The screen was rescued from institutional disposal and the mismatched wooden stands supporting the speakers are surveyor's tripods. The rose-coloured carpet was on sale in the local flooring shop. The seats were purchased through Trade Me from a home cinema enthusiast who acquired the from the State Theatre

in Napier. I had to buy seven seats in order to have enough arms to make two rows of three. The micro cinema was located on a busy street so I used the situationist principles of psycho-geography and detournement to attract passers-by in advertising my tenuous connections to the surrounding movie industry through the title on the awning over the door.

The installation strategy drew inspiration from the micro cinema network in the USA. Operating since the early 1960's, these small-scale independently run venues have supported local experimental film makers through organizing screenings and running film making workshops. Micro cinema pioneer Jonas Mekas started *Film Culture* magazine, and founded the Film-Makers' Cooperative and the Film-Makers' Cinematheque in New York during the 1960s, making it possible for underground filmmakers to bypass mainstream distribution. The Cinematheque eventually grew into the Anthology Film Archives, which continues to be one of New York's essential screening venues. Mekas stated "we were making different kinds of films because we were driven to, but we did not think we were experimenting. We simply wanted to do something else that could exist alongside Hollywood, but they did not want to let us in. They had built walls around traditional cinema that could not be broken so we had to operate outside those walls in whatever way we could."⁹⁷ While Mekas supported a culture of underground film making through his initiatives, I used a temporary micro cinema installation to critique the authority of the surrounding Wellywood movie industry. The micro cinema movement has since grown into a wider network of screening venues and film making workshops. In 2015, I received a Professional Development grant from Massey University to visit micro cinemas in California and these experiences have also informed the direction of this research. Visits to the Echo Park Film Center in Silverlake Los Angeles and Craig Baldwin's Other Cinema located in the Mission District of San Francisco came with the invitation to screen my work "if I lived in the neighbourhood", revealing their priorities for supporting the surrounding community. Ed Halter founder and director of Light Industry, a venue for film and electronic art in New York recalls the micro cinema community of the 1990's and reveals how this nationwide network of DIY movie theatres evolved through its connections to punk rock:

⁹⁷ Retrieved April 14, 2021 from: <https://www.artnews.com/art-news/news/jonas-mekas-key-experimental-filmmaker-dies-96-11746/>

Video projectors became more available than in previous decades; the rapid evolution of projection technology meant that older models soon became available at relatively low costs. Although cinema required industrially produced materials, micro cinema often sidestepped this dependency on market capitalism through recycling the garbage of the past. In these latter cases, the models provided by other indie cultures such as music may have proved more crucial, due to the lack of other replicable cinema-based strategies. The most obviously successful low-budget framework at-hand would have been the makeshift sub corporate network forged by punk bands in the 80s (pp.23-24)

Fig. 50 – 53. Micro and expanded cinema tests in the studio located beneath Peter Jackson's *The Great War* Exhibition, Dominion Museum building. Photographs by Mike Heynes



Chapter Seven: *In the Shadow of Wellywood* Synopsis

In the Shadow of Wellywood imagines a world where international co-productions have taken over our national cinema and dreams of movie stardom have become nightmares. The casting of international actors in this production was a necessity in both narrative and practical terms as Sam Neill is the only New Zealand actor to be commercially reproduced in plastic. In casting real actors playing themselves, the narrative deliberately confuses their roles in the production, holding the audience at a distance, and allowing viewers to draw their own conclusions about the artificial setting.

In the Shadow of Wellywood cast in order of appearance and the productions they originally starred in:

Elle Fanning – *Maleficent*
Sam Riley – *Maleficent*
Sam Neill – *Jurassic Park*
Alfred Molina – *Spiderman*
Harrison Ford - *Star Wars*
Kevin Costner – *Robin Hood Prince of Thieves*
Mark Ruffalo – *The Incredible Hulk*
Sylvester Stallone – *Rambo*
Henry Cavill – *Superman*
Billie Burke – *The Wizard of Oz*
Laura Dern - *Jurassic Park*
Angelina Jolie – *Maleficent*
Elizabeth Olsen – *The Avengers*
Megan Fox – *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*
Tommy Lee Jones – *Men In Black*
Will Smith – *Men In Black*
Kevin Sorbo – *Hercules (TV series)*
Johnny Depp – *Pirates of the Caribbean*
Annie Potts – *Ghostbusters*

Living in the shadow of Wellywood, Elle Fanning and Sam Riley the co-stars of Disney's *Maleficent* movie are now in a relationship, renting a modest bungalow and working together in hospitality, while individually waiting for their comeback roles. A sign marking the territory sits high on a hill they pass travelling to work, but the surrounding landscape is filled with exotic trees and palms suggesting a temperate climate and somewhere unlike Wellington. In the evenings after work Elle and Sam watch TV, in a state of sofalarity. They always watch the channel with the spectacular golden castle, but recently its spectacle has started to fade. Sam Neill's celebrity cult are performing a ritual all dressed in white, and the *Jurassic Park* star appears to have found Shangri-La, and the elixir of youth, but the couple are unmoved.

One night on television, producer Alfred Molina announces a callout for starlets and stuntmen to audition for roles in new productions, and Elle and Sam take notice. The next morning, they arrive late for work and are scolded by their boss Harrison Ford when they express their excitement about the advertisement. Ford's warning about the dangers of the spectacle is represented by a red skull, and each time this warning appears its prophecy is fulfilled shortly afterwards. It is later revealed that Ford has become a member of the celebrity cult, and his warning suggests that he is there under duress. The Producer arrives at the restaurant and offers Elle an audition. The couple drive in search of the spectacle but stop to watch a movie in a roadside cinema on the way.

After watching a fantasy sword fighting movie starring actors Kevin Costner and Mark Ruffalo, they are warned of the dangers of the spectacle by their doppelgangers, indicating that many like them have tried to make it big in Wellywood and failed. The following day their car is run off the road by a flying teacup, and crashes into the canyon they saw on the cinema screen the night before. At this moment the real-world merges with the artificial world of the studio, and the crash creates the first and thoroughly literal cliff-hanger of the work. A Studio Tour advertisement presented by Megan Fox and Tommy Lee Jones begins with screen tests auditioning the stable of stars.

The tour visits the home of Sylvester Stallone where female members of the celebrity cult are required to serve him. A relationship between Laura Dern and Will Smith appears to be on the rocks. Smith is an outsider and has not been invited to join the cult, and he is beginning to notice his new partner's head spinning behaviour, indicating that the celebrity cult are a manifestation of evil.

After watching a ritual performed by the celebrity cult, Megan and Tommy enter the same cinema Elle and Sam visited, which is now seemingly relocated inside the golden castle. As Megan and Tommy watch the movie, Elle and Sam's adventure continues and they are lost in the canyon. The couple are eventually rescued by the celebrity cult who offer them orange juice and shelter, where it is revealed that some of the members are reduced to camping on the studio backlot. Unmoved by the cult's rituals, Elle and Sam sneak away and an unknown member sets fire to their camp, indicating division within the group. Leaving the canyon, the landscape changes dramatically as Elle and Sam cross a stone bridge and find themselves on a yellow brick road. This cinematic trope could be a mythical geographic feature made real in their narrative world, but it is more likely that they have wandered onto part of the studio backlot. The arrival of more flying teacups indicates that the spectacular castle is not far away, but the rides are going off-course.

Eventually, Elle and Sam walk through the castle gates, but the landscape appears the same on the other side, indicating a merging of the city and movie studio. Inside the next golden castle Elle and Sam find a motel managed by Henry Cavill. When Sam speaks of their ambition to become part of the spectacle Henry offers the same warning they received from Harrison Ford. As soon as Henry delivers his warning, Sam Neill appears in the lobby accusing the couple of lighting the fire but leaves without further incident.

When Sam Riley uses the phone in the motel lobby to enquire about an audition, Kevin Costner and Mark Ruffalo pass by on their way to work. Costner, already in costume is carpooling with Ruffalo who has overslept and is not yet in costume, suggesting that their off-screen relationship is as strained as the characters they play on-screen.

Sam attends his audition with *The Producer* for a role in a Transformers themed musical, and out-dances his robotic opponent in a scene which imagines the demise of CGI in favour of the real. After his audition, Sam leaves with Laura Dern. They go to her place, where she offers Sam marijuana, and he is last seen wandering the backlots of Wellywood in a drug induced haze.

As Elle stands on the balcony waiting for Sam to return, she watches a party at a mansion across the road owned by Angelina Jolie and Johnny Depp. The accidental death of an extra at the party is reminiscent of avant-garde film maker Kenneth Anger's *Hollywood Babylon* books exposing the darker side of the industry's early period and indicating a continuum as Depp owned the infamous Viper Room club in Los Angeles where actor River Phoenix died of

a drug overdose. Back at the motel, Sam Neill suddenly appears on the balcony with Elle and makes advances towards her. She defends herself and an ambulance is required for Neill.

The next day Elle goes to her audition at The Producer's mansion. Elle is met at the door by Billie Burke the actress who played the Good Witch in *The Wizard of Oz*, suggesting that the Wellywood studio may have developed Disney's fabled cryogenic technology. Elle is offered a drink by Laura Dern before Billie shows her to the casting couch.

The Producer arrives and Elle remains compliant with his advances, which involve kissing her hand, asking her to marry him, then injecting her with drugs. Billie and Laura guide Elle through the secret tunnel between the mansions to the Producer's bedroom. As The Producer imagines Elle wearing lingerie, she punches him in the face and runs away, indicating that attacking the patriarchal and exploitative movie system had been her plan all along. Elle fights with Laura Dern and wins. Lost in the mansion hallways Elle encounters Elizabeth Olsen who tells her how to escape, but she is caught by Billie, creating the second episodic ending.

Returning to the studio tour, the spectacular golden castle of Wellywood is strangely empty apart from the presenters and the celebrity cult, there are no crowds, suggesting that the destination is no longer popular or relevant. E-waste disposed of by the studio contaminates the surrounding waterways. The events of the Wellywood tour are at first banal, with an unspectacular flash flood, and an inexplicable trip through a rotating ice tunnel. The tour becomes increasingly dangerous as the collapsing bridge collapses endangering the presenters, and Megan Fox is eaten by the shark Jaws.

In the boiler room Elle reveals that she is still holding the knife and was waiting for the right moment to turn on Billie. They fight but Billie defeats Elle. Annie Potts meets them in the basement as Billie has arranged, but Annie shoots Billie instead of Elle, and then tells her how to escape. Elle meets Tommy in the tunnel as she makes her escape. Employed as a presenter on the Studio Tour Tommy has knowledge of, and access to, the tunnels. Carrying a bomb with the wick already lit, Elle realizes that he is a disgruntled employee planning to destroy the studio, and they escape the mansion as it explodes. Collectively the actions of Elle, Elizabeth, Annie, Tommy, and the unknown arsonist represent a proletariat uprising against the Wellywood movie studio system.

Chapter Eight: *In the Shadow of Wellywood* Production Notes

The following chapter contextualizes narrative and technical decisions made for *In the Shadow of Wellywood*.

Movies About the Movies

A suite of feature films about the darker side of the Hollywood dream and the power of business over creativity have informed the plot, themes, and characterization of *In the Shadow of Wellywood*. *Sunset Boulevard* (1950) directed by Billy Wilder is a cynical tale of Hollywood values and the celebrity cycle set within the studios of Paramount Pictures. This film noir classic remains a relevant critique of the psychological pressures of a constantly changing industry, as an unsuccessful script writer becomes involved with a fading silent film star who is desperate to make her return to the big screen. The movie was made in secret under the working title *A can of Beans*, and was ground-breaking in its satire of the industry as director Cecil B DeMille plays himself, and this narrative decision contributed to my approach to casting actors as themselves. *Sunset Boulevard's* explores themes of ambition, transformation, failed expectations, power, and tragedy continues through later feature films such as *A Star is Born* (1954), *Mulholland Drive* (2001), and *Maps to the Stars* (2014). In *Wellywood* Elle Fanning's character represents ambition in her desire to audition for a role in a spectacular studio production, but also transformation as rises up against The Producer who exploits his position of power, Harrison Ford, Henry Cavill, and Kevin Sorbo all have failed expectations in their need to work in hospitality jobs, and tragedy befalls Megan Fox in the workplace. *A Star is Born* is a musical following the journey of a rising star and her older alcoholic lover whose own acting career is in decline, and its dark, reflective tone can be read as an industry responding to the issues raised in *Sunset Boulevard* three years earlier. Cukor's early film *What Price Hollywood?* (1932) follows a similar plot in which a young actress becomes involved with an alcoholic director. The characters depicted in *Wellywood* face workplace harassment and substance abuse issues. *Maps to the Stars* directed by David Cronenberg follows the journey of sibling child stars who have been literally and metaphorically scarred by their lives within the film industry. Cronenberg is best known for his horror and science fiction films with bodily themes and the characters he portrays in this

real-world drama are equally disturbing in my opinion. *Mulholland Drive* directed by David Lynch is set within a movie studio influenced by the mob and follows a failed actress dreaming of a botched hit on her lover and rival. Lynch's use of exaggerated characterization within a dream-like setting has influenced my vision of Wellywood. In 2016 a panel of 177 film critics selected by BBC Culture⁹⁸ nominated Lynch's critique of the Hollywood movie business the best film of the 21st century to date. Movie critics choosing a critique of Hollywood by an arthouse director perhaps reflects disillusion with the dominant studio system. BBC Culture film critic Luke Buckmaster suggests that critics "could get lost in the dream-like ambience of it while being engaged in an intellectual exercise deeply critical of the commercial realities of filmmaking: a sort of backhanded valentine to Tinsel Town"⁹⁹

Genre Movies

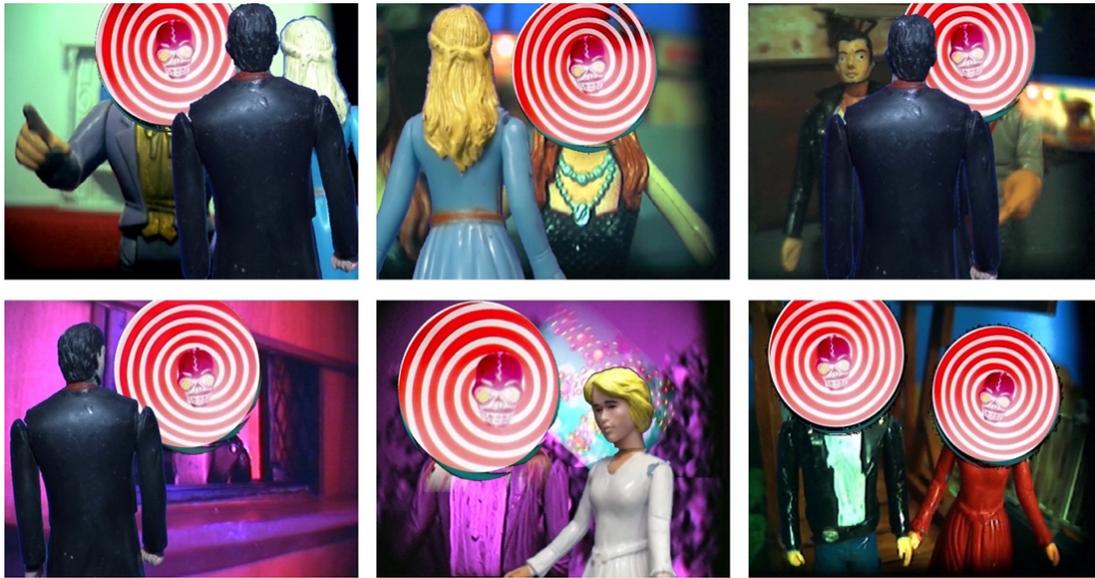
Genre movies were a staple of the Golden Age of Hollywood studio production as they were easy to make within a quick turn-around time, while their familiar subjects guaranteed a returning audience. As the opening feature on a double bill, these B-movies had lower production values and a smaller budget and were often produced in black and white after the studios had moved to colour for the main features. Made with the economical narrative style of a B-movie, *In the Shadow of Wellywood* reimagines their tight turn-around time, minimal use of sets and locations, and recurring stable of actors. The revisionist nature of genre movies accepts that a knowing audience will compare a new film with works from the existing canon. My genre-blending mix of action, melodrama, musical, road movie, crime drama and arthouse cinema intends to summon memories of the 5 for \$11-8 day rental deals video stores once offered on their older titles. The work of genre filmmakers Roger Corman and John Carpenter have greatly informed my approach to making *In the Shadow of Wellywood*. Working across horror, science fiction, and various forms of action movie, both have influenced the narrative shorthand this style of animatic is built on. Corman's teen movies *Rock'n'Roll High School* (1979) featuring the Ramones, and *Suburbia* (1983) in which he appears as the presenter, exemplify the connections between punk rock and B-movies which have long influenced my

⁹⁸ Retrieved April 14, 2021 from: <https://www.bbc.com/news/entertainment-arts-37164880>

⁹⁹ Retrieved April 14, 2021 from: <https://www.bbc.com/culture/article/20160822-why-mulholland-drive-is-the-greatest-film-since-2000>

film making practice. *In the Shadow of Wellywood* continues my investigation of genre films: as my past projects have examined the teen movie (*Punk Shane*, 2000, and *Legends of Kirkville*, 2001), science fiction (*Martian Channel Chroma*, 2009), horror (*SCHLOCK! HORROR! Death of a B-Movie Empire*, 2005), and melodrama (*To Be Continued...*, 2015). Film critic and academic Barry Keith Grant notes that director John Carpenter makes genre films which “seek to disturb generic expectations or to play with conventions” (p11) which resonates with the intentions of my own research. Carpenter has frequently stated his appreciation for Hollywood’s old studio system and for genre films as the mainstay of studio production and the trend in Hollywood movies of the 1980s and 1990s towards minimally drawn characters in fast-paced narratives featuring much violent action can be traced back to the genre films of Howard Hawkes and Corman’s early work. Carpenter identified himself with the studio system of the 1940s and 1950s through “using genre to provide a kind of narrative ‘shorthand’” (p22) that contributes to the visual economy of his films. Movie historians Ian Conrich and David Woods acknowledge “the audience’s desires and expectations were stimulated and managed through the familiarity of genre conventions, and filmmaking was conceived solely as a craft, rather than anything more lofty” (p2). The red skull used to express a warning of the dangers of the spectacle of *Wellywood* was inspired by Carpenter’s *They Live* (1988) in which people require specialized glasses to “see through the obfuscating haze of dominant ideology” (p16) and recognize the presence of aliens with a skull-like appearance representing capitalism who create a false consciousness through television signals designed to control the masses and encourage consumerism

Fig. 54 – 59. *In the Shadow of Wellywood* video stills showing the skull warning symbol



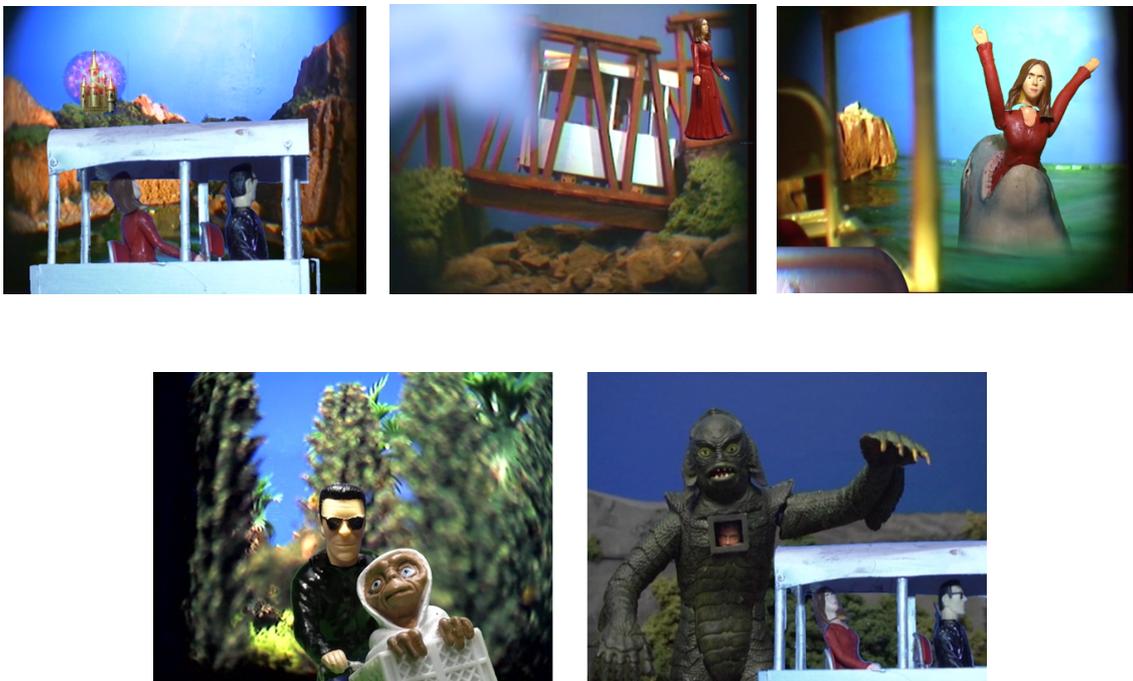
In the Shadow of Wellywood resembles a road movie, a genre which defined arthouse cinema of the early 1990's. David Lynch's *Wild at Heart* won Best Picture at the 1990 Cannes Film Festival, followed by *Thelma and Louise* (1991), *My Own Private Idaho* (1991), *Kalifornia* (1993), *Even Cowgirls Get the Blues* (1993), *True Romance* (1993), and *Natural Born Killers* (1994). These stories of outsiders on transformative journeys through the landscape continue the themes established by *Easy Rider* and *Two Lane Blacktop*, a trend which existed in New Zealand's national cinema a decade earlier.

The Studio Tour

In 1984, when I was 13 years old, my family visited Los Angeles and we attended a tour of Universal Studios, and as a movie fan, this formative experience sparked my interest in special effects and video production technology. I kept the tour brochure, referring to it throughout this research, selected pages are reproduced in the attached appendix. The second and third advertisements for the *Wellywood* studio tour recreate sections of the Universal Studios tour I experienced but their alternate and tragic endings offer a prediction that transplanting cultural reference points from Hollywood to Wellington will end badly. My use of a kitset model of *The Creature from the Black Lagoon* recreates a scene on the Universal tour promoting *The A-Team*, a new TV action series of the time. A mechanical model depicted one

of the team members wearing a *Creature* suit attempting to escape a car which he has crashed into the lagoon. In portraying a contemporary television character revising a classic horror movie on the set of a studio tour, this instance of inter-generational cross-platform branding operated on multiple post-modern levels. *Creature* kitsets were available in the Universal gift shop alongside the E.T. keyring I purchased and eventually appropriated. The reproduction *Creature* kitset I used was released in 1981 and was purchased new online for this work. The same kitset was used by Melbourne based New Zealand artist Ronnie van Hout for his work *The Dark Pool* (2015)¹⁰⁰ which explored the monster as a symbol of the cultural underground and otherness, whereas my own specific research interest involves investigating merchandising strategies. My appropriation of the key ring acknowledges that *E.T. The Extra Terrestrial* represented a new level of product placement in movies¹⁰¹ as major brands are embedded within the narrative when Eliot plays with *Star Wars* toys and Reece's Pieces candy is used to lure the alien E.T. out of hiding.

Fig. 60 – 64. *In the Shadow of Wellywood* video stills



¹⁰⁰ Exhibition *The Dark Pool* (2015) Centre for Contemporary Photography, Melbourne.

¹⁰¹ Karışık, V.J.(2104). *20 Years of Research on Product Placement in Movie, Television and Video Game Media* Journal of Economic and Social Studies

The studio backlot, collapsing bridge, flash flood, ice tunnel, and shark attack scenes depicted in the Movie Studio Tour sequences of *In the Shadow of Wellywood* re-imagine the tour bus ride I experienced. The highlight of the Universal tour for me was the Special Effects Stage which featured a themed experience based on the recently released Steven Spielberg film *E.T: The Extra Terrestrial*. Participants were invited to sit on the hero Elliot's bike in front of the green screen and see themselves composited into a scene from the movie in which the bike flies over a forest. The experience could be recorded onto VHS tape for the cost of \$29.99 USD, but we didn't buy a copy as we were told that the tape would not play at home, as the US used the NTSC format and New Zealand used PAL. The brochure described the Special Effects Stage as "a combination of film, miniatures, and live action that takes you on a tour of the past present and future of special effects techniques". The video presentation by actor Robert Wagner predicted a future where actors were no longer required after being recorded from every angle by a computer. After witnessing the ability of scale models to appear life-size through the transformative abilities of the lens only moments before, the prospect of computer-generated actors amounted to entering the uncanny valley for me. Wagner's predication came true in recent years with animated versions of the late Peter Cushing and late Carrie Fisher being used in Star Wars movies *Rogue One* (2016) and *The Rise of Skywalker* (2019). The majority of video cameras donated to my collection were domestic models and accordingly I have considered how this technology was marketed at the time of its release. A TV commercial for the Panasonic Omni VHS camcorder from the early 1980s set with Universal Studios demonstrates how connections between the Hollywood movie industry and technology companies are reinforced to create business opportunities and a point of identification for the consumer, and an opportunity for participation in the spectacle.

Fig. 65 – 67. YouTube screenshots of a TV commercial for the Panasonic Omni VHS camcorder (1995)



The commercial shows a family recording their experience of the *Conan The Barbarian* movie themed experience.¹⁰² This successful fantasy action movie was released in 1982, and starred Arnold Schwarzenegger in his first major role in a big budget feature. Opening with the statement “now a world of magic is in your hands” the commercial shows the blond-haired son fighting a dragon, and afterward a theme park actor representing Conan rewards him by presenting him with a medal and placing it around his neck. The boy then relives the experience at home watching the video recording on TV with friends. This commercial is distinctive as it shows a desire to participate within the filmmaking experience, while the others from the era address the capturing of memories. The Universal Studios tour brochure describes *The Conan the Barbarian Sword and Sorcery Spectacular* as “a world of swords and sorcery where magic is the rule and the unexpected is the norm; where fantasy and reality meld into an awe-inspiring spectacle of clanging steel and powerful spells” but the stage show with pyrotechnics and lasers lacked the excitement of the movie due to our fixed viewing position and the advertorial nature of the production. An informal survey of the range of 1980s camcorder commercials available on YouTube demonstrates that the intended market of home video recording technology was middle class white families wanting to capture highly privileged experiences, for example a JVC commercial shown filming a hot air balloon ride.¹⁰³

Fig. 68 – 70. JVC camcorder commercial 1985 YouTube screenshots



¹⁰² Retrieved April 14, 2021 from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2F5ZhTCppko>

¹⁰³ Retrieved April 14, 2021 from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v3OK_D19vEo

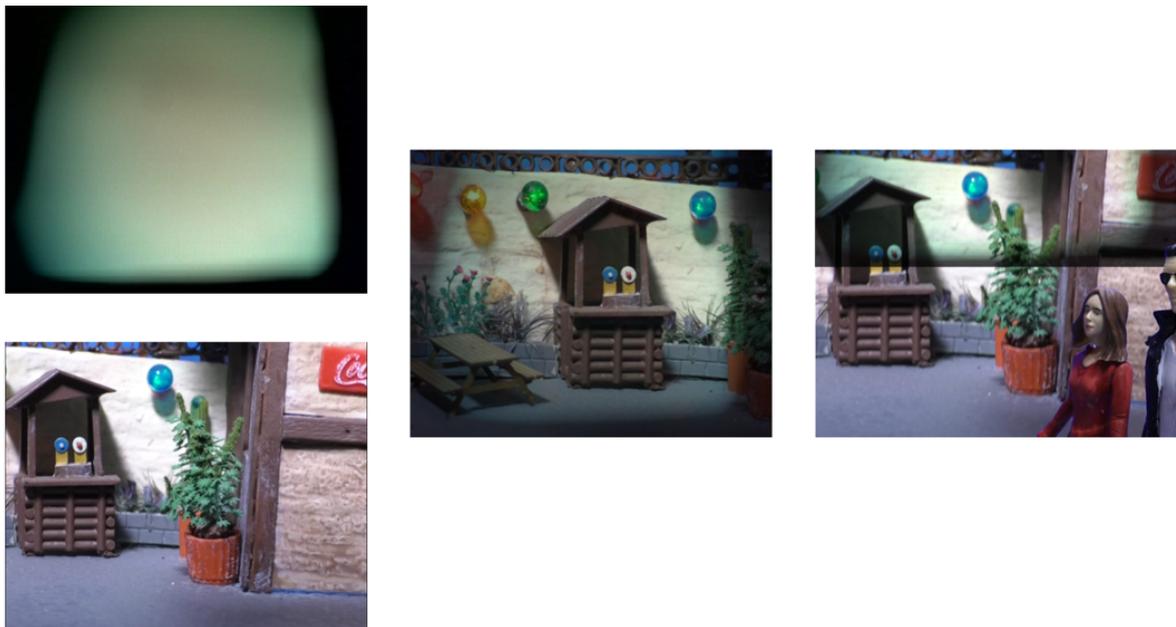
The following sections of this chapter explain how the production environment of *In the Shadow of Wellywood* mimicked the various departments of a Hollywood movie studio:

Camera

The initial stages of this research were based around an exploration of the space between model and camera which stop-motion animation inhabits and attempting to actively disrupt it. The small body of the Swann camera and live video feed allows it to be handheld to create point of view shots or rigged on set to film a scene, while the manual focus lens provides limitations which contribute to the overall look of the production. The camera used for filming backgrounds and full frame character shots was designed to be fixed in place, so when it moves too quickly the auto white balance starts to adjust, a greenish hue taints the image and signal interlacing becomes visible, activating otherwise static scenes with awkward and shaky point-of view cinematography. The shallow depth of field provides a flat cartoonish look when filming scale models and a distinctive vignette occurs when the macro lens is unscrewed to its limits and starts to misalign with the sensor. Re-purposing this camera required specific set building conditions such as creating exteriors wider at the edges to allow for lens distortion, and interiors with diffused overhead lighting to manage the auto-white balance settings. As a result, the sets were built in front of the camera and progress monitored through the live video feed. The limitations of the camera mean that it is only suitable for atmospheric full-frame shots as its lack of image sharpness, distinctive vignette, and auto white balance make filming blue-screen impossible. After some unsuccessful initial tests, the blue screen characters were filmed using a Panasonic standard definition digital video camera to allow greater control, while combining old and new technology achieved the desired entropic sense of disorder and decay. Compositing the mis-matched formats together highlighted the creative potential of working with a unique set of equipment collected via the *dérive*. Adjustable Look-Up Tables, or LUTs are used in video editing software to simulate the look of old film stock, but these filters ironically mourn the passing of a technology they helped render obsolete. Adobe Premiere's Lumetri filters allow editors to simulate the look of a wide variety of Kodak and Fuji film stocks with nostalgic names such as Monochrome, Faded Blue

Moon, Gold Rush, Gold Tobacco, and Western Noir 1965.¹⁰⁴ In response, I created two DIY video LUTs using the Swann camera and consumer level SVID2USB23 capture device.

Fig. 71 – 74. Simulating the Swann lens. Left above is the Swann filter, Left below is the professional camera image, centre, the combined layers. Right, the shot as used in the finished video, revealing the effect



The aim of the experiment was to degrade images recorded by other higher quality video cameras through applying the same distinctive white balance, picture noise and vignette of the Swann. The effects were created by filming a piece of white paper in natural daylight. The daylight light LUT has a greenish blue hue, while the sunset LUT was created by filming through four layers of pink lighting gels. The occasional pulses in the LUTs were created by casting a shadow off camera to disrupt the auto daylight white-balance. Combining the vignettted image from the spy camera with the obviously interlaced look of the SVID2USB23 creates an effect which is deliberately unspectacular rather than referencing the nostalgia of VHS.

¹⁰⁴ Effects available in Adobe Premiere Pro CC 2020

The Animatic

In the Shadow of Wellywood was created without a screenplay and as an investigation of the genre film, using a backlot of sets and a library of characters filmed on a bluescreen to develop the experimental narrative. The visual treatment is based on the animatic (known as a pre-vis or pre-visualization in 3D animation), an animated storyboard used in movie pre-production to test concepts and pacing, and the timing of voice acting for animation. It can be read as a set of instructions including camera angles, and the locations required for production. When used as a conceptual tool, the animatic is an opportunity for exploring an experimental narrative process and allowed me to allude to the presence of real actors working within my own studio system. In drawing upon this provisional stage of pre-production, I am humorously asking viewers to imagine the real thing. In setting *In the Shadow of Wellywood* within a stage of pre-production not usually intended for public viewing I am conceptually excusing the use of rudimentary animation techniques which I couldn't get away with if I was working in the movie industry. Compared to the usually slow pace of making stop-motion, my approach is quick and rough, then heavily treated in the post-production phase. As a video artist my \$2 movies reject the pure fantasy of claymation, in favour of the reality of using ready-made plastic models which offer the opportunity to critique their mode of production. The precision and detail ready-mades provide is far greater than anything I could build by hand for the same amount of time and money. Using what is cheaper and easier is a strategy that animation theorists Elaine Cheasley Paterson and Susan Surette refer to as "sloppy craft", to describe "a consciously deskilled aesthetic", suggesting that:

If skill is set up as a way of achieving "cultural authority" within a material discipline, then working within that discipline without the requisite skill has the potential to mount a challenge to this authority. The need to be highly skilful in using materials may have excluded some artists from expressing a number of their ideas in craft materials; but other ideas, usually framed as social critiques, can be effectively expressed in these same materials using less skill involving material and tool manipulation. (p70)

The term "craft" refers to a handmade tradition, which stop-motion animation and model making belong within. My intentionally sloppy use of Premiere for animating layers, and basic use of Photoshop for cutting out images belies a deeper understanding of digital video editing

workflows and techniques. While it is deliberately less skilful, my approach retains energy in being able to quickly test a scene. It is important that viewers understand the level of antagonism towards the mainstream movie industry portrayed in the treatment of *In the Shadow of Wollywood* so my use of sloppy craft extends to doing everything badly. These tactics include using files visibly pixelated from a low quality video capture card, allowing single-take shaky camera work, keying bluescreen poorly despite the use of a higher quality camera, excusing rough paint jobs, and basic animation and post-production editing techniques all combined to create an overt message of opposition and resistance.

The approach I took to animating layers is based on digitally replicating the capabilities of a pre-digital optical film printer, and the use of multiple layers of video owes more to cell animation than stop-motion. Where some scenes were filmed in camera and others composited in Premiere from pre-filmed video layers. The use of bluescreen is functional in allowing the mixing of different scale characters and backgrounds, and it is considered in this research to be an essential compositing technique rather than a special effect. No effort has been made to hide the inconsistent processes of animating the figures, and the tell-tale signs of compositing techniques are usually hidden in a commercially produced movie, but the animatic style used for *In the Shadow of Wollywood* makes them obvious. In revealing my tricks such as leaving the edges around bluescreen keyed figures, I am allowing the audience to see how the work is constructed and encouraging them to consider how the movie industry itself is constructed.

Animation and Editing

The research investigated two approaches to editing, animating video layers in Premiere as a digital simulation of the analogue technology of optical film printing, and using a DIY analogue video switcher to simulate a live action sequence, as discussed in *Chapter Six: Developing Strategies for Resisting the Spectacle*. While my process starts with filming models, the experimental films of avant-garde artists, and the way that Disney's cell animation was created using multiple layers, have contributed more to my video art practice than stop-motion pioneers such as Ray Harryhausen or Jan Švankmajer, as more of my animation occurs in post-production. The optical film printer was developed in the 1920's by Linwood Dunn a

special effects technician at RKO Pictures, and designed for copying films, adding captions, and working with layered mattes through mechanically aligning multiple filmstrips and refilming the composition. Dunn animated RKO's radio tower logo and later worked on *King Kong* (1933) and *Citizen Kane* (1941). In 1944, Dunn and colleague Cecil Love developed a printer for Eastman Kodak to service the US Armed Forces Photographic Units and the resulting Acme-Dunn optical printer soon became the standard for Hollywood special effects. New Zealand experimental film pioneer Len Lye would have required the use of an optical printer to copy his direct animation techniques of scratching and painting the film. The Oxberry optical printer was introduced in 1957, and by the early 1970s the technology was becoming available to students at art schools in the USA. The term "Oxberrian Motion" was used by curator Rebecca Erin Moran in 2016¹⁰⁵ to describe the distinctive ways optical printer artists manipulated layers of film. As I replicate the layer, movement, and colour effects of optical film printing digitally, *In the Shadow of Wellywood* uses *Oxberrian-Like Motion*.

As a video artist and academic living in a movie industry town, I am interested in connections between the film industry, academia, and the avant-garde, as exemplified by California-based optical film artist Pat O'Neill between the late 1960s and 1980s. As a founding member of the Oasis avant-garde cinema collective, the CalArts tutor who taught George Lucas, and was a visual effects artist on *Star Wars*, O'Neill represents the ability to work across the field. His influential psychedelic colour film *7362* (1967) was created using a Navy surplus optical printer and developing laboratory running Kodak 7362 high contrast film for titles and matte work, and featured multi coloured layered sequences of naked dancers abstracted through mirroring. The sexual tone of naked bodies and pulsing edits suggest that the work was not intended for mainstream audiences. *7362* is an example of the political shift that occurs in the repurposing of technology in that O'Neill's optical printer started as a tool of war and became art equipment for the counterculture. O'Neill applied compositing techniques to everyday subject matter including boots that change colour in *Saugus Series* (1974)¹⁰⁶, and a

¹⁰⁵ Retrieved April 14, 2021 from: <http://www.re-mi.eu/wiki/re-engineering-the-industry/oxberry/oxberry-index>

¹⁰⁶ Preview available April 14, 2021 at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mRCISTlyL-Q>

strip of film hung outside on a line drying in the wind, in *Foregrounds* (1978)¹⁰⁷, choices which belie the complexity of their creation. In 2020 curator Daniel Fitzpatrick described O’Neill’s avant-garde film *Water and Power* (1989) as a “dizzying masterpiece operating in a city symphony mode which combines techniques of collage, time-lapse, and superimposition to depict an ongoing clash between industry and nature”.¹⁰⁸

Fig. 75 – 77. *In the Shadow of Wollywood* video stills showing visible compositing techniques



Emily Breer’s optically printed films from the 1980’s demystify filmmaking effects by revealing editing processes which are usually hidden and can be considered an example of sloppy craft. Breer’s film *Fluke* (1985) is an exercise in exploring animal, mechanical, natural, and cinematic movement. A film of the sea is moved downwards in the frame and positioned so its top edge sits in the middle, creating a new horizon line. Flying fish on the layer behind begin to jump through the air, and layers of aeroplane films are re-positioned so they fly upside down. A shark moves across the frame from right to left, originally filmed in close-up, the movement of the layer reveals it has no body but also indicates that it is swimming. I have adapted this technique in animating the shark scene in the Movie Studio Tour sequence. While Breer’s films all have the feeling of being out of control due to their stylistic shifts but the amount of resizing and re-printing required to make work in this way confirms that these are all intentional decisions.

¹⁰⁷ Exhibition documentation available April 14, 2021 at: <https://philipmartingallery.com/video/15-pat-o-neill-foregrounds-excerpt/>

¹⁰⁸ Retrieved and abbreviated April 14, 2021 <https://aemi.ie/event/water-and-power-by-pat-oneill/>

The flickering vertical black lines framing characters filmed on the bluescreen and visible to the side of the castle in the cover page image could have been fixed with a simple crop effect in Premiere but there is a deliberate level of antagonistic satisfaction in resisting the urge to clean images up too much. Elle's blue dress changes colour below the knee in some bluescreen shots, the patch indicating that the original framing was too tight. Sam Riley's point of view as he walks into the distance down the yellow brick road is awkward and comical, his body appears distorted as the legs were filmed in profile and combined with a mismatched angle. These examples of intentionally sloppy craft represent disdain for now-standard Hollywood studio techniques such as motion capture and computer-generated animation which prioritize perfection over the hand of the maker.

The lurid colours and anarchic humour of *In the Shadow of Wellywood* recognize the formative influence of underground filmmakers John Waters, and Mike and George Kuchar on my animation practice. The Kuchar brothers' early films were shot on 8mm, a medium "despised" for its home movie associations. Using their family apartment as a studio, the teenaged twins started making films during the early 1960's using an 8mm camera to parody the Hollywood melodramas of the era. Their films including *Sins of the Fleshapoids* (1965) and *The Craven Sluck* (1967) directed by Mike Kuchar were screened with the support of Jonas Mekas and became an influence on Waters' independent Dreamland Studios. The Kuchars' work included special effects using stop-motion, cell animation, and scratching directly onto the film while their hand lettered title sequences reflected their training in advertising.

The decision to accept my plastic figures' fixed expressions was influenced in part by the extremely stylized make-up used by George Kuchar throughout his films, inspired by the distinctive eyebrows of screen star Elizabeth Taylor

Casting and Characterization

The *Wellywood* screen tests were filmed with each "actor" as the figures were collected. The process was informed by the 472 silent screen tests artist Andy Warhol made of friends and celebrities visiting his studio The factory between 1964 and 1966. These cinematic portraits "reveal his lifelong fascination with the cult of celebrity, comprising a visual almanac

of the 1960s downtown avant-garde scene”.¹⁰⁹ In 2009 Warhol’s former assistant Gerard Malanga reflected that ““none of these screen tests amounted to giving those people the opportunity to go on in the underground film world, it was kind of a parody of Hollywood.”¹¹⁰ My own movie-star screen tests adapt Warhol’s concept into a “what-if” directing scenario, with the choice of actors in my stable of stars being limited by their depiction in mass-produced plastic.

Fig. 78 – 83. Video stills. Titles used to identify the stars of *In the Shadow of Wellywood*



As the actors are unidentifiable, the titles introducing them are a replacement for their familiar facial features and voices. The concept of developing a mythological celebrity narrative to undermine the authority of its subjects is a central theme of *In the Shadow of Wellywood*. Due to their depiction in plastic the usually recognizable stars require titles to identify them. The phenomena of familiar people looking different in dreams was first identified as disjunctive cognition, by psychoanalyst Mark Blechner in 2001.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ Retrieved April 14, 2021 from: <https://www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/1086>

¹¹⁰ Retrieved April 14, 2021 from: https://www.openculture.com/2012/03/andy_warhols_screen_test_of_bob_dylan_a_classic_meeting_of_ego_s.html

¹¹¹ Retrieved April 14, 2021 from: <http://www.psychomedia.it/rapaport-klein/blechner02.htm>

The figures included in the *Maleficent* set were dressed in medieval costumes which prompted the celebrity cult narrative. In casting well respected New Zealand actor Sam Neill as their leader, and as a villain, I am suggesting that he has the range to play such a character, rather than insinuating anything more about his personality or abilities. But I am also considering the potential outrage from local audiences in seeing Neill cast in this role. Hollywood has a long tradition of cult-like activity connected to celebrities, ranging from the popularity of the Church of Scientology amongst actors including Tom Cruise and John Travolta, to the Manson Family murdering actress Sharon Tate, the pregnant wife of director Roman Polanski. The Source, an early health food restaurant popular with Hollywood actors was run by a cult communally living in the Hollywood Hills.¹¹² Charles Manson, perhaps the most infamous cult leader and mass murderer, moved to Hollywood with a group of his followers and settled at Spahn Ranch, an old film-and-television set in the western San Fernando Valley. James Edward Baker, a war hero, alleged bank robber, and graduate of the Chicago School of Swedish Massage arrived in Hollywood during the mid 1960's hoping to find work as a stuntman, but instead started The Source, one of America's first health food restaurants located on Hollywood's Sunset Strip. Baker renamed himself Father Yod and founded a spiritual commune in the Hollywood Hills known as the Source Family, inspired by the Nature Boys, a group of Californians dedicated to the German philosophy of Lebensreform, and its strict adherence to a natural lifestyle, including a vegetarian diet, and yoga. Yod cherry-picked and distorted the teachings of other Yogi, taking a number for wives, including some underage, and fathering children to multiple women. Yod fronted the psychedelic rock band Ya Ho Wha 13 who released three albums, but he died in a hang-gliding accident after moving the cult to Hawaii.

D.W. Griffiths' film *Birth of a Nation* (1915) demonstrated connections between early Hollywood and racist ideologies in adapting a story called *The Clansman* by Thomas Dixon Jr. The movie was credited with reviving the Ku Klux Klan became the first Hollywood blockbuster. At a duration of three hours, it was the first long form drama and used pioneering cinematic techniques, but its historical association with racism is offensive. As a reminder of

¹¹² *The Source Family* (2012) Documentary directed by Maria Demopoulos and Jodi Wille

this troubling lineage, the *Wellywood* cult are all Caucasian and dressed in white. Will Smith, the only Black actor in the production plays the new partner of cult member Laura Dern. He is excluded from the cult and becoming wary of their evil motivations, as visualized by Dern's head spinning movement reminiscent of the horror movie *The Exorcist* (1973). Smith's limited presence acknowledges the lack of Black heroes on Hollywood movie screens. The decision to cast him in this small role was key in positioning the imagined studio in a particular way, and more significant than his on-screen time suggests. In 2016 Smith announced that he would be boycotting that year's Academy Awards due to its all-white nominee list.¹¹³

The demographic which Disneyland attempts to attract or avoid contributed to wardrobe and plot development decisions which reflect upon on individuality in the face of conformity. The use of generic costumes in *Wellywood* becomes a form of visual shorthand, such as the cult wearing white, and the "rebel" symbolized by a black leather motorcycle jacket in the style of Marlon Brando's *The Wild One* (1953), the Ramones, and the Situationist Enragés. Sylvester Stallone and Harrison Ford are wearing matching lilac suits with gold shirts, left over from previous chorus line roles in the same studio musical. In August 1970 approximately 300 members of the Youth international Party (or Yippies) a prankster protest group invaded Disneyland citing a range of political grievances including that of theme park sponsor The Bank of America financing the Vietnam War. The group entered the park as paying visitors, unfurling a Viet Cong flag and taking over Tom Sawyer Island. Riot police were called and the park was closed for the day. This act of subversion led to Disneyland banning men with long hair and the wearing of tie-dyed t-shirts for many years. However, *Bats Day in the Fun Park*, an annual goth day at Disneyland ran for 20 years, attracting an estimated 8,000 morbidly dressed fans of the music subculture. The event included off-site parties, live music, attendee souvenirs, and official Disney photographers outside Sleeping Beauty's Castle and the Haunted Mansion. Fans were offered discounted park tickets and hotel rooms, as their interest in the event no doubt contributed to Disneyland's attention economy. In 2018 the event was cancelled due to a change in tax regulations making the event unaffordable for independent organizer Noah Korda to manage as he received no financial support for the

¹¹³ Retrieved April 14, 2021 from: <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2016/jan/21/will-smith-oscars-diversity-boycott>

event despite the media attention and economic benefits for surrounding businesses.¹¹⁴ While the two fan bases may seem incongruous, Reggie Ugwu of the New York Times pointed out that “beyond the surface discord are clear harmonies: a love of costumes and glamour, a flair for the sensational and dramatic, an allergy to humdrum reality”.¹¹⁵ *In the Shadow of Wellywood* draws upon a similar mix of a candy-coloured and playful aesthetic with a darker side. Actor Sam Riley, co-star of Disney’s *Maleficent* movie previously played Ian Curtis lead singer of the band Joy Division in the film *Control* (2007) whose music was a precursor of and influence upon the goth movement.

Set Design

In the Shadow of Wellywood enlists tropes of the Hollywood movie industry experience to create a spectacular, dreamlike setting in which the boundaries between the studio, the backlot, the theme park, and the real world are deliberately blurred. The yellow brick road represents a cinematic journey, and the red carpet denotes celebrity. The golden castle indicates the presence of a Disney-like corporation and its branded theme park experience, but the flying teacups suggest that the rides are going awry. My appropriation of these well-known Hollywood movie tropes references the pre-digital era and establishes the satirical tone of the work from the opening shot.

Fig. 84 – 86. *In the Shadow of Wellywood* Video stills.



¹¹⁴ Retrieved April 14, 2021 from: <https://www.vice.com/en/article/qvxgyd/disneylands-goth-day-is-the-latest-victim-of-trumps-america>

¹¹⁵ Retrieved April 14, 2021 from: <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/11/arts/goths-disneyland-bats-day.html>

The unrolling of a red carpet anticipates a majestic event such as a movie premiere or awards ceremony. Traditionally outdoors, the provision of a red carpet to walk on indicates the presence of royalty too important to have their feet touch the ground when they arrive. The earliest known reference to walking a red carpet is in the play *Agamemnon* by Aeschylus, written in 458 BC. When the title character returns from Troy by chariot, he is greeted by his wife Clytemnestra who offers him a red path to walk upon, but Agamemnon responds with trepidation, knowing that only gods walk on such luxury. *In The Shadow of Wellywood* treats the red carpet as a monstrous symbol of disdain. The castle gate is a giant mouth and the carpet a hideous tongue releasing a plume of spectacular spittle which otherwise might be shaken out. The action of unrolling my carpet was clumsy as the backing material was uncontrollable and the feeling of frustration in shooting the sequence is palpable to me as the artist, while outcome of the scene alludes to real studio pressures of time and budget. The red carpet was painted flock on a plastic backing, usually used to simulate scenic grass. The material has a high tensile strength so was resistant to rolling and required creasing in order to move as required. Filmed as real time video to capture the live unfurling and edited to look like stop-motion, the carpet holds its position in some frames, and springs forward in others. Each movement triggers the Swann camera's white balance causing a flash of greenish light, although this could have been avoided by filming a longer clip and waiting for the colour to settle between movements. However, capturing live takes in this way caught the tongue-like flapping at the end of the shot. In the film *The Wizard of Oz* (1939) the lost heroine Dorothy follows the yellow brick road, searching for the Wizard in the hope that he will help her return to Kansas, only to discover that he is a charlatan who uses technology to manipulate his followers. In my version of *Wellywood*, the yellow brick road symbolizes the plight of the film worker and the tensions which exist between creativity and business within the industry.

The musical jingle broadcast by the castle resembles that of a damaged toy. In creating the golden castle logo, I relied on my memories of the Disney version rather than re-examining it once again. The logo used by the *Wellywood* studio reduces the iconic Disney version to merely "a castle and some fireworks". The actual Disney logo starts with a white glow starts at the top of the screen, revealing the tip of the tallest spire at the centre of the castle and wiping downwards to complete the castle's silhouette. The broad horizontal stripes across

the castle could be read as weatherboard, or the interlacing of a video signal, likely representing a mix of timeless family values and technological progress. The wipe ends with a flash of light and the logo in Disney's handwriting appears underneath. A single firework arcs over the castle leaving a glowing trail. The Disney castle has 9 visible points, while mine was a modified toy and has only four, however my logo offers a more spectacular fireworks display, created by filming through a kaleidoscope.

The concept of a studio backlot allowed me to re-use sets and stock footage of scenes created in the development of previous video works, in combination with sets created as part of the creative research. The high cost of materials means that I break down sets and reuse parts where possible, as life-size studios do. When visiting Los Feliz, a suburb located between Hollywood Boulevard and Griffith Park, it was easy to see the effect of the movie studios in the surrounding architecture – a mixture of Spanish, Gothic, Neo-Classical and Tudor all in the same street, sometimes in the same building. This personal observation contributed to the styling of my own imaginary movie town of Wellywood, the muddled architecture providing new possibilities for kit-bashing, a term used by modellers referring to the process of combining multiple kits to create an original scene. Historian Mark Shiel cites magazine articles from *The Southwest Builder and Contractor*, and advertisements from *Pacific Coast Architecture* (1927), to demonstrate how tradespeople worked between the film industry and “relatively mundane projects such as high schools, churches, bungalows, and packing plants” (p145). In turn, working on movie sets influenced the direction of domestic architecture of the 1930's. The foliage of *Wellywood* is dissimilar to the actual environment of Wellington to indicate that this is a non-place¹¹⁶, a completely artificial world. When the Disneyland theme park first opened a sense of exoticism was achieved by sourcing plants from as far away as New Zealand and Australia, so in transplanting palm trees to Wellywood I am indicating a further blurring of the boundaries between the theme park and the real world.

¹¹⁶ The term 'non-place' is attributed to Marc Auge (1992) citation sourced from Oxford Dictionary of Critical Theory published 2010

Fig. 87 – 89. *In the Shadow of Wellywood* video stills left to right: restaurant, motel, and mansion sets



The mansions, restaurant, and motel sets were built for *Wellywood*, and inspired by Raymond Chandler's Philip Marlowe detective novels which were written during the classic Hollywood era and are mostly set within the seedier side of the entertainment business: *The Big Sleep* (1939) involves pornography; the setting for *Farewell My Lovely* (1940) features a nightclub and its characters' radio personalities; the main suspect in *The High Window* (1942) is a dishonest singer; and *The Little Sister* (1949) is the sibling of a troubled Hollywood star. Director Robert Altman's 1973 film adaptation of Chandler's novel *The Long Goodbye* can be read as a retrospective critique of the violence of Chandler's period. Where Altman's critical vision is gritty, mine uses kitsch sugar coating and sunset colours as a metaphor for hiding unpleasant truths. When Sam uses the phone in the motel lobby to enquire about an audition, Mark Ruffalo and Kevin Costner walk past on their way to work. This shot reveals the motel as a home for actors reminiscent of the Chelsea Hotel in New York or the Tropicana in Los Angeles, both renown for having troubled creatives as tenants and guests. Opium poppies and cannabis plants grow in the gardens of *Wellywood*, courtesy of the adult-themed Busch railway modelling company. The mansion exterior sets follow the Hollywood trends of mixing multiple styles of architecture in one building and installing ostentatious statues or fountains on front lawns. The Producer's mansion is a two-story brownstone apartment building with a Neoclassical façade, the ornate columns flanking the entrance are at odds with the iron fire escape running down the side of the house, indicating that things are not what they seem. A marble fountain depicting King Neptune offers a display of wealth rather than any symbolic or narrative connection. The three-story building next door next door is noticeably grander and based on the design of the entrance it could be a restaurant or a hotel, but the presence of a red light indicates instead that it is a brothel. The interiors of both mansions are worn,

emphasising the narrative’s backstory of characters falling on hard times. Both are decorated with the same pink wallpaper, red carpet, and white painted woodwork to add a maze-like confusion and to formalize narrative connections between the two buildings.

Fig 90– 92. In the *Shadow of Wellywood* video stills. Left to right: mansion interior, boiler room, tunnel



Popular mythologies of Disneyland include the existence of underground tunnels, which is true as they were designed to transport staff around the park unseen by visitors, and the theory that the body of Walt Disney was cryogenically frozen, and stored somewhere within the grounds, likely beneath the *Pirates of the Caribbean* ride. This long-held fan theory has been recirculated online as recently as August 2020 by *Ripley’s Believe It or Not*,¹¹⁷ but the official site of Disney’s cremation and burial is a matter of public record: Forest Lawn Memorial Park in Glendale, Los Angeles. Billie Burke was born in 1884, thus if the story is set in the year 2020, she would be 136 years old. Given her likely age and the presence of underground tunnels it could be assumed that her longevity is the result of a cryogenic experiment. Billie died in 1970, and Walt Disney died in 1966 so if the theory of him being cryogenically frozen is true, then the technology was available prior to Billie’s death. With this knowledge in place, the boiler room affords the expectation of a secret underground cryogenics laboratory which never eventuates. The boiler room is a trope of action movies, a precarious location in which a protagonist battles their opponent. In this case a boiler room serves the practical function of powering the laundry, as a brothel washes large quantities of bedding. This choice of location acknowledges that audiences familiar with action movies will identify such tropes and assess them against existing examples from the genre.

¹¹⁷ Retrieved April 14, 2021 from: <https://www.ripleys.com/weird-news/walt-disney/>

Special Effects

All special effects used in the production have been created in-camera with no computer-generated imagery. This conceptual decision was chosen to limit the style of animation to photo collage and what could have been achieved in the pre- CGI era, by compositing and repositioning multiple layers of film, simulated through keyframe animation in Adobe Premiere. The stop-motion smoke was made from cotton wool, and the pyrotechnics were created by using real fireworks, filming sparklers in front of a bluescreen, and stretching and cropping the video layer during editing to make fire. The flying monster in the canyon and *Transformers* inspired scene have been chosen to intentionally to associate my *Wellywood* studio with the fantasy and science fiction films the actual studios are known for. The small size of the Swann camera allows precise positioning on set and has enabled experimentation with adaptations of Pepper's Ghost and the Schüfftan Process, theatrical and early cinematic techniques involving the use of sheets of clear glass or mirrors to reflect off stage action into the scene. The decision to explore these effects was inspired by a shot in *Sunset Boulevard* in which a mirror was placed in a swimming pool to reflect the image of a dead man floating face down in the water above.

Fig. 93 – 95. *In the Shadow of Wellywood* video stills. Pepper's ghost effect using two Elle Fanning figures, one positioned off camera and reflected into the shot through transparent plastic



A variation of Pepper's Ghost was used in the audition sequence when the Producer fantasizes about Elle wearing lingerie. A sheet of transparent film was placed diagonally across the set between the subject and the camera and manipulated to reflect another model of Elle wearing lingerie, positioned off camera. When the Pepper's Ghost effect is used in theatrical productions lighting shows or hides the reflection of the off-stage set, but in this case the

scene is changed by moving the surface of the transparent film so the change in reflection becomes distorted to visualize the Producer's fantasy.

Fig. 96 -101. Above, the finished shots, below, the Schüfftan Process revealed. Images by Mike Heynes.



The Schüfftan process developed for director Fritz Lang's Film *Metropolis* (1927) by special effects artist Eugen Schüfftan used mirrors to place actors inside scale model buildings. The effect was used for the motel entrance, to position the 16th scale foyer inside the 87th scale exterior archway, and to position Elle and Sam Neill on the 1/87th scale motel balcony. To achieve the effect a mirror is positioned inside each balcony, reflecting the 1/16th scale set. Due to the small scale of both sets and the parallax of the mirror, the sets need to be positioned opposite each other and only a few inches apart for the reflection to line up correctly. The Swann camera was small to fit in between the sets to see the mirror at the correct angle. The ability to position the small camera only a few centimetres from the set makes the edges of the mirrors easier to hide when working at a small scale. On the mansion set the apartments to the left of the Producer's house are doubled using a mirror across the back, positioned behind the first apartment and angled into the distance, as if the brick wall and adjacent apartment buildings had a natural curve. The bottom of the mirror is hidden by bushes and the fountain. Later versions of the scene used a smaller mirror, and the tops of

the trees are missing from the reflection revealing the effect but in addition suggesting that the studio is falling apart. The cult members' halos were created by digitizing the video signal from the psychedelic light machine, the concept mimicking the spectacular explosions and particle effects used in videos produced by the Scientology network. ¹¹⁸

Fig. 102 – 104. *In the Shadow of Wellywood* video stills showing the halo effect



The *Wellywood* opening titles, actors' names and credit for musical contributor Ceramic were created by photographing the letters from home movie titling kits donated to the obsolete equipment collection. The gold letters were also attached to clear plastic film to make them appear to float in the air, and placed on set as sculptural objects.

Fig. 105. Easy Titler Video Movie Titling Kit. **Fig. 106.** Austral Plastic Colour Titling Kit. Photographs by Mike Heynes



¹¹⁸ Retrieved April 15 2021 from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mw0TXgHVHrc>

Fig. 107. *In the Shadow of Wellywood* video still showing digital layout of the Easy Titler Video Movie Titling Kit

Fig. 108 & 109. *In the Shadow of Wellywood* video stills showing the Austral Plastic Colour Titling Kit used on set



Sound

In designing the soundtrack my aim was to collaborate with sound artists who understood the experimental nature of the work and the way the scenes were animated and edited. Wellington based musician Simon Cuming (S.C.Cumuna) has an established sound art practice built upon mixing field recordings with noises generated by homemade and "circuit-bent" sound generators and modulators. In 2016 I attended Simon's performance of Douglas Lilburn's *Cicadas, Oscillators, and Treefrogs* at the National Library in which his field recordings reimagined the work of the pioneering composer who contributed to the development of New Zealand's first professional electronic sound recording studio at Victoria University in Wellington in 1966. The atmospheric qualities of Simon's compositions can be best described as cinematic due to their duration and layering of sound, and for their ability to describe imaginary worlds. Simon's complex understanding of the ways that sound can describe place, and his interest in the social and cultural upheavals of the 1960's provided a valuable perspective in designing the soundtrack. The DIY video mixer and switcher I built as part of this research and discussed in Chapter 6 section 3 was inspired by the sound modulators that I saw Simon building. The collaborative process began with Simon and I discussing the atmosphere of the imagined world of Wellywood, a place where dreams of stardom have turned to nightmares. A shared appreciation for John Carpenter's sound design and use of electronic music framed our approach to composition and editing. Simon designed and recorded the musical score, castle sounds, and signature tunes, and the guitar parts were added by Menno Huibers (Menn-O-Matic) of The Raskolnikovs. Simon's role was to create

atmosphere, Menno's was to provide energy which combined to create an air of tension between discomfort and celebration, while my role was to record additional foley, sample sounds, and edit the various elements together. The electronic composition for the *Transformers* sequence was provided by Ceramic, a regular collaborator on my pre-PhD animated works.

The muffled whirring and wind up-music-box-like loop of the spectacular golden castle theme visualises a place which is wearing out. The electrical sound of Megan Fox and Tommy Lee Jones' tour cart is a sample of a noisy guitar input on a faulty amplifier. While Simon and Menno provided the main elements of the soundtrack, the editing decisions are my own, designed to increase the awkward tension of the visual treatment. The poor synchronizing of sound and image during the swordfight scene and when Elle and Sam walk through the canyon are potentially humorous, but also provisional within the formal qualities of an animatic as they have been chosen to indicate what the final audio would be, just as the figures are stand-ins for the real actors, and signature tunes replace dialogue.

The scene in which Megan Fox is eaten by the shark contains screaming sounds sampled from the trailer of *Jaws*, while the Producer's scenes contain soundtracks appropriated from 1980's porn videos. The porn samples have been changed significantly, slowing them down to achieve the sad and desperate atmosphere of exploitation required. The shuffling noises could be attributed to the sound of a live studio environment, and the heavy breathing coming from the actor on screen. The porn soundtracks were found online by searching "VHS porn" and the chosen clips were uncredited. This musical genre was selected for its upbeat instrumental synthesizer pop which could be slowed down, lowering the pitch to create a claustrophobic atmosphere. When the teacup is punched by Megan, and crashes into the castle, there are sounds of breaking china, but it does not break even once it falls on the ground. In this scene the use of foley is designed to exaggerate the real audio-visual effect of the teacup breaking. The sound of the teacups was created by speeding up the audio track recorded of the motor animating the rotating model of the cup on the blue screen. The overdriven sound is designed to explain their haphazard paths in driving Elle's car off the road and appearing to attack Megan during the Studio Tour suggesting that their behaviour is the result of poor maintenance on the part of the theme park management.

Chapter Nine: The Portable Micro Cinema

My final practice work for this doctoral submission involves a portable six seat micro-cinema designed to screen the experimentally animated video *In the Shadow of Wellywood*.

As an artwork, the installation critically reflects upon mainstream methods of movie production and distribution, and which parts of that system are embraced or rejected within the research. The decision to make the micro cinema portable visualized the need to operate between and across the academic and underground communities that my practice is built upon. A psychedelic video projection which is similar to the one shown on page 92 of this document greets visitors as they enter the space and mimics the spectacular environment of the multiplex while also acknowledging the influence of expanded cinema practices on this research. In summary, the micro cinema screening *In the Shadow of Wellywood* for examination evolved through three developmental stages: as part of the movie studio tour presented at confirmation, a private testing environment for expanded cinema collaborations with musicians, and the Circuit Aura Video Festival installation in 2019. The first micro cinema was installed in a space destined for renovation, so it was possible to bolt the seats to the floor. Following this opportunity metal frames with castors were welded to the seats to make their transportation and installation more practical. The carpet was cut smaller to make the screen appear larger and edged to reduce wear and tear. The whole kit now fits easily in the back of a van providing greater ability to screen the work in a range of venues in the future.

Fig. 103. The micro cinema kit. Photograph by Mike Heynes.

Fig. 104. The seats on welded steel frames. Metal work and photograph by Phil Halasz



By screening *In the Shadow of Wellywood* in a micro cinema and distributing the work online I am offering the audience the ability to consider the differences in each experience.

The uneven sound-mixing and awkward pacing provide a deliberately intensified and uncomfortable experience for the micro cinema audience, while the online version allows the viewer to adjust the volume, or fast forward through intentionally overlong scenes if they choose. The micro cinema screens the work at specified times in a physical location whereas the online version can be watched anywhere on demand. The micro cinema DVD is designed to loop and play the 54minute video on an hourly cycle. The movie is preceded by the motif of the golden castle at the end of the yellow brick road, allowing the audience time to enter and take their seats. The micro cinema is an embodied space which at times requires audience members to sit in a position as to avoid their shadows being cast on the screen, or to be able to see around the people in front. The back row of seats have been elevated with slightly with larger castors to simulate the gently raked floor of a movie theatre. The screen stand is adjustable in height and the viewers' comfort is relative to each venue that the portable kit is installed in. The size of the 4:3 screen dictates the dimensions of the cinema's 2.8m x 5m footprint. Installing the micro cinema in the corner of the concrete bunker-like gallery space suggests the way the portable kit might be used in a domestic environment such as a garage.

The faulty 2-in-1 home stereo system playing the soundtrack for the screening further situates the work within an ethos of environmental sustainability and consumer resistance in choosing this option over buying something new. Due to the safety concerns associated with using electrical equipment rescued from disposal everything was PAT tested prior to installation. The soundtrack is presented in dual mono due to a damaged left speaker output, so both speakers have been wired to the right channel, following my personal philosophy of using equipment until it literally wears out, and is a reminder of the level of creative and technical risk undertaken in this experimental mode of video activism. Following examination, the micro cinema becomes a potential environment for collaboration with sound and video artists who share an ethos of environmental sustainability, and who are willing to work within my system's constraints of the standard definition format and 4:3 screen.

Chapter Ten: Conclusion

This creative practice-based research was conducted in the shadow of the surrounding Wellywood movie industry, and the exegesis has discussed how the final work is deeply connected to the context of Wellington, while not literally depicting it. In operating my video production studio and obsolete equipment library in the basement of the University campus building also hosting Peter Jackson's *The Great War* exhibition, the initial stages of the creative research considered the implications of literally living in the shadow of Wellywood. In developing an animation studio based on the continued use of obsolete video equipment the research methodology questioned the consumerist desire to be at the cutting edge of video technology. Through repurposing technology which the consumer no longer wants, this research has developed an original form of creative video activism capable of critiquing the surrounding movie industry as an instance of capitalist spectacle. In working with obsolete video equipment and appropriated movie merchandising *In the Shadow of Wellywood* demonstrated the continued value of the Situationist principles of psycho-geography, détournement and the dérive through applying them to the local movie production environment as a mode of critical reflection. In repurposing Hollywood movie merchandising to tell a story of local significance I have questioned the influence the industry has on our national identity. In summary, the portable micro cinema installation presented for examination positions the creative practice research as a work of art critiquing the systems of production and distribution used by the mainstream movie studio system and enacts the need to operate independently beyond academia. Following this research, the animation studio will continue to operate for as long as the obsolete video equipment continues to function. As an extension of my production studio, the micro cinema became a vital testing environment for *Seeing Things* and *Barnacles on The Balls of Industry* projects, demonstrating the potential for future expanded cinema collaborations with local artists.

The experimental style of animation visualizes notions of the movie industry as a spectacular site of trash and toxicity which re-occur throughout this exegesis. Beginning with Stronach's local perspective of the Wellywood movie industry operating like an endless garbage braid to Jean Baudrillard's reflection on the ambience of Disney's theme parks, Kathryn Ramey's

mental image of the trash island floating in the Pacific Ocean, micro-cinemas recycling the garbage of the past as described by Ed Halter, the Disney Corporation's multiple cases of breaches of environmental regulations, the toxic work culture of Weta, Debord's trinkets of Capitalism, and Adorno and Horkheimer's vision of the Hollywood movie industry producing rubbish have all contributed to the aesthetic treatment of the final work.

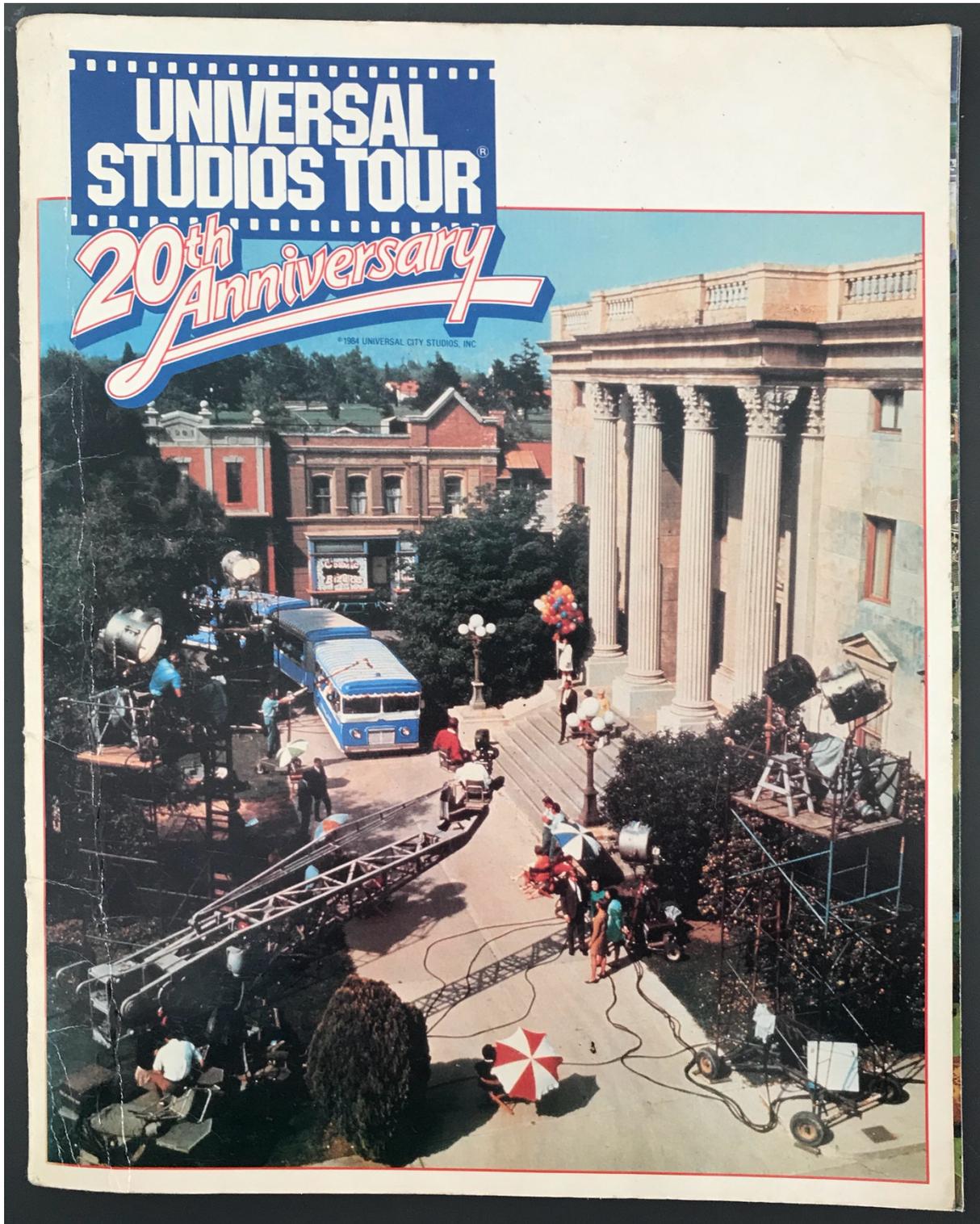
By positioning *In the Shadow of Wellywood* as a work of video activism rather than culture-jamming or animation I am identifying that my creative practice prioritizes an engagement with a specific technology, rather than a particular approach to generating content.

In repurposing video equipment rescued from university disposal, this research provided a form of institutional critique through creating a situation out of everyday life. The act of operating a library loaning of obsolete video equipment playfully asked artists and academics to consider their place as a critic or consumer of new technology when its use is viewed in relation to the wider environmental issues of its manufacture and disposal. The creative practice research of refusing to upgrade my analogue video technology fills a gap in the field of video art and this statement is evidenced by the library facilitating so few requests for loans compared to offers of donations of unwanted equipment. The antagonism of the library's proposition to keep using the rescued equipment was designed to recognize the environmental implications of new video technology, question consumerist trajectories, and instigate behavioral change towards sustainable methods of production. But this paradigm shift requires a re-evaluation of the trend towards ultra-high-resolution image making and display amongst consumers, artists and academics. *In the Shadow of Wellywood* seeks to disrupt this trend.

Appendix

The Universal Studios Tour brochure (1984) referenced in Chapter Eight.

Photographs by Mike Heynes



THE SPECIAL EFFECTS STAGE

When you visit the Special Effects Stage, you take a fascinating close-up look behind the scenes and find out some of the secrets that make movies magic.

Presented by The Eastman Kodak Company and hosted on film by Robert Wagner, the Special Effects Stage is a combination of film miniatures and live action that takes you on a tour of the past, present and future of special effects techniques.

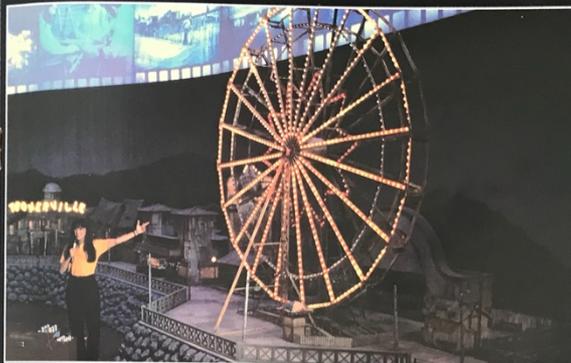
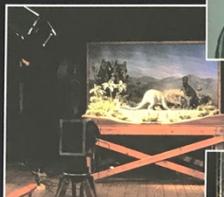
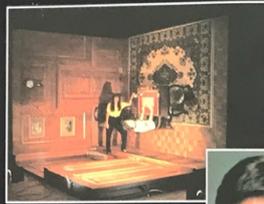
You'll learn how Fred Astaire was able to dance on the ceiling, how dinosaurs were brought to screen life after millions of years of extinction and how Hollywood was destroyed for filmdom's most famous "Earthquake."

The secrets of movie flight are revealed, including the lyrical flight of "E.T." on a boy's bike and the warp-speed space flight of Buck Roger's space ship.

You'll see how Steven Spielberg was able to destroy a whole amusement park in "1941," and learn what wonders the new technology of computer animation holds for the future.

One of the most informative attractions on Universal's Tour, The Special Effects Stage will give you a respective new look at the magic of the movies.

TM & © 1984 Universal Studios, Inc.



NEW YORK STREET

It's called "New York Street," but you've seen it as Los Angeles in "Earthquake," as San Francisco in "Ironside" and "Dirty Harry," and as Chicago in "The Sting" and "The Blues Brothers." It's even appearing as the town of Richmond in Universal's "Streets of Fire." If you're from any urban area, New York Street can be made to look like home.

THE COLLAPSING BRIDGE

Leaving "the city," there's only one road out. Unfortunately, it goes across the rickety, creaking, wheezing old bridge ahead. As you approach it, you see one of its supports crack, and topple slowly into the brackish water below, doing nothing for your peace of mind. But there's no turning back. And once your team is on the bridge, naturally, that's when the bottom drops out!

Don't worry; it's a controlled drop controlled by massive hydraulic lifts. You'll make it across to finish your tour of the magic world of Universal.



ANYTOWN, USA

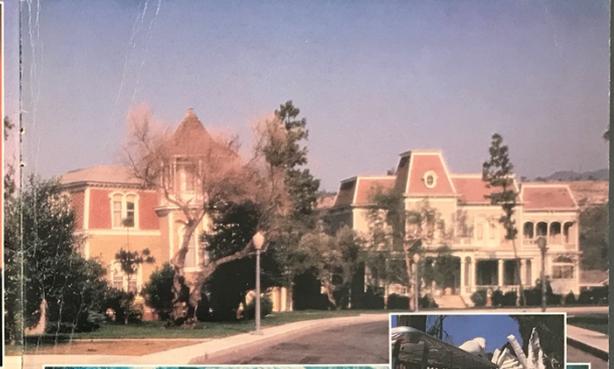
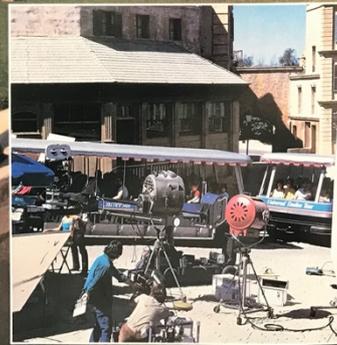
After the terror of "Jaws," Anytown, USA is a welcome relief. It's a quiet, homey neighborhood of familiar houses. It's been the home of everyone from "The Beaver" to Doris Day to "The Munsters."

Adjacent to it is Industrial Town, a set that can be made to look like Main Street in any of the thousand small towns across America. Of course, it all wouldn't be complete without one slightly ominous note: not far away, as you leave the sanity of Anytown, you pass the forbidding house that won its fame in "Psycho" and "Psycho II."

THE DOOMED GLACIER ICE TUNNEL

You're heading back to civilization now. But from these dizzying heights the only way back is down through the ice tunnel ahead.

When you enter, you find yourself in a thundering avalanche, a spinning vortex of sight, sound and sensation. Through the magic of Sensuround® and Reflected Force Perspective, you experience an assault on the senses that simply cannot be described.



JAWS

"Welcome To Amity," the sign says. Hm-m-m. Seems like a pleasant enough little village. But how come there's nobody on the beach?

Where's the welcoming committee?

In fact, there's nobody anywhere except that one guy out there fishing in the boat, and—now, where could he have gone? He was there a minute ago. Hm-m-m.

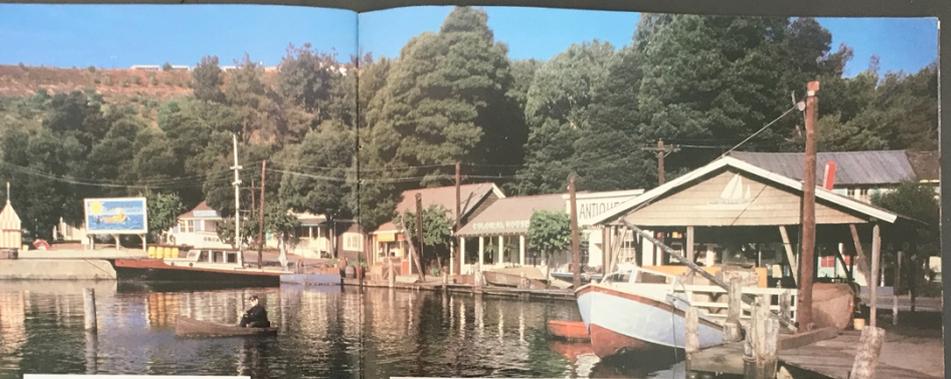
Then you see the fin gliding slowly but resolutely through the water.

With a chilling certainty, you know where that fisherman went. There's a shark out there, and what a shark. He's headed for the tram now, but you're safe on high ground.

That's when he knocks out the pier, dropping the tram virtually into the water, and that's when you realize just how huge and powerful that monster really is.

The tram engine begins to whine, straining for the traction to pull you back up onto the roadway. It's just when you feel that you're going to make it that the shark leaps out of the water seemingly inches away, his great, crushing jaws snapping; his whole body thrashing from side to side, throwing spray and foam in his frenzied efforts to get at you. Some welcoming committee!

The star of Universal's "Jaws" is a twenty-five foot "eating machine" that was cast from the same mold as the shark that appeared in the movie. It's an effect that will leave you limp. It is not for the weak of heart.



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