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As always, profound love and gratitude to my parents Keith and Cathie and my brother Adrian - the points on my compass, always there, always themselves, but always available should I need help to navigate through times rough, smooth or strangely circular in nature.

ABSTRACT

When we are buffeted by extreme external or internal forces, the self may splinter and spiral in a psychological maze of disengagement and lost sovereignty. This trans-disciplinary design project responds – operating between fashion, performance and film – and acts out Elaine Scarry’s contention that pain can be constructively re-made.

Functioning as a metaphorical problem-solving space where the textures of inner experience are explored, this project employs fragmented narrative and theatrical re-fashioning of the environment and body to attain greater social relevance. It asks how can we reconnect with the ‘sovereign self’ when our constitutional confidence has been eroded and how do we re-engage with the outside world once we have become psychologically estranged from it?

The Interior Cinematic utilises cognitive scientist Douglas Hofstadter’s formulation of the self as a ‘strange loop’, and Louis A. Sass’ explanation of the dissociative and recursive features of schizophrenia as a point of poetic departure for understanding the damaged and dissociated self.

The lost self may seem like an end - a *horrific* freefall out of normal life into madness and estrangement. But it is also a beginning; the pinnacle of sensory ascendancy - a *beautiful*, lateral, life affirming state. Through *The Interior Cinematic* I construct *an aesthetics of reengagement*: an affective pathway between these contradictory and overlapping existential poles, contending that the lost self can, in part, be recovered through a rediscovery of sensation. This work is informed by Julia Kristeva’s assertion that alienation is the kernel for empathetic re-engagement with others, as well as by Arthur Frank’s theory of narrative as a strategy to reconnect with the damaged self.

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CONTENTS

FIGURES AND IMAGES.....	iv
INTRODUCTION	7
CHAPTER ONE MYSELF TALKING AROUND THE SELF.....	15
CHAPTER TWO SELF AS HORROR.....	31
CHAPTER THREE SELF AS BEAUTY.....	47
CONCLUSION.....	63
APPENDIX ONE DIALOGUE FROM THE PAST/PRESENT INTERCHANGE	71
APPENDIX TWO THE INTERIOR CINEMATIC INSTALLATION.....	75
APPENDIX THREE THE INTERIOR CINEMATIC DVD	INSIDE BACK COVER
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	79

FIGURES AND IMAGES

Fig. 1 <i>Mobius strip</i>	16
[Frances Benson, (2010)]	
Fig. 2 <i>The Interior Cinematic in Overview, Frances Benson (2010)</i>	17
Fig. 3 Stefan Sagmeister. <i>Things I have learned in my life so far. (2007)</i>	20
[Sagmeister, S., Heller, S., Nettle, D., & Spector, N. (2007). <i>Things I have learned in my life so far</i> . New York: Abrams.]	
Fig. 4 Sophie Calle, <i>Take Care of yourself. (2007)</i>.....	21
[Left: <i>Crossword Puzzle Writer</i> , Art Observed, Retrieved December 1 2009, from http://artobserved.com/go-see-sophie-calle-take-care-of-yourself-us-debut-at-paula-cooper-gallery-april-9-may-22-2009/	
[Right: <i>Take Care of yourself 1</i> , Slashstroke Magazine, retrieved December 1 2009, from www.slashstrokemagazine.com/blog/?p=209]	
Fig. 5 Frances Benson, <i>Red Thread (1999)</i>	22
Fig. 6 Frances Benson, <i>Past/Present Interchange (2010)</i> - images	23
Fig. 7 Frances Benson, <i>Past/Present Interchange (2010)</i> - dialogue excerpt	23
Fig. 8 Frances Benson, <i>Past/Present Interchange (2010)</i>.....	24
Fig. 9 <i>Droste Cocoa</i>	25
[<i>Droste Effect</i> , In Wikipedia. Retrieved December 1 2009, from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Droste_effect]	
Fig. 10 Cindy Sherman, <i>Untitled Film Still #22, (1978)</i>	27
[Sherman, C. (2003). <i>Cindy Sherman : the complete Untitled film stills</i> . New York: Museum of Modern Art. pg. 153]	
Fig. 11 The mythological Ouroboros	29
[drawing by Theodoros Pelecanos from <i>Synosius</i> (1478), Image from Wikipedia, retrieved December 1 2009, from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ouroboros]	

Fig. 12 David Lynch (director), <i>Inland Empire</i> (2006)	34
[film stills from Lynch, D. (Director) (2006). <i>Inland Empire</i> . In S. Canal (Producer). USA: 518 Media. DVD.]	
Fig. 13 Frances Benson, <i>The Vacated Sovereign</i> (2010)	35
Fig. 14 Frances Benson, <i>The Vacated Sovereign</i> (2010)	36
Fig. 15 Frances Benson, <i>The Vacated Sovereign</i> (2010)	37
Fig. 16 John Pilson, <i>Mr Pickup</i> (2000), video installation	38
[video stills from Christov-Bakargiev, C. (Ed.). (2003). <i>I Moderni = The moderns</i> . Milan: Skira Editore S.p.A. p.184]	
Fig. 17 Frances Benson, <i>Abandoned Subordinates</i> (2010)	40
Fig. 18 Frances Benson, <i>Abandoned Subordinates</i> (2010)	41
Fig. 19 Frances Benson, <i>Abandoned Subordinates</i> (2010)	42
Fig. 20 Frances Benson, <i>Spilled Life</i>, exploratory photo exercise (2009)	43
Fig. 21 Dennis Potter (writer), <i>The Singing Detective</i> (1986)	44
[film stills from Potter, D. (Writer) (1986). <i>The Singing Detective</i> [Television mini series]. In K. Trodd (Producer). United Kingdom. DVD]	
Fig. 22 Ronnie van Hout, <i>Ersatz</i> (2006)	45
[image in Artnet retrieved December 1 2009, from http://www.artnet.com/magazineus/reviews/boyce/ronnie-van-hout8-12-09_detail.asp?picnum=4 . Collection of the James Wallace Arts Trust.]	
Fig. 23 Frances Benson, <i>Abandoned Subordinates</i> (2010)	50
Fig. 24 Frances Benson, <i>Dancing Debutante</i> (2010)	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Fig. 25 Frances Benson, <i>Dancing Debutante</i> (2010)	53
Fig. 26 Testing out the first dress toile for movement and appearance	54
[Frances Benson, (2009)]	
Fig. 27 Frances Benson, <i>The Big Reel</i> (2010)	56
Fig. 28 Frances Benson, <i>The Big Reel</i> (2010)	57

Fig. 29 Bill Viola, *The Greeting* (1995)58
 [Viola, B., & Townsend, C. (2004). *The art of Bill Viola*. New York, N.Y.: Thames & Hudson, p.28.]

Fig. 30 Frances Benson, *Drawing of potential exhibition layout* (2010)59

Fig. 31 Frances Benson, *Working drawing/project map* (2010)65

Fig. 32 Frances Benson, *Working Drawings*, (2010)66
 [image, Lans Hansen]

Fig. 33 Frances Benson, *The Interior Cinematic, Installation* (2010).....76

Fig. 34 Frances Benson, *The Interior Cinematic, Installation* (2010).....77
 [image, Lans Hansen]

Fig. 35 Frances Benson, *The Interior Cinematic, Installation* (2010).....78
 [image, Lans Hansen]

Fig. 36 Frances Benson, *The Interior Cinematic, Installation* (2010).....78
 [images: (Top Right and Bottom) Lans Hansen. (Top Left), Frances Benson]