



The Fourth Space

video by

Cecilia Dougherty

with

Moving



Parts

sound installation by

Aleksei R. Stevens

Participant, Inc.
New York

Species of Spaces

video after Georges Perec

At first my interests lay in three types of space: the physical space of streets, homes and apartments, kitchens, bedrooms, public and corporate places, and architecture as such; historical space – places that have meaning beyond the present, one originating in another time, and representing turning points in a chronicle of events, e.g. “this is where the first shot of the revolution was fired;” and places that have special meanings beyond the obvious, e.g. “this is where I met my true love,” “this is where so-and-so is said to have been murdered,” etc. I include psychic space in this investigation as well, meaning that which employs the mental exercise of representation and expression within a logic of perception, impression, abstraction and poetic syntax.

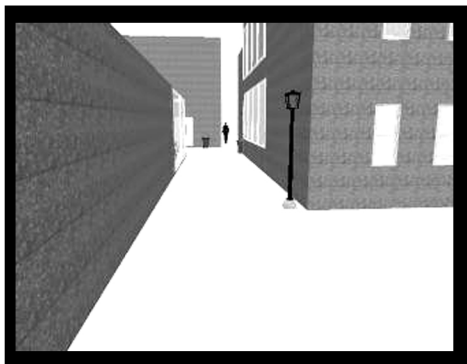
That said, I am less interested in categorizing than in observing and recording what is in front of me, often due to an arbitrary set of circumstances such as time of day, the weather, or the happenstance of simply being somewhere with a camera. Stories can be constructed, of course. Cultural memory and personal association play a role as well. Even mood and temperament are a part of the survey of spaces, places and locations. In this work, my observations are further abstracted and reconfigured in electronic light. Sometimes the imagination has to take over.

I am interested in observing how the body is situated and how it functions as it moves through a space. What do sight, memory, aspect, action, intention, direction, etc. contribute to knowing where the body ends and the environment begins?

I would like to make visible the electronic other of spaces and places as well, to open up the record of what is present and insert into it knowledge of the fantastic as well as the ordinary.

The videos installed here encompass a range of perspectives, from a record of unrehearsed daily life in four locations (*The Third Space*) to a low-tech microcosmic record of the horrors of bureaucratic necessity (*The Third Interval*); from an attentive regression into spiritualism at Brighton Beach (*Tetragrammaton*) to mining obsessive desire from the endless imaginary architectures of freely downloadable 3D modeling software (*The Scenography*) and from the fictions embedded in realism to an unchecked reopening of electronic space within the universe of analog video (*The Fourth Space*).

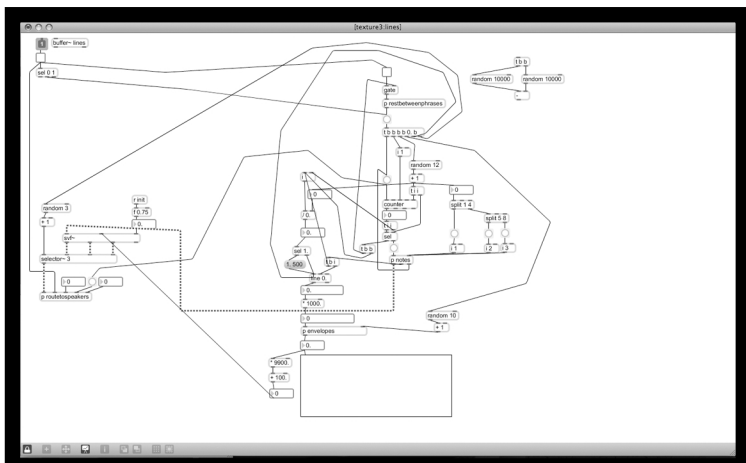
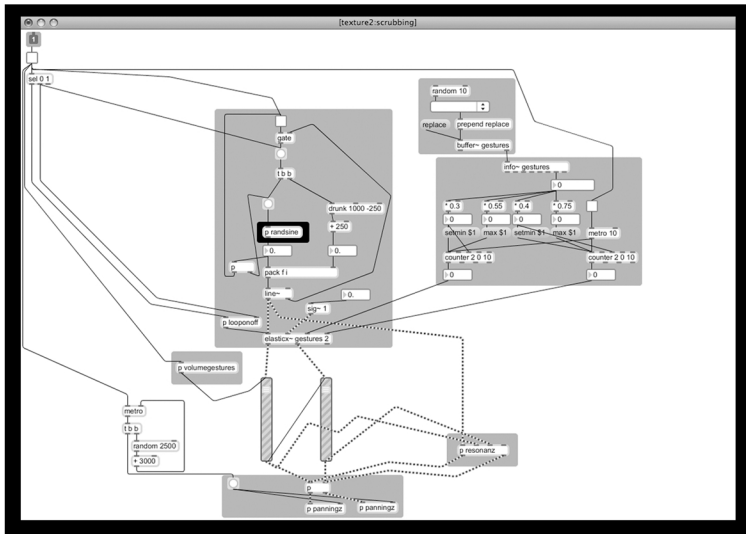
Cecilia Dougherty
October 2010



"What we need to question is bricks, concrete, glass, our table manners, our utensils, our tools, the way we spend our time, our rhythms. To question that which seems to have ceased forever to astonish us. We live, true, we breathe, true; we walk, we go downstairs, we sit at a table in order to eat, we lie down on a bed in order to sleep. How? Where? When? Why?

Describe your street. Describe another. Compare."

Georges Perec (L'Infra-ordinaire)



Moving Parts

a sound installation

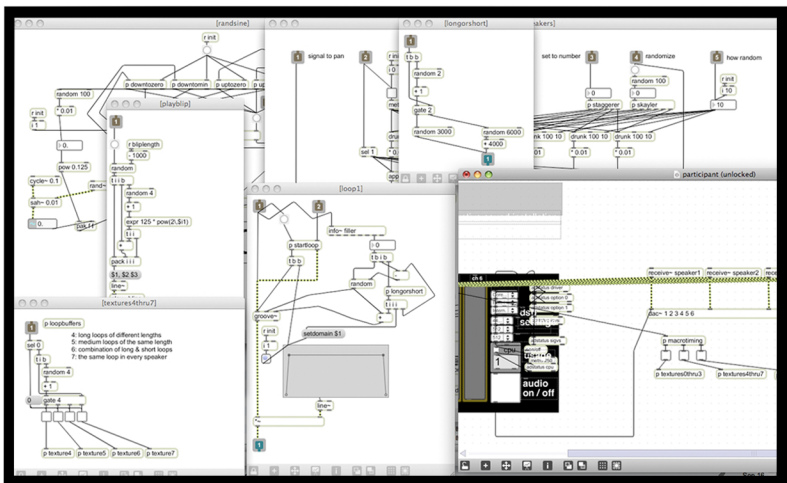
Much of my work over the past five years has focused on explorations into the use of algorithm as musical structure – pieces which, until the moment of execution, exist only as a network of interrelated instructions. This body of work has included a variety of aleatoric and graphic scores for traditional instruments, as well as (and often in combination with) generative or interactive computer music systems.

Moving Parts is a six-channel generative sound installation based on the rhythms and resonances of the built environment. The source sounds falls into three categories: “close-up” recordings of building noise (humming fans, buzzing lights, municipal water, chugging machinery, etc.), wide stereo ambient recordings of public spaces throughout New York City, and recordings of instrumental improvisations inspired by these field recordings. The installation continually combines and recombines these sounds in real time according to a set of behavioral patterns, resulting in an ever-changing texture.

There is also an optional performance element – a graphic score, which can be performed by any number of instrumentalists while the installation plays (and, which can also be performed separately as a stand-alone performance piece).

The full work, installation and performance together, can be heard in the gallery on October 14 and October 21, at 7pm.

Aleksei R. Stevens
October 2010



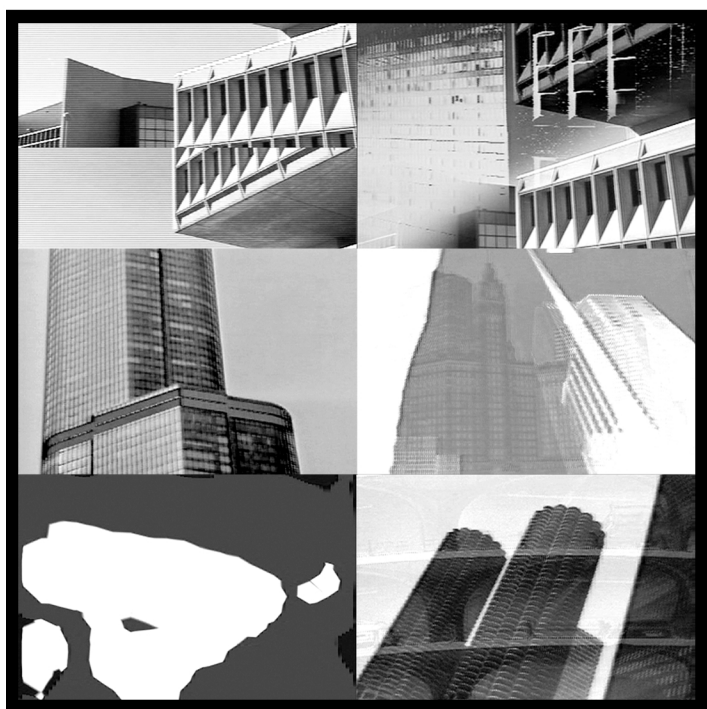
The Fourth Space

The Fourth Space begins with a fixation on two odd structures asserting themselves in the New Haven landscape: Marcel Breuer's 1969 Pirelli Tire Building, built as an office complex on what had been considered a prime waterfront development area, and which now sits in the Ikea parking lot; and the Knights of Columbus Headquarters, by Roche-Dinkeloo Architects, 1969, a 23-story red tower with circular concrete columns at each corner.

At first I thought these buildings were eyesores, ugly oddities in the landscape. But their odd silhouettes and architectural incongruities make them mysterious, and eventually I was captivated by the sight of them. From the parking lot where the Breuer building sits, it is easy to spot the K of C Headquarters about $\frac{3}{4}$ mile away, jutting up directly across the lot, behind the police station.

Like filmmaker John Smith's black tower, The K of C Headquarters seems to loom on every New Haven horizon. I took my camera to both buildings and shot them from as many angles as possible from street level. I began to love them, their assertiveness and their refusal to blend in.

Later I read about the Aqua Tower in Chicago, a town known for its massive old buildings. Studio Gang's 2009 86-story Aqua Tower is different. Jeanne Gang's team designed it so that Chicago's famous wind would move around it rather than push against it. The Aqua is not weighted at the top, and therefore represents an alternative to the practice of adding tonnage to the tops of skyscrapers



to steady them against high winds. When I went to Chicago to shoot the Aqua, I also shot the Marina Towers, the Wrigley Building, the Trump Tower, the Chase Bank, the Mercantile Exchange, and the streets.

The Fourth Space is about more than skyscrapers, however. It is based on places where I found myself over the year. In Mexico, at San Miguel de Allende – Juan’s Cafe, the Oratorio, the Instituto Allende, the Biblioteca, streets, traffic, and Mexico’s famous green taxis. On Dean Street, under demolition in Brooklyn; the split tower at the Wexner Center for the Arts in Columbus; beds slept in, tables worked at, ceiling fans stared up at, chairs and couches sat on, cats petted, windows looked out from, garden paths walked, planes flown in, mountains crossed, oceans swam in. Altogether, the record of a year of taking note of location.

Repetition, the eternal return – the memory of the place. The scale of the body – the proprioceptive sense in relation to soaring skyscrapers as well as to the intimate and singular experiences offered by a seat in a café, or by watching rain on a fire escape – a scale then expanded electronically, visual experimentation in anticipation of an event.

The Fourth Space came from months of wandering, having no proper address, autonomous as well as homeless. Places did not exist in relation to the home I would go back to at the end of the day. I was never home, not looking forward to a retreat into private space. always in the continuous present.

The Third Interval

The other side of being a free-spirited nomad with laptop editing is that the “free” part is largely an illusion. Being homeless and/or a wandering spirit may still leave intact other ties to governmental and bureaucratic systems. The fantasy of being off the grid is no more than a fantasy, unless one decides to no longer visit the doctor, find employment, pay taxes, or keep up with professional contacts. One must still visit the bank, wait for many minutes at the pharmacy, get an occasional document notarized, pay one’s mobile phone bill, and keep appointments. *The Third Interval* is an expression of the horror of the mundane, of plunging into joyless tasks on the level of need rather than want. Nomadism gets tiresome. Resting places are scarce. The camera is unable to create images of an objective encounter with necessity. The subject remains alien, immersed in a tedious mainstream.



The Scenography

Once one starts creating simple plans for cool pads and swell digs in Sweet Home 3D, a free downloadable architectural modeling software, it is, basically, difficult to stop. The obsession is not singular -- many kinds of free designs are available online from similarly obsessed individuals, some of whom create complete suites of 3D furniture, many styles of doors and windows, spiral staircases, perfectly modeled bowls of apples, tiny bottles of wine and other . . .

Anyway, in my case the obsession may have been driven in part by a simple wish to find an apartment. Creating architectural models may have sublimated the anxiety caused by needing to find a place to live. But, it also opened up a strange and wonderful space between the unreal and the impossible.

The Scenography is composed of thirteen virtual environments, animated as "walk-throughs." The furniture, landscaping and other objects are either part of the software package, or have been created by others and offered online to fellow-users of the software.

Desire is the engine. The portability of a design studio (laptop), free software, and a familiar desktop environment create a satisfying private space, clean and secure. No mind that is entirely electronically generated. No mind that the home you create, and even feel comfortable in, is as real as a cartoon.

Tetragrammaton

In 1973, sculptor Frank Gillette made a 23-minute videotape called *Tetragrammaton* at an unnamed beach, as one element of a six-part video installation called *Six Matrices* (1971-73). The camera focuses quietly on ripples in the sand, driftwood, shells, feathers, etc. and then swings out wildly to long shots of the sea and the horizon. At one point, it makes a 360-degree turn, and at other points it stays glued to one small object in the sand, defining the body of the artist as well as his surroundings.

The portable video technology of 1973 ensured that the image produced would be comprised of soft grays and whites. Seascape and objects are somewhat blurred, offering suggestions and impressions rather than clear depictions. His title refers to an archaic Hebrew word formed by the four letters יְהוָה (YHWH), representing the name of the god, a name that is too sacred to be spoken aloud, and a word that only a few people from each generation are taught to pronounce.

On day while capturing video with my cell phone at Brighton Beach in Brooklyn, the misty images that the phone produced called to mind Frank Gillette's video, a piece I had always loved. For three days I went back to Brighton Beach with my mobile phone to record a response to his work.

I was enjoying the limitations of my old Nokia 5130 mobile phone. It records beautifully degraded and pixilated images that make very general statements about color. The phone is also limited to recording 15-second clips, which then have to be sent wirelessly to the carrier's web site and downloaded for editing. I recorded hundreds of clips for this 23-minute piece.

Obviously, this piece not a re-creation of Frank Gillette's *Tetragrammaton*. It is a response based on the experience of the place: the weather, sky, sun, birds, sea, wind, foam and surf.



The Third Space

a video in four places

The Third Space begins the project of this five-part installation and marks the point at which I began to look at my surroundings purposefully – not only because I was at a certain place at a specific time, but because I wanted to make note of what sense these places make of themselves.

The four locations of the video are the Super King Laundrymat in Crown Heights, Brooklyn; Coney Island on the Fourth of July, 2009; the village of Saas-Fee in the Swiss Alps; and the Chinatown Bus en route to Philadelphia from New York. Each location's imagery is laid over with text from the books I was reading while making the piece: *Non-Places: Introduction to the Architecture of Supermodernity*, by Marc Augé; *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces*, by Georges Perec; *Basic Concepts*, by Martin Heidegger; and *Hatred of Democracy* by Jacques Rancière.

The texts function as ideas themselves, and also as a record of the natural environments of intellectual discourse, marking the locations in which the memory of books and texts becomes fixed.

Artist Biographies

Cecilia Dougherty has been working in video since 1985. Her themes include psychology, language, sexuality, outsider interpretations of popular culture, and everyday life. She has produced over thirty videos and installations and has had numerous shows, screenings and retrospectives. Ms. Dougherty works in photography, writing and installation as well as video. She has taught for many years in the Master of Fine Arts program at Bard College.

Aleksei Stevens is a composer and sound artist living in Brooklyn, NY. His work brings together traditional instruments with found sound and interactive electronics. Aleksei has had his music performed at many of the leading experimental music venues in the city including The Stone, The Tank, Monkeytown, 3-Legged Dog, Chelsea Art Museum, The Flea Theater, The Monkey, White Box, and many others, as well as Carnegie Hall, Symphony Space, and various venues in Europe. He has presented work in festivals including Make Music NY (NYC), Ear to the Earth (NYC), Source (Washington, DC), and Tevereterno (Rome). Recent collaborators include Jessica Schmitz, James Moore, Jennifer Stock, Jessie Marino, Okkyung Lee, Vongku Pak, Kathy Supove, Madeleine Shapiro, Joan La Barbara, Joel Chadabe, Matthew Wright, Alvin Scott, and others. Ensemble commissions include Flexible Music and Mantra Percussion. Aleksei is the recent recipient of a MacDowell Colony fellowship.

PARTICIPANT INC



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Reception
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Exhibition is free and open to
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