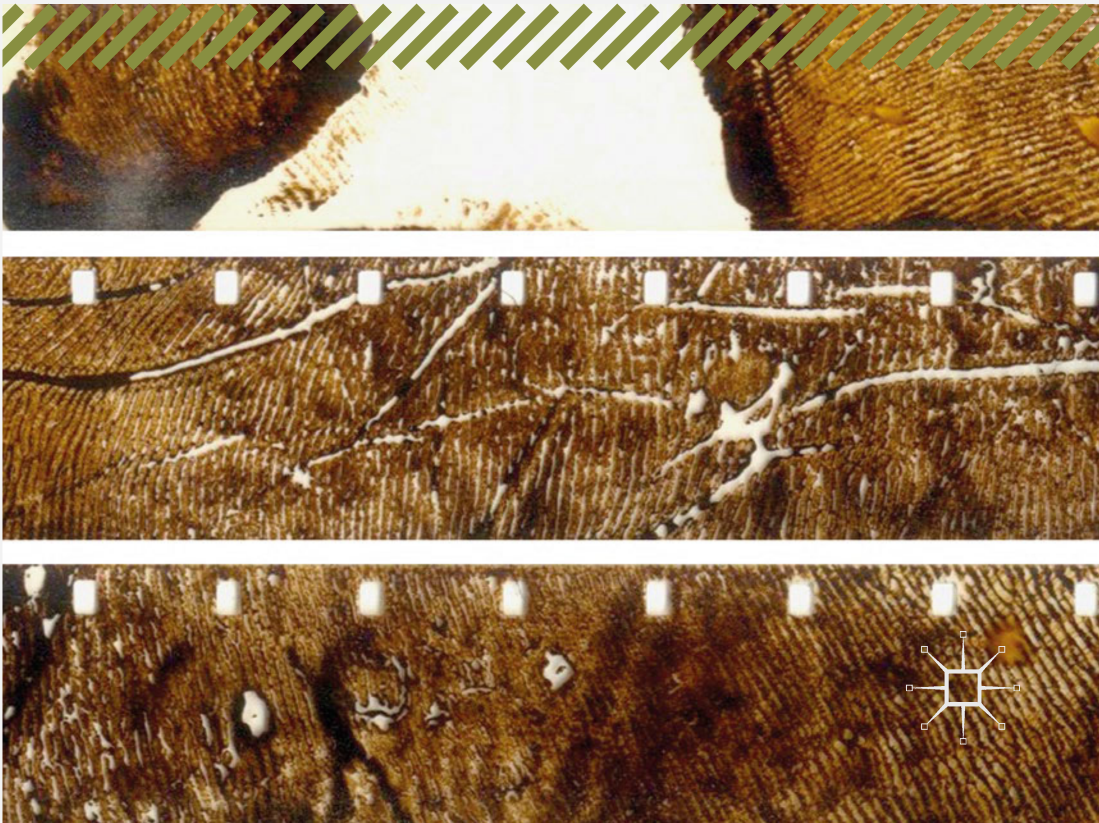
Experimental Film and Artists' Moving Image

Experimental and Expanded Animation

New Perspectives and Practices

Edited by Vicky Smith & Nicky Hamlyn



Experimental Film and Artists' Moving Image

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Existing outside the boundaries of mainstream cinema, the field of experimental film and artists' moving image presents a radical challenge not only to the conventions of that cinema but also to the social and cultural norms it represents. In offering alternative ways of seeing and experiencing the world, it brings to the fore different visions and dissenting voices. In recent years, scholarship in this area has moved from a marginal to a more central position as it comes to bear upon critical topics such as medium specificity, ontology, the future of cinema, changes in cinematic exhibition and the complex interrelationships between moving image technology, aesthetics, discourses, and institutions. This book series stakes out exciting new directions for the study of alternative film practice—from the black box to the white cube, from film to digital, crossing continents and disciplines, and developing fresh theoretical insights and revised histories. Although employing the terms 'experimental film' and 'artists moving image', we see these as interconnected practices and seek to interrogate the crossovers and spaces between different kinds of oppositional filmmaking.

We invite proposals on any aspect of non-mainstream moving image practice, which may take the form of monographs, edited collections, and artists' writings both historical and contemporary. We are interested in expanding the scope of scholarship in this area, and therefore welcome proposals with an interdisciplinary and intermedial focus, as well as studies of female and minority voices. We also particularly welcome proposals that move beyond the West, opening up space for the discussion of Latin American, African and Asian perspectives.

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Experimental and Expanded Animation

New Perspectives and Practices

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FOREWORD

ON ANIMATION

This book makes its appearance at a time when, more than ever before, it is possible to question what exactly *is* animation? The employment of CGI in many Hollywood feature films has irrevocably blurred the boundary between animation and live action. This, in a way, returns us to cinema's first decades, when there were no definitions to concern us; the attraction of the medium was 'things in motion', be it Louis Lumière's wall being demolished and rebuilding itself, or Georges Méliès's multiple self-portraits singing on a musical stave, or Émil Cohl's *Fantasmagorie* (1908) of white-lines-on-black seamlessly morphing from one image to another. In the following decades, animation largely took its own path, and became a branch of cinema generally subservient to the live-action mainstream, no longer 'the main attraction', but with the compensation of being more open to individual expression.

The early animators (Cohl and Winsor McKay) would have appreciated the French term for animation, *Le Dessin Animé*, the animated drawing. Better than bald 'animation', it captures the sense that the drawn-image should be totally and constantly in motion; no 'dead' inanimate parts. After his first fully animated *Gertie the Dinosaur* (1914), McKay himself struggled to maintain this dynamic, and invented many of the tricks that would be used by later animators to minimize the labour involved, (cels, cycles of drawings, etc.)—in effect, accepting the 'killing' of part of the image. Hollywood animators largely accepted these compromises; the story's the thing, although there are moments in early Disney and Fleischer where gloriously the whole image is involved in motion. But these are rare. To see the 'struggle for full animation' (for 'life') continued, one turns to the parallel history of experimental animation and the work of artist animators Walter Ruttmann, Len Lye, Lotte Reiniger, Alexandre Alexeieff and Claire Parker, Robert Breer, Caroline Leaf, et al. These animators demonstrated that *anything* material could be animated—wet paint, the filmstrip, silhouettes, a screen of pins, postcards, sand; and so began the process of medium-expansion.

Such animation is labour intensive. It takes time, but 'time' can add its own enrichments. The tortuously long process of Yuriy Norshteyn making his (unfinished) *The Overcoat* (1981–) comes to mind, or the digressive reverie of Susan Pitt's *Asparagus* (1979), which must have taken years of labour, or Fischli and Weiss's live-action-as-animation *Der Lauf der Dinge* (1987), the latter two of which are discussed here. All benefit from ideas developed en route … originating in the intellectual curiosity that is every artist's starting-point. Once questions are asked, boundaries fall away and the imagination expands. So, as this anthology put together by two outstanding practitioners clearly demonstrates, animation continues to sustain the excitement of cinema's first decades.

London, UK David Curtis

David Curtis was Film Officer at the Arts Council of Great Britain, then established the British Artists Film & Video Study Collection at Central St Martins. He founded the ANIMATE funding programme. He is author of Experimental Cinema (1970) and A History of Artists Film & Video in Britain (2007).

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Dr. Birgitta Hosea is a London-based artist and Reader in Moving Image at the University for the Creative Arts. Her work, which has been collected for the Tate Britain's archive (2012) and Centre d'Art Contemporain, Paris (2014), explores presence, time, affect and digital materiality and ranges from short film to video installation and animated performance art through to drawing on paper. Most recently (2017), her projects have been shown in the Venice Biennale, the Karachi Biennale and the Chengdu Museum of Contemporary Art. She has also taught in Azerbaijan, USA, China, Romania, Austria and Sweden, was Head of Animation at the Royal College of Art and MA Character Animation at Central Saint Martins.

Dr. Alex Jukes' animation concerns fine art and experimental image making. His practice research challenges what might be considered a dominant, largely commercial aesthetic relating to the field of 3D computer generated (CG) animation and seeks to develop alternative approaches to its creation and presentation. His Ph.D. at the Royal College of Art concerned the study of 'space' as material within the production of 3-D CGI. Alex is Programme Leader for BA Animation at Edge Hill University.

Dr. Simon Payne is an artist and Senior Lecturer in Film and Media Studies at Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridge. His video work has been shown at Tate Modern, Tate Britain, The Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg, the Serpentine and Whitechapel Galleries, Anthology Film Archives and various film festivals including Edinburgh, London and Rotterdam. He also programmes films and has written widely on experimental film and video, most recently editing the book *Kurt Kren: Structural Films* with Al Rees and Nicky Hamlyn.

Dr. Sarah Pucill's 16mm films, which stretch nearly three decades, have received public funding, have shown in galleries, museums and cinemas world-wide and won awards at Festivals internationally. Her first feature length film *Magic Mirror* (2013), premiered at Tate Modern, toured internationally with LUX and was exhibited with photographs from the film at The Nunnery Gallery 2014. The sequel film *Confessions To the Mirror* (2016) premiered at London Film Festival and has screened at leading museum and gallery venues in London (National Portrait Gallery, White Cube Gallery) and internationally (Creteil International Film Festival, Alchemy Film Festival). Her work is archived and distributed through leading international distributors including LUX, The British Film Institute (BFI), and Light Cone Paris. She is a Reader in Fine Art Film at University of Westminster and is an active member of the Research Centre CREAM.

Dr. Vicky Smith is an experimental animator and writer. Her films have screened at international festivals and galleries including Antimatter, Canada; SF MoMA; Anthology, NY; Tates' Britain and Modern; The Nunnery Gallery, London; Animate! *Parts and Labour* touring and on C4 TV. Smith co-edited 'boiling': journal of experimental animation (1996), and has written widely on animation, including in *Animation: An Interdisciplinary Journal, Sequence, Artist Film and Video Studies 2.0.* online. She lectures in the School of Fine Art & Photography at the University for the Creative Arts, Farnham.

Prof. Paul Wells is Director of the Animation Academy, Loughborough University, and Chair of the Association of British Animation Collections. He has published widely in Animation Studies and is an established screenwriter and director in Film, TV, Radio and Theatre. He is completing a book on *Screenwriting For Animation* and has curated a major exhibition of film and art, *The Beautiful Frame: Animation and Sport*, opening at the National Football Museum, Manchester UK, and touring.

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Introduction

Vicky Smith and Nicky Hamlyn

This project began partly with the realization that although the field of experimental animation has received attention through exhibitions, festivals, symposia, funding schemes, projects and journals, there hadn't been a *book* devoted to the area since Robert Russett and Cecile Starr's 1976 *Experimental Animation: Origins of a New Art*. Solely dedicated to the subject, their publication provided a starting point for our own project. Where a catalyst for Russett and Starr was their perception that the field of experimental animation had widened during the late twentieth century (Russett and Starr 1976, 17), we discovered that a growth area of twenty-first century experimental animation is one which crosses over into the domain of Expanded Cinema, hence the title and focus of our project.

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We define experimental animation as forms of animation that are as far from conventional cartoons as possible. While elliptical narrative and figurative animation might also be highly experimental, our emphasis is on non-generic, non-narrative animation. Our enquiry is concerned with practice that relates to the single frame and the single screen, alongside the expanding potential of animation practices no longer confined either to the screen or the frame. Much of the expanded animation discussed here dispenses entirely with the frame, and that leads to the question—what of animation remains? Perhaps at this level, animation refers more strongly to a making process such as that used by Bruce McClure, whose work is discussed in this volume and whose filmstrips are made simply by bleaching away the emulsion from selected frames to create rhythmic patterns of black and white. In this sense, his work is far from generic, mostly narrative forms of animation, even though his making processes overlap with the frame-by-frame procedures of conventional animation.

The notion of expanded animation applies in numerous further ways, from the combination of animation with installation and multi-screen live 'making', sound-generating visuals for instance, to the work of artists who combine animation techniques with performance, using both the body and/or multi-projector set-ups. This work is often exhibited as installation, in locations such as music venues, project and artist-run spaces, temporarily vacant buildings, etc., which can give the site of the work greater significance. Our project asks how animation can be re-defined when it is no longer articulated through the single screen alone, and what quality of perceptual engagement is called for. Finally, animation is understood to be expanded when traditional or commercial practices are exposed to new critical methodologies and re-workings—ones that are with increasing frequency referring to broader questions around performance, the social, political-documentary and so on.

We editors are ourselves practitioners of forms of expanded experimental practice: Vicky Smith in her scratched rotoscoped films, and performances in which she creates animated filmstrips that are immediately projected for their audience, and in which the sound is synaesthetic or live; and Nicky Hamlyn in his ongoing series of four-projector 16 mm loop performance works and his use of stop-motion techniques. We both work in arts universities (UCA Canterbury and Farnham) and to some extent this book is an extension of our respective PhD research and practice, and teaching work. Possibly a category that was not recognized prior to 1976, this volume includes contributions from several research-active animator pedagogues, who theorize their own and others' practices, employing new methodological frameworks and offering insider perspectives on the subject.

It had been our intention to bring matters up to date, to trace developments and continuities since the 1970s and provide some kind of survey. Things have turned out rather differently in the end, and perhaps inevitably, given the incalculable explosion of all kinds of animation everywhere. While this proliferation of practice has not been matched by theory, a few titles do exist, including: *Undercut: Animation*, Issue 13 (LFMC 1984–1985); Smith's *Boiling: Experimental Animation* journal (LFMC 1996) and *The Animate! Book: Rethinking Animation* (Lux 2006). Since 2007, the UK agency Animate Projects has continued to nurture practice and discourse in the field, and includes many essays on the subject on its website and in exhibition catalogues, such as *Animate OPEN: Parts and Labour*, *Experiments in Animation* (2015). Lily Husbands' essay in this catalogue is important in developing an understanding of current directions of experimental animation as forming common ground between experimental animation and craft, in that both pursue a fiercely independent enquiry that is not compromised by the industrial practices of mainstream production, but where the visibility of labour testifies to the close authorial connection between artist and artefact (Husbands 2015, 66–67).

Edwin Rostron began *Edge of Frame* in 2013 as an online blog, addressing his concern that experimental animation is typically seen or discussed within the context of industrial animation. This enquiry developed into an eclectic screening series, extending to a London-based seminar and screening weekend, *Edges: An Animation Seminar* (2016). The problem raised by Rostron is indicative of divisions existing not merely between art and commerce (an ever-changing situation, with animation as an increasing presence in the gallery) but also between art and academia. This deficit of discussion on the subject at an academic level is evident in an examination of the papers and themes at the main international scholarly forum for animation: the Society for Animation Studies. In 2015, the SAS annual conference theme *Beyond the Frame* suggested a high level of analysis of expanded models of animation. Yet only one out of the thirty-six panels focused solely around experimental, abstract or expanded animation, a paucity that does not indicate a bias on the part of conference organizers, but rather reflects the sense that scholars are not encouraged to research this topic.

In the USA, Chris Gehman and Steve Reinke's *The Sharpest Point: Animation at the End of Cinema* (2005), an anthology of perspectives from artists using animation, had less of a focus on expanded experimental forms. The USA also hosts the *Eyeworks Festival of Experimental Animation*, run by Alexander Stewart and Lilli Carré, the only festival devoted exclusively to the area. The pervasiveness of animated phenomena, and the impossibility of capturing or summarizing its multifarious forms and manifestations were addressed in Suzanne Buchan's important conference (Tate Modern, 2004) and subsequent book *Pervasive Animation* (2013). This volume contains a similarly wide-ranging set of essays—indeed, some of the authors are common to Buchan's project and our own—but this new anthology, while similarly not attempting to be a chronological or otherwise systematic approach to developments over the last forty years, is different in that the focus is more on specific aspects of practice, in which philosophical and aesthetic issues are teased out and considered.

Our method was to invite a number of authors—current key international researchers, scholars, practitioners, curators and animation advocates—who we felt could contribute something interesting, to write about who or what they wanted, but with the brief to address expanded forms of experimental animation. This is a niche area, but diverse in its range of practices, and so the scope of the book reflects this in terms of its historical and critical perspectives and the inter-disciplinary approaches that are employed. Fundamental questions concerning drawing and the line are addressed, broadening out to topics such as the inter-medial, post-humanism, the real, fakeness and fabrication, causation, new forms of synthetic space, ecology, critical re-workings of cartoons, process as narrative and how experimental, expanded animation speaks to and is informed by other disciplines such as aesthetics, phenomenology, feminism and critical theory.

A Context for Experimental Animation

Russett and Starr's project was catalysed by what they considered to be a proliferation of experimental animation during the 1970s and their intention to foster greater understanding and appreciation of this field. As they found, several conditions led to this burgeoning, including wider socio-cultural developments such as the women's liberation movement, the inclusion of animation in the art school curriculum and the flourishing of conditions for exhibiting such work in small art venues, such as Cinema 16 (Russett and Starr 1976, 100). Animated film is ‘experimental’ when it pursues aesthetic enquiry, is creatively daring, innovative and original and where artists are dedicated to their practice or have personalized and customized their equipment and techniques (9). Russett finds that the possibility to manipulate time and space in animation has particular relevance in 1976 because of the multi-faceted character of reality of this period (24). Throughout, experimental animation is identified as a single-frame practice; that aspects of film material and cinema technology are privileged over discussion of narrative aspects of animation points to the commonality of enquiry between experimental animation and experimental film.

Russett and Starr propose the 1920s pioneering European abstract animators, and their shared concerns with the abstract art forms of music, poetry and painting, to be a major historical precedent of 1970s experimental animation. In works such as these, concerns with rhythm, motion and form are common to those found in the wider arts, and these formal concerns are discussed in relation to contemporary animators in this volume (Dicker, Payne). Russett observes that work of this latter period ranges from the basic and minimal, manually made animated imagery by, for example, Robert Breer and Larry Jordan, through to that being influenced by highly complex devices and new computer imaging, such as work by the Whitney brothers and Lillian Schwartz (Russett and Starr 1976, 31). It is also the case in our book, forty years on, that experimental animation practice ranges from a minimal use of technology through to high-end 3D CG and internet animation. As an example of these extremes of technological engagement, the method of montaging and collaging of found materials appears as part of the discussion of two artists in our book, yet while the method is shared, one works with old found films (John Stezaker, whose works are analysed by Paul Wells), while the other (Peggy Ahwesh, who is interviewed by Johanna Gosse) rips and collages from 3D CG popular imaging.

Russett also speculates on directions that future experimental animation will take and how new technologies such as 3D, high definition and holograms will emerge and shape the creative process. With the ‘long term interest in simulation of real space and volumetric phenomena, it is reasonable to assume that some kind of artistic three-dimensional medium will eventually be developed’ (Russett and Starr 1976, 30). Russett is prescient in identifying the drive to realism that has determined the direction of the animation industry and in which he anticipates the construction of 3D CG volume as creating more realistic digital renderings of the world. He forecasts many technologies that are commonplace in animation production today, and that are discussed in our book. But where Russett focuses on what is *technically* possible with digital animation, contributors here, including Alex Jukes, shift the enquiry in a philosophical direction by questioning how our encounter with the non-naturalistic spaces fabricated with 3D CGI programmes, by artists such as Chris Cornish and Ryoichi Kurokawa, prompts us to reconsider our apprehension of the actual world.

A Context for Expanded Cinema

Some claim that the Expanded Cinema movement originated with Gene Youngblood's eponymously titled book, a vision that has been interpreted across time frames of 1967 to 2007 as embracing two core sensibilities. Both invested in a utopian vision, that of a global public and collective ownership of the earth (Marchessault and Lord 2007) and the notion that an expansion of consciousness would be reached through the broadening of cinematic technologies (Renan 1967, 227). Youngblood's objective was to raise the motion picture to the stature of the wider arts, using film in expanded ways as a means to reject the fixities of industry standardization. Through the use of multiple projectors, films made in the live event and/or in combination with other media, Expanded Cinema made it possible to overthrow the manner of serial production typical of single-screen cinema, such that artwork differed with every exhibition (Renan 1967). In our book, the promise that art can deliver a utopian ideal is raised in Sean Cubitt's analysis of Fischli and Weiss's *Der Lauf der Dinge* (1987) and Blu's *Muto* (2008), which he reads as animated analogies of a longing to reunite with nature and to copy its agencies. In these films, objects exist in an absurd and unpredictable relationship with one another, seemingly ungoverned by human intervention and indifferent to human witness. Youngblood sought to balance technology, mind and nature at the level of the cosmic, and in this respect indicated a key difference between the utopian expectations of Expanded Cinema in the 1960s and the more recent hopes invested in technology. For Cubitt and others writing in our book, problems of human/nature/technology relations are brought to the terrestrial level, as expression of a yearning to achieve ecology on the material plane, while

Simon Payne's discussion of a forward-looking momentum in the lines of vector graphics cautions against what he sees as its idealistic trajectory.

Renan identifies the gravitation towards inter-media practice, whereby art crosses different media, as a response to image proliferation (Renan 1967, 228) and in which mixed-media versions of onstage actions with their filmed counterparts might be 'interlocked' (236). Andrew V. Uroskie illuminates this aesthetic as one in which discrete media forms are enhanced through their operation with others. With reference to Stan VanDerBeek's 1965 *Movie Mural* and *Move Movies*, Uroskie recounts how slowed down, close-up filmic imagery of dancers' feet and hands projected across the stage crosses the paths of the onstage performers, creating an 'interpenetration' of live and mediated activity (Uroskie 2014, 165–168). It seems that the radical breakthrough that VanDerBeek's conjoining of different media achieved is the disruption of a hierarchy. Whereas film was previously seen as a mere backdrop to the main dance event, in *Move Movies* it gains equal stature to accompanying art forms. Uroskie suggests that what drew VanDerBeek to work across forms of animation and Expanded Cinema was his fascination with movement generally (as is also the case for Len Lye's preoccupation with kinetics). Indeed, VanDerBeek's techniques in single-screen animation are particularly fluid, employing free-form drawing directly under the camera and collaging of found imagery to describe themes of acceleration—the arms race, the cold war and 'media saturation as bombardment' (Bartlett 2011)—and these concerns with movement carry across to his work in Expanded Cinema. In this respect, VanDerBeek bridges experimental animation and Expanded Cinema, and to some he is its founder with his work in 'intermedia', 'stressing rather than subverting the specific differential qualities of the media combined' (Bartlett 2011, 50).

Intermedia practice and theory continue to be a central facet of Expanded Cinema and experimental animation. Where VanDerBeek's methods are thought to be groundbreaking in the interlocking of differential qualities of film/dance and film/theatre (Renan 1967; Bartlett 2011), in our book Sarah Pucill elaborates on the aesthetic possibilities for the inter-medial. She argues that, counter to the tendencies of the post-medium digital era whereby medium specificities are subsumed into one, inter-media theory and practice emphasize the *relationship* between media, stressing the individual qualities of each. Pucill discusses her inter-medial approach to re-staging and re-animating Claude Cahun's portrait photography in her films *Confessions to the Mirror* (2016) and *Magic Mirror* (2013), arguing that the interlocking of media in the *tableau vivant* effects a crossing between live action and animation, between the media of photography and film, and also between time zones of past and present. As with VanDerBeek's projection of the past of the filmed dance movement onto the present of the live event, the collapsing of the past of the static photographic space with the present of its live re-enactment is a metaphor for the coming to movement and into life that is animation: the *tableau vivant* enhances the distinction between these states.

Uroskie explains that Youngblood's publication on Expanded Cinema also coincided with the novelty of early computer imaging and because Youngblood's notion of expansion was poorly defined, a misconception that Expanded Cinema was primarily one of technological innovation developed (Uroskie 2014). With reference to Jonas Mekas's 1965 *Movie Journal* reviews, Al Rees (2011) casts a wider net on our understanding of Expanded Cinema as a practice that is often technically quite rudimentary. As Rees observes, by including direct-on-filmstrip works such as *Mothlight*, Mekas posits Expanded Cinema actually as one of reduction, in the sense that by removing components of the cine apparatus, film is freed from its condition of reproduction and brought closer to the singularity of painting. With this, a further understanding of the embrace of Expanded Cinema comes into view: with the handmade film original, the projected film is never the same twice—it changes with each screening, especially in examples where original material is projected, as in the case of Emma Hart's *Skin Film* (three versions, 2005–2007), in which skin, which was transferred to clear celluloid using adhesive tape, is gradually eaten by the microbes contained within it, so that the image eventually disappears, and James Holcombe's *Hair in the Gate* (n.d.), briefly discussed in this volume by Nicky Hamlyn.

Such variation with each exhibition overthrows serial production in ways that Renan (1967) characterized as Expanded Cinema. Furthermore, the cultivation of live matter on the filmstrip constitutes an extremely direct, Povera-like and technically minimalist approach to cinema. Elwes elaborates on Expanded Cinema's 'minimalist aesthetic', citing a contradiction pointed out by Chrissie Iles, that cinema is expanded through its contraction (Elwes 2015). One further understanding of Expanded Cinema as a technically contracted practice is manifested in the rapid single-frame experiments of Gregory Markopolous and Robert Breer, in which flicker and motion are located in the physiology of the viewer, produced through the act of spectatorship (Rees 2011, 12). In this regard, Mekas's understanding of a contracted Expanded Cinema resonates with sensibilities articulated in our book whereby the phenomenon of flicker is foregrounded in much contemporary practice. Flicker is intangible, existing therefore only in the present moment of its apprehension, and specific to a time and place: in this regard, it is a prime example of the locatable historical context that is central to the experience of Expanded Cinema. Reading contemporary experimental flicker animation through Rosalind Krauss's argument that throbbing movement exists outside of and destabilizes form, posing a threat to the modernist art canon, Barnaby Dicker relates the flicker's perceptual limits to a libidinal economy and links it to other cinematic phenomena that work on the nervous symptom, such as the pulse that is generated by early optical toys. Through the analysis of manifestations of flicker as it is occurring today in experimental single-screen films by Jodie Mack, Benedict Drew and Sebastian Buerkner, Dicker is able to claim that proto-cinematography endures in the cinematic forms of the present day.

Bridging Experimental Animation and Expanded Cinema

We have roughly mapped the situation of early Expanded Cinema in the USA. In the meantime, a great deal of 1970s UK Expanded Cinema had different priorities, employing relatively low technology and veering away from the notion of an altered consciousness that might be brought about through new and multiple technologies, aiming instead towards Expanded Cinema as an analytic event. The collective Filmaktion (Lis Rhodes, Malcolm Le Grice, Gill Eatherley, Annabel Nicolson, William Raban), for example, worked with the film projector in relation to simple actions and commonplace tools to provoke questions about time, space, distance, duration, materials, arbitrary systems (film stock) and givens (concrete space). The differently nuanced Expanded Cinema of the UK is acknowledged by Mekas, who suggests that VanDerBeek's use of multi-screen collage imagery is gratuitous in contrast to the two screen works of Gill Eatherley, whose use of both screens to compare different stages in film production is essential in bringing the act of making into the present of the viewing (Mekas 2011, 72). Further outlining core differences between the psychedelically orientated Expanded Cinema of the USA and the analytic method of the UK version, Malcolm Le Grice discusses the significance of projection as the primary area of film reality. Where commercial film presents illusions of time and space that do not relate to the one that the audience occupy while watching it, Expanded Cinema seeks to collapse that distance by combining production and exhibition into one event (Le Grice 1977, 143). What is apparent through works by Filmaktion and Le Grice is that Expanded Cinema is an extension of the broader materialist aims pursued by experimental filmmakers, only taking expanded forms (Elwes 2015).

A further area of common ground that unites Expanded Cinema and experimental animation is that of abstraction. In the same overall context of abstract film, Le Grice analyses tendencies in works by those who are primarily animators (Oskar Fischinger, Len Lye) and those working primarily with live action, such as Stan Brakhage. Film is abstract in the sense that the imagery might carry no real-world referent (Viking Eggeling through to US West Coast computer-generated work by Jordan Belson and the Whitneys) but also extends to imagery that does capture the trace of the concrete, albeit in ways that obliterate or set at a remove the plastic referent through processes of, for example, reproduction. This abstracting process is evident in films such as his own *Little Dog for Roger* (1967), a film that explores the possibilities for image transformation through printing techniques (Le Grice 1977). Overall then, many crossover areas exist between Expanded Cinema, experimental animation and film and the wider arts. These form the foundations of our own project.

The Growth in Expanded Cinema and the Themes Explored Here

Possibly one of the most significant developments in experimental animation from 1976 to the present is Russett and Starr's ambition that animation be ranked alongside the visual arts. Today, this has been realized, with animation installation proliferating in the context of Expanded Cinema, performance and live 'making', exhibited in galleries, public sites and online. Al Rees provides some explanation for the growth of Expanded Cinema during the twenty-first century. The structurally informed expanded film by Filmaktion and others during the 1970s was followed by a resurgence in expanded work in the late 1990s by the Young British Artists, whose work often engaged with narrative cinema, differing therefore from the Expanded Cinema of the 1970s. Relocated to the space of the more popular galleries, this new work came to dominate the perception of Expanded Cinema (Rees 2011). The move away from the confines of cinema and the increased exposure of Expanded Cinema to a wider audience, including what would be the next generation of experimental filmmakers, mobilized younger makers of structural film to rediscover the continuing Expanded Cinema practices of artists such as Bruce McClure, Sylvie Simon, Guy Sherwin and Lyn Loo. This has included the recent practice of re-performing original works by Sherwin and others by the Australian filmmaking group Teaching and Learning Cinema.

In this volume, Dirk de Bruyn, also based in Australia, draws on a wide range of ideas, including colour theories and the writings of P. Adams Sitney, to consider questions of the specificity of a medium that was and continues to be important to the expanded live cinema of Sally Golding, Guy Sherwin, Ken Jacobs and others. With reference to Vilem Flusser's 'technical' image, in which digital forms have lost all historical context, de Bruyn proposes that the Expanded Cinema of Sherwin et al. restores the specificity of the origins of the imagery they use.

Hamlyn also references Expanded Cinema that has carried across earlier and more recent times in his study of the performances of Bruce McClure. He finds that, through paring it down to its barest essentials, McClure is able to question cinema's foundations with an analytic rigour that is distinctive amidst the current proliferation of work where arsenals of projectors are used to quite sensational effect. McClure's minimalist practice is one instance of the so-called contracted cinema that Elwes remarked upon (Elwes 2015). Theodor Adorno observed that the technological basis of cinema condemns it to a mere mute recording function, thereby ruling it out as an art medium. Hamlyn suggests that it is through actually adapting and in some respects extending cinema's technical capacity that McClure is able to build a meta-cinematic language, so transforming the status of film into one that is also art, thereby complicating Adorno's position.

Our current period is yet more technologically divergent than it was in 1976, when Russett and Starr remarked upon the then breadth of means for creating experimental animation. It is worth referring briefly once more to Russett's understanding that in 1976, experimental single-frame practice is ideally suited for communicating the multi-faceted character of reality of this period. His view is usefully paralleled by those who point to the diversification of political and media landscapes as drivers of Expanded Cinema today. Marchessault observes that, currently, media are becoming more ubiquitous, yet are owned by fewer and fewer proprietors, pressing a greater urgency to situate such 'fluid' media in histories and political economies (Marchessault and Lord 2007). The impact of media diversification as a growth factor of animation is reflected upon in this volume. Johanna Gosse's interview with Peggy Ahwesh opens up precisely this area, as to how animation engages in the politics of fluid media. Ahwesh is a filmmaker who has recently taken up animation because of the capacities it offers to invent and manipulate the extant world in ways that resonate with our current political landscape and its post-truth agenda. Gosse delivers insights into the artist's rationale for using 3D CG animation material drawn from Taiwanese news agencies, in an attempt to tackle how such footage can deal adequately with complex political events. Ahwesh is one among several filmmaker-artists turning towards appropriation of industry cartoons (another example is *The Pure Necessity* [2016] by David Claerbout, who has frequently used found photographs in his work) and indicating a trend that paradoxically inverts the common practice whereby commerce has raided the avant-garde. Gosse locates in Ahwesh's work several issues that have long been pertinent to animation, chiefly how its association with 'cuteness' and its failure to point to a trace has given it less authority as an index and less credibility than live-action film. Yet, as Gosse and Ahwesh point out, CGI seems uniquely suited for the purposes of propaganda and misinformation. It is becoming less improbable in this climate of so-called fake news that animation as an art of invention is recruited to the service of reporting facts.

Alex Jukes also engages with the implication of media proliferation in terms of how VR and CG shape our experience and expectations of space. Ultimately, animated images have always been fantasized and fabricated, yet have often related to objects that exist within the world more than the space that surrounds them. The particular conundrum of how space itself must become objectified by the 3D CG animator pertains to Jukes's enquiry into the way CGI software has been used by Karl Sims, Chris Cornish and others to create new kinds of animated environments, in which space is not a neutral setting or background, but is actively shaped as a palpable material component of the film.

Duncan White reiterates the idea that Expanded Cinema has developed in response to the diversification of media and its increased role in everyday life (White 2011). White and others delineate two main tracks along which media diversify and proliferate—the more recent creative engagement with interactive technologies and the ongoing practice with analogue film. Such tendencies also divide debate in our book, as evidenced in the Jukes and Gosse chapters on digital media and the debate on matters relating to the analogical, as discussed by Payne and Smith.

Scholars have sought explanations as to why artists continue to work with film during this period, when digital is easy to use and offers high-definition imagery (Elwes 2015). Several chapters here analyse how analogue media continue to best meet the 'requirements of the project', most suited to represent the ideas that are under investigation. The specific use of analogue media is crucial to the aesthetic—for example, in Hamlyn's *Gasometers*, where the interaction between grain movement and the liveness generated by the physical movement of film through the projector, juxtaposed with areas of stillness and movement within the image, are crucial to the experience. Smith engages a 'New Materialist' methodology to reflect upon analogue and animation's capacity to make visible the energies in objects that otherwise appear to be inert. She finds that through his hand processing of celluloid, Hamlyn draws analogies between analogue media and nineteenth and twentieth-century sources of fuel, in that both possess great mass and bulk and both are now being replaced with less visible technologies of storage and distribution. Hamlyn's time-lapse film itself refuses to conceal and bears on its surface the once common industrial processes of wetness and chemical traces entailed in its own production: the filmic plasticity makes this contact with matter possible in ways that the digital does not.

The cutting and joining together of pieces of celluloid in editing uses the same tools—a blade and glue—as are required for the technique of collage assembled from paper. Mekas found that while VanDerBeek collaged materials across a number of screens, it would have been equally effective had he combined all these fragments into one (Mekas 2011, 72). Paul Wells considers the process of the artist John Stezaker, who is mostly well known for his disturbing photographic collages made from found postcards. Stezaker has made a number of short films using the collage method of combining images from different sources, but instead of joining these parts into one whole single image, he uses the speed of the projected single frame to simulate a collage effect. The rapid cutting together of single frames, each bearing different images, creates the impression that they are collaged together. Yet this impression is actually occurring merely at the optical and not the physical level, the quick cutting causing persistence of vision and a fusion of imagery from one frame to the next, locating the notion of the expanded at the level of the eye and chiming with Jonas Mekas's ideas of cinema, outlined in his 1964 essay *On the Expanding Eye*. As Wells argues, the editing together of things not ordinarily seen to be in relationship produces associations that border on narrative, albeit in an extremely condensed form. Wells demonstrates that experimental animation does not have to be exclusive of storytelling, and that the very processes the artist deploys are a part of such narratives.

Simon Payne also presents a case for the specificity of celluloid practice and its unique relationship to physical contact in his study of artists who work with the filmic possibilities for recording traces. Payne produces a kind of mini-history of the line as it is foundational to animation, from Eggeling to Lye to the present day, drawing on Brownian Motion, Bergson's theories of time and Tim Ingold's important book *Lines* (2007), among other writings. He finds examples of Expanded Cinema that rethink film's condition as a divisible series of frames, approaching it rather as a strip or thread of continuous movement. While Bergson disapproved of cinema's capacity to replicate movement, due to the constant breaking of time into discrete moments in the form of frames, when film is treated as a strip it is restored to a constant flow. Perversely, the absolute of animation, its frame-by-frame stop-motion structure, is defied by the frameless film. While both methods may be accepted as animation, the latter, while achieving continuous, genuine, as opposed to illusionistic movement, does so at the cost of the loss of stable, perspectival representation, as in the case of Jennifer Nightingale's pinhole films.

Regarding the voice and practice of women, there were fewer female animators in 1976 than there are today, although Russett and Starr endeavoured to frame this work 'about being female' (Russett and Starr 1976, 19) through the inclusion of now canonical animators Lotte Reiniger, Mary Ellen Bute and also Rose Bond, whose practice spans the period from 1976 to 2018 and ranges from single screen to her more recent expanded animation installation. The consensus during the 1980s was that women were attracted to work with animation because the rostrum table offered a refuge of sorts from the glare of production, easing the difficulty of expressing personal—and therefore political—often troubling issues (Pilling 1992). This mode of private practice was in contrast to women working in Expanded Cinema during a slightly earlier period, such as Filmaktion member Nicolson, who was so animated in