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### Ephemera

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*EPHEMERA*

Graduate Thesis  
Master of Fine Arts  
School of Photographic Arts and Sciences  
Rochester Institute of Technology

By Terri Whitlock

Spring 2001

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*Ephemera*

Graduate Thesis  
Master of Fine Arts  
The School of Photographic Arts and Science  
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May, 2001

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## I. Experimental description of approaching the installation

And even before you enter the darkened gallery space, the sounds of footsteps overlapping sounds of water call your attention. The sounds are abstracted from their associated image or other physical form. But once inside you can see from a distance, that across the room, on the other end of the gallery, there is a glowing image of a forest scene projected on the front wall of a long, black, boxed in space. Seeing the image in the distance, your curiosity encourages you to walk toward it. As you move closer to the image, subtle movements appear in the shaking of tree branches and moving of the stream's water, and your perspective shifts from perceiving the scene to be a still image, to that of an image alive with perhaps a narrative unfolding in front of you.

That shift in perception is the first premise of this installation, *Ephemera*. A thread that is woven into the experience of the video installation and that I intend to expand upon here, is the notion of a dynamic self. The tone of both the work and the writing is this immersive space, belonging to both the video installation in the gallery and to the dynamic self. What is to unfold is first the imagining and then the encountering of narratives, which leads to a developing awareness of the past and the present experience. Immersion is by definition a sensory interaction, and as such it cannot be perceived without a viewer. That viewer's experience completes this art object. The "object" becomes a fluid mix of mental space and physical interface.

To approach the projected video space of this work is to feel separated and outside of the time contained within the installation. Even though you can see that across the room there is a projection of a forest space, illuminating the face of the long black box, you perceive this projection as a still object not a moving, living image. See figures 6 - 8. Distance is your boundary; it is outside of the your experience, and you in no way feel your presence effects the object you see

at the other end of the room.

To approach the object is to alter your perception. The closer you get to the long black floating boxes, the more they disappear from your vision, and the brighter the projected image becomes. To approach the image is also to make a connection between the abstract sounds you heard outside of the gallery space and the visual life of that sound you discovered within the gallery walls. The initial separation of audio and visual cues was a deliberate reference to the body and mind dichotomy, favored by Western ideology. The audience member, though, is encouraged to actively make those connections, between audio/visual, body/mind, and later between forest/beach, stream/ocean, self/other, presence/absence, and virtual/reality.

In literal terms when approaching the installation, the projected video image is experienced as an object defining space, as it seems to be encapsulated within the two long black boxes of curtain. The closer the viewer gets to the image screens at the center of the installation space, the more immersed the viewer becomes in the video scenarios of forest and shoreline. Those two scenarios, set facing one another, are set to run on an hour loop. The viewer is able to enter and leave the space at his or her will, so the the timing of the scenarios varies from viewer to viewer. The actual timing of the video, however, does have a system. Every 30 minutes the person, Ephemera, appears in the image, interrupting the continuous landscape, and approaches the camera. Once she reaches the camera, she turns it off, ceasing the continuous presence of image. Seconds later, she turns the camera on and immediately turns to walk away, soon leaving the camera's view and leaving the audience with the landscape image again. *See figures 9 - 23.* The motion of the water, whether it is stream or ocean wave, takes over as the main action in the scene.

Deeper in this paper, I will discuss Ephemera, the myth I became in this video installation work, including her connection to narrative structures and an underlying premise of presence and absence. Both Ephemera and the viewer of the work, play the role of dynamic self throughout this video space. The essence of their “self-ness” is crucial to both undergoing and conceptualizing the installation experience.

## **II. Discussion of the concept of self**

For the sake of clarity, I think it is important that I first establish my meaning for the word “self” as it is used here in this paper. The “self” is not to be understood as a specific ego, individual, or character. Instead it is to refer to the simultaneous and varied concepts of person and identity. That is to say that, in its use here, the term “self” should be understood as a term undefined and unlimited by one singular definition or belonging to one specific ideology. It is my intention with this section of the paper, to establish the preferred interpretation of “self” to be an idea in flux; one that refers to the culture and history it is describing, and therefore one that can not be eternal or universal.

As an alternative to the singular notion, I present four alternative approaches to the self. These four, Hinduism; Buddhism; Marxism; and Feminism, come from different religious or social premises, yet it is useful to compare these philosophies, in an attempt to better understand the multiplicity of how self and identity are perceived. To understand the concepts of self, one must understand the social, cultural, historical, economic, and spiritual contexts within which these ideas are nurtured. To begin a discussion of self, it is useful to explore the popular modern Western concepts of self. In the modern West, people tend to think of themselves as a separate, independent, autonomous individual. Modern Western concepts of self have roots in the Cartesian approach to truth and his separation of the mind and body. Descartes privileged mind over body; in fact, having a body was not essential to his analysis of the self as a thinking being. Furthermore, this thinking self is definitely a separate entity rather than a relational self and his mind can be more certain of his own existence than of the existence of anything else.



Despite the persistence of current thinking within the intellectual community, popular thought in the West assumes that our views of the self are not the result of cultural or historical construction, but instead are natural, objective, universal, and apolitical. Admittedly, each of us does have a separate body and a separate physical identity, but the existence of a separate biological identity does not equate to a universal of “the person.” The concept of self always involves interpretation. Contrary approaches to the self, that claim to be universal and finite, I find to be inadequate approaches to such a complex idea.

Hinduism’s approach to the self can be traced within the practice of yoga. Although there are also multiple traditions of yoga, they generally advocate denying the finite and separate ego, a fundamental characteristic of the Western notion of self. The yogi sees the concept of a permanent self as a false illusion. The denial of this false view of self is essential to spiritual liberation (i.e. transcendence). A true devotee must free oneself from the delusion of ‘I’ and ‘mine’ to attain the *Atman*, a non-egoistic self. Unlike the self defined by Cartesian and other modern views, the true self according to Hinduism does not exist because the person thinks it so.

Similar to the Hindu concept of *Atman*, is the Buddhist word for ‘no-self’, *Anatta*. Buddhism emphasizes that our concepts of self and ego are illusionary. Furthermore, an ego-constructed world is essential to our suffering, so that liberation entails transcendence of the self (or even better, transcendence of the illusion of self). The Buddha discourages considering the body, feeling, perception, impressions, and consciousness (which are impermanent, painful, and subject to change) as a definition of what “is mine” or what “is my self/soul.” Through the Four Noble Truths, Buddhism teaches that everything is impermanent; the constructed self is an illusion of a permanent individual, a concept which prevents us from experiencing the flow of a continuous becoming. Buddhism offers an experiential realization of the self as an alternative to the popular

modern Western view. Like the Hindu approach, the Buddhist philosophy critiques the individual separate self for a more general, abstract, and ultimately ahistorical approach.

Like Hinduism and Buddhism, Karl Marx maintained that our self-constructions, at least in terms of class societies, must be transcended. He considered the modern capitalist approach to the self resulted from an emphasis on isolated, self-sufficient, ego-orientated individuals. Thus, his revolutionary transcendence of capitalism requires the transcendence of the modern person. He said that within our ego orientated selves, all of our physical and mental senses have been reduced to “the sense of having” and of consuming. The primary relation of the modern ego is to its property. In transcending this, the human senses will become completely “emancipated.” He would have regarded any assumption of an ahistoric view of the self as having a hidden agenda in the capitalist relationship to production. Marx would have emphasized that modern Western and other specific concepts of self must be situated and interpreted as being historically and culturally constituted in order for the human senses to become completely “emancipated” and thus truly human.

The fourth alternative approach presented here will be that of Feminism. Although there is no single unifying feminist agreement of the construction of self or on the critique of the modern Western concept, Anti-Cartesian thought is a popular thread connecting many feminist concepts of the self. To begin with, Simone de Beauvoir’s essentialist feminist approach upheld the principle that there are no ahistoric or universal essences, whether it be the ‘feminine,’ ‘the masculine,’ or the ‘self.’ All essences, including the modern Western idea of self, are therefore simply specific cultural creations. Beauvoir’s view of the self is relational; she argued that the “other” is a necessary structure of human consciousness. Furthermore, one can develop as a self-transcending self only in relation to that which is “other” (or not-self) to them. Beauvoir and her

text *The Second Sex* establishes a more symmetrical self-other relationship, so that both men and women have the capacity to realize their potential for freedom as self-transcending subjects.

In relating these four diverse critiques of the self, how ever oversimplified their descriptions may be, all of them view freedom in terms of transcending the ego that is central to illusion, oppression, and suffering. Some possible parallels can be noted between the four as well. Both Hinduism and Buddhism suggest that we experience a nonegoistic reality that has always existed, but that it is our modern perspective (not the reality) that has changed. Marx and Beauvoir agree that the modern ego may be disillusioned in thinking itself an alienated individual, but they believe the modern capitalist and masculinist ego is a real cultural development that causes real specific conditions for its transcendence. From the perspective of Hinduism and Buddhism, however, Marx and Beauvoir have a limited understanding of the human cycle of continual suffering in this world, even if it were filled with their communist and feminist ideals of nonegoistic individuals.

The four different approaches presented here are not only significantly different, but are also complementary. Perhaps the Buddhist and Hindu perspectives would remain incomplete or appear to be attempted escapes from reality, without the political, economic, and cultural variables highlighted by the Marxist and Feminist tradition. Likewise, it may be that the Marxist focus on economics and politics appear incomplete without the spiritual dimension of Hinduism and Buddhism. More-so than the Marxist; the Feminist, Hindu, and Buddhist focus more attention on subjective dimensions of ego-formation, including the importance of overcoming the need to desire attachments. And, perhaps the recent feminist emphasis on the personal and the embodied self, as a reaction against abstract theorizing, remain incomplete as well, leaving unaddressed political and cultural structures.

The above critique is not merely a critique of the dominant Western idea of the self, but more importantly, it can serve to suggest that there is no common concept and there is certainly no single objective view that can be placed on all people at all times in history. With the privilege of being able to look back in hindsight on the development of Marxist and Feminist concepts of self, in addition to the non-Western concepts of self that influence many religious traditions, we are able to see the multiplicity inherent to a culturally and historically specific self identity, self definition, and ultimately “the true self.”

My own idea of what constitutes and constructs the self is influenced by the current post-modernist climate, especially the post-modernist feminist emphasis on multiplicity rather than a dominant model. When looking at the self, it is important to realize that people do not live their lives on the level of some perfect and pure universal law. Such an essential definition of the self is abstracted from the particular variables that define the contexts of experience. The universal definitions of self really act as an illusion or boundary between the experienced self; the self that is changing and becoming. It is this act of constantly becoming that I consider to be the self, or at least ‘my self’. It is a relational self, as related to Hegel’s general structure of self-development and self-alienation. Hegel tells us that the self must externalize itself to that which is “other.” Through this dynamic process of self-externalization, the relation to the other provides the necessary basis for the movement towards self-transcendence - towards a new and more conscious self. While the concept of the “other” has taken a negative and oppressive connotation to it, we can imagine the term to mean a creative relationship between the self and the other as a necessary condition for the dynamic process of self development.

That said, I have chosen to bring this dynamic of self and other to the foreground through an experience that is both culturally and historically current (through the use of technology as both

the mode of representation and tool the participant will experience), while also presenting timeless yet recognizable narratives and landscapes. My installation reflects an understanding of the self as a project of constituting and re-constituting, that develop in relation to the surrounding 'others'. One of the subjects for this installation is the presence and process of self, both being complex, dynamic, and open-ended ideas. Both the presence of self and the process of self are expressed as physical and meta-physical properties. Absence is as equally profound as presence; although the boundary between the two is not clear. This murky and fluxus display of presence and absence of the physical body and the surrounding environment that the body is passing through parallels the evolving self the body is connected to. The interpretation of this self that is presented on the video screen or that belongs to an audience member, will depend greatly on the specific cultural and other contextual variables particular to the person and that time. Specific to this video installation, those variables go beyond their viewer's personal experience with water, forest, and beach, to include the stories told in the viewer's culture, forming how the dark, confined spaces of the forest are perceived and embodied compared to those of the open, empty beach and endless shoreline? Those variables are at the essence of this concept of self and at the underlying premise of the installation work. The installation is an attempt to address the dynamic and holistic self, as it is attainable in connection between body, mind, and other (Allen p. 3 - 22).

### III. The self in art and literary narrative

To follow that philosophical and meta-self discourse, I think it may be best to continue this exploration by looking at the body as it has been told in modern visual narrative. With this example, the body is understood as an extension of the self. Furthermore, to the modern mind, to see the body is to see the closest visual and tactile representation of the self. “The body is both ourselves and other, . . . To psychoanalysis, it is the object of primary narcissism. To religious ascetics, it is a dangerous enemy of spiritual perfection” (Brooks 1).

The premise of Realism, the dominant 19th century tradition, is “to know is to see, and to represent is to describe” (Brooks 88). The importance of knowing and knowledge in general, is completely tied to the perceived truth inherent of vision. In the Realist tradition, vision is the master key to relating and understanding the world. Unlike the fluid and androgenous bodies of the Romantic era, Realism represses such fluidity in exchange for a preferred structure of visual and formal laws. Those formal laws are also gendered laws, and while assumed in that code, the bodies being viewed are both male and female, often the perspective is that of the male vision, and the object of the male vision is the female body.

In creating fictions of the body, the narrative implied has been criticized as that belonging to the male. But, like ‘the self’, ‘the body’ can be understood in a broad range of semantic terms, including a biological entity, psycho-sexual construction, cultural product, etc. It is not my aim to say exactly what the self or the body is, either in my thesis installation nor in this thesis writing, my interest in the body, as it is connected to the self, lies in the use of the body as the prime vehicle for narrative construction and communication. A tradition of thinkers, including Freud and Lacan, have argued that the body is the building blocks of language itself. Language then

takes us away from the body, but always with the tension that reminds us that mind and language need the body somehow for their very definition. The body that interests me is the dynamic body, the shifting body, the body in flux, the body that can at once be perceived abstractly as the object within a space, but can then shift to the sexual being of narrative lore, and then to the embodied essence of a moment as time unfolds. What I find most interesting about the body is that it is both impossible to define, but also has infinite definitions. The rich histories of visual and literary narrative have infused the body with meaning and possibilities that are both apart from our own personal understanding, but also constructed from it.

The video installation *Ephemera*, uses such allegoric traditions to evoke a presumed narrative out of what can at times appear to be an empty scene. It does this both with its large scale projected presence, alluding to the cinema screen, and also in the scenarios established with landscapes familiar to epic tales of the secret world of storybook characters lurking in the forest and voyagers stranded on a deserted island. That narrative history imbues this installation containing two video landscapes set facing each other: the forest and the shoreline. Because both landscapes are steeped in literary and artistic tradition, when set before you, without other context, the mind begins to respond to the imagery with notions of the enchanted forest, little red riding hood, or Édouard Manet's forest picnic setting in *Déjeuner sur l'herbe*<sup>1</sup>. The other landscapes recalls, lands end, the deserted island, and *The Great Wave off Kanazawa*<sup>2</sup> by Katsushika Hokusai depicting the untamed energy of the ocean. They also invoke opposing psychological tones; the forest being a

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1. Édouard Manet's *Déjeuner sur l'herbe* created a major scandal when it was exhibited in the Salon des Refusés because the Classical, pastoral subject had been translated into contemporary terms. Manet places the figures in a sort of sealed forest setting.

2. Hokusai's prints reveal the intense response to natural forms and the genius for decorative pattern-making which has characterized Japanese art. The *Great Wave off Kanazawa* depicts a huge wave breaking into spray like dragon-claws over fragile boats.

deep inward meditation, while the ocean being an external transcendence. These two landscapes are like two empty vessels waiting and ready to be filled with a narrative. The key expectation of that narrative is a person, or rather, a body. The presumed presence of the body effects the underlying tone of even the “bodyless” landscape. The viewer will perceive of the landscape in terms of presence or absence of a body.

As the installation is set up, the play of absence and presence is foregrounded. This is an attempt to suspend the concept of ‘body’ beyond its physical boundaries or conventional definitions. The body is present even when it is visually absent. This is achieved by two methods, the first being the use of sound within the installation space, and the second being the assumptions that a narrative invoke. Time serves as both an aid and a challenge to those assumptions. Thirty minutes of image pass before the viewers eyes, with no sign of a narrative, no sign of a character, no sign of Ephemera. The cycle of the landscape images play through in a manner that allows the viewer to enter the space during various points in the flow of narrative. For example, a person can enter the installation during a moment when there is no body nor any human trace present; he or she can enter when a faint trace of Ephemera can be detected in the distance as her form ever so slowly grows nearer and larger; or perhaps the viewer enters when the body has approached its decisive moment, when Ephemera has filled the screen with her presence and abruptly ends the narrative flow by turning off the camera, and thus turning the image to a black, blank screen.

Ephemera, as she has been named in this work, is the controller of presence and absence. She can be the subject, the object, or the imagined depending on when you enter her space. The title of the work, Ephemera, references the transformative nature of walking through a space and into the next, but it also suggests a character’s name. Thus, Ephemera is that young woman who appears in the distance on the screen, when the viewer has been waiting for the narrative to begin. One half



of the dynamic at hand is Ephemera's affect on the way the landscape is perceived and ultimately on her affect on that land at that moment. The time inherent to the installation is not measured in minutes or hours, but has instead the appearance of timelessness, of eternal space continuously in flux. Essentially, time is measured by Ephemera herself, specifically in her presence and absence. One moment's 'timeless flow' is abruptly altered by the sudden presence of a walker who has entered the picture frame. Ephemera breaks the meditative experience the participant has with the image, immediately changing the dynamic between the viewer and the viewed, between the individual and an embodied experience, between eternal time and a moment in time. The installation space was constructed in such a way as to potentially offer multiple experiences, layered so that they each reveal themselves when the various factors for their happening lines up. Parallel experiences of this time-lapsing phenomena often occur during moments when our seeking turns into something found.

#### **IV. Experimental description if being inside the installation**

'The body' as in both the intimate relation to person and space as well as its cultural connection to narrative tradition, has a key role in the *Ephemera* installation. To approach the video space is to feel separated and outside of the time contained within the installation. Even though the participant can see that across the room there is a projection of a forest space illuminating the face of the long black box, you perceive this projection as an object not an image. It is outside of your experience, and you in no way feel your presence effects the object you see at the other end of the room. To approach the object is to alter your perception. The closer you get to the long black floating boxes, the more they disappear from your vision, and the brighter the projected image becomes. That is the initial experience of the installation. Once the distance between the so-called audience member and the work is diminished, their status as an audience member quickly shifts to that of a participant, as they are consumed with the sights and sounds of the space. See figures 1 - 4. The technological and electronic reverberations bounce off of the participant inside, as they stand between the bookends of two video screens. The first real shift in the presence of time is felt at the threshold of the confined installation space. As the viewer walks through the gallery toward the installation, they are experiencing a sense time open to their determination; they may stroll towards the projected image, or they may walk briskly towards it. Once the space of the gallery has been passed, and the threshold of the installation is at foot, their control of time is less obvious. Time is felt to be more extended, seemingly it is an endless cyclic of image and audio rhythms, ventilating through a meditative, virtual, and momentarily empty space. Standing inside of the installation, the participant is enclosed in an active space that eliminates the safe separation distance allows. This is an attempt to blur the presumed and comfortable boundaries of body and self, merging the viewer with hyper nature and electronic image, whose noise becomes white noise and whose time becomes your own sense of the moment. Space is defined

not only by the black walls of the box and the images on the screen, but also by electricity and sound and glowing light.

## **V. Discussion of phenomenology and landscape/body relationship**

From here to there. It seems simple enough yet beyond its surface simplicity, a walk can be more complex than a linear progression from point A to point B. Instead of narrowing the exercise to a starting point and an ending point, a walk can be thought of as a continuous condition. Transition occurs within that condition. Transition, the impermanence of physicality, the invisible element, and the ultimate act of connecting are underlying themes of the walk occurring in this work.

This described walk, is through a changing landscape. The act of walking is also an act of connecting the human form with its surround. Space becomes an extended body. Walking is an action that causes the walker's attention to be brought to the specific moment. The presence of that moment becomes more and more apparent as time passes and the walker grows tired. The labor of walking manipulates the walker's perceived sense of time. We have all felt the lingering minute when we have walked so long that our feet have grown tired, yet we know we still have further to walk. Thus, the first minute of a walk and the last minute of a walk do not carry the same weight on that walker's experience.

Walking is one activity that when performed, the person has a closer sense of their physical form. Furthermore, when a walker passes through the landscape, their activity level is directly connected to that terrain and those specific weather conditions. The walker bisects time and space, and in that intersection the presence of one is felt on the others.

## VI. Role of technology within embodiment

All this discussion of the body and experience and the landscape is integrated with the *Ephemera* installation in a technological and electronically obvious sort of way. The previous paragraphs have dealt with the walk that occurred inside that video screen. The installation, however, complicates the purity of walking and experiencing embodiment, because this journey, this personal experience, is represented through the technological medium and it is filtered through the projected video screen. It is an intersection of the material with the immaterial, similar to the contemporary cultural products of online communities, virtual video-gaming, Imax films, and surround-sound technologies. The following description of virtual reality art projects also seems appropriate in explaining the place of technology in the installation *Ephemera*:

Turn the projection off, disconnect the cable, and what remains? An empty room, a blank screen, a memory of how it felt to be within that three dimensional place where a wider existence was inferred. Yet we still have our subjective experience, a psychological reality that is arguably just as valid as any other. The technology used in immersive environments merely sets the stage for digital mediation in tangible space. It is then up to us to engage that space physically and psychologically. (Forde p. 92)

Previously, we discussed the role of an assumed narrative and how that presumption is carried through the presence and absence of a person in the image. The use of video also adds to that presumption, because like literature and other contemporary forms of story telling like film and television, video is imbued with a narrative expectation. Beyond the sense of 'videoness', is this installation's relationship to virtual reality. Unlike film and video that are traditionally viewed and experienced at a distance, this installation is specifically designed so that someone can not satisfactorily view it from a distance. To attempt to view the projected video images is to view it

from a harsh right angle. In order for a person to face the image head on, they must enter the small enclosed area between the two screens. Once inside and confronted with the pixelated image deterioration, all sense of a-safe-distance disappears and the person can feel the vibrations of the video image and the glow of the projection screen on the surface of their bodies. It is not so much an image of nature that they are looking at, as it is an image of nature broken up and contained in the technological world.

Like the embodied journeyman, who walks through nature, leaving his traces on it and feeling its presence on him, the installation audience participant becomes embodied by technology in a way that can be uncomfortable. While becoming embodied with the pure natural world somehow seems as though you are connecting to your greater world and larger self; becoming embodied to a false technological representation of nature is a bit jarring and confusing, especially when first experienced. Partially because the experience of the installation is so different from outside as you approach it, then from when you step inside of it and are sandwiched between two video screens, I have found the shift from external to internal can be jarring enough to parallel the experience only time can bring to a long walk or a deep meditation. It is the exhaustion of the last mile of a long walk, it is the resurfacing from a deep meditation. In a sense it is two senses of time set side by side and the threshold between the two is inches deep, rather than miles or hours long.

Although it has been described thus far as an inhospitable place, the technology of the installation eventually becomes a sort of white noise and its presence vanishes beneath the surface, allowing the natural world within the image to come alive. It was my experience, that the technological essences, such as flickering light and pixel fuzziness actually began to mimic subtle rhythm of wind blowing leaves in trees and the waves washing up on the shore. *See figures 24 - 27.* Rhythm, either of technology or of nature, connected with my own body's rhythms and the three seemed

to synchronize with each other.

Beyond its literal use to challenge and direct one's experience with the image, technology is also used here in a poetic and metaphorical manner to connect two distant places and place them in one location, so that they may be experienced simultaneously. Whereas the walker in the image has to labor to experience both the forest stream and the coast's ocean, through the magic of technology, the installation viewer must only stand to experience both senses of place. The mediation of nature, is thus, not an aberration of purity nor a false truth. It is an atmosphere of equal worth, that when layered upon a real experience that was documented with a video camera, carries its own sense of truth, of time, and of presence. It brings its own questions to the question of body and self and embodiment.

## VII. Experiential description of leaving the installation

The experience set forth with this installation does not end inside of it. That would be like a walk that never ended or a meditator that never came out of concentration. Just as importantly as when the viewer approached the installation or when he stood inside of it, the viewer must leave, and in doing so, it effects his sense of time of presence and of self.

The meaning I sought to approach with this work is both metaphorical and experiential. Metaphorically, the idea of connection was expressed both in terms of my connection as the walker, with the spaces I passed through; the connection from the viewer to the installation and how it was experienced; the connection between the viewer and *Ephemera*, the character I became when I was introduced to the image of this work; and the connection of two separate and distinct places, the forest and the coast.

This work was an attempt to address historical notions of perception, the self, the body, and narrative, in a contemporary and technological space. It was not my aim to critique so much as it was to re-present views of embodiment and the body in a contemporary manner, with the aid of contemporary tools we are all familiar with and can all relate to. To examine both historical notions of the self and the multiplicity inherent to modern day acceptance of such notions, it seemed fitting to pair established and familiar ideas of narrative contained within forest and ocean imagery, sewn into contemporary cultural icons such as the large scale projected image and the vibration of a pixelated image. These subjects are familiar both in history studies and in modern everyday experience. They are both abstract and tangible.

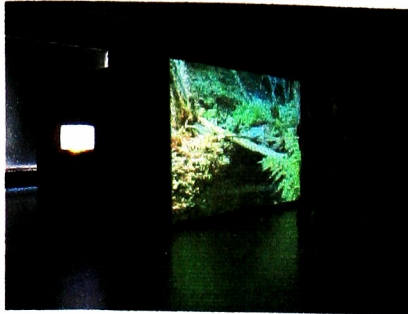
*Ephemera* was designed to be a potentially different experience for each viewer and possibly a new



experience for the returning viewer, depending on what point in the 60 minute cycle of the videos the viewers enters that space during. The element of time becomes a subject equal to the main character herself. Her absence and her presence seem unpredictable, even though she is guaranteed to fill one of the screens every thirty minutes. With her absence, time is immeasurable, and the viewer is left to drift into their own vicarious journey into the natural spaces and glowing pixels.

It is both the seduction of the space and the challenge of the spaces' presence that leaves the viewer to examine their self, their body, and their place in its other. The reciprocity between one's own consciousness and a sense of place is central to this understanding of the self. When the participants leave the place of *Ephemera*, with its presence of technology, landscape, and narrative, the experience is carried with them ready to become active again with their future relationships to technology, landscape, and narrative. These three elements are familiar to our contemporary lives, in often intersecting ways. As stated earlier in this paper, modern technology has become part of our surrounding. To some, it may be a modern day landscape, with its own set of narrative iconography. Because technology has powerful simulators in its tool belt, such as large scale video projections, time recording, and surround-sound audio, it conveniently supports both the presence of the "other" and the acts of immersion or embodiment.

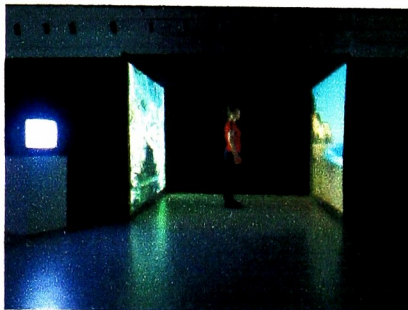
When the participant leaves the installation space, I anticipate that their heightened consciousness and attention will linger. Their meditation on the subtleties discovered while staring at the delicate motion of the leaves in the forest or of the rhythmic pattern of the waves washing the shore, will translate into a heightened awareness of their surroundings and of their dynamic self. Once connections are formed, those relationships between self and other can be emerge and evolve with new encounters.



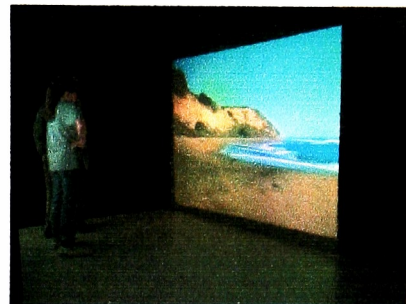
*Figure 1*



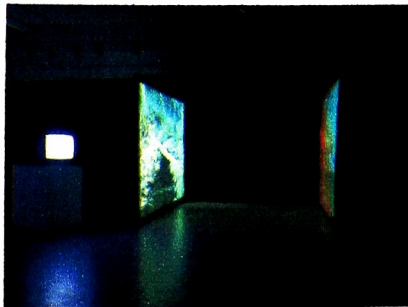
*Figure 2*



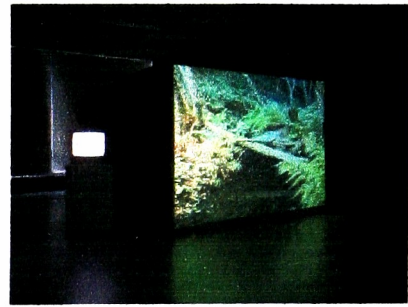
*Figure 3*



*Figure 4*



*Figure 5*



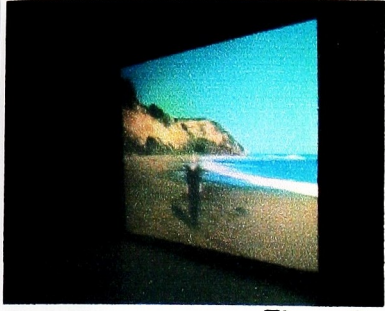
*Figure 6*



*Figure 7*



*Figure 8*



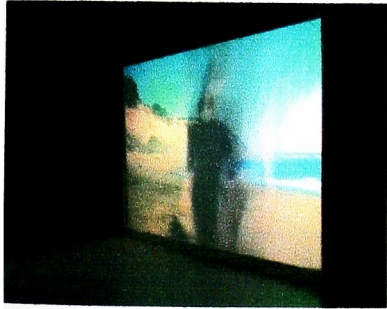
*Figure 9*



*Figure 10*



*Figure 11*



*Figure 12*



*Figure 13*



*Figure 14*



*Figure 15*



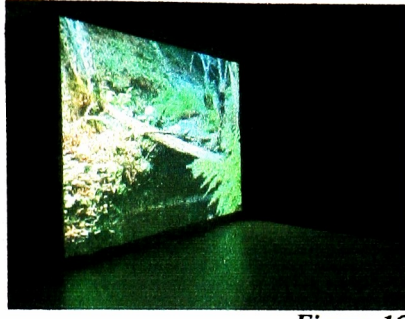
*Figure 16*



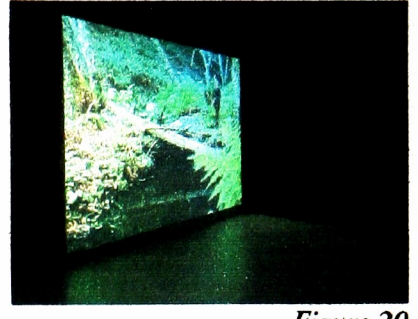
*Figure 17*



*Figure 18*



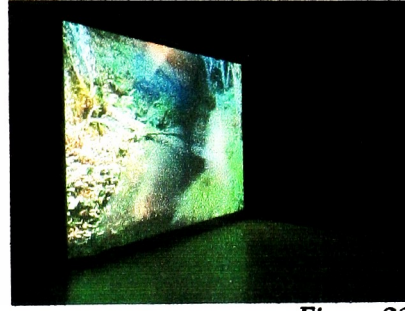
*Figure 19*



*Figure 20*



*Figure 21*



*Figure 22*



*Figure 23*



*Figure 24*



*Figure 25*



*Figure 26*



*Figure 27*

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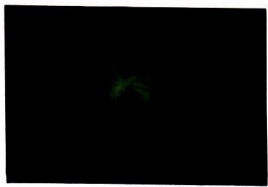
## Colophon

This thesis work, both in exhibition and in written form, was guided by my Thesis Committee. I would like to express my gratitude for their insight, support, and challenge. I had the good fortune to begin working with Angela Kelly, the Chair of my Committee, as an undergraduate student, and since that time she has been a mentor to me, influencing the development of my work and thought. I would like to thank her for her guidance.

I also thank my family for their confidence, enthusiasm, and for their participation in the installation of this work.

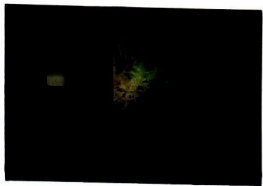
And finally, I thank my partner who shared with me, the actual recorded experience of connecting the forest stream with the beach's ocean; as I walked away from the camera in one landscape, he took that camera to the other landscape, awaiting my arrival and documenting my return. He was the one who introduced me to the very forest and shoreline I connected through walking. Although the sites were new to my experience, he had previous connections to both places. As I walked through that unfamiliar land, I was discovering his history there. My passing through places he had been added a personal layer to the premise of the thesis work: on a conceptual level, of connecting two distant landscapes with the act of walking, and on a personal level, of connecting two people by the experience of a landscape.

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4/2000



by  
Terri Whitlock

Ephemera  
4/2000



by  
Terri Whitlock

Ephemera  
4/2000



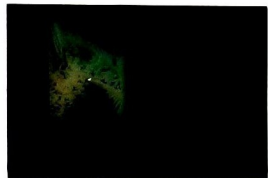
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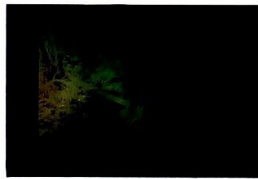
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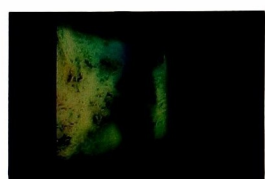
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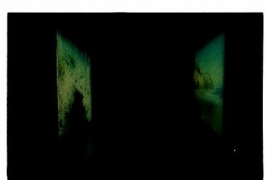
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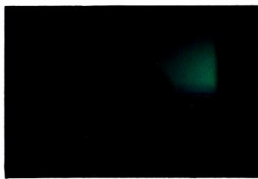
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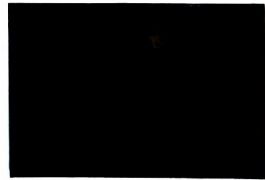
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