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Drawing light: Gesture and suspense in the weave

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Fig. 1: Participants entering the workshop ecology with light-emitting recording devices. Photo Credit: Kimura Byol.

Drawing Light was a research-creation workshop on procedural thinking held in the early evening of a wintery Saturday (10 February 2018) in Montreal, Canada. The workshop was facilitated by Nicole De Brabandere, a postdoctoral fellow at McGill University and an interdisciplinary artist-scholar, and Alanna Thain, director of the Moving Image Research Lab at McGill, which is devoted to the study of the body in moving image media. *Drawing Light* emerged from our shared research into gesture as a way to expand on and

explore the encounter between human and nonhuman embodiment in media arts, and in gesture's ability to activate an encounter between abstraction and animation (as technique and as the feeling of aliveness and agency). Through the workshop design, we built a propositional installation ecology that invited twenty participants (largely artists and scholars) to explore gesture at the threshold when actor and spectator, skin and cinematic screen, light and bodily presence coincide and become indistinguishable. Our call for participation invited people to 'join us for an event of reading, drawing, screening and fabulating with light at the edge of visibility and corporeal dimension'. They were asked to prepare in advance by reading short excerpts from key texts on light in media ecologies, to come prepared with a light-emitting device that could also capture moving images and sounds, and to think about how to respond to our prompt asking them to imagine practices where 'illumination is no longer reducible to the invisible and the visible, but an affectively charged relation between transparency and opacity, inside and outside, reflection and absorption, capture and dispersal'. We anticipated that all participants would bring their corporeal and conceptual memories of inhabiting the light gestures of cinema and electronic screens, from the careful negotiations of not blocking the projector's beam while moving around a darkened cinema, to the repopulating of darkened spaces of attention with the small glows of mobile phones, to feeling the collapse and chasm between projection and the landing site of the screen in the cinema versus the flat spaces of laptop, television, and phone surfaces. Through a free play with materials and several directed exercises, participants both engaged, activated, and were moved by a light ecology that drew on and exceeded memory, material, and mediums.

The workshop took place at Studio 303, a large dance studio in downtown Montreal. We chose this space for its large floor to ceiling windows on two sides. In the three hours of the workshop the space moved from being fully lit by outdoor light to only artificial light, making the temporal modulation of light gestures a natural and unnatural part of the workshop materials. We opened with a short reading session, samples of theoretical texts provided to participants in advance at the intersection of cinema, light, and embodiment. These were excerpts of texts from Édouard Glissant, Akira Lippit, Alanna Thain, Jun'ichiro Tanizaki, Erin Mouré, and A.H. Church.[1] Reading together, we sought to identify propositions that could be mobilised in the workshop in the procedural context of 'drawing light'. Reading Church, for instance, we considered colour as a material quality beyond the visual, such

as when the threshold between red and infra-red gives way to warmth or intense saturation. Similarly, Tanizaki's descriptions of shadows that fill the room with pools and rivers of 'thin, impalpable, faltering light'[2] attuned us to thinking with and perceiving the threshold of form and shadow as the light faded over the course of the event. In this essay, we expand on these propositions and identify new ones that the workshop brought into focus for us.

After reading the texts, the participants discussed how to draw actionable practices from them, in order to activate the workshop ecology. This was followed by a fifteen-minute exercise, where the participants were sensitised to the different and differential qualities of light in the space. We used poet Erin Mouré's text *O resplandor* to launch the exercise. She writes that 'there are non-image forming light receptors in the ganglion cells of the retina that in receiving light form produce not images but our sense of time', and that exposure to blue light 'detains time'.[3] Research on this phenomenon has discovered that these receptors wander in the body and can be found even in the mouth, and so 'we feel time passing, this way, in the mouth'.[4] From this prompt, which reroutes our normative sensible and sensory perceptions of light and time, we moved to performing some small exercises to attune to light gestures as they are developed in the body, trying to move beyond ocular-centric measures and methods for drawing light. In particular, we asked people to find a space in the room to lie down in, to close their eyes, and to try to attune to the different kinds of light the space offered. We asked them, how do we tell time through light? This created a recall effect over the course of the day; rather than pinning down a fixed point in time, participants could return to noticing the fading daylight and refresh their perceptual habits. Here for the first time participants could engage with the propositional ecology of the space, handling the fabric screens we had supplied, bringing in their own tools, and starting to move around and rearrange the space.

Drawing Light experimentally activated these material affordances:

- a found ecology of movement (a dance studio)
- mobile fabric screens of varying translucency, elasticity, and reflectivity
- light-emitting/video recording devices (smartphones and other cameras)
- philosophical and critical textual prompts
- the gesturing bodies and anarchival memories of participants, who brought habitual ways of entering and inhabiting or avoiding light zones such as the projector's beam or the camera's flash

Pragmatically, this means that in the dance studio, the screens – strips of fabric of different colours and textures – were laid out across the floor and flooded with light. The parallel and perpendicular orientations of the long fabric strips echoed the structural beginnings of a plain weave, when the warp is laid out, ready to accommodate the weft. Wooden dowels sewn into either end incorporated an invitation to touch and move. Various fabrics offered the allure of a multiplicity of textures seeking the light like leaves sunning themselves in a slow choreography of solar revolution. Over the arc of an afternoon into the dim of an early winter evening, participants played with redistributing these and other luminous attractors to create novel assemblages of light gestures. We left the studio lights off until we reconvened at the end for discussion, inviting in the evening's opacity as a nonhuman agent in the workshop space.

After our collective warm-up exercise, the participants performed their own experiments with light, using the various media and materials available in the space, working individually and collaboratively. People activated the materials in the room according to attraction, working towards what, adapting a notion from Lippit, we might term 'exscriptive drawing', where 'the mark is no longer made from the outside in, nor for that matter from inside out: (it) takes place outside, it remains irreducibly elsewhere'.[5] Such exscription is avisual, and part of the proposition of *Drawing Light* asks: what emerges between light and screen when there is nothing to see (i.e. no predetermined or projected content), when perceptual habits are expanded through light into unfamiliar registers? Rather than prepare participants with techniques or tasks, the aim was to make openings for heterogeneous forms and codes of recognition to intercede with each other in corporeal and world-making assemblages. Through this emphasis on the processual form of collective assemblage, we abandoned the autonomous status of the artwork in favor of specifying the terms with which gestural, conceptual, aesthetic, and material forms come to matter. No longer driven by making an artwork, we focused on refreshing our habits and perceptions of how we organise the relation between light, screen, and body in moving image media.

Thinking with the gestural ecology of *Drawing Light*, we consider the emergence of 'forms of feeling' as impersonal 'light gestures'.[6] We draw on Suzanne Langer's *Feeling and Form* (1953) to explore the *impersonal form of feelings* carried by light gestures in the workshop, expanding expressive powers and reserves of virtuality in excess of subjective and objective capture. In

Langer's thinking around the work of art, gesture is not reducible to its referentiality. It is a double articulation of the virtual and the actual, arising from a potentiality that exceeds the form, function, or trajectory of a discreetly articulated movement. A dynamic co-composition of the virtual and the actual is where Langer's thought finds coherence amidst paradoxes, including 'avisual images'.[7] The paradox presents us with 'a symptom of misconception; *and* coherent, systematic conception'.[8] For Langer, the paradox is thus an opening to philosophise and make *sense* of experience by unpacking where and how the misconceptions that give rise to them permit reconsiderations of the stable and discrete entities and bodies they refer to. In Langer's words, the import of an artwork – its form of feeling – is how it makes think-able form as a perceptual process *in time*. Identifying import is a processual articulation of lines of differentiation co-emergent with the feeling of thought: import is 'the pattern of sentience – the pattern of life itself, as it is felt and directly known' a 'vital import' whose relevance is 'restricted to the dynamics of subjective experience'.[9] The gesture's import or urgency occurs relative to the precision of its articulation, how makes the generative quality of relations thinkable amidst a muddy diversity of movement-based, physiological, vocal, and visual forms.

Langer's thoughts on gesture influenced our emphasis on the thresholdings of the corporeal and material, and articulations that do not distinguish between an inner, subjective life and an outer, physiological one – a critical point of friction in many theories of gesturality. The critical potential of gesture's doubleness appears in high contrast: even amidst continuous physiological movement, gestures emerge that exceed the intentions of unique bodies and persons, and give rise to new material and assemblages of shared or collective import. Light gestures align figural and cinematic gestures with their durational affects, highlighting the topological relation between light and time. Rather than generating codifed gestures, like making shadow puppets on a wall, we found that participants lingered in play, attentive to change over time. Such practices gained the power to amplify or falsify how gestures are recognised and interpreted, suspending cinematic terms of capture in durational affects that seem to 'warp' the room.[10] The embodied knowledge practice at stake is verifiable to the extent that it brings to light new techniques for specification and speculation. This temporal confound is what Thain terms immediation.[11] Light gestures thus thicken light's capacity and containment as simply carrier of information, and make screening more than a surface (effect). In practice, the workshop challenged our notions of

clear intentionality and control, instead making space for a materially and collectively distributed agency, where distribution is as much temporal as it is spatial.

In the remainder of this essay, we remix the gestures emergent in and around *Drawing Light* to account for the workshop's generative dynamics, in dialogue with other movement ecologies of cinematic light that we treat here as intercessors, from Anthony McCall's solid light films to Alexandre Larose's *Brouillard* series (2009-2016). Looking at these works, we were better able to perceive the temporal logic of feeling that drawing light affords, what we are calling the 'light gesture'. In the workshop, this existed between fleshy and projected corporealities, or that which is enfolded and which is made visible on the surface, and the participants' attention to how gesture configures light forms in time. In writing up our observations from the workshop, we first retrace this light gesture, through re-viewing selected examples that were re-called to mind after the workshop. Here they serve as a kind of choreographic score for the light gesture's productive temporal confound that was, in the end, the work of *Drawing Light*. We discovered that procedural play in the writing process can be a critical tool for revisioning art. The participatory is displaced from the limitations of interactivity with a work or object, and comes to reside in critical gestures as well. All of the works explore how gesture moves beyond the confines of the screen, in ways that recall but also exceed the framework of expanded cinema.

Intercessors, or anarchival perception

> Many of the new sports – surfing, windsurfing, hanggliding – take the form of entry into an existing w*(e)*ave. There's no longer an origin as a starting point, but a sort of putting into orbit. The basic thing is how to get taken up in the movement of a big wave, a column of rising air, to 'come between' rather than to be the origin of an effort.[12]

Temporal light artefacts, or TLAs, is the name given to the unsolicited residue of transparent perception, that occurs due to arhthymic fluctuations in light sources. These can appear as flickers, stroboscopic flashes, or ghostings, as when you stare at a light source that then appears as a bright hole in perception fixedly mapping onto any new movements of the eye. At speed, these are at best annoying and at worst exhausting or physically debilitating. In the

slow ecology of *Drawing Light*, such TLAs become the signs of critical heter-ochronicity. In this section, we explore such light lags through works we read as light gestures, after the fact. What kind of critical modulation can reopen and re-opacify our received visions of works already encountered, and what more can they tell us about light gestures? We identify three qualities of the light gestures that we were able to newly perceive from the experimental propositions people performed in *Drawing Light*. The first is *avisuality* in An-thony McCall's work, through spectatorial gestures that testify to their felt perception of a virtual dimension that they reality test through reaching for what escapes their grasp. The second is *double exposure*, when a recognised gesture becomes irreconcilable with all meanings previously attached to it, readable and opaque at once in work by Hito Steyerl. Finally, we consider the *opacity of seriality* between repeatability and singularity, reflecting on opacity first here as a material practice in Alexandre Larose's films before revisiting it in the next section on light gestures through the work of Edouard Glissant.

Light exscribing a cone: Anthony McCall's avisuality

In recent years, Anthony McCall's Solid Light films from the 1970s have been the subject of renewed interest and of several retrospectives that seek to place his work within a new field of expanded cinema studies.[13] *Light Describing a Cone* (1973) invited audiences to turn their back on *cinema*, facing away from the screen to instead observe light suspended in space, flecked by the ambi-ent matter of dust, smoke, and the sensible flow of air: a slow zone of disar-ticulated consistency. Over the course of nearly thirty minutes, a 16mm pro-jector arcs light through space as a dot leisurely traces itself into a circle re-sulting in the generation of a cone of light. Released from a landed content (images on screen), spectators are invited to a sensual engagement with the leisurely zoning of the film's luminous plasticity. The work is described as 'having a certain drama, though there are no surprises, everyone can see where it's going'.[14] But the gesture does not belong solely to the dot that traces itself into a line. During screenings as part of the Whitney's Museum's Dreamlands: Immersive Cinema and Art 1905-2016, as well as in other doc-umentation of the work, spectators can be observed creating heterogenous, intermittent, and anarchic temporal light artefacts, interrupting the light's in-exorable consolidation with their own bodies.[15] In parallel, a flicker effect langorously alternates in the gaze's edge between the onscreen image and the

slow exposure of the room's breath, in the projector's long exhale into the space. This doubleness is the light gesture's *avisuality*.

McCall's work is frequently described as suspended between sculpture and cinema, but in its call to a full body engagement and ecology of action it comes closer to dance, maybe even a mode of contact improv that solicits and and diverts habitual action, or inaction as the case may be. McCall's spectatorial choreographies re-articulate relations of expression and content into sensuous ecologies of vague perception. Also described as an inversion or a critical reversal of the cinematic condition, it is so only in the way that reverse motion opens onto a world of expanded perception rather than the same thing merely another way round: it is a form of replay that makes time felt. It is in fact an excellent example that illustrates how a change in point of view is a change of state. Things do not hold their form but are energetically reconfigured. Light stages an intimate ecology between cinema and movement within its proximal flows, altering mediums into a chaotic machine of connection.

For McCall, his work produces a certain unrepeatable singularity of experience. He writes:

> It is dealing with the projected light-beam itself, rather than treating the light-beam as a mere carrier of coded information, which is decoded when it strikes a flat surface (the screen). The film exists only in the present: the moment of projection. It refers to nothing beyond this real time. The form of attention required on the part of the viewer is unprecedented. No longer is one viewing position as good as any other. For this film every viewing position presents a different aspect. The view therefore has a participatory role in apprehending the event: he or she can – indeed needs – to move around, relative to the emerging light-form.[16]

McCall describes the intimate allure of 'mobile' media – media that moves you – in terms that seem familiar to categorical claims that today media is participatory, demanding a particular attention economy from the viewer. At the same time, McCall's autoethnographic account of his work calls to mind Sven Luttiken's claim about gesture today and its relation to labour:

> (Gestures) may invite codification, but they fail once they become visible as pure convention. Their sign value can be transmuted into exchange value only because they are under- and overcoded. In the mode of the gestural, semiotic labor can work only if it is also affective labor.[17]

Disaggregation is a corporeal condition of the light gesture, ludic variations that reorganise corporeal thresholdings. Photos of McCall's work often

reek of an expensive and expansive minimalism, while it is in fact a delightfully DIY piece, made for a mere $100. What feels quite luxurious in its presentation today is that it renders palpable the space it occupies; what is ludic is also a question of occupying space. The viewer's participatory role then is not just a free play; McCall's work also relies on a certain animacy of hands that are free to reach, move, touch, and bodies that can occupy the zone of light. McCall has described how the transposition of his work from New York's smoke-filled art lofts to the gallery required the use of mist machines to generate the visual 'noise' that used to be freely available in the form of the smoke, dust, and dirt of the less formal art spaces in which the work first emerged. Philippe Alain Michaud writes: 'Having seen this as a distortion of the initial project, McCall came to consider the set-up as a possible non-narrative version of the film, with neither beginning nor end, thus transforming the course of action into a formal statement.'[18] In reading this work as a light gesture, we emerge somewhere between remake, a non-narrative version that is nonetheless not simply a formal statement, and a replay, one whose slow exposures invite not only the playfulness of full body touching, but shift material conditions into acts of conditioning. The constant form of light disaggregates into a heterogeneous zoning of the body – now the skin is no longer an uninterrupted surface, one that presents and contains an individual in its constancy, but is reconstituted by the durational progression of the light contour, as the arm curls to reorient itself to the relief of underarm, and the form of the projected shadow on the ground, inviting the floor to press and roll against the skin, first felt in its hardness, then in its barely perceptible grit.

Hito Steyerl's Adorno's Grey

Hito Steyerl's *Adorno's Grey* (2012) is a single channel HD video that is projected onto four panels set against a wall, each at a slightly different angle, and of a slightly different tone of grey. The film opens with a still scene facing the front of Theodor Adorno's former lecture hall with a filmic movement that *feels* like a pulling focus but that startles when the realisation hits, that the movement pulls between over exposure to one that reveals the entire grey-scale in perfect calibration, drawing attention to the contingency of photographic exposure. In the following scene this contingency is encountered again in the image of two restorationists scraping gently but tirelessly at the

walls of the lecture hall. Steyerl hired the restorationists to search for a hidden layer of grey paint, it being rumored that Adorno had the room painted grey because it was the only colour that could really allow students to focus. Early on, we discover that there is no layer of grey paint, only several layers of white. As per Steyerl's instruction, the restorationists abandon the grand gesture of revealing the hidden layer in favor of 'plan B'.

The restorationists continue to scrape, this time not through the layers but across them, generating just enough shadow between individual layers for a relatively homogenous, if faint, grey to appear over the scraped area. Now the surface of the wall and of the film becomes intense with the careful and tedious movement of scraping. As the scene unfolds, we are informed about the significance of the lecture hall and the protest that occurred there. A voiceover commentary explains that during Adorno's last lecture, three students bared their breasts to him, then dressed and returned to their seats. The commentator suggests that this gesture could not be 'passed' or even talked about due to its strangeness: 'it was not sexual, not maternal but something else like belligerent or militant, a gesture of something stranger than love'. Now we have two scenes of indeterminate exposure that coincide with each other: one occupied with the processual appearance of grey and one with a version of womanhood unaligned with archetypal meaning despite obvious physiological signifiers that would suggest otherwise. As the film continues, Steyerl attempts to trace a lineage of why Adorno would have found an affinity between philosophy and grey, by interviewing a contemporary philosopher. The philosopher cites Goethe's notion that colour is the mysterious product of grey, grey being the substance found at the edges of the spectrum. Here we are given an idea about how gesture, like colour, is a co-composition of meaning and an affective expressivity that exceeds it. The commentator continues with the alternate explanation that the relevance of grey could refer to Hegel's preface to a 'Philosophy of Right' that states grey is the 'plenipotentiary of utopia' – the thought of an elsewhere or otherwise, at the moment of its separation from the status quo. In the film, what follows is a scene of a photographer carefully metering and re-metering the vaguely greyish square of scraped wall and photographing it. Between the time of the flash of the camera and the adjustment period to the changing light, we are enfolded in a process of exposure that is synonymous with gradation, and the way light slips away from the image in indeterminate shadings. Now grey scrapes, rubs, and presses between advancing and receding, in the rhythmic contrasts of light and dark.

Adorno's Grey occupies grey as a threshold of the paradoxical, or answers to the significance when a recognised gesture becomes irreconcilable with all meanings previously attached to it. Rather than fix or give an answer to this paradox, the consistency of grey-dation marks an opening to the potential for alternative versions of intelligibility. In this process, grey undergoes a transition from being registered as a grey-scale value to a consistency with which to problematise the *rational basis of the feeling* in its material, gestural, and affective entanglements. Here, the meaning of grey is not only inseparable from the register in which it is apprehended, whether as a value on a wall in architectural space, photographic or filmic image, but marks the site of hesitation surrounding grey as a means of control, and means of calibrating exposure to values of lightness and darkness associated with human photographic subjects. In the persistence of tonal slippage, grey becomes a spacetime of radical inclusivity in time that is ordered only by the felt thought and intensity of the simultaneity of convergence.

Fog as form and feeling: Alexandre Larose

Quebec filmmaker Alexandre Larose's experimental film series *Brouillard* (Fog, 2008-2015) is a serial variation on embodied repetition and recording.[19] An assemblage of body, camera, and environment served as a refrain function for work that transforms temporal light artefacts into vibration's vital import. For the films in the series, Larose wore a 35mm Arriflex camera strapped to his body and walked the same path repeatedly, each time shooting at a high speed and stingy apeture opening. At the end of each ambulation, he removed the film from the camera and rewound it, before starting out again. In this weave, temporal threads compress into a single strip of film that, in overexposure, retains a discrete opacity.

Larose says that 'if I were to process one image, one layer, you would only see the sunlight … all you see is those highlights … so you never see a volume really in a way'.[20] In this way, his practice repeats the conditions of *Drawing Light*, to screen the encounter with light and make the screen into a mobile surface, where volume emerges as temporal form of exploration, return, and discovery. To develop only one layer would reveal almost nothing, and this opacity persists even as the final image fairly bursts with an astonishing undulation of form. Exposed and projected, the repeated scene, which involved walking through a forest path to a dock out into a lake, inverts ecologies of air and water as everything is imbued with the refractive suspense of acquatic

light. Form multiplies beyond number and here, the avisuality of the light gesture opens onto Langer's paradoxical impersonal feeling that characterises (light) gesture. The careful and regulated metricality that was the creative choreography between body and camera explodes into a work of astonishing grace, always at the verge of perishing. As in McCall's film, there is little surprise or narrative drama, and yet anything seems possible. As the end approaches, the variable rhythms of movement pull out of the image as the flicker of the end of the reel in a final flash, and yet finality is suspended. The non-narrativity extends, also like McCall, into a co-composition with setting: no sound, Larose claims, works with the image to save the projector's metrical breath, relaying the performance quality of Larose's original slow dance with the camera to the new scenes of reception.[21] Larose describes his practice as 'trying to get out of the way'.[22] A light gesture might also be such a dodge, seen on screen as recognisable things – trees, clouds, running children – themselves work the dodge of recognition by occupying both the visual register and the movement space of the vacuole between weaves. The intensive evasions are, in *Brouillard*, not an escape so much as the invitation to stay with, a co-compositional and companionable encounter. If the series trembles with life and an animacy beyond subjective and objective capture, it is because such companionability is profoundly volatile, at each instance fully open to the loss of integral form that feeling entails. What generates the paradoxical and profound peacefulness of the images though is that the threat of this loss is nothing other than breathing itself.

Larose's luminous opacity resonates with a key text from our workshop, a short excerpt from Glissant's *Poetics of Relation* (2010). Glissant insists on the right to opacity as an alter-ethics of nonrepresentational screening.[23] He describes how opacity and transparency co-compose in the practice and metaphor of *weaving*, where

> (o)pacities can coexist and converge, weaving fabrics. To understand these truly one must focus on the texture of the weave and not the nature of its components.[24]

As a poetics of relation 'interweaves and no longer projects ... [the circuit or trajectory] even bent or inflected, no longer applies' and '[r]erouting [*détournement*] is its only norm'.[25] Glissant continues: when we make 'the specific relative' through this process of rerouting we no longer have to 'merge the Other (the expanse of the world) into a reductive transparency but can imagine the tranparency of Relation through 'the opacity of what impels it'.[26]

In the workshop ecology, the weave as a movement between woven structure and the opacity of relief emerged as a way to return to the intersection of light and screen, as one of play that refused simple or formal transparency. Opacity persists as the light gesture *draws forth*, like water from a well, a movement between and across bodies, even as it *draws closed* the visibility of discrete 'transparent' bodies. The weave is an endurance form that, rather than extracting a vital import from the body, *draws out* a light gesture attentive to the vacuoles of obscurity that make the weave habitable and that suspend any presumed corporeal unity or permanence.

Glissant's insistence on rerouting served as a refrain, reminding us that there is no reduction to an innocent materiality as the components of any medium. In such reroutings, we can inhabit divergent ways of apprehending emergent form, generating ecologies 'woven' by exceeding the intentions and agencies of individual actors 'where the creator is never fully extractable or containable'.[27] This partial embeddedness is at the heart of Glissant's critical approach to moving beyond or side-stepping colonial and binary logics of possession and extraction, and a critical part of what is made felt through Larose's light gesture of somatic surrender to intensive repetition in *Brouillard*. Such logics are intimately and historically connected to documentary practices of capture that codify light gestures into an elegiac archive of the discreet and the knowable (primitive or natural). The weave is thus characterised by a multiplicity of potential encounters between form and indeterminacy, and the potential to activate an economy of passages into import, where emergent logics of feeling (and collectivity) make themselves intelligible. Crucially, such instances of import are not known in advance – at various moments during *Drawing Light* we all shared an absence of obvious direction or recognition. Through the waning day, this released us from the worker's logic of productive time and encouraged alterhythms of boredom, distraction, dis-and re-engagement and moments of truly surprising import. Crucial to this process is the generosity with which participants inhabit the *avisual time* of not knowing what to look and feel for, allowing partially articulated and peripheral sites of interest to rise to the surface and the center of articulation.

In this article we set for ourselves the task of accounting for this vital import amidst and beyond the workshop ecology of *Drawing Light*, to transform how one approaches objects of study, the artwork, the process of articulating and identifying its material and affective constituents. We account for not only particular movements, materials, forms, and techniques but how,

amidst a seemingly elementary proposition – animate the encounter between these fabric screens, light, and your body – something interesting starts to take shape that is felt, that only becomes articulable after the fact, and that is always incomplete. The discursive then becomes think-able as a heterogeneous *weaving* in time that traverses vital, perceptual, and affective registers. We conclude with a return to the workshop to catalogue specific gestural imaginaries that emerged from the participants' labour. This catalogue could also be taken as an experimental choreographic score, in Gilles Deleuze's sense of an invitation to 'do with', and an invitation to the reader to remix light gestures imaginatively or pragmatically.[28]

Anarchival gestures: A catalogue of actions

Fig. 2: Participants experiment with different screens and light sources during the Drawing Light workshop. Photo Credit: Kimura Byol.

1. Drawing Light: Solar, electric, and electronic sources flood the space with light and through fabric surfaces (screens). The shifting incidence and position of cloth and projected light creates differential movements of visibility, that slip between threads and span the room. Between the substance and surface of cloth, light renders a field of tonal variation, illuminating the heaviness of cloth, as well as its roughness, thinness, and responsiveness to touch. A searching lingers, to recover some kind of form in the stretching and lifting lengths of cloth as they press against an ever-encroaching depth of shadow.

2. Drawing (into the weave): In the midst of the drawing light ecology, drawing is a potential that is some or all of the following: 1) drawing a contour in image space over a surface ready to receive and transform it; 2) drawing blinds or curtains over windows, deepening the textures of interior shadow; 3) drawing conclusions along/between different logical threads of thought; 4) drawing opacity through translucent, permeable, or porous surfaces; 5) drawing surfaces between the digital, the analogue, and the skin; 6) the leakiness of light from screens, flashlights, and other sources, spreading between clusters of people, in an experimental contagion.
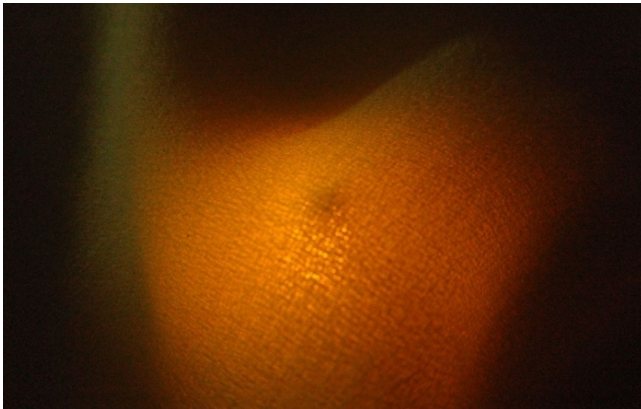

Fig. 3: Close-up of back-lit layers of fabric screens moving over a light source. Photo Credit: Nicole De Brabandere.

Fig. 4: Participants experiment with recording light in the workshop ecology.
Photo Credit: Alanna Thain.

3. (A)visual Screenings: Mobile phone screens set to record, scan, and filter lengths of fabric with the light of a continuous flash. Live video capture over the dimly lit surfaces folds the time of record-keeping into the present, multiplying the register of the visible. Between the long lengths of cloth and the continuous time of recorded material, the digital screen renews and flattens the image. Video images emerge as the video frame shapes proportion and perspective and the long, weighty surfaces of cloth as it appears to lift and press against its surface and edges; converging the image of flush with gradations of inhabitable depth.
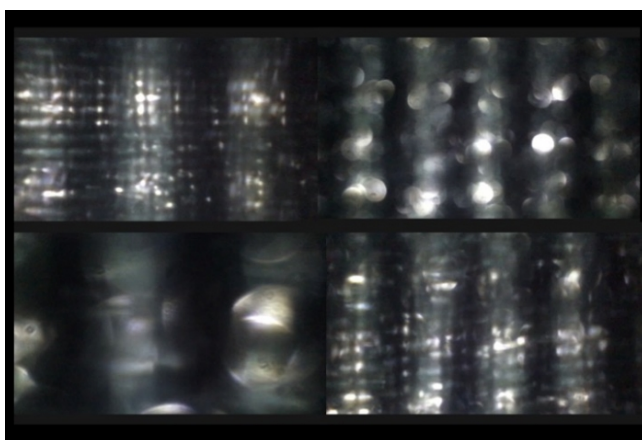

Fig. 5: Images of electrostatic cloth taken at different distances from the cloth surface. Photo Credit: Alanna Thain.

4. Electrostatic Optics: A reflective black cloth is prone to jolts of electrostatic shock, giving it a charge that leverages a marked discontinuity with cloth that can be readily touched and worn. The cloth is retrieved from the underexposed corner of the room by the allure of its subtle shimmer. The image of this provocative luminescence cannot be recorded since as it approaches the video recording device, it registers as an electrostatic, kaleidoscopic configuration. This transforms the reflective surface and the woven structure of cloth into a high-contrast geometry. In moving the recording device closer and further away from the surface of cloth, the electrostatic image renders the weave in time, reconfigured by the abstraction at the threshold of camera vision.

Fig. 6: Participants co-compose with light and shadow generated from a variety of light sources and screening techniques in the workshop ecology. Photo Credit: Alanna Thain.

5. Pacing Colour: Seeing, and the time of exposure, slows over the darkening tones of the receding day. Red and blue disappear first. Red absorbs the light at the threshold of red and infra-red, substituting colour for the warmth of coursing blood. Blue darkens to the coolness of abandoned corners, cracks in the floor, and exposed fingertips. Lighter tones hold onto the light longer, and striate the

room as they appear to lift away from the darkening floor. Translucent lemon urges the light source closer so that it can recover its vibrancy. Mid-tones of blue and yellow are suspended in the volatile, back-lit image of their woven form when held hovering over an electric light source, drawing new contours between colour, surface, and thread in over and under exposure. In time with the changing light, colour weaves new thresholds of form, temperature, and proximity into the visible.
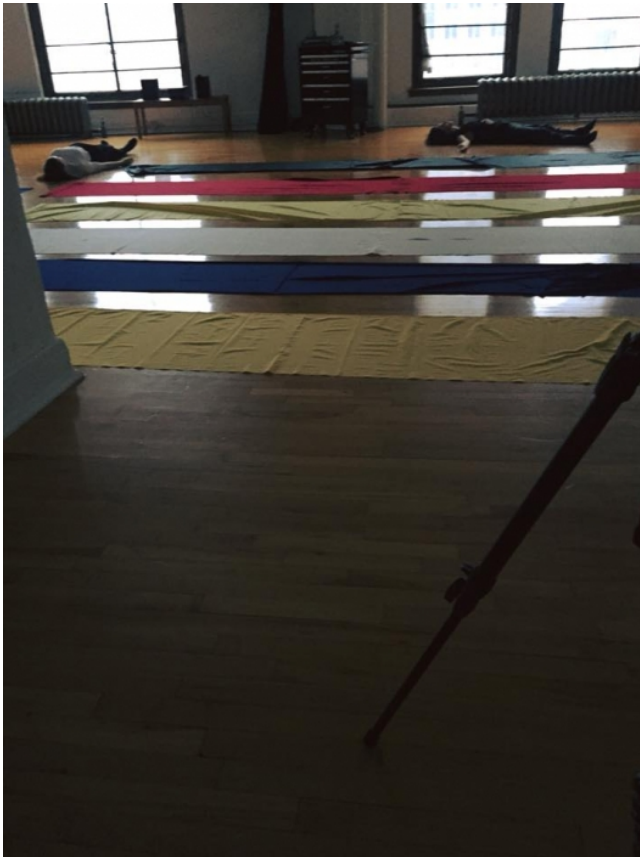

Fig. 7: The warm-up exercise asking participants to 'tell time' with daylight in preparation for the experimentation with light-emitting devices. Photo Credit: Ivette Sun Young King.
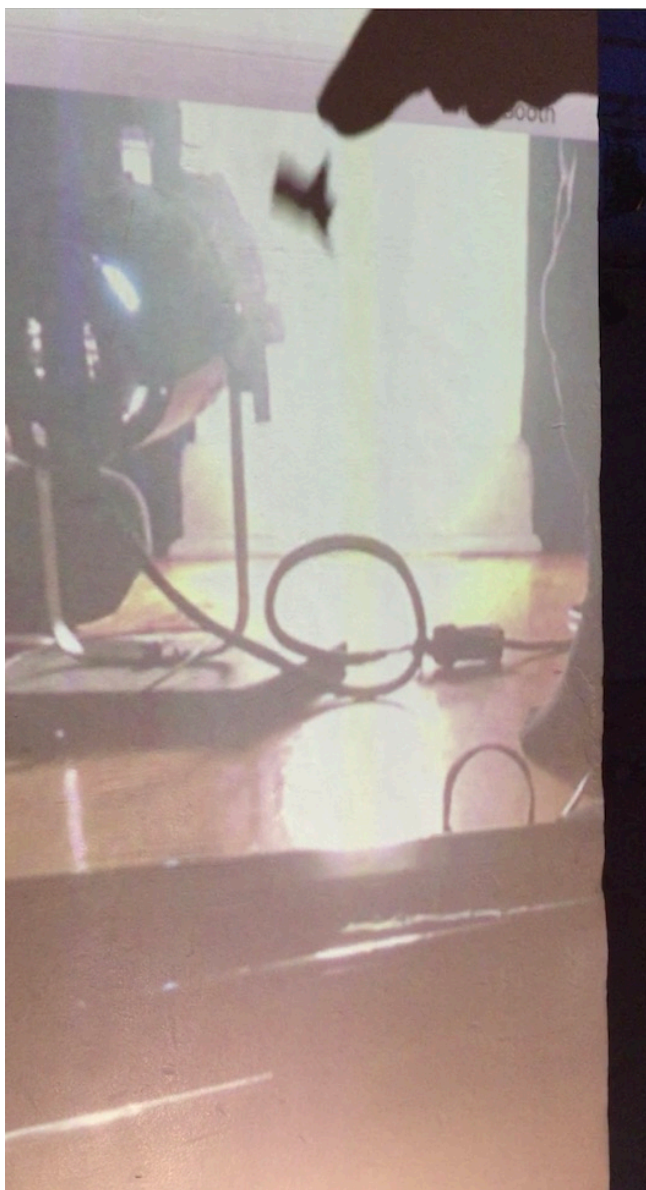
Fig. 8: Participants experiment with a live image of the event as it is projected onto a fabric screen. Photo Credit: Alanna Thain.

Fig. 9: Participants cluster in human and more-than-human arrangements to co-compose screen, light, and movement. Photo Credit: Kimura Byol.

6. Preparing the Weave: In preparation for the event the fabric strips are cut, assembled, and sewn along their edges with a sewing machine to prevent fraying. The sewing machine beats in time with the cinematograph in early cinema, the same device used to power the continuous movement of the film strip. This sets the strips to the movement of continuous, cinematic motion, one that coincides with the invitation to move offered by the dance space where the screens will eventually be laid out and the rhythm of lifting, lowering, and overlapping threads proposed by the figure of the weave itself. But as the screens are activated with light, these directional movements give way to a topography where shadow, projected light, and video capture reconfigure the weave into an entangled, unruly consistency, primed to give movement to emergent form.

7. Accompanying Fascination: On site with *Drawing Light*, synthesis is not a priority. Fascination becomes an unruly temporal affordance, between social form and carnate contingency. Fascination produces a delicate counter rhythm to the need for synthesis. As people remain involved in a partial engagement with the entire field of relation, they 'miss' in some ways what other groups are doing or how they are working, save for thin tentacles weaving between sites when a sound, movement, or beam travels from across the room. In this

way, immersion and extension are no longer in opposition to each other, but become a consistency of mutual accompaniment. Emergent terms of accompaniment swell the spacetime of relief, converging and dissipating bodies between and across the divergent temporalities of discrete iterations.

Fig. 10: Participants move fabric screens with a recording device attached to the underside, weaving together different registers of movement, exposure, and camera vision. Photo Credit: Kimura Byol.

8. Intensive Under Exposures: In underexposure, form surges from shadowy surfaces. The resulting photographic images are less bound to gestures of capture than in drawing the edges of form into proximity and into shape. The spacetime of image capture presses below, between, and across the intersection of noise in the image and interweaving threads, sustaining an energetic indeterminacy. Image capture appears to hold surfaces, however tenuously, in relation by substituting physical matter with the indetermined materiality of light and by reorganising the difference between light, digital noise, and surface.

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Notes

[1]   The readings for the event were excerpts from the following texts: Glissant 1989; Lippit 2005; Tanizaki 1933; Thain 2017; Mouré 2010; Church 1887. The excerpts are available here: https://www.dropbox.com/s/cwrvbz5mvxnhn51/drawinglight_readings.pdf?dl=0.

[2]   Tanizaki 1933, p. 14.

[3]   Mouré 2010, p. 7.

[4]   Ibid., p. 8.

[5]   Lippit 2005, p. 55.

[6]   Langer 1953.

[7]   Ibid., p. 180.

[8]   Ibid , p. 16.

[9]   Ibid., pp. 31-32.

[10]   Dana Reitz, quoted in Buckwalter 2010, p. 85.

[11]   Thain. 2017, p. 11.

[12]   Deleuze 1994, p. 22 (*our remix*).

[13]   See for example the 2014 retrospective at the Eye Film Institute in Amsterdam, 'Anthony McCall: Solid Light Films and Other Works (1971-2014)'.

[14]   This quote is taken from the voiceover of an episode of TateShots, 'Anthony McCall: Light Describing a Cone' from 2008: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1-HWsxPnNNY

[15]   See the spectatorial play in the above video from the Tate Modern.

[16]   McCall 1977, pp. 51-52.

[17]   Lutticken 2019, p. 88.

[18]   Michaud 2011, p. 7.

[19]   Excerpts from the *Brouillard* series can be found on Larose's website: https://alexandrelarose.com/brouillard.

[20]   Authors' interview with Alexandre Larose in Montreal, 17 July 2019.

[21]   Ibid.

[22]   Ibid.

[23]   Glisant 1989, pp. 189-195.

[24]   Ibid., p. 190.

[25]   Ibid., p. 40.

[26]   Ibid., pp. 55-56.

[27]   Ibid., pp. 27-28.

[28]   Deleuze 1994, p. 26.