

# First Take

Research beginnings in film and art

## **First Take: Research beginnings in film and art**

- some debates on research and artistic practices
- PhD as site of research emergence
- some examples
- tactics for starting

**some debates  
on research and artistic practices**

“research creation”

“practice based research”

“practice-led research”

“artistic research”

“art as knowledge production”



***the simple version***

art making done as a form of enquiry

cultural and artistic practices – writing, image-making, filmmaking...  
often given purpose and direction  
by a grounding rationale or model of  
how artistic production *operates* ...  
*what doing art does...* (not a theory of art *per se*, but a rhetorical framing)

- as expression
- as formal play
- as experiment and testing
- as unfolding
- as collective memory work
- as enquiry

Understanding artistic work as a mode of enquiry is just one model  
... not best nor most important... just one among many possible

***Some examples of different models or rhetorical framings of practice***



The Simpsons (1999)  
S.10 E.19  
"Mom and Pop Art"



**Astrid Weller (Art gallerist)**  
"Art isn't just pretty pictures.  
It's an expression  
of raw human emotions...."



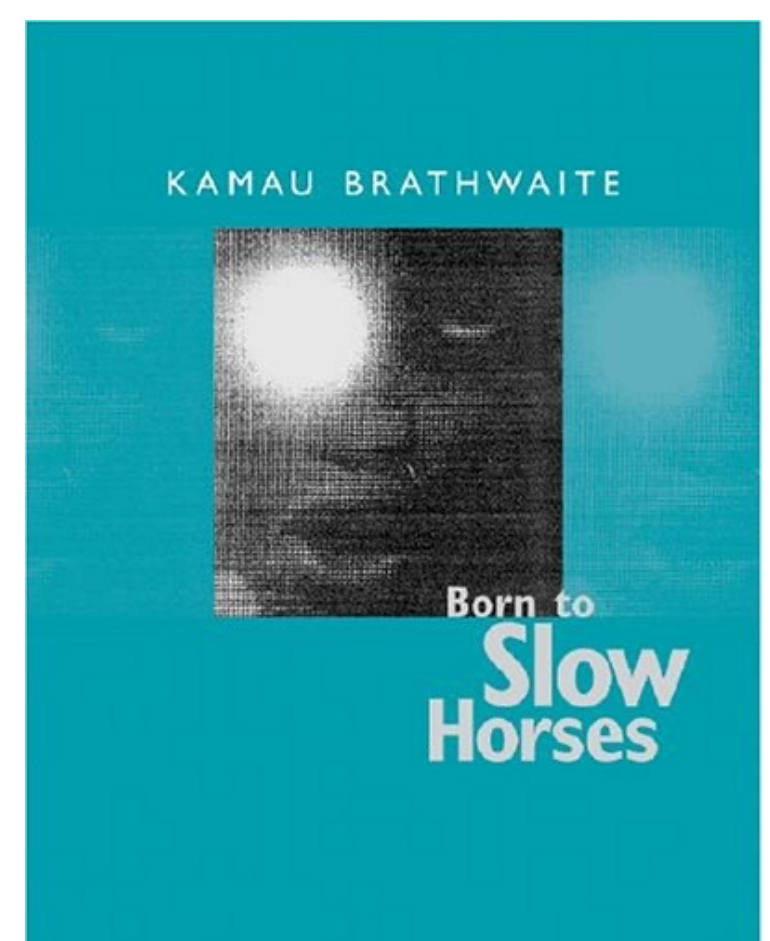
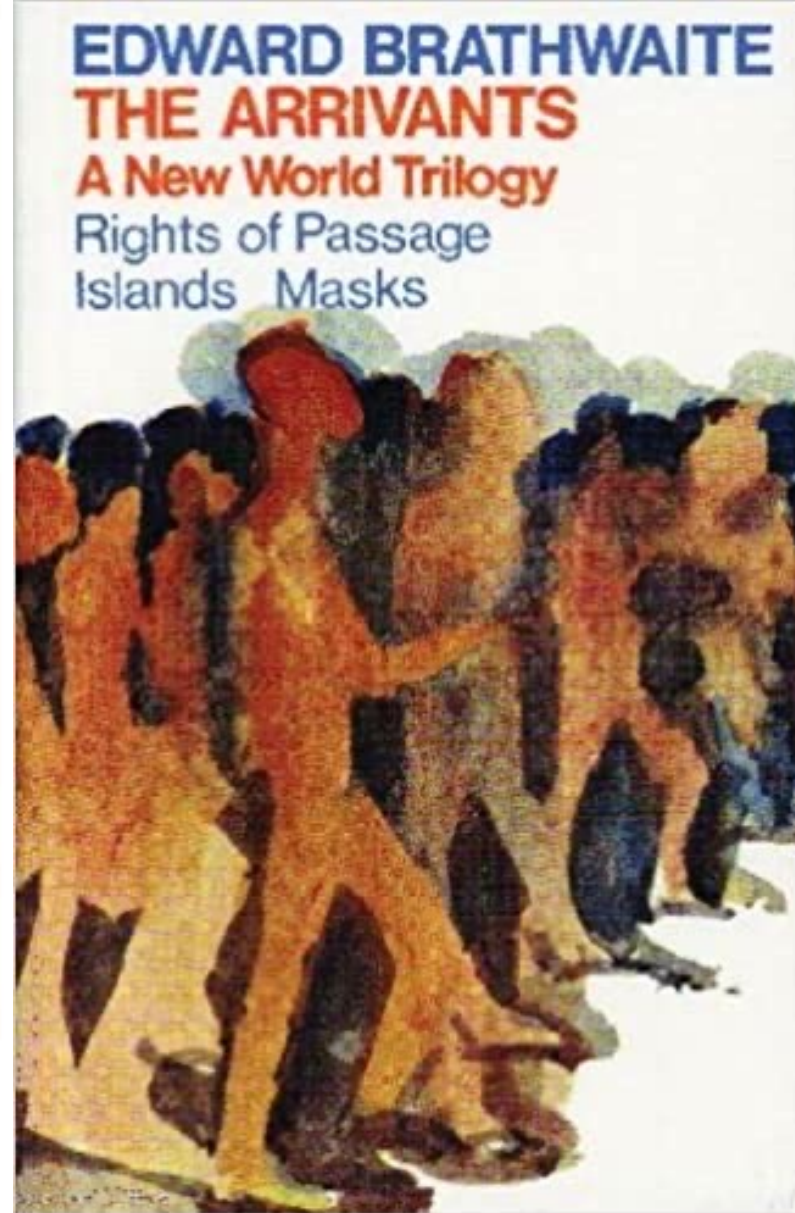
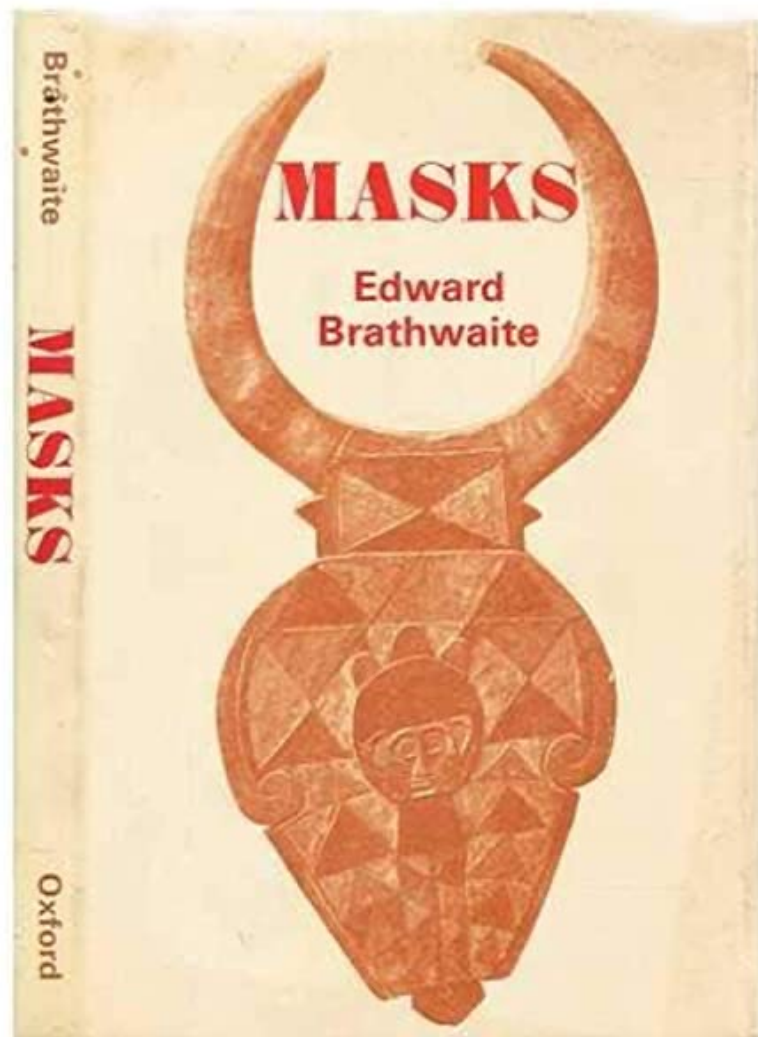


**artistic practice as experiment and pushing against the boundaries of genre/form**

**Hannah Gadsby, Nanette (2017)**

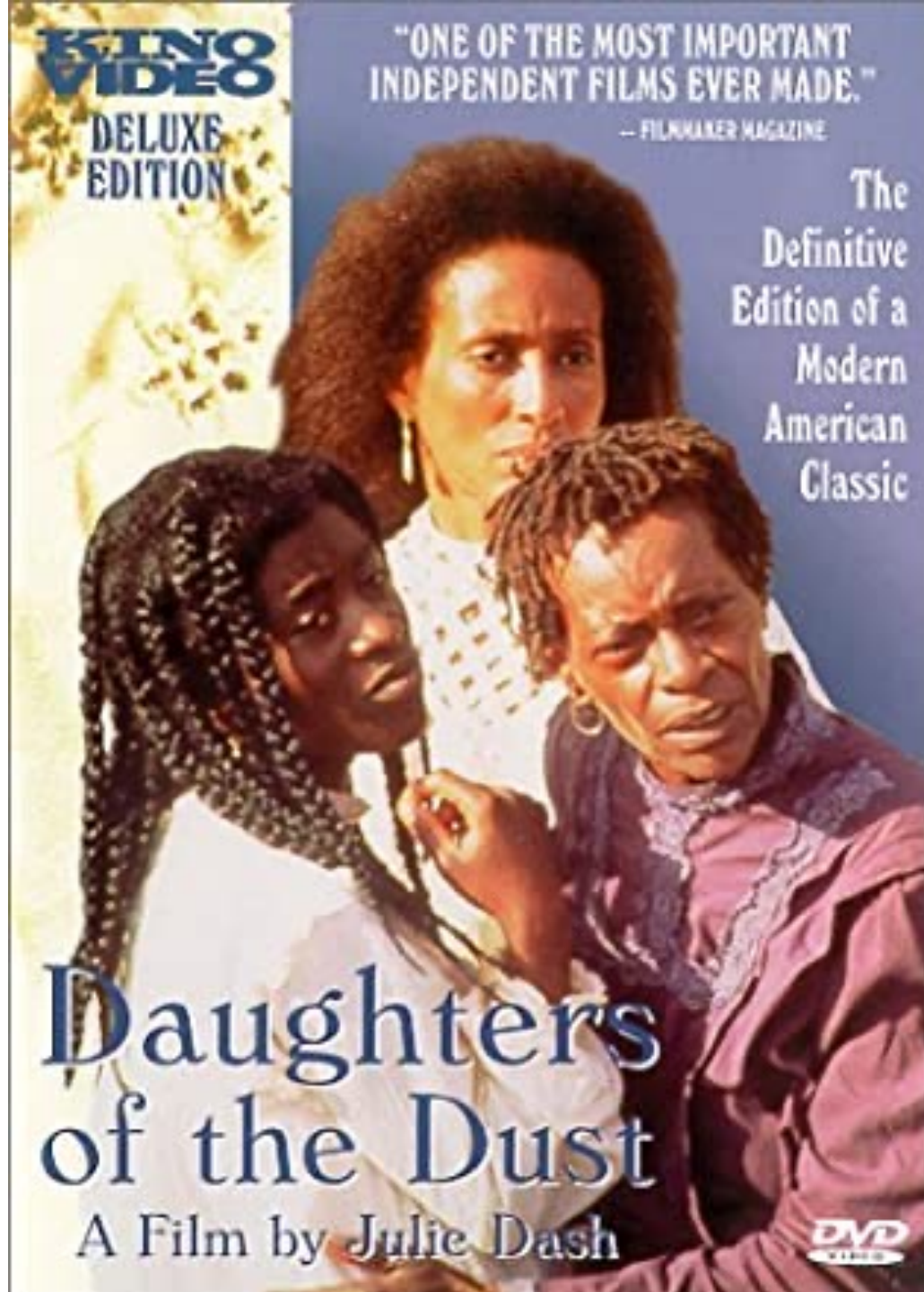


**NETFLIX**

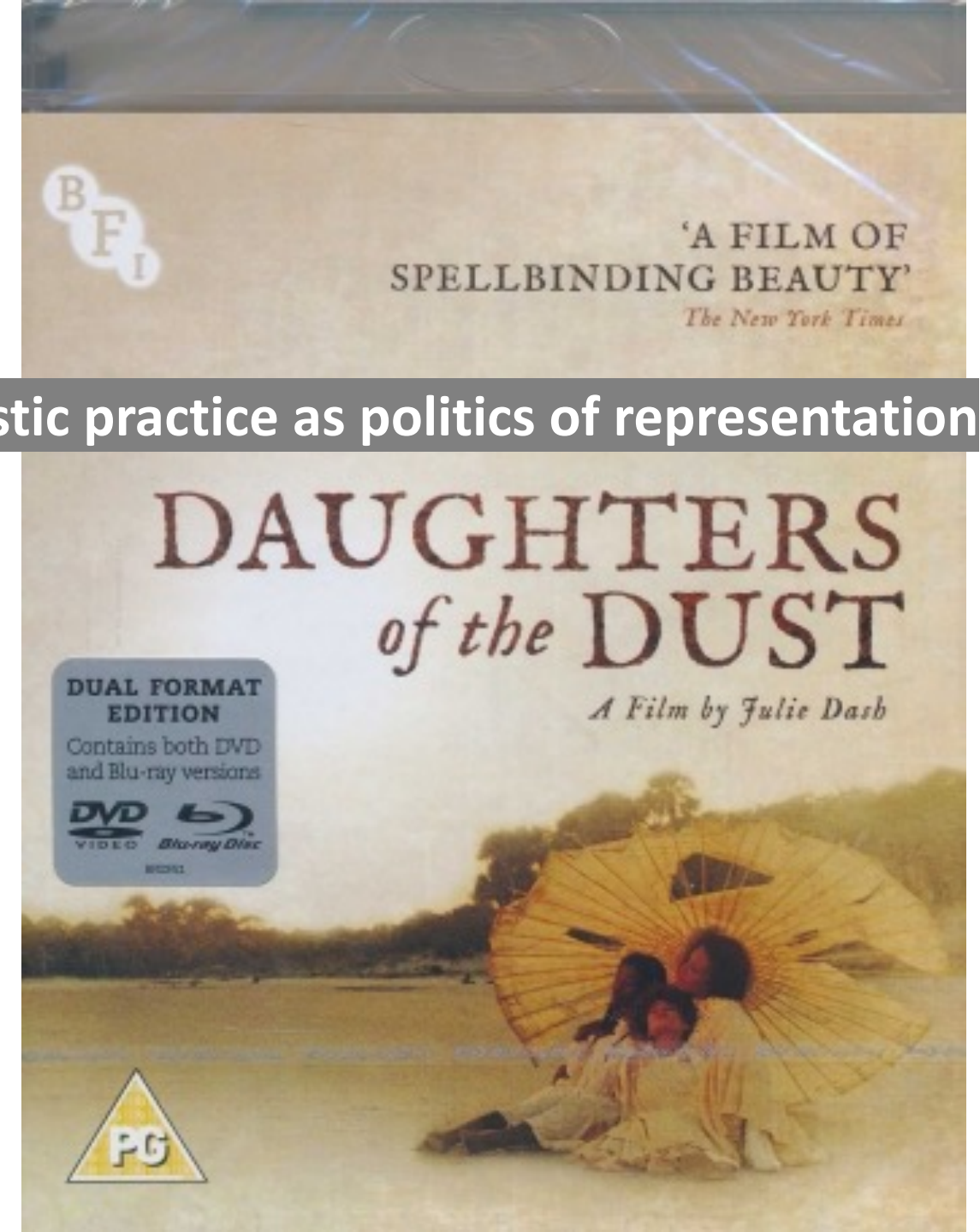


artistic practice as reconstruction of memory and production of social relation

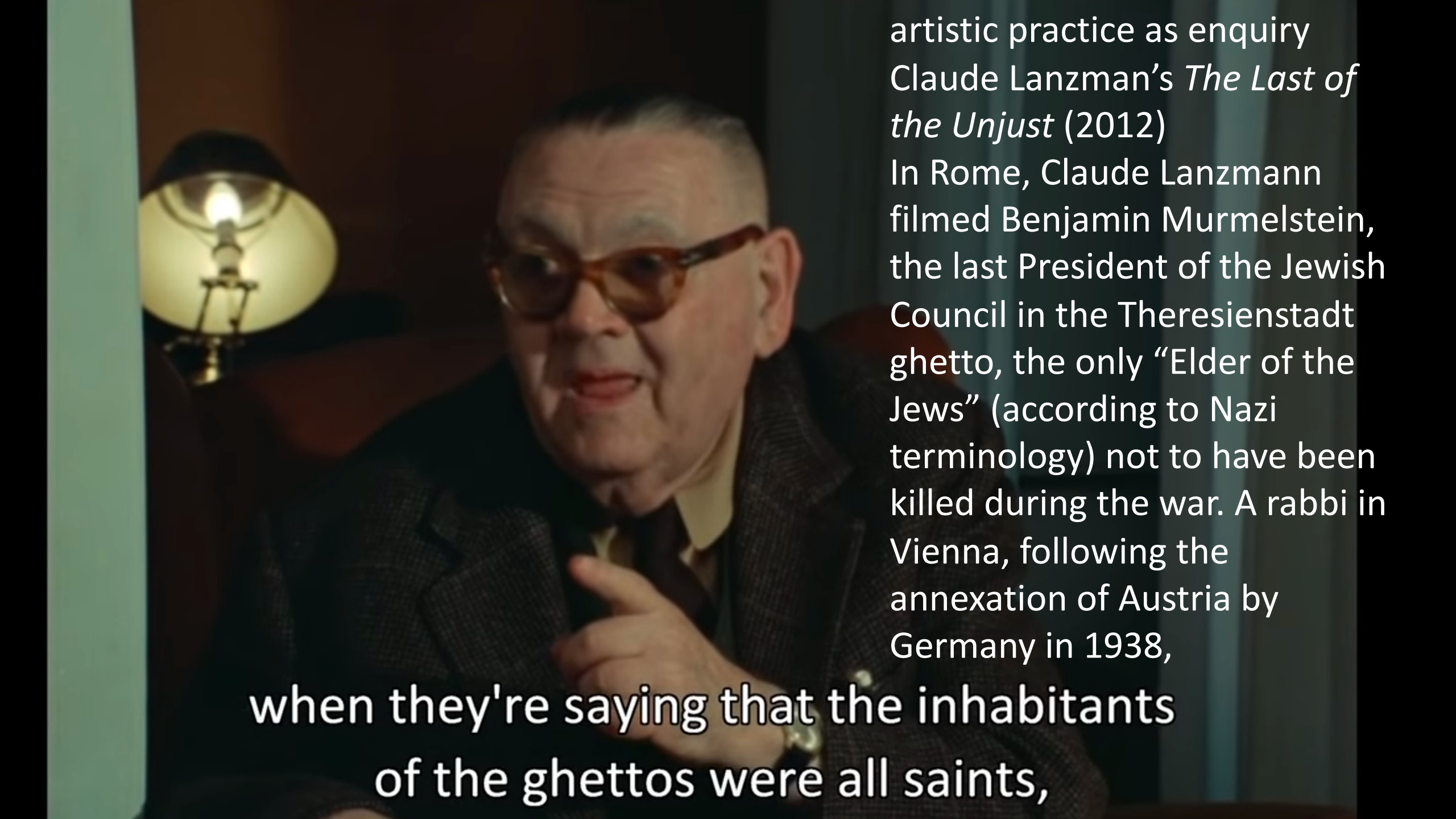




artistic practice as politics of representation





A still from the film 'The Last of the Unjust' showing Claude Lanzmann. He is an older man with short grey hair, wearing brown-rimmed glasses, a dark patterned suit jacket, a light-colored shirt, and a dark tie. He is gesturing with his right hand, pointing his index finger. The background is dark, with a warm, yellowish light source visible on the left, possibly a lamp. The overall tone is serious and contemplative.

artistic practice as enquiry  
Claude Lanzmann's *The Last of  
the Unjust* (2012)

In Rome, Claude Lanzmann  
filmed Benjamin Murmelstein,  
the last President of the Jewish  
Council in the Theresienstadt  
ghetto, the only “Elder of the  
Jews” (according to Nazi  
terminology) not to have been  
killed during the war. A rabbi in  
Vienna, following the  
annexation of Austria by  
Germany in 1938,

when they're saying that the inhabitants  
of the ghettos were all saints,

"Whether you're a mom, know a mom, or ever had a mom, you are going to want to read this surprising book." —SY MONTGOMERY,  
New York Times bestselling author of *The Soul of an Octopus*

# MOM GENES

Inside *the* New Science  
of Our Ancient Maternal Instinct



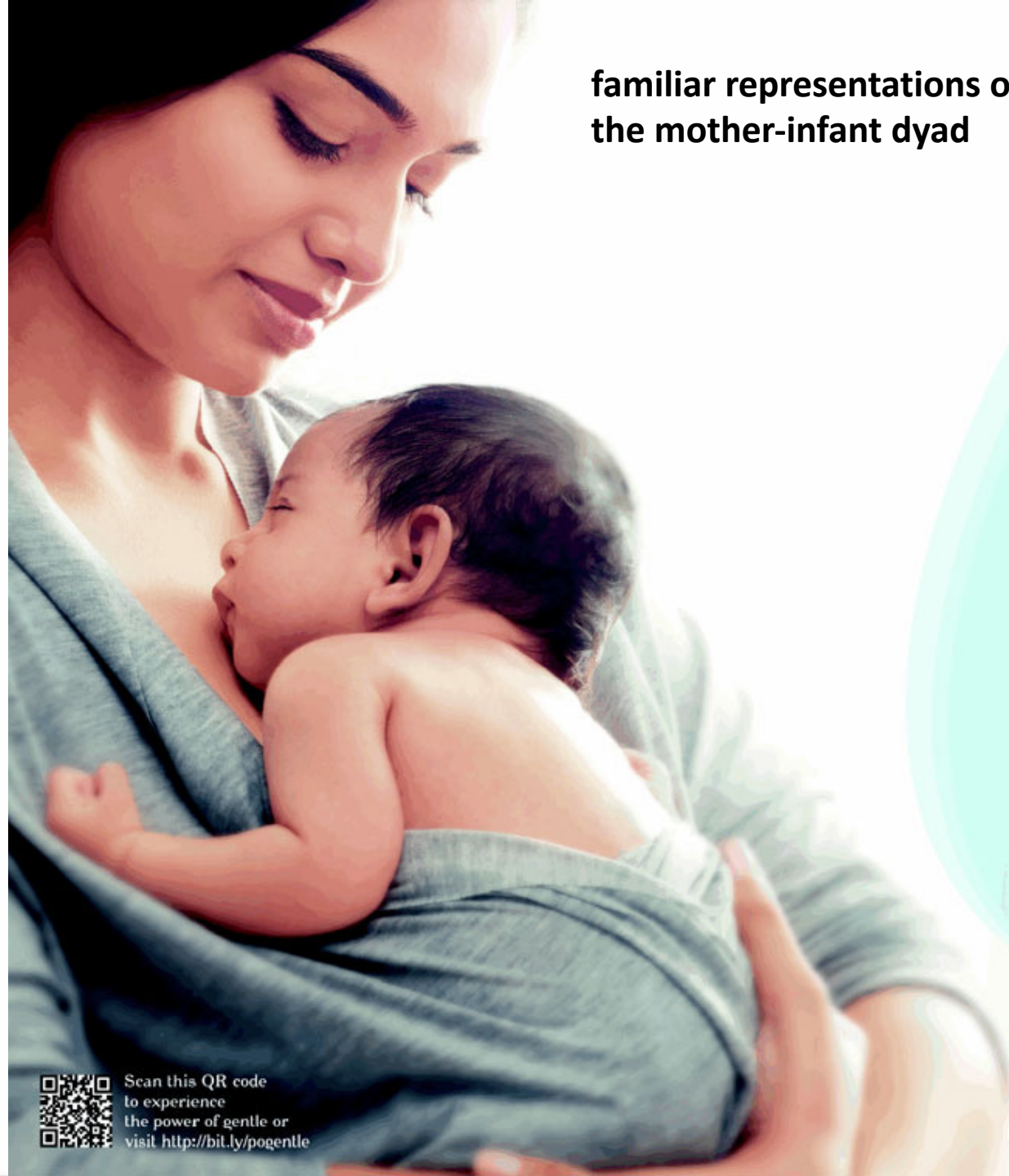
Abigail Tucker

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF  
*THE LION IN THE LIVING ROOM*



Scan this QR code  
to experience  
the power of gentle or  
visit <http://bit.ly/pogentle>

familiar representations of maternal femininity  
the mother-infant dyad



Remember this smell?  
The smell of your little one  
when she was a little one.  
The smell of her oh-so-soft skin.  
The smell of innocence.  
The smell of sloppy wet kisses,  
cuddles, and long gazes.  
The smell that made you fall in love.  
The smell that made you a mother.

The smell of every baby.  
The smell of Johnson's baby.

Because only a smell so gentle  
can bring back  
memories that powerful.

Johnson's baby



# -After the Tate's bricks



NAPPY LINE-UP at the ICA Gallery—there are 22 framed exhibits captioned with relative details.

# On show at ICA ...dirty nappies!



Mary Kelly  
Post-partum Document  
1973-9

Contrary to conventional  
representations of  
motherhood and “maternal  
subjectivity.”

Exhibition project within  
wider context of the  
feminist critique of “labour”  
– paid and unpaid work,  
and of reproductive labour.

JANUARY 5, 1974

09.00 HRS.	7 OZS. SMA
13.00 HRS.	4 OZS. SMA
17.00 HRS.	4 OZS. SMA
19.00 HRS.	3 OZS. ORANGE, 2 TSPS. CEREAL, 2 TSPS. APPLE
21.30 HRS.	6½ OZS. SMA
TOTAL:	26½ OZS. LIQUIDS 4 TSPS. SOLIDS



/GAH/

KITTY IS 'GONE'

NON-EXISTENCE

FEB 6 1975

UTTERANCE

GLOSS

FUNCTION

AGE 17.11

UTTERANCE

GLOSS

FUNCTION

AGE 17.11

/GAH/

KITTY IS 'GONE'

NON-EXISTENCE

FEB 6 1975



FUNCTION

NON-EXISTENCE

AGE 17.11

FEB 6 1975

T2 6.2.75

CONTEXT: M(mother) putting K(son) to bed.

13.00 HRS.

SPEECH EVENT(S)

/gah/R5

- 5.1 K. /dit-dy/ dit-dy/ e dit-dy/ (seeing kitty out the window)  
/gah/ dit-dy gah/ (kitty disappears under a car)

M. Oh! (seeing it come out again)

K. /dere/ dere/ e dere/ e dere/ (excitedly)

MOST FREQUENT UTTERANCES: /dere/ e dere/ gah/ dit-dy/ ah-gah/

MEAN LENGTH OF UTTERANCE: 1.78

17 months, 11 days

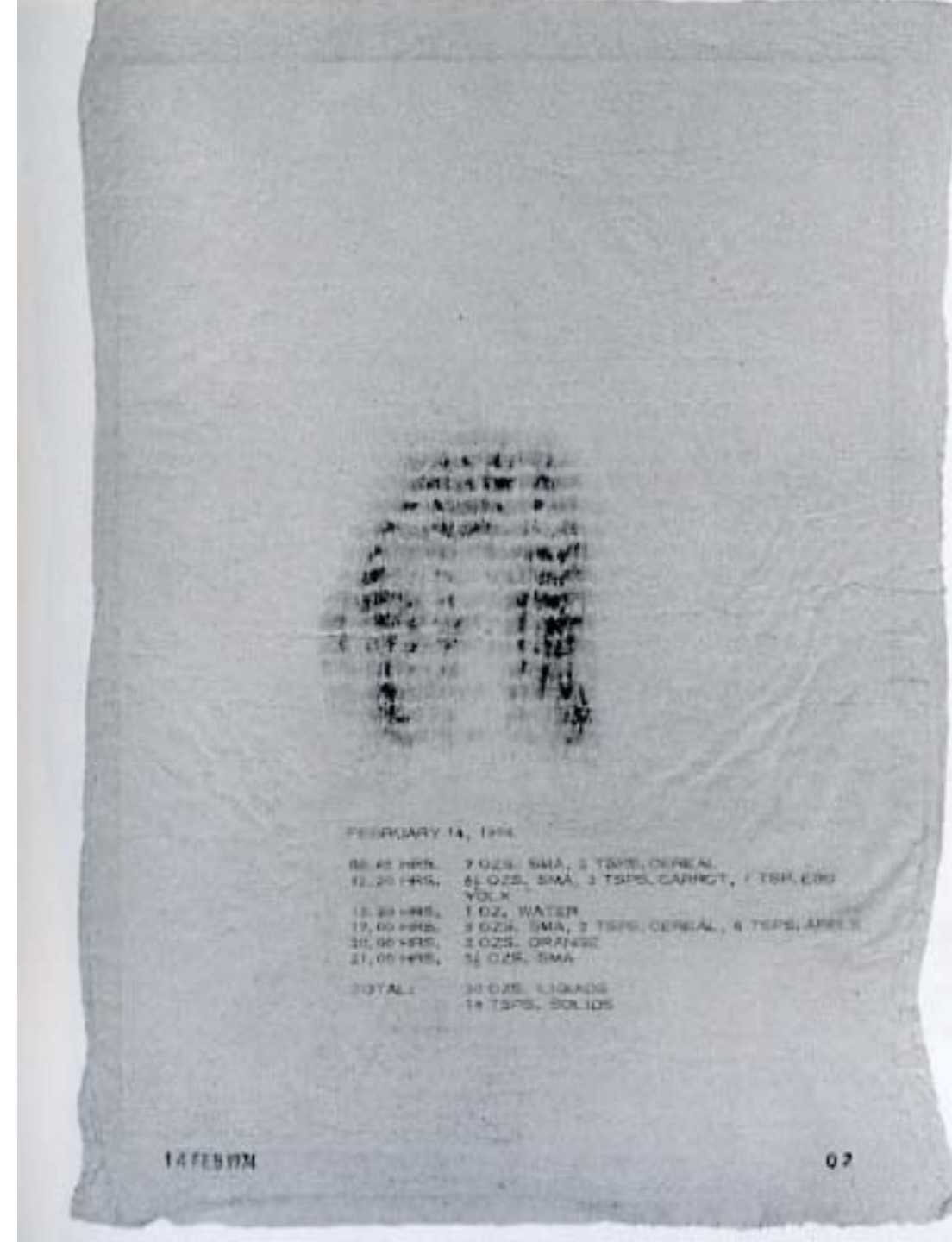


I didn't see K much  
this week because of  
the Brighton show.  
Now I've noticed he's  
started stuttering.  
Dr. Spock says it's  
due to 'mother's  
tenseness or father's  
discipline'. My work  
has been undermined  
by the appearance of  
this 'symptom' be-  
cause I realise it  
depends on belief in  
what I'm doing as a  
mother..... as well  
as an artist. I feel  
I can't carry on  
with it.

## Six-year exploration of the mother-child relationship

Each of the six-part series concentrates on a formative moment in the artist's son's mastery of language and her own sense of loss, moving between the voices of the mother, child and analytic observer.

Informed by feminism, psychoanalysis, and film-making the work has had a profound influence on the development and critique of conceptual art, and on feminist psychoanalytical theory.



FEBRUARY 14, 1994

08:45 HRS.	7 OZS. SMA, 2 TSPS. CEREAL
12:30 HRS.	8 OZS. SMA, 3 TSPS. CARROT, 1 TSP. EGG YOLK
13:30 HRS.	1 OZ. WATER
19:00 HRS.	3 OZS. SMA, 2 TSPS. CEREAL, 6 TSPS. APPLE
20:00 HRS.	2 OZS. ORANGE
21:00 HRS.	5 OZS. SMA
TOTAL:	30 OZS. LIQUIDS 18 TSPS. SOLIDS

14 FEBRUARY

02









# Nightcleaners Part 1

*Nightcleaners Part 1* was filmed in 1972–5 by the Berwick Street Collective. Mary Kelly was a prominent member of this collective.

## **Berwick Street Film Collective**

The collective was active from 1970–78. It was co-founded by Marc Karlin and James Scott; others associated with the group include Mary Kelly, Richard Mordaunt, Jon Saunders and Humphrey Trevelyan. The collective directed three films released between 1974 and 1978, the most well known of which is *Nightcleaners Part I*. This film was originally conceived as a campaign film to raise awareness of the situation of women cleaning offices overnight for very low pay. However, it became more of an avant-garde representation of women and work, and is a landmark of collective and feminist film-making. The film documents the daily routine of several women who cleaned offices in London at night, their low pay and the bad conditions within which they had to work. It also discusses and shows their fight to gain union recognition and therefore protection. In these clips you can see two women talking about their daily lives, as well as a protest rally to gain support for the cleaners' cause.

These last two examples “art making done as a form of enquiry” that pre-date the recent decades of debate on artistic research

Mary Kelly, *Post Partum Document* (1973-1979)

Claude Lanzman, *The Shoah* (1985) & *The Last of the Unjust* (2012)

## *the complicating version*

art making done as a form of enquiry but with “A”rt claimed as:

- radically other to science & academic knowledge traditions & practices
- institutionally “free” - not imprisoned by “universities” & “academies”
- in some fundamentally important sense beyond language, reason...
- embodiment, as affect, as emotion, as the abyssal horizon of meaning...

## ***the complicating version***

depends upon competing accounts of "normal" knowledge and of how "A"rt is just very very different from everything else ...

my basic proposition to people starting out to do research, is that large speculative pronouncements on the nature of "Art", or the differences between "Art" and "Science", or the monolithic nature of Western epistemology etc... have very limited use-value in actually starting to do enquiry in a considered way...

repeating these big theoretical, ideological and rhetorical positions can become a passionate *credo* rather than an act of enquiry

## Some debates on research and artistic practices

I am proposing that rather than start with a big covering theory like

- “what is artistic research?”
- “what is film research?”
- “what is research?”
- “what is the essence of film?”

that we use rough and ready approximations and let the complexities emerge as we go rather than begin with a big theory of the world and how it carves up between art and science, between good and bad...

## **Some debates on research and artistic practices**

we start instead with the ongoing experience that we are in the middle of doing the art thing, or the film thing, or teaching, or some other lived practice in the wider world ... starting within whatever practices we already do...

and then we have something that we don't understand,  
or that we are curious about, or that we want to experiment with,  
or that we think might be possible  
or might generate interesting – as yet not fully foreseen – possibilities  
or some hunch that there is something interesting just nearby  
but that we cant quite touch yet...



## **Some debates on research and artistic practices**

The idea then is to just begin the process of enquiry with whatever means are available in whatever way that is imaginable and that seems to offer possibility of getting somewhere

This is not about a claim for instinct, or a pre-theoretical moment.

Rather, it is a claim for attending to the theoretical commitments already operative in a given practice and its conditions, rather than dressing this or masking this with an elaborated and abstracted terminology or jargon.

# **PhD as site of research emergence**

## **PhD as site of research emergence**

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, especially in relay between Germany and USA the PhD became defined as a certificate in research training

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century the paradigm was transferred into other disciplines – especially from Chemistry and History

in recent decades, the doctoral level transformed in all subjects

“massification” of what was previously elite formation

PhD education as a target of policy-makers etc.

# fields of tensions and conflicts over PhD

beginner's licence in research

**OR** professional's culminating formation

disciplinary self-reproduction

**OR** human capital formation

'workhorse' of research culture

**OR** creative individual with own solo research agenda

"knowledge production"

**OR** critical "public intellectual" culture

globalized standard

**OR** site for various 'decolonial' projects

## **PhD as site of research emergence**

PhD often becomes a kind of ahistorical fetish

PhD is often understood narrowly - a humanities / social science version

PhD is often seen as useful or important battle ground

PhD is used by some as key instrument to build a research culture

Introduction of new PhD is often the occasion for  
ideological struggles to be rehearsed  
(often as proxies for struggles over resources)

## PhD as site of research emergence

often local institutional, sectoral and national arrangements become “ontologized” (*and here I risk the use of a jargon*)

“this is the way our organisation carves up  
so this must be the way that the world carves up”

the “written component” and the “practical component”\*

the “scientific part” and the “artistic part”\*

(\* these divisions are not inevitable or especially useful,  
we don’t have to talk this way )

## **PhD as site of research emergence**

The PhD is not the only avenue to work in research

It is the primary avenue for formal employment in research

This brings other issues ...

labour market dimension to all of this

However, as many institutions such as

BAK, Utrecht, La Colonie, Paris, or Asia Art Archive, Hong Kong, show ...

academia is not the only game in town...



L'arrivée d'un train en gare de La Ciotat  
(1895 / first public screening 1896)

This scene from an 1897 re-shoot

<https://catalogue-lumiere.com/faq-movies/>



[https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/transcoded/c/c3/L%27Arrivee\\_d%27un\\_train\\_en\\_gare\\_de\\_la\\_Ciotat%2C\\_1895.ogv/L%27Arrivee\\_d%27un\\_train\\_en\\_gare\\_de\\_la\\_Ciotat%2C\\_1895.ogv.720p.vp9.webm](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/transcoded/c/c3/L%27Arrivee_d%27un_train_en_gare_de_la_Ciotat%2C_1895.ogv/L%27Arrivee_d%27un_train_en_gare_de_la_Ciotat%2C_1895.ogv.720p.vp9.webm)

**some examples**

## **some caveats about the examples**

- Short intro, not my work – mostly not my PhD researchers' work
- Based on what I have learned through attending various presentations conferences etc. I am not an authority in these projects, just using what is for the most part in public domain
- I may misconstrue parts of these, especially the ones that are still ongoing
- I am just showing them to suggest the variety of work underway
- If interested, please invite the actual researchers themselves  
– as it is their work and they know more

# REWINDING INTERNATIONALISM - SCENES FROM THE 90S, TODAY



Read out



susan pui san lok, 'Rewind / Replay' (2022), Courtesy the artist and Netwerk Aalst.

# REWINDING INTERNATIONALISM

## Scenes from the 90s, today

19/11/2022 - 30/04/2023



The exhibition *Rewinding International* explores developments, ideas and stories from the 1990s and how they resonate in the world today. The end of the Cold War, the AIDS pandemic and increasing globalisation brought about dramatic changes, also in the art world. What became of the questions and experiences of those days?

### COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH EXHIBITION

*Rewinding International* features visual and audio material from the past and present, archive materials and recently created work. The curators, collectives and artists who have curated the exhibition invite you to 'rewind' to moments from the 1990s and reflect on them from the perspective of today. Five new artworks have been created for the exhibition including works by Lubaina Himid and Magda Stawarska, Didem Pekün and susan pui san lok / lok pui san. *Rewinding Internationalism* is partly the result of a collaboration within the **L'Internationale** museum confederation, of which the Van Abbemuseum is a member.

### UNIQUE EXHIBITION DESIGN

The distinct design of the exhibition emphasises the fact that history is not linear. Instead of walking through a continuous story, visitors are occasionally made to turn around and go back to where they started. In the process, they

### FEATURING WORKS FROM

Christine Baeumler, Act Up Barcelona, Belkis Ayón Manso, Nadiah Bamadhaj, Cecilia Barriga, Miguel Benlloch, CADA, Tony Cokes, Betsy Damon, Eugenio Dittborn, Les Diables Bleus, Diamela Eltit, Gorgona Group, Beth Grossman, Dai Guangyu, Félix Guattari, Lubaina Himid en Magda Stawarska, Julije Knifer, Ivan Kožarić, Li Jixiang, Chengying Liu, susan pui san lok / lok pui san, Miguel D. Norambuena, Miguel Parra Urrutia, Olu Oguibe, Didem Pekün, Pejvak, Wang Peng, Nelly Richard, Christian Rodriguez / CEPSS, Sandra Rylvin Rinaudo, Lotty Rosenfeld, Allan Sekula, Semsar Siahaan, Lamnu Suri, Norbert van Onna, Yin Xiuzhen, Zeng Xun.

### RESEARCH PROJECTS

*AIDS Anarchive* developed with Equipo re (Aimar Arriola, Nancy Garin and Linda Valdés), *Revista de Crítica Cultural*, *The Three Ecologies* and *Internationalist Feminisms* developed with Paulina E. Varas; *Keepers of the Waters* (Chengdu and Lhasa, China, 1995-1996) developed with Sebastian Cichocki; *Contemporary Art of the Non-Aligned Countries*. *Unity in Diversity in International Art* (Jakarta, 1995), developed with Bojana Piškur, Grace Samboh and Rachel Surijata; *ADN* (Association pour la Démocratie à Nice), with Carnivals Independents and Les Diables Bleus (1991-2004).

# Rewinding Internationalism:

An Exhibitionary Enquiry on the Political Imaginary  
artistic PhD research  
currently being conducted  
at HDK-Valand, University of Gothenburg  
by Nick Aikens



“Rewinding Internationalism is a research and exhibition project that explores the construct of internationalism through different histories, figures, art works and exhibition histories. Developed within a wider collaborative research context (of the museum confederation L’Internationale and their current programme *Our Many Europes*) the exhibition includes five new commissions, a number of joint research projects developed with external curators alongside loans from private and public collections. The project takes the 1990s as a departure point, a decade when political internationalism – as construct, practice or imaginary itself – went through a fundamental shift with the end of the Cold War and the ascendancy of globalization. “

**MIGMA**FILM  
presenterar

# BLOD

ett filmprojekt av och med  
Annika Boholm & Kersti G. Brennan

Beyond the Cut and Join:  
Expanding the creative role of film editing  
artistic PhD research  
currently being conducted  
at University of the Arts Stockholm  
by Kersti Grunditz Brennan

A key part of this research has been the collaborative realisation of a major expanded film by Kersti Grunditz Brennan working with her collaborator Annika Boholm.

<https://vimeo.com/394963921>

Their article on “The Blod Method: Case Study of an Artistic Research Project in Film” in *Transversal Entanglement - Artistic Research in Film International Journal of Film and Media Arts*, Vol. 7 No. 1 (2022)

<https://revistas.ulusofona.pt/index.php/ijfma/article/view/7992>








An underwater photograph of a swimming pool. A swimmer is visible in the distance, swimming towards the right. The pool has lane lines and a floating lane rope in the foreground. The water is clear, and the pool floor is tiled. The lighting is bright, creating reflections on the water surface.

We want to remove your uterus.



A photograph of two women sitting on a wooden bench in a room with white walls. The woman on the left is wearing a white sports bra and white high-waisted shorts, while the woman on the right is wearing a black sports bra and black high-waisted shorts. Both are wearing glasses and holding up patterned socks. Large, dark shadows of their bodies are cast onto the wall behind them. In the foreground, there are wooden chairs with patterned fabric draped over them. To the right, a small white table with a blue star sticker is visible.

-What if my therapists see this?  
-How does that feel?





-Do you empty your bladder when you pee?  
-I think so.





Simplified summary of research questions:

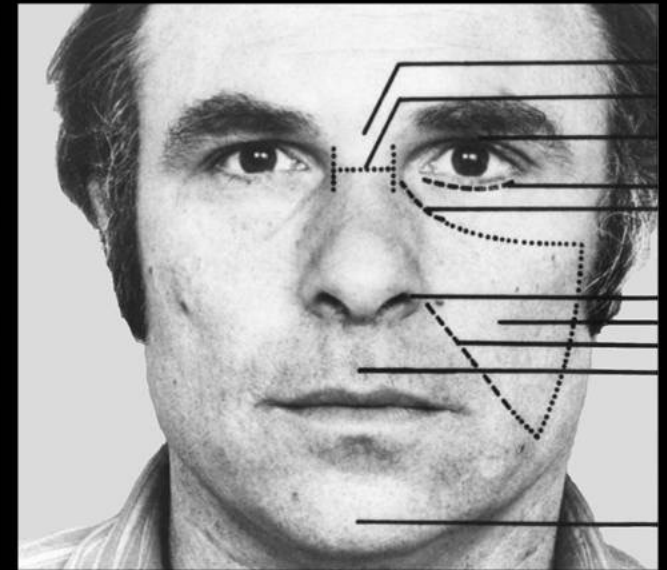
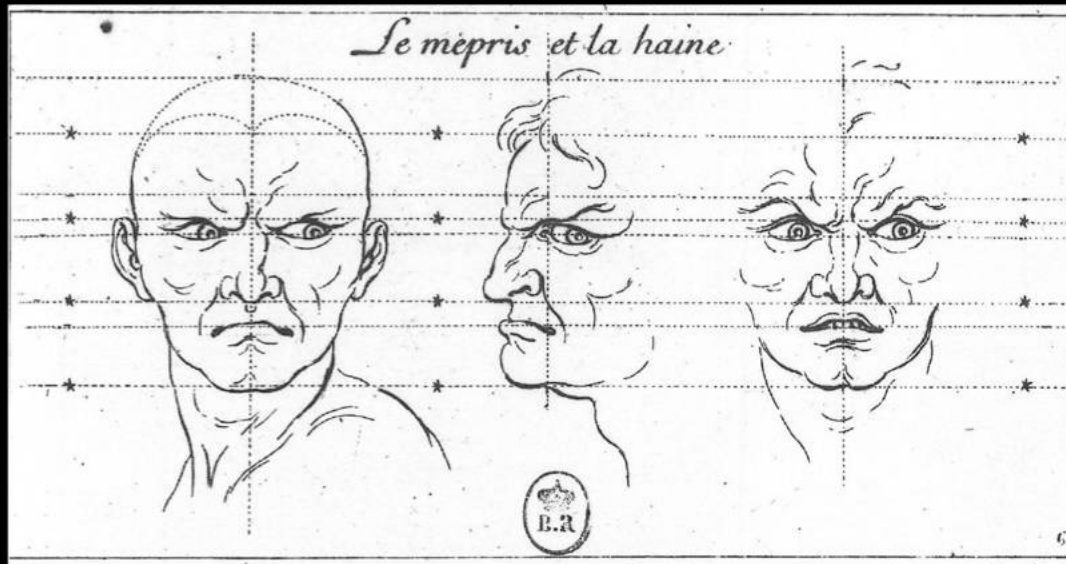
How to design a process for exploring what editing does to invite and enhance layered experiences of characters in cinematic storytelling?

Focusing on people and their relationships (in documentary, drama, and experimental film) what can editing do to enhance the experience of character?

What expanded description of film editing can be articulated?

The Feeling Machine:  
Emotions in Acting and A.I.  
Scientific-Artistic PhD research  
currently being conducted  
at Film University Babelsberg  
and Zurich University of the Arts  
by Manuel Flurin Hendry







**Research Question:**

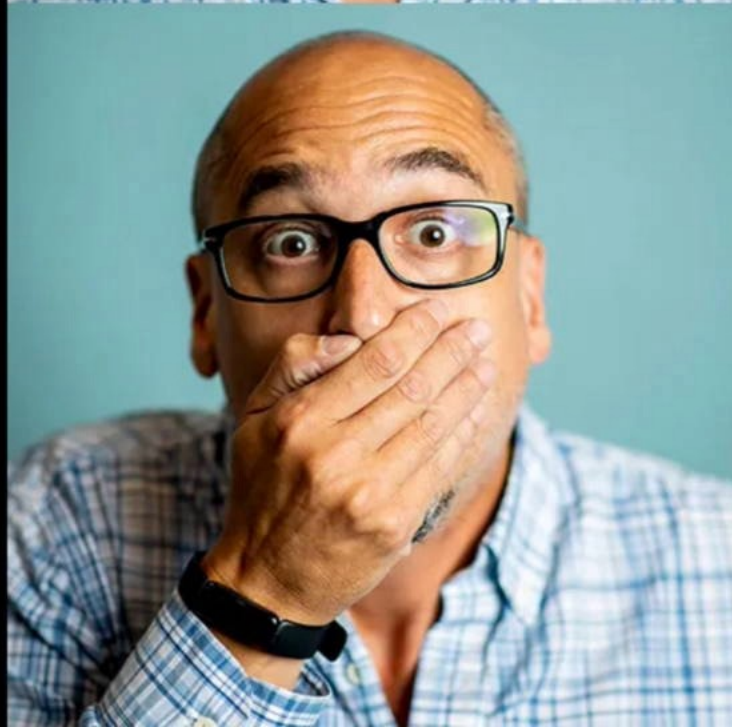
**«Why are computers so bad in dealing with human emotions?»**

# YOU CAN'T DETERMINE EMOTION FROM SOMEONE'S FACIAL MOVEMENTS—AND NEITHER CAN AI

by Molly Callahan August 20, 2021

New research by Northeastern neuroscientists Lisa Feldman Barrett shows that interpreting a person's facial expression can't be done in a vacuum; it depends on the context. Photos by Matthew Modoono/Northeastern

University



# **Why Computers fail**

**(emotionally speaking)**

- **No concept of the world  
(Commensense Reasoning)**
- **No Personal History**
- **No Understanding of Context**
- **No Body**

**How can I short-circuit the  
science and art of Emotion?**

# **Subaltern Imaginations of the Bengal Famine of 1943 in and through Film Practices**





# Subaltern Imaginations of the Bengal Famine of 1943

in and through a film practice  
practice-based PhD research  
currently being conducted

HDK-Valand, University of Gothenburg  
by Ram Krishnan Ranjan



“The Bengal Famine of 1943-44, which resulted in nearly five million deaths, is considered one of the most catastrophic and murderous instances of British colonial rule in India.<sup>1</sup> The colonial government’s policy of diverting agricultural land from food crop to cash crops and prioritising food supplies to its troops at the expense of the general public, contributed significantly to the making of this crisis. Fearing a Japanese invasion of Bengal through Burma, the government further exacerbated the matter by removing surplus stocks of paddy and curtailing boat transport lines in eastern and coastal Bengal. The general scarcity and panic also induced private hoarding and profiteering by some Bengali elites. Even at the height of the famine, the Churchill government continued to prevent food imports. The net result was mass starvation, displacement, death, and chronic disease.”

“analysis and artistic (re)presentation of the famine can’t stem only from colonial critique; a shift towards situating the famine in terms of subalternity (caste, class, gender, rural-urban divide etc.) must occur. Against this backdrop, this PhD in artistic research mobilizes the film practice to further and experiment with subaltern imaginations (epistemologies and ontologies of expressions that emerge from the space of subalternity) of the Bengal Famine of 1943. “






## *Chaturth Duniya: Fourth World and The Bengal Famine*

Running time: 75 mins.

Status: Work-in-progress

This film has emerged from the fieldwork conducted in two Dalit villages in Midnapore, Bengal in 2019. The fieldwork centered creative-collaborative practice as a method to engage with Dalits' experiences of the famine. Two local practitioners of Patchitra tradition (scroll paintings accompanied with songs), Manu Chitrakar and Sonali Chitrakar, were creative- collaborators during the fieldwork.

The film *Fourth World* weaves together fieldwork footage, poetry and essayistic writing. While the film attempts to foreground subaltern experiences of the famine, but it concomitantly also proposes that there is a need to shift away from 'recovery' and 'representation' of subalterns' 'authentic' experiences of the famine and towards 'negotiated imagination'.

A group of people, including men and children, are seen from behind, sitting and watching a video on a large screen. The screen displays a close-up of a person's face, possibly a woman, with a red and white patterned background. The text "क्या हमारा पेट भी कब्रस्तान" is visible at the bottom of the screen. The setting appears to be an outdoor or semi-outdoor area with a wooden structure and colorful curtains in the background.

क्या हमारा पेट भी कब्रस्तान









**I will have difficulty in subtitling it.  
It's too fast.**

*Where we rats lurk*, a 11-minute film

Intervention into Mrinal Sen's *Akaler Sandhaney* (1981).

*Where we rats lurk* – both the text as well the video work, cast a critical subaltern eye on Sen's film. This paper focuses on exploring the limits of self-reflexivity and auto-critique in Mrinal Sen's *Akaler Sandhaney* ('*In Search of Famine*') and asks if they can be unsettled without undermining their critical potential in filmmaking practices.



HD FULL MOVIE



Full HD  
1080

A National Award Winning Film  
By Mrinal Sen

Digitally  
Restored

আকালের  
সন্ধান

AAKALER SANDHANE  
(In Search of Famine)



ENGLISH SUBTITLED







For a 43 famine film  
you need documentation



*You deny my living and I defy my death*

Running time: 35 mins

Status: Work-in-progress

Summary: This film is a meditation on the (im)possibility of foregrounding Dalits' experiences of the Bengal Famine through an 'anti-caste affective aesthetics'. This film has emerged as a result of a collaborative-performative workshop between Durga Vishwakarma, a Dalit performance/theater artist, and the filmmaker. Just like the workshop, the film is also animated by the desire to rupture the dominant representational realm that is either essentializing or reductive. Moving away from the indexical and mimetic, the film embraces the affective and participatory registers to (en)act out the difference between 'critical presence' and representation of Dalits.







You Told Me

artistic research PhD

completed 2010

HDK-Valand, University of Gothenburg

by Magnus Bårtås

(now Head of Research at Konstfack, Stockholm)





*You Told Me*. Three words and two people are involved. You is not a complete stranger, since *Me* is addressing *You* in the past tense. A continuation is also implied; you told me *something*. This something may be a story, or it may be a fact.

This dissertation in artistic research is grounded in the *You Told Me* situation and certain resonances of the act and context of utterance. Fundamental to the work are meetings, conversations and storytelling – activities that are closely linked to the biographical genre, but also to the oral dissemination of artworks. *Work story* is a concept that points to the stories about the making of art, the very sequence of actions that inform the work, and the order of the actions within the sequence – practically, symbolically, ethically, metonymically, metaphorically...

*You Told Me* is also about the making of video essays – about listening and talking to images, and making transferences between the working instances of narrative video. Video essays, like work stories, do not just give an account of their own orbit of production, but they also reflect on their own choices of method and subject matter as well as their own contingent nature. The video essays and work stories in this book privilege the meaning of the local, the situated, the neglected detail, the personal pronoun, the individual's body and its experience of pleasure and pain, and the striking repetition among people and in history. These singularities, and their mundane and fantastic stories, are formed by, inscribed in – and producing – our social and political realms.

ArtMonitor is a publication series from the Faculty of Fine, Applied and Performing Arts, University of Gothenburg.

ArtMonitor

ISBN 978-91-977758-8-5



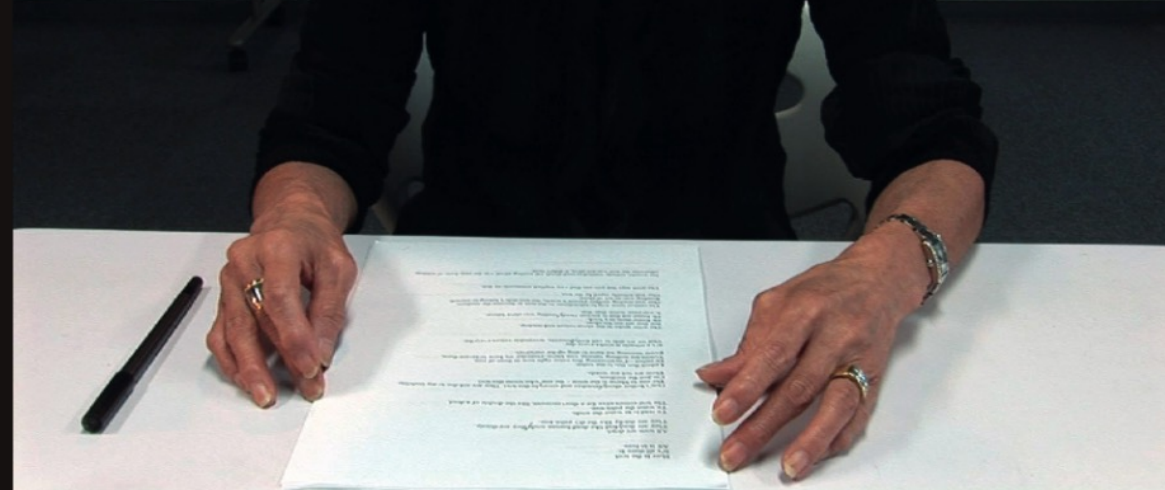
Valand School of Fine Arts  
Faculty of Fine, Applied and Performing Arts



UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG

You Told Me – Magnus Bårtås

ArtMonitor



## You Told Me

– work stories and video essays/  
verkberättelser och videoessäer

Magnus Bårtås



*Magnus Bärtås*

YOU TOLD ME. WORK STORIES  
AND VIDEO ESSAYS

## YOU TOLD ME. WORK STORIES

## AND VIDEO ESSAYS

My dissertation (University of Gothenburg 2010) consists of five video works, an introductory text, and three text essays. The video works are based on meetings, conversations, and storytelling; activities not only closely linked to the biographical genre, but also to the dissemination of artworks – as I will demonstrate. As a biographer, I travelled in the footsteps of films while staging different memory acts together with the ‘biographized.’ The method of repetition I use coincides with and is inspired by Chris Marker. In his video essay *Sans soleil*, he calls it pilgrimage or travelling in the footsteps of film and texts which implies many of his key motifs: the return, the search, multiple identities, the connection of memory, situations, and events where pasts manifest themselves in the present.

# Madame & Little Boy

(the voice-over text from the video essay)

You cross the Golden Gate bridge.  
You see Alcatraz on the right.  
This is the story about Madame Choi,  
and the Little Boy.

Over the mountain.  
On the way to the coast.  
All monsters must die.

These buildings were built for the military.  
These eucalyptus trees were planted as camouflage.  
Now they say they're going to cut them down.

Now these buildings are for artists.  
We have dinners in the mess hall  
and we look at things.

Look at the fog that's coming.  
There's a rainbow inside the fog.



# Geo-Aesthetical Discontent

Svalbard, The Guide and Post-Future Essayism

completed 2022

HDK-Valand, University of Gothenburg

by Eva La Cour

(now postdoctoral fellow at Art as Forum,  
the Department of Art and Cultural Studies, University of  
Copenhagen)

Propelled by the acute ecological crisis this dissertation moves between artistic affinities and academic disciplines to craft an intervention into imaginaries of Svalbard as an Arctic place. Designed as an iterative set of artistic practice experiments with live editing, it seeks to demonstrate a Geo-Aesthetical Discontent – a dissatisfying lack in the representational discourse – upon terrains with colonial history for visual production. By subverting the historically monolithic and singular narrative of the Arctic, the artistic research unsettles the traditional exemplars of the artist and the scientist. Rather it mobilizes The Guide as an analytical figure and tool with which to propose a Post-Future Essayism: a precarious filmic methodology and epistemological strategy of the moving image; a fragmentary and momentary compositional effect that seeks to navigate and negotiate the role of film in relation to a historiographic concept of futurity.

The dissertation, then, is a response to a discontentment with current portrayals of the Arctic that produce the region as an outside to the global west. At stake is to connect the production of an artistic practice – significantly described in relation to historical image-makers such as Jette Bang, Emilie Demant Hatt and Johan Turi, Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson – and the production of the Arctic.

Eva la Cour

Geo-Aesthetical Discontent

**Eva la Cour**

# **Geo- Aesthetical Discontent**

**SVALBARD  
THE GUIDE AND  
POST-FUTURE ESSAYISM**







Propelled by the acute ecological crisis this dissertation moves between artistic affinities and academic disciplines to craft an intervention into imaginaries of Svalbard as an Arctic place. Designed as an iterative set of artistic practice experiments with live editing, it seeks to demonstrate a Geo-Aesthetical Discontent – a dissatisfying lack in the representational discourse – upon terrains with colonial history for visual production. By subverting the historically monolithic and singular narrative of the Arctic, the artistic research unsettles the traditional exemplars of the artist and the scientist. Rather it mobilizes *The Guide* as an analytical figure and tool with which to propose a Post-Future Essayism: a precarious filmic methodology and epistemological strategy of the moving image; a fragmentary and momentary compositional effect that seeks to navigate and negotiate the role of film in relation to a historiographic concept of futurity.

Nick Aikens

Kersti Grunditz Brennan

Manuel Flurin Hendry

Ram Ranjan Krishnan

Magnus Bartas

Eva La Cour

- exhibition-making as enquiry
- filmmaking as part of enabling  
an enquiry into editing contra directing
- filmmaker doing experiments  
resource logic different from production
- reflexive film-making and limit of telling
- an artist looking at methods of telling
- an artist seeking a post-representational  
politics *modus operandi* - live editing

they do not all subscribe to a common credo

they are in tension with each other

what if they were to dialogue more explicitly with each -other?

**tactics for starting**



## tactics for starting

suggesting not to start with a master theory of art, of film, or of research  
start in the middle ... which also means with implicit operational thinking,  
which may need to be rendered explicit at some point

talk with people ... in the sense of listening to them

look at, and inform yourself of, things that are not interesting to you,  
or that you just don't like, but that are somehow nearby your interest

do things ... but consider before and after – and at some point during –  
how you are doing things, and what assumptions and ideas are  
embedded already in what you are doing

## tactics for starting

we often get stuck in our own rhetorics

– we have a “name” for what we are interested in...

but maybe we have mis-named, mis-recognised...

what it is that we are interested in

test different formulae, different terms, simplify jargon,

to describe and name what we are interested in...

but don't just talk ... do something ...

## **tactics for starting**

choreograph and invent structured encounters with others who have a take on what you are interested in...

try get a sense of what else is going on out there among the neighbours

test, play, make, dabble ...

but don't commit to a massive production-task based project on day one

put some time into testing the connections between your rhetorics and the actual activities, practices and productions that you pursue



## **tactics for starting**

research can be specified as trying to ask or answer a question

it can also be specified as trying to show that something is possible

it can also be simply describing and disclosing a phenomenon without understanding that much about it

it can be about seeing what happens if ...

it is helpful to have a sense of a research task as a little bit more than, and different from, a simple production task ... not a master theory of research but a differencing between a focus on production and a focus on enquiry

**thank you for listening**