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HOMING IN: A RETURN TO THE FRAMES OF REMEMBERED DRAWINGS

Key words: childhood and home, silence and noise, intergenerational trauma, drawing live, 16mm film, abstract and pictorial symbols, performance and immersive spaces, drawing sonics on the optical track.

In this paper '**Homing-in...**' negotiates a route; to find a way back to the place of what was once the family home; a migration through time, where displacement and that of being lost, traumatised and disturbed is navigated through a topographical memory - as a way to locate and move in on the residue of (an obsessive) childhood drawing activity - the home space(s) of childhood memory and drawing.

This paper examines the impact of home and the recollections of drawing as a child, through the lens of 'transgenerational trauma', that was later associated with an exploration of the modalities by which the language of visual signs and symbols were transmitted through the medium of the celluloid 16mm film frame; the performative gesture and audio transmission as (optical) noise.

In 2018, I was commissioned by Vivid Projects, Birmingham, UK, as part of Flatpack Film Festival's Optical Sound strand to develop a new live work with 16mm film and performance work under the title: '***Shots In The Dark***'.

This multi-screen performance work utilised the 16mm film frame to orchestrate 4 x 40ft film loops, that contain hand-drawn abstract and pictorial symbols. The event featured these gallery height film loops projected from four 16mm film projectors, towards the bodies of four performers who stand in the midst of the audience. The projected images are the only source of light, gradually revealed on the bodies of the performers and eventually spilling out over the surfaces of the gallery space and the audience themselves. The choreographed response of the performers' actions in relation to the projected drawings, align to the shock of the corresponding optical sounds, that puncture the cinematic darkness; enveloping the performers and audience in an immersive battery of light and sound; the discourse between audience and the cinematic screen becomes redundant.

This work offered an artistic recovery of elusive childhood memories - the experience of a silence in the home - 'that which cannot be discussed', only in 'whispers'; the troubled territories of my parents war and their respective liberation which could not have existed without their experience of destruction. The palimpsest of past narratives of their trauma contiguous with what was their present post war lives, resonated with a childlike imaginary through my drawing activity.

Significantly, it was my father's experience of the concentration camps that came to my childhood erratically. His silence was only broken as I cautiously began to ask questions that he was comfortable with or that he himself would on occasion volunteer; to draw in my mind the places of the experience he endured and which I had up to that time, never seen or visited.

In *Shots In The Dark* I reconnected with my childhood drawing: the representations of violent pictorial tropes, that were at the time evidenced in cartoons, television, and cinema; alongside of which was an emergent understanding of my father's internment at concentration camps and fragmented revelations of the Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp. I stumbled upon the noise of hearing conversations between my parents of descriptions: witnessing hangings, experience of aircraft bombings and hearing shots being fired, at what I knew many years later after my father's passing was the execution area known as Station Z. I recall that these traumatic childhood drawings were as witness to an imaginary understanding of war, bloodshed and human conflict. These remembered drawings were (observed by an adult audience; teachers and friends of the family) at once shocking and considered artistically accomplished: brutal landscapes that depicted the ugliness, violence and terror of war and killing.

Shots In The Dark alludes to film memory in relation to the 'shot' as a cinematic term; the camera's relationship to the gun: loading", "shoot", "shooting" and the choreography of violence.

This work utilised crude hand drawn imagery directly onto the geometric field of the 16mm film frame and corresponding markers on the optical sound track, to manifest the contexts of a sonic source that refers to the cause and effect in the spacing of the animated drawings. In this paper I will discuss the drawings and abstract marks through an understanding of animated mark making and the nuances of specific signs and symbols that crudely reference early iterations of remembered childhood drawings. As part of this I will discuss specific visits to the former concentration camps including, the ghetto of Terezin (Theresienstadt); the impact of children's drawings and poems from the camp: '*.../ Never Saw Another Butterfly...*'.

The paper *HOMING IN...* will consider and reference two previous manifestations of drawing 'live' directly onto the 16mm celluloid film and audio track:

1. '*Light Drawings: Interventionist Acts*' (2011, as part of *The Act of Drawing*, at Vivid Projects) in collaboration with Vicky Smith.

VIVID became the site of a performative, interventionist space, comprising of several installed 16mm films, looping around the gallery space, that slowly revealed a series of

'light drawings' developed over time. Saxon and Smith began the process of drawn interventions on celluloid at the launch event for the exhibition. For the duration of the exhibition projected drawn images were evolved in the space through a laboratory/performance process, as viewers participate and intervene on the material projection. For the duration of the exhibition the public was invited to intervene in the 16mm celluloid projection through their own responses to the act of drawing on film.

2. **'Blissfully Gunned Down'** 'live' performance work.

From an original collaboration with the late *D. John Briscoe (1949 – 2013)*

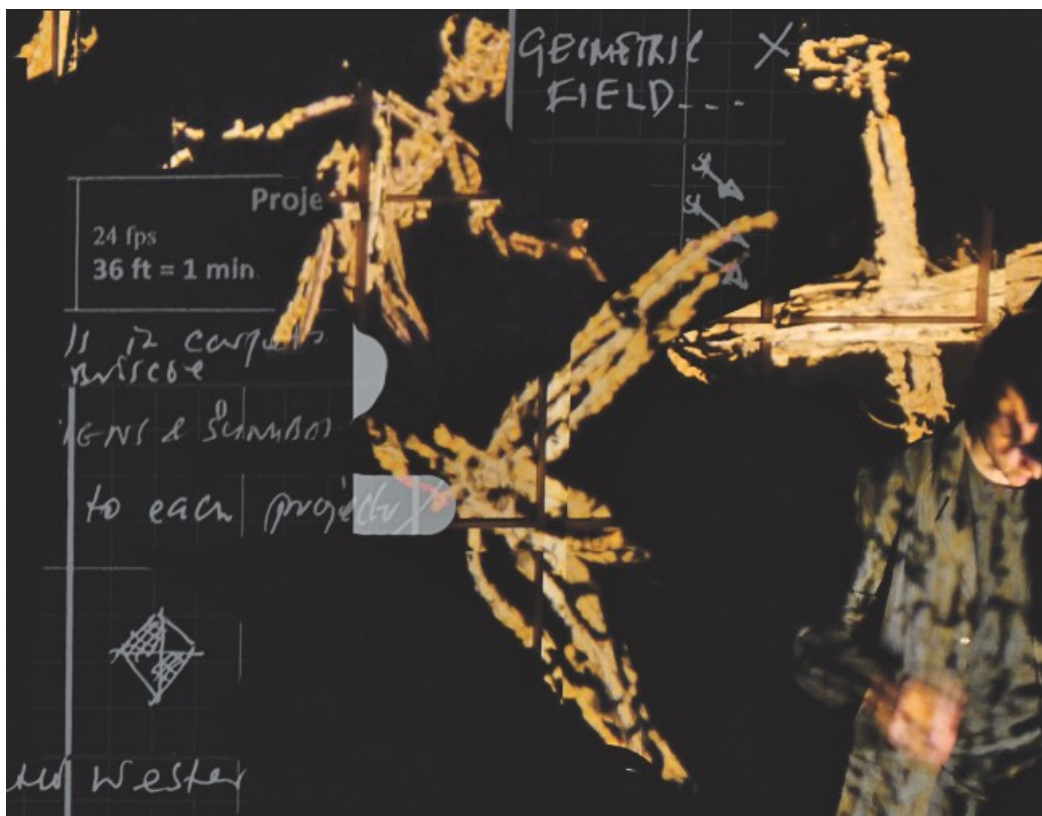
16mm twin screen loop (durational) performance, first performed at no.w.here London, 16.10.13.

The re-discovery of a short 16mm film (from 1980) was developed as a twin screen performance, orchestrating through mark making that revealed a synchronous and diagetic sound event on the optical track of the film, alongside a frenetic obliteration of the film image - a deconstruction of potential and familiar audio/visual narratives.

This paper will be illustrated with drawings discussed and fragments of video documentation.



Shots In The Dark, still from video documentation, 2018



Shots In The Dark, still from video documentation and Collage of Shots 2018