



**Projective Moving Image Installation as Disorientation Device:  
A Phenomenology of Queer Encounters**

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## DECLARATION

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I, Danilo Nazareno Azevedo Baraúna, declare that the enclosed submission for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy and consisting of a thesis meets the regulation stated in the handbook for the mode of submission selected and approved by the Research Degree Sub-Committee.

I declare that this submission is my own work and has not been submitted for any other academic award.

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Date: 02/02/2022

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## ABSTRACT

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In this thesis, I explore the experience of disorientation within projective moving image installations as informed by the emergence of queer affects in the relatively conventional space of art galleries and museums. Despite limited forays into this field, the literature on the uses of projection in a contemporary art context indicates this experience as disorientating. Nevertheless, current research stops short of providing evidence regarding what it means to be disorientated in an art context and exploring possible forms of materialising this experience in academic writing. Consequently, the research question posed in this thesis is: How can disorientation facilitate an understanding of queer affective experiences within projective moving image installations? To investigate this question, I employed a queer phenomenological and autoethnographic methodology to explore these fleeting disorientated moments. This is to account for an analysis that considers elements such as first-person voice, self-narration, and autobiographical notes as queer methods appropriate to approaching disorientation as a queer affective experience.

This thesis is designed as a multiple case study, composed of an experimental critical analysis of six artworks or exhibitions in which disorientation was a direct result of my experiences in the art galleries. The first part of each analytical chapter is composed of an affective orientated description of my live encounters with the case studies, intended to capture the disorientated moments via self-narration. The second part integrates description and theory to analyse the relationships between disorientation and the queer affects that emerged in the encounters with the artworks. These chapters are organised around the three core experiences that result in disorientation described by Sara Ahmed (2006), called *zooming in*, *becoming an object*, and *disturbing the others*, and explore the key concepts of camp, cruising and besideness that are specifically related to each of the case studies.

My original contribution to knowledge in the field of moving image art criticism is a demonstration that projective moving image installations are disorientation devices due to the magnetising aspects of projected moving images, which lead the bodies in the gallery to gather around whilst experiencing fleeting moments of disorientation that destabilise binaries used to describe the experience in the gallery, such as wandering and absorption. Consequently, this process is characterised as a queer affective experience informed by a fluid movement between queer kinaesthetic engagements and the histories and sedimentations of bodies.

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## **PREFACE**

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People walk, they travel, they pass through, and they move themselves. And their path, their itinerary, changes them, transforming them into something different at the provisional end of any given trajectory. This process acts on bodies that feel the effects of other languages, habits, and ways of being in the world, and these bodies become something different. This becoming is not totally controlled; such is the beauty of trajectories. Like bodies, theories also travel, and the transpositions that play out in unheard paths and encounters transform these theories into processes of dislocation, movement and multiplicity. (Pereira, 2019, p. 50).

Movement creates residues. I tend to incorporate this statement into my own route as a metaphor to envision a space where my footprints and my fingerprints are suggestions of presence. In this manner, I might affect someone or some space. As Pedro Paulo Pereira (2019) states above, by inhabiting the world while moving I become different after each encounter with the surprising affects that unfold before me. Movement thus increases encounters. Movement is a tactic; I decide to move to encounter a chosen object. Conversely, an unexpected presence may prompt me to move and take a different position, which implies that movement also modifies directions.

While referring to movement, I mirror Pereira's (2019) assertions because I am on the way with a lineage of becoming, walking among different places, cities, and in a shift of languages, although a conscious decision of movement might be, at the least, a naïve term to describe this journey. There is indeed, more queerness in this decision than I had assumed. As a matter of fact, queerness can also be a residue of movement. Unquestionably, one of the places I moved around the most, and where a sense of queerness tends to emerge, is the art gallery. From a very young age, this particular space exists in my life as a place to find pleasure, and the encounters that emerged there always surprised me. Whatever my role is in the gallery, I am aware it reflects the qualities of movement that have always shaped my exploration of paths in the world. Starting when I was eleven years old, I used to go to art galleries and museums with my school's art club. I would sit on the floor, alone and in

silence, and spend hours recreating the artworks we encountered there. My method for positioning myself in the gallery even now is not that different, even though I have replaced the oil pastels for a pen, a notebook, or my mobile phone, with which I have attempted to recreate through words some of the movements that I have experienced in this place.

I tried to hide from others in the gallery, just as I did in other contexts of my life. ‘Do not disturb’ is the best way to describe the signalling that my body position reflected in my late childhood and adolescence in the early 2000s. Perhaps we all try to hide, we all feel slightly ‘different’, until we discover the reason why we cannot fit in. Feeling ‘weird’ was, for me, occasionally replaced by feeling gay. My position and movement in the gallery are residues of my body’s histories and trajectories. Therefore, the gallery also works for me as a location to access vulnerabilities as I see myself among other visitors, and I place myself to be seen, leading to situations that go from isolation to cruising.

Consequently, the gallery also presents itself as a place for gathering. Why do we go to exhibition openings, for example? Do we go to experience art or to eat some of the appetisers and drinks served on the occasion? I used to go for both reasons when in my hometown, accompanied by a noisy group of students unashamedly and ferociously eating while surrounded by artworks. At that moment, I was followed by a rising confidence about being in that space, which only the reorientation of ‘feeling gay’ could provide me, and solely because I had finally, in an art school, found a community where I belonged. Maybe art schools create some sort of movement. My art school experience certainly moved me in a different direction. However, the gallery can turn back into a place of isolation and loneliness when you feel that, for some reason, you do not belong within the surroundings and you cannot see yourself around the people that inhabit the space with you. I certainly felt that sensation rising while visiting places such as the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art in Denmark. Having grown up

in a working-class family in Brazil, the sumptuousness of these great museums still, in ways, exclude me, prompting a feeling that I should not be there, that I do not belong there.

I started this text by locating myself in the art gallery because it was in this space that I initially developed a more affective relationship with projective moving images, and this may relate considerably to the approach I take in this thesis. The majority of people have encountered the projected image in the cinema, yet the art gallery was the place in which I connected with this mode of exhibition. My relationship with the cinema was always erratic, almost non-existent, due to the financial constraints of my family. At the age of eighteen, when I was already an undergraduate art student, I first encountered moving image art by watching on YouTube the weird and distorted dancing movements of Pipilotti Rist in *I'm not The Girl Who Misses Much* (1986) and Letícia Parente sewing 'Made in Brazil' on the sole of her foot in *Marca Registrada* (1975). These early video artists used to leave me fairly uneasy as if I was watching some found-footage horror film. Those were moments of an uneasy fascination. It was also around this time that I first faced an artwork in installation format, where projection played a central role in the experience. The uncomfortable feeling mixed with some excitement emerged by entering the space of *Permanência* (2007), by Val Sampaio and Mariano Klautau Filho.

This occasion was probably the first time I experienced the projected image as an element revealed to me in the same affective proximity of the films I used to watch on my television, and different from the usually distant projection I so rarely encountered in the cinema. In *Permanência* (2007), a swing in the centre of the room invites everyone to move, while located between two images projected on opposite walls. I could see my body as if entering the projection because my trajectory in the space interfered in the image, and by taking the position on the swing and moving, my body affected the beam of light, creating a shadow, a silhouette that prevented the image from continuing to exist as it had done. During

this fairly isolated experience of sitting alone on the swing and watching me, or something odd about me, the image of that backyard located on the island where I used to spend most of my summer holidays touched me as a powerful tool for spatial exploration, which obviously included my body as a mode to incorporate affects and memories of places I had been in my life before that moment.



*Figure 01: Permanência (2007), by Val Sampaio and Mariano Klautau Filho, installed in the chapel of the Historic Museum of the State of Pará during the Arte Pará Exhibition. Source: Archive of the Amazoniana Collection of Art (Universidade Federal do Pará).*

In the rise of these experiences, the overlay of projection and moving image art became an element that sustained some of the most disorientated encounters I have had in art galleries. I share these short autobiographical notes in this preface and right at the opening of my thesis as an attempt to reflect on and primarily expose some of the affects that shape my bodily connections with the three most important concepts explored in my research, namely ‘projection’, ‘disorientation’, and ‘queer’. The texts developed here reveal some of the overlaps, movements, affects and ‘switching of codes’, to mention Gloria Anzaldua (1987), of feeling disorientated while turning towards the encounter of projective moving image installations.

## INTRODUCTION

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**Unfold the lines**



In this thesis, I explore the queer affective experience of disorientation in projective moving image installations through a queer phenomenological approach. In the realm of experimental criticism, I analyse, in the three main chapters, six artworks that use projection as an element to provoke emerging disorientation as a queer experience within moving image installations. I employ an analysis informed by queer phenomenology and autoethnography and connected with queer methodological accounts of life-writing, self-narration and the use of a first-person voice in academia. This first section of the introduction explores the key concepts that are underscored in the full thesis (projection, queer, queer phenomenology, and affect) and ends by stating my research question and original contribution to knowledge. The next sections consist of my literature review, methodology, and an outline of the chapters.

I start the exploration of key concepts by stating that, since 2002, key literature around projection (Iles, 2002; Doanne, 2009; Mondloch, 2010; Balsom, 2013; Bruno, 2014; Butler, 2019) has described the experience of projective moving image installations as disorientating but lacked in addressing the complex meanings of the disorientation. Most of the literature published in the first eleven years of the 2000s (for instance Iles, 2002; Turvey *et al.*, 2003; Paini, 2004; Kotz, 2008; Knapstein, 2006; Gunning, 2009; Nash, 2009; Trodd, 2011; Walsh, 2011) implements an analysis based on psychoanalytical concepts of projection, departing from rigid differences between a presumably phenomenological aspect of multiple-projection artworks and psychoanalytical approaches to the experience of single-projection. This situation created binary approaches to understanding the complex experience within projective moving image installations, the most common being the idea that a body that is apparently motionless and absorbed in the moving image and a body that is wandering around the gallery are shaped by radically different affective experiences. However, other scholars in the second decade of the 2000s (Ross, 2011; Mondloch, 2010; Balsom, 2013; Bruno, 2014; Elwes, 2015; Butler, 2019) developed an approach to moving image

installations through a less binary position, which will be further explored in my literature review. Therefore, it is important to indicate how projection is understood in my research.

According to Mary Ann Doanne (2009), projection is mostly understood as follows

To project is literally to throw forward (the distance between projector and screen is called a “throw” by projectionists). In geometry, the term fixes a certain conceptualization of space and vision in relation to points and lines. A straight line or “ray” connects each point of a figure to an intercepting surface or plane – the resulting image is a projection of the original (...). A basic assumption here is the transformation, the alchemic transmogrification as it were, of the three-dimensional space into two-dimensional space, a mapping or reduction of sensory, tactile space into purely visual space (...). (Doane, 2009, p. 157).

Doanne (2009) bases this widespread concept of projection on the process of codifying the three-dimensional world in two-dimensional images. However, Doanne (2009) argues that works such as *Line Describing a Cone* (1973) by Anthony McCall have challenged this notion by exposing the mechanisms forming the act of projecting images, focusing on light as a phenomenological element with which the audience’s bodies can interact. Drawing on Doanne’s (2009) accounts, my thesis goes beyond the idea of projection as solely an image, focusing on projective moving image installation as a social space, as claimed by some of the literature around the uses of projection in contemporary art (Turvey *et al.*, 2003; Cubitt, 2007; Connolly, 2009; Lütticken, 2009; Venturi, 2013; Balsom, 2013; Bruno, 2014; Ferreira, 2015; Noble-Olson, 2016).

Therefore, I understand projected moving images in my thesis as an element composed of what Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (2003) calls a ‘magnetic queerness’ (Sedgwick, 2003, p. 33), producing deviant, and I add disorientating, relationalities. In the art gallery, projected moving images are a sort of affective magnet that acts as a conduit to generate the gathering of people, creating social spaces and allowing the emergence of spatial and corporeal affective explorations. A queerness of both projection and moving image emerges

from their *becoming* qualities, their fluid and malleable aspects (Cubitt, 2007; Bruno, 2014), concepts that are usually associated with the idea of queer (McCallum and Tuhkanen, 2011; Baker, 2013; Sewell, 2014; Ilmonen and Juvoen, 2015). I explore *becoming* as the unfixed, adaptable, and constantly moving quality of queer objects, which suitably describes the combination between projection and moving image. Sean Cubitt (2007) argues that projection is a *becoming* of a new world, not simply the translation of the three-dimensional world in a bi-dimensional image, but a possibility to access non-accurate versions of the world from relationalities we normally do not access. Cubitt (2007) highlights projection's malleability and immateriality, meaning adaptability to a diversity of surfaces potentially leading to a high level of experimentation with space.

Concurrently, Giuliana Bruno (2014) argues that moving images are essentially a movement of surfaces (the textures, plasticity, colours and other elements in the moving image) that change with time and that projection causes these surfaces to *become* screens. Bruno (2014) understands *becoming* as a 'connective, pervasive, or enveloping substance' (Bruno, 2014, p. 05) that exists between projection and the moving image to reconfigure spaces through contact with architecture, objects and bodies. Hence, I argue that the contact between the becoming qualities of both projection and moving image prompt a closer relationship with fleeting or sustained temporalities in the art gallery, enhancing a magnetic queerness through the combined concept projective moving images, orientating people towards affective gatherings to experience the temporality of *becoming*.

Along with the qualities of becoming, the use of projection as a large-scale element in moving image installations plays a crucial role in the prompting of gatherings. Erika Balsom (2013) argues that moving images in monitors are usually watched by one or a small number of viewers, identifying the practice of video art and its connections with the private context of domestic furniture and maintaining distinctions with architecture, even if publicly exhibited

in an art gallery. Conversely, projection to Balsom (2013) would be a ‘public image’, one that is not confined to a monitor and merges with architecture. My thesis explores this context of large-scale projections in comparison to the viewers' bodies. Nevertheless, instead of approaching projection as a public image, I prefer to understand projection in moving image installations as the magnetic element that facilitates the emergence of a ‘public intimacy’ (Bruno, 2014, p. 148), the sharing of intimate encounters with artworks that troubles the binary private and public and focuses on the connection between them, an ‘(...) intimacy of shared experience’ (Macdonald, 2014, p. 68).

I employ this conceptualization of projection to highlight the queer phenomenological aspects of the disorientated experience within projective moving image installations. This means understanding the fluid experience in these environments as informed by both absorption and wandering as a movement that is non-hierarchical and non-binary in terms of affective and critical engagements that lead to a process of disorientation. For instance, seating absorbed and immobile in front of a single-screen projection in the gallery presumes a visceral movement that can lead to disorientation, whilst wandering around the gallery results in fleeting moments of absorption that can disorientate the body. In these cases, the queer affective experience of a body’s responding to disorientated moments are vectors for kinaesthetic engagements that make the body feel ‘out of place’, disorientated, and thus experience queerness. Queer phenomenology in my research is a possibility to engage with my disorientated experience within projective moving image installations. Consequently, I would like to define my approach to the concepts of ‘queer’ and ‘queer phenomenology’.

I start by emphasising my connection with queer as stated in Sara Ahmed’s (2006) queer phenomenology: a mode of becoming oblique and thus experiencing the world from misaligned perspectives. Ahmed (2006) argues that this act is the result of movement, as a crucial tactic to twist our existence. As I will explore further in my thesis, queer has a strong

connection with spatial qualities, and according to Ahmed (2006), the word ‘twist’ is a particularly powerful mode to describe the results of queerly navigating the world whilst having a commitment to challenge discreet and normative social structures. Movement has twisted my experiences as a queer Latinx American man on the way to different places. In the process of moving and travelling between places and languages, the meanings of ‘queer’ became apparent to me in this research as an overlap of affective elements that move across sexuality, class, race, language, nationality, and the phenomenological movements towards projective artworks that exceed, encompass, and can expose these overlaps.

*Across* is not an arbitrarily chosen word to describe these overlaps. Sedgwick (2011) defines ‘queer’ as a troubling and transitive state of movement that uses these *across*, relational and interdisciplinary approaches to twist cultural hegemonies. Concurrently, ‘looking across’ can engender issues of disidentification (Muñoz, 1999), creating important mechanisms to reinvigorate the initial historical developments of queer theory. José Esteban Muñoz (1999) approaches disidentification as a process that ‘is meant to offer a lens to elucidate minoritarian politics that is not monocausal or monothematic’ (Muñoz, 1999, p. 08), thus complicating the meanings of queer and including a multiplicity of identities that relate to dominant cultural codes whilst avoiding assimilation. According to Muñoz (1999), to disidentify is to see yourself amidst cultural codes you do not belong to whilst having to act on and rethink these encoded implications for your life.

Thinking through disidentification with one-dimensional understandings of queerness is an important strategy to start disorientating the meanings of queer, departing from a stable position of ‘being gay’, as I tend to identify myself, to approach queerness as a broader form of cultural critique. For instance, the queer affects that emerged initially in my life from the issues of ‘feeling gay’ whilst living in Brazil, the country with the highest number of LGBTQIAPN+phobic crimes, was reorientated towards being a ‘foreigner’ whilst living in

Scotland. However, ‘being gay’ has shaped my modes of navigating the world, as it has for many people, all of us looking for a community and similarities through identifying with such categories until we face a complex situation that mirrors the first axiom explored by Sedgwick (2008) in *Epistemology of the Closet*: ‘People are different from each other’ (Sedgwick, 2008, p. 22). As Sedgwick (2011) states, queer theory has taken directions that include discussions far beyond non-normative sexual identities and practices, approaching intersections with gender, race, nationality, and class.

However, excluding these sexualities that challenge heteronormativity from the centrality of queer theory would be a mode to ‘evaporate any possibility of queerness itself’ (Sedgwick, 2011, p. 200). Therefore, in dialogue with Sedgwick (2011) and Ahmed (2006), my second approach to the word ‘queer’ relates to sexual identities and practices that are included in the acronym LGBTQIAPN+<sup>1</sup>, a community in which I include myself as a gay man that navigates queerness in these intersectionalities, employing self-identifications that move between being gay, being queer, and acting queer. Queer is thus understood as an unstable mode of self-identification and a verb, challenging established categories such as ‘gay’ and other normative and oppressive structures that prevent queer lives from moving in the social, affective, and theoretical realm. Therefore, instability configures what most theorists understand as ‘queer’. Another key concept for my thesis, instability, has an undeniable connection with disorientation as understood by Ahmed’s (2006) queer phenomenology, described as follows:

A queer phenomenology might involve an orientation toward what slips, which allows what slips to pass through, in the unknowable length of its duration. In other words, a queer phenomenology would function as a disorientation device; it would not overcome the ‘disalignment’ of the horizontal and vertical axes, allowing the oblique to open up another angle on the world. (Ahmed, 2006, p.

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<sup>1</sup> Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender/Transexual, Queer, Intersex, Asexual, Pansexual, Non-binary and the intersections with race and class.

172).

A queer phenomenology would involve an orientation toward queer, a way of inhabiting the world by giving ‘support’ to those whose lives and loves make them appear oblique, strange, and out of place. (Ahmed, 2006, p. 179)

In the above statement, Ahmed (2006) claims that queer phenomenology is a mode of analysis that considers an orientation towards what is queer in a lived experience. With disorientation being a crucial concept for queer phenomenology, and implemented to describe the experience within projective moving image installation, the relevance of approximating these two contexts in my research becomes clearer. By using queer phenomenology as my main theoretical and methodological framework, I include my thesis in the realm of an affective turn of queer theory. According to Kent L. Brintnall *et al.* (2017), a turn of queer theory towards affect is traced back to the middle of the 1990s with Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank’s essay *Shame in the Cybernetic Fold* (2003 [originally published in 1995]) and includes authors such as José Esteban Muñoz (1996, 1999), Ann Cvetkovich (2003, 2012, 2021), Sara Ahmed (2006, 2010), Heather Love (2007), Lauren Berlant (2011), and Denilson Lopes (2016).

An affective turn of queer theory connects with a broader turn within a critical and cultural theory that, as Patricia T. Clough (2010) indicates, is a reaction to the lack of involvement of poststructuralism in the realm of affects, emotion, and the material body. In queer theory, this poststructuralist approach is mostly represented by the early work of Judith Butler (2007, 2011). This does not undermine the role of Butler’s (2007, 2011) theories in the work of scholars that focus on queer affects. For instance, Sara Ahmed’s queer phenomenology draws on Butler’s (2007, 2011) work on repetition to discuss the formation of tendencies, histories and sedimentations that orientate our bodies. However, in this thesis, I focus specifically on queer phenomenology as part of a concern with affects that the work of

Butler (1993, 1994) does not address.

Sedgwick (2003) states that, contrary to drives, affects do not have a relationship with a specific object, exemplifying that ‘the drives are relatively narrowly constrained in their aims: breathing will not satisfy my hunger, nor will sleeping satisfy my need to excrete waste’ (Sedgwick, 2003, p. 18). Sedgwick (2003) draws attention to the fact that affects are more fluid and informed by greater freedom since they exist through countless relationships with numerous objects. Whilst drives such as thirst can only be overcome by drinking liquids, affects such as anxiety, fear, anger, pleasure, can emerge in the relationship with many different situations that are ambivalent, as ‘one can be excited by anger, disgusted by shame, or surprised by joy’ (Sedgwick, 2003, p. 19). Queer affects are forces that highlight this ambivalence, meaning the embracing and re-orientation of negative affects that emerge in the process of disorientation. According to Sedgwick (2003), an affect theory is a mode to amplify these affects by inserting a tautological analysis, as if putting these affects under a microscope and exploring the most fleeting elements of lived experiences. Affect theory in general understands affect as follows:

Affect (...) is the name we give to those forces – visceral forces beneath, alongside, or generally *other than* conscious knowing, vital forces insisting beyond emotion – that can serve to drive us towards movement, toward thought and extension, that can likewise suspend us (as if in neutral) across a barely registering accretion of force-relations, or that can even leave us overwhelmed by the world’s apparent intractability. Indeed, affect is persistent proof of a body’s never less than ongoing immersion in and among the world’s obstinacies and rhythms, its refusals as much as its invitations. (...) Affect is in many ways synonymous with *force* or *forces of encounter*. (...) Affect is born in *in-between-ness* and resides as accumulative *beside-ness*. (Seigworth and Gregg, 2010, pp. 01-02).

In a queer phenomenological approach to this context, as I employ in my thesis, affects are understood in dialogue with the above mentioned fleeting, untouchable,



unmeasurable, visceral forces that move us. However, a queer phenomenology does not lose sight of how affects appear, at the same time, as a result of and an orientation towards the histories and sedimentations (class, gender, race, sexuality, nationality) of our bodies and the encounters with objects in the world, including the disorientated encounters with projection within moving image installations. To address this context, the research question that orientates this thesis is: How can disorientation facilitate an understanding of queer affective experiences within projective moving image installations?

In addressing this question, my original contribution to knowledge resides in the understanding of projective moving image installations as disorientation devices, as projection is formed by a magnetic queerness that creates fleeting disorientations and prompts the gathering of people in the gallery whilst sharing fluid disorientated experiences that undermine the binarisms mostly used to describe these moments, of which absorption and wandering are the most common. Consequently, this process is described as a queer affective experience informed by a fluid movement between queer kinaesthetic engagements and the histories and sedimentations of bodies. The analysis of artworks in this thesis is located in the realm of what Sedgwick (1998) calls experimental critical writing, aiming to challenge the ‘boundaries between genres, between “critical” and “creative” writing, between private and public address, between argumentation and performance, between individual and collaborative production’ (Sedgwick, 1998, p. 104). The remainder of this introduction presents my literature review and methodology.

## **1. Literature review**

The first section of this literature review is a ‘scoping review’ (Xiao and Watson,

2019), providing a short theoretical and historical framework about approaches to projection in contemporary art. This is to identify frequent discussions and indicate the gap in the field of knowledge in this literature. As stated before, within the bodies of literature I examined, the idea of disorientation appears as a means to describe the corporeal experience within projective moving image installations. Nevertheless, this concept is not overtly discussed, and what these authors mean when they consider the encounter with projection as a disorientated experience is unclear. I included texts in which projection is understood as an intermedia category and is thus not concerned with discussions of medium specificity. Consequently, I have excluded literature that understands projection solely from within particular fields such as expanded cinema, video art, new media art, and digital art. Furthermore, my research is concerned with the use of projection in a gallery-based context, which excludes contemporary approaches to projection in contexts such as performance (Walley, 2012), the cinema theatre (Campan, 2014; Menotti and Crisp, 2020) and urban spaces (Dell’Aria, 2021). The literature selected for this first section comprises book chapters, edited books, monographic books, peer-reviewed articles and essays for exhibition catalogues. Rather than implementing an exhaustive review of each of the sources, I explored this literature through themes and key texts that connect certain historical periods and theoretical approaches to moving image art.

The second section of the literature review unfolds the concept of disorientation, particularly as it is theorised within the field of queer phenomenology. Therefore, the use of queer phenomenology in my thesis, mainly through the work of Sara Ahmed (2006) and Katharina Lindner (2012; 2018), includes the methodological possibility to build up a critical analysis of moving image art that connects the experience of the projection-related disorientation as described in the literature and the disorientations that shape queer lives. This theoretical alliance can help foster queer insights that challenge phenomenology’s universalist

ideas of the bodily experience (in this thesis, regarding moving image installations), a challenge discussed further in the methodological section of this introduction. Thus, this second and the third section explore the theoretical framework for the analysis of the case studies in the following chapters, which will suitably provide a demonstration of my research's original contribution to knowledge. In the third section, a key text is the book *Film Bodies: Queer Feminist Encounters with Gender and Sexuality in Cinema* (2018) by Katharina Lindner. Lindner's work has proved to be one of the most useful sources for my thesis as she pioneered combined queer phenomenological discussions with the analysis of moving images.

However, Lindner's analysis is based on cinema, which differs significantly from a gallery-based context. To address this issue, I included recent literature on the relationship between queer phenomenology, affect and moving image installation, published by Albertine Fox (2019), Alison Butler (2019), and Ann Cvetkovich, (2021). In the next section, I briefly explore some key themes that emerged in the literature published since 2001, which helped in building a scholarship around projection in the field of moving image art. I will illustrate the shift from 'projective installations' (Iles, 2002; Turvey *et al.* 2003; Douglas and Eamon, 2009) to the use of projection as an element in the contemporary context of moving image installations (Mondloch, 2010, 2011; Balsom, 2013; Elwes, 2014; Butler, 2019).

### **1.1. From projected image to projective moving image installation**

In the first decade of the 2000s, some exhibitions were held in an attempt to explore the role of projection in a gallery-based context. In 2001, Chrissie Iles curated the exhibition *Into the Light: The Projected Image in American Art 1964-1977* at The Whitney Museum of

American Art in New York City (USA), and according to Tamara Trodd (2011), this was the first large exhibition to discuss what Trodd called ‘projected image’ as a category of contemporary art, towards an exploration of what Iles (2002) called ‘projective installations’. According to Maxwell L. Anderson (2002), the exhibition focused on projective artworks produced in the USA during the 1960s and 1970s, including the works of artists such as Michael Snow, Paul Sharits, Andy Warhol, Joan Jonas, Robert Whitman, Yoko Ono, Mary Lucier and Gary Hill.

In the exhibition catalogue’s essay *Between Still and Moving Image*, Chrissie Iles (2002) recalls the important role of the Minimalist movement in the 1960s for the shift of engagement from the two-dimensional space of painting to the architectural and object-based spatial experience. Iles (2002) argues that this shift has paved a way for the context known as Postminimalist art, in which ‘Projections and video screens are presented on and around the walls of the gallery – split, overlapping, multiplied, serialized, mirrored, rotated, made miniature or gigantic’ (Iles, 2002, p. 34). Iles (2002) states that in most of these multiple, fragmented and live projective works, the space is no longer a place where the spectator simply co-exists with the image, but instead, their body is surrounded and dominated by the projection, a perspective shared by other scholars in the 2000s (Zummer, 2002; Colomina, 2009; Jäger, 2009; Douglas and Eamon, 2009).

In 2003, not long after this exhibition was held, scholars in the field of art history and film studies fostered the exploration of the role of projection in the art gallery in a roundtable titled *The Projected Image in Contemporary Art*, published in the academic journal *October*. Participants included Malcolm Turvey, Hall Foster, Chrissie Iles, George Baker, Matthew Buckingham and Anthony McCall. In this publication, Turvey (2003) used the term “‘projected image’ installations’ (Turvey *et al.*, 2003, p. 71) to refer to the practice of using projective technologies, arguing that they opened the possibility for the construction of social

spaces since the shared physical space of the gallery was crucial for the exhibition of the artworks, an approach that would be implemented by several scholars in the following years (Turvey et al., 2003; Cubitt, 2007; Connolly, 2009; Lütticken, 2009; Venturi, 2013; Balsom, 2013; Bruno, 2014; Ferreira, 2015; Noble-Olson, 2016). This roundtable, along with the previously mentioned exhibition and its respective catalogue, set the first scenario for the emergence of a scholarship specifically concerned with understanding projective installations as an intermedia category in contemporary art.

Subsequently, the exhibitions *Into the Light: The Projected Image in American Art 1964-1977* (2001) and *X-Screen: Film Installations and Actions in the 1960s and 1970s*<sup>2</sup> (2004), the latter curated by Mattias Michalka, are cited in the catalogue of another important survey exhibition of projective installations named *Beyond Cinema: The Art of Projection*<sup>3</sup> (2006), curated by Stan Douglas, Christopher Eamon, Joachim Jäger and Gabriele Knapstein. Stan Douglas (2006) indicates the importance of the first two exhibitions to the establishment of a curatorial field to explore the projected image but argues that they failed in comparing historical artworks from the 1960s and 1970s with works produced from the 1990s onwards. Douglas *et al.* (2006, pp. 11-12) state that *Beyond Cinema* included works produced between 1963 and 2005, aiming to discuss how the ‘art of projection’ incorporated the architecture of the gallery as an element that could be used to explore multiple simultaneous narratives in which the moving image shared the desire to destabilise the idea of the gallery as a white cube (Douglas, *et al.*, p. 10).

In challenging the gallery as an ostensibly neutral white cube, these works also exposed the ideological mechanisms that form this space. Erika Balsom (2013) characterises the modernist idea of the art gallery as informed by a certain erudition, where ‘The light level is higher and the visitor wanders at will, perhaps speaking to a companion’ (Balsom, 2013, p.

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<sup>2</sup> Held at the Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Wien (Vienna)

<sup>3</sup> Held at the Hamburger Bahnhof Museum (Berlin)

39). In turn, the architecture of the modern gallery as a white cube (a model used until the present) reinforces the possibility to incarnate the modernist desire for an autonomy of the artwork as exhibited in this space. This means an artwork disconnected from the world ‘outside’ and, thus, non-contaminated by mass culture (Balsom, 2013). The modernist art gallery is a ‘blend of neutrality, objectivity, timelessness, and sanctity: a paradoxical combination that makes claim to rationality and detachment while also conferring a quasi-mystical value and significance upon the work’ (Bishop, 2018, p. 29). As a response to these modernist arguments, several scholars (for example O’Doherty, 1986 [1976]; Uroskie, 2011; Balsom, 2013; Bishop, 2018; Butler, 2019) indicate that the art gallery is, instead, a space formed by an institutional framing, expressing political points of view and, according to Balsom (2013) and Claire Bishop (2018), producing a specific viewing subject.

Some other scholars (for example Butler, 2019; Bishop, 2018), whilst engaging in the discussion of the gallery as a white cube, focus on the role of contemporary technologies in rearticulating the ideological performance of the modern gallery. Alison Butler (2019) indicates how the moving image, an element that usually refers to something outside the white cube (a deictic characteristic), necessarily provides a context to the artwork and thereby undermines the modernist desire for neutrality. Bishop (2018) goes even further in the discussion by articulating the concept of the grey zone: the introduction of emergent technologies (such as smartphones) in the white cube has created a nebulous environment where spectatorship becomes a zone of negotiation between attention and inattention, ‘expressing the extent to which audiences are always distracted’ (Bishop, 2018, p. 39). Further, ‘distraction is just another form of attention’ (Bishop, 2018, p. 39), an idea that opens space for considering the art-gallery experience as a considerably more fluid encounter with artworks, as will be argued throughout my thesis.

Bishop's (2018) studies, as well as the main arguments of my thesis, connect with an emergent mode of institutional critique less worried about dethroning potentially conservative political framings of the art world institutions, as argued by Douglas et al. (2006), and focus on what Verónica Tello (2020) understands as transversal and extra-disciplinary modes of critique. According to Tello (2020), a new wave of institutional critique 'has shifted its focus from questioning the autonomy of art towards the potentiality of wild heteronomy – and with that the construction of infrastructures that enable experimental social assemblages' (Tello, 2020, p. 648). Instead of criticising the institution and hoping for its change, Tello (2020) indicates that contemporary voices in institutional critique become parallel and transversal institutional builders through acts of spectatorship in these institutions, with a focus on social commitment and a re-imagination of these organisations through creative forms of spatial occupation, criticism, and art making.

Subsequently, the tendency to explore the projected image as a specific intermedia category in contemporary art runs through the first decade of the 2000s<sup>4</sup>, drawing on the pioneer curatorial and critical work of Chrissie Iles (2002). The book *Art of Projection* (2009), edited by Stan Douglas and Christopher Eamon, was published to '(...) trace the prehistory, precedents, and current condition of film and video art within a particular emphasis on projected pictures that challenge the conventions of industrial cinema' (Douglas and Eamon, 2009, p. 08). Composed of ten essays, this book approached the 'art of projection' through discussions of projective installations concerning rearticulations of the early and contemporary cinematic dispositive (Gunning, 2009; Doanne, 2009), the role of multiple- stimuli as a matter of distraction (Colomina, 2009; Joseph, 2009), the performativity of the screen (Bal, 2009), the post-medium condition (Nash, 2009), and projection as the centre of attention (Stemmrch, 2009) or as an element that prompts the emergence of areas of

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<sup>4</sup> For instance, in the Works of Iles (2002), Turvey et al. (2003), Pains (2004), Knapstein (2006), Jager (2006), Hirsch (2006), Douglas and Eamon (2009).

conviviality (Lütticken, 2009).

Sven Lütticken's (2009) article is of particular interest for this research as it highlights how projection can act as an element that brings people together in the gallery, as previously claimed by Chrissie Iles (2002) and Malcom Turvey (2003). Lütticken (2009) argues that in works emerging from the 1990s some artists produced slower, contemplative and reflexive moving images, such as in *24 Hour Psycho* (1996) by Douglas Gordon, which differed from the multiple-stimuli environments of the 1960s and 1970s installations. Due to the emergence of this slow, extended time that could bring people together in front of projections for a longer period, Lütticken (2009) claims that areas of conviviality emerged in the gallery, where collective experiences became the main mode of sociability.

Meanwhile, the artworks produced in the 1990s provoked the emergence of theoretical shifts in the scholarship around moving images and projection. From the middle to the end of the 2000s and at the beginning of the 2010s, three main segments of scholarship appeared concomitantly. Firstly, some scholars fostered the exploration of the relationship between projection, moving image and the cinematic, either through understanding the concept as related to a specific spatial and experiential dispositive (Doanne, 2009; Balsom, 2013) or through the appropriation of mainstream cinema's content and cultural forms (Hüsch, 2006; Smith, 2007, 2008; Conolly, 2009). Secondly, there was an attempt to revive and maintain a discussion around the projected image as an intermedia category of contemporary art (Trodd, 2011). A third segment appeared in the work of Kate Mondloch (2010) and her concept of screen-reliant installation art, which deviated from nomenclatures such as a projected image or projected installation and from the approach to cinematic concerns. This last approach appeared in published articles that understand projection as a system (Venturi, 2013; Balsom, 2015; Venetsjanou, 2017), and subsequent approximations to the concept of moving image installation (Elwes, 2015; Butler, 2019). These three theoretical



moments are briefly explored in the remainder of this section to locate my thesis in the contemporary realm of the projective moving image installation.

Regarding the first segment, Andrew V. Uroskie (2011) states that in the 1990s artworks towards ‘an aesthetics of ‘the cinematic’<sup>5</sup> (Uroskie, 2011, p. 145) emerged. Erika Balsom’s book *Exhibiting Cinema in Contemporary Art* (2013) became a reference for the discussion of this context, which Balsom (2013) refers to as artists’ cinema, overcoming the idea of video art due to the proliferation of projective technologies in moving image installations. However, even before the appearance of Balsom’s (2013) publication, other scholars had approached this cinematic situation, such as in the book *The Place of Artists’ Cinema*, published in 2009 by Maeve Connolly. In an article released in 2016, Connolly indicates an approximation to the concept of cinematic as not necessarily related to a metaphor of embodiment (Shaviro, 1993) or the idea of cinema as a live event (Doanne, 2009, 2012; Balsom, 2017). Connolly (2009, 2016) understands ‘the cinematic’ (Connolly, 2016, p. 02) as the process that goes beyond the technological and explores the arena of cinema as a cultural form without necessarily claiming to be part of this context. Connolly (2009, p. 09) uses the term ‘artists’ cinema’ to highlight a specific type of moving image that approximates the histories, methods of production, memories, and experiences of cinema in the realm of contemporary art, an approach that developed throughout the work of other scholars (Smith, 2007, 2008; Cruz, 2011; Balsom, 2013). In this context, the study of projection as a cinematic technology moves on to advance an understanding of elements such as storytelling, circulation, funding, and appropriation of mainstream cinema content.

Tamara Trodd’s edited book *Screen/Space: The Projected Image in Contemporary Art* (2011) represents the second segment, a key literature aiming to understand the

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<sup>5</sup> According to Erika Balsom (2013), this aesthetic has an important historical point of reference: the exhibition *Passage de l’image*, curated by Raymond Bellour, Catherine David, and Christine Assche, and held at the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris (France) in 1990.

developments of the projected image as a specific category, reviving the discussions that Chrissie Iles started in 2002. This book expands on Iles' (2002) concerns to address what Trodd (2011) calls an 'expanded situation for 'projected images'' (Trodd, 2011, p. 16) that emerges directly related to the rise of digital technologies. Deviating from the previously cinematic trend, Trodd (2011) reunited essays that approach projection in a much more interdisciplinary mode, turning this publication into an important theoretical transition from the idea of the projected image to an understanding of projection in a context of moving image installation and affective experiences, which is implied in the essays of Andrew V. Uroskie (2011), Kate Mondloch (2011) and Christine Ross (2011).

In the article published in Trodd's (2011) edited collection, Mondloch (2011) deviates from the idea of the projected image to explore the term 'screen-reliant installation art', previously coined in her 2010 book *Screens: Viewing Media Installation Art*. Although Mondloch's (2010) study does not specifically address the exploration of projection, her book highlights some of the nomenclatures that emerged in the new millennium to address the presence of projection and moving images in art galleries, such as media installation art, projected moving image installations, and film and video installations. Mondloch (2010) coined the term 'screen-reliant installation art' to indicate the intermedia approach undertaken in the book, in which the projected moving image installation, my main focus of study, conforms to only one style of contemporary production in a gallery-based context. Mondloch's (2010) justifies the creation of this term as an attempt to address a shift from a screen-based approach, pointing out the screen as a performative category that can exist on a variety of surfaces, highlighting projection's malleable characteristic as capable of turning these surfaces into screens.

From a similar perspective, the main thesis of Giuliana Bruno's book *Surface: Matters of Aesthetics, Materiality, and Media* (2014) is that projection can be understood as a

landscape. According to Bruno (2014), like the experience of seeing a landscape, facing projection allows us to feel the passing of time and the changing of light and to experience duration as an external and internal phenomenon in which we can dwell. Bruno (2014) approaches projection as a *becoming* screen concerning several possible surfaces, which connects Bruno's (2014) work with Mondloch's (2010) arguments. However, Bruno (2014) understands the projection as a surface. The concept of the surface appears in the tense encounter of light, architecture, objects, and bodies, resulting in Bruno's (2014) claim of the emergence of a public intimacy through this relationality on the surface.

In the most recent developments in the discipline of moving image art, Catherine Elwes (2015) and Alison Butler (2019) tangentially explore the use of projection in a context they call 'moving image installations'. According to Elwes (2015), a moving image installation 'invites a viewer physically to enter a work that takes account of the setting of the screened event' (Elwes, 2015, p. 03), in which projection is seen as one more element among a variety of others that can compose the space, such as screens, computers, speakers, and other objects. Butler (2019) explores the same context, arguing that moving image installations have a deictic characteristic, which means being physically in a place whilst affectively displaced towards somewhere else outside the gallery through the contact with the projected image. Therefore, Butler (2019) approaches projection as a sort of interface that connects the distant locations presented in the moving image with the gallery in which the viewer is located.

Noticeably, the most recent theoretical developments in the field of moving image art have been focusing less on the role of projection in moving image installations. I developed this short review to locate my research amongst the scholars mentioned and to establish a theoretical dialogue with contemporary approaches to moving image installation, which most evidently appear in the works of Elwes (2015) and Butler (2019) and are implied in the

writings of Balsom (2013) and Bruno (2014). In conclusion, I would like to highlight that I have not used the term “projective moving image installation” throughout my thesis as an attempt to create a new concept referring to this context in the gallery. Instead, I use this term as a form of delimitating what type of case studies are analysed in this research, i.e. installations that include projective moving images, therefore excluding installations that use exclusively monitor-based works or still-image projections. As I argued elsewhere in this text, projection in moving image installations is composed of a ‘magnetic queerness’ (Sedgwick, 2003, p. 33), which potentially produces disorientating (and thus queer) experiences in the art gallery, the main phenomenon studied in my thesis.

## **1.2. Projective moving image installation as disorientation device**

In this section I will briefly indicate how some of the scholars mentioned in the previous section use the concept of disorientation, either explicitly or implicitly, to refer to the experience with projection in moving image installations. As previously mentioned, this concept is under-theorised by these scholars, as it is not clear what they mean by being disorientated in projective moving image installations, a gap that my thesis aims to address by discussing disorientation from a queer phenomenological perspective. Whilst the most recent literature (Balsom, 2013; Bruno 2014; Elwes, 2015; Butler, 2019) uses the word ‘disorientation’ directly to address the experience in projective moving image installations in the analysis of case studies, the literature on projective installation from the beginning of the 2000s use concepts implicitly related to the idea of being disorientated.

Therefore, I follow Ami Harbin (2016) in understanding disorientation as a ‘family resemblance concept’ (Harbin, 2016, p. 18). According to Harbin (2016), a variety of modes

can exist for understanding disorientation as a phenomenon, which means the implementation of different terms to refer to similar experiences. For instance, if disorientation is a matter of a ‘failed orientation’ (Ahmed, 2006) that prompts the body to feel out of place and navigate the world through misaligned perspectives, disorientation can be understood through an exploration of its counterpart concepts, orientation and re-orientation. Other terms to describe similar experiences, such as ‘confusion’ or ‘decentralisation’, refer to similar responses to certain environments.

In the literature from the first decade of the 2000s, expressions such as ‘orientation’ (Cubitt, 2007), ‘loss of a centre’ (Iles, 2002), ‘loss of location’ (Doanne, 2009), and ‘dismantling’ (Joselit, 2009) and direct reference to the concept of disorientation (Iles, 2002; Cubitt, 2007; Doanne, 2009; Connolly, 2009; Mondloch, 2010) appear. In the literature of the second decade of the 2000s, ‘disorientation’ explicitly and repetitively appears as a mode to describe these experiences, as in the work of Balsom (2013), Bruno (2014), Connolly (2016), Elwes (2015), and Butler (2019). Through the exploration of this context, I revive my argument that projective moving image installations are disorientation devices due to the projection’s magnetic queerness, which brings people together to experience disorientation.

Disorientation, therefore, appears in the description of a variety of case studies explored in the previously mentioned literature. Chrissie Iles (2002) analyses *Spinning spheres* (1970) by Bruce Nauman, mentioning that this work ‘confounds the body’s ability to locate itself in space according to tangible coordinates. As in so many of his works, the resulting *disorientation* [emphasis added] pushes the viewer not only out of the image but also, potentially, out of the room itself’ (Iles, 2002, p. 38). Iles (2002) analyses bodily experiences through the psychoanalytical notion of double, especially in works from the 1970s that use real-time feedback and video technology to disorientate the viewers’ bodies by including them in the projected image. This highlights the doubleness of a subjectivity that

exists both in the physical space of the gallery and as a representation in the moving image that only appear through the intermediation of projection as a spatial interface.

Mary Ann Doanne (2009) states that these psychoanalytical approaches to projection are closely linked to apparatus theory<sup>6</sup>, which emerged in the 1970s and aims at approximating the cinematic experience with the viewer's subjectivity. Doane (2009) states that in this context cinema is understood as the encounter between the technical projective apparatus and the audience's projective consciousness concerning the exhibited image and a subjective projection of the self onto the screen. Doane (2009) states that, from a Freudian perspective, the concept of projection allows the comprehension of the process of dematerialisation of the body's sensation onto an object of attention, meaning a fragilization between the internal and the external limits. This psychoanalytical approach normally appears in the literature about projection in contemporary art in the work of scholars that published from 2001 to 2011 (Iles, 2002; Turvey *et al.*, 2003; Pains, 2004; Kotz, 2008; Stemmerich, 2009; Trodd, 2011; Walsh, 2011). Mary Ann Doanne (2009) approximates a phenomenological approach to disorientation and projection by stating that works such as *Line Describing a Cone* (1973) by Anthony McCall challenge this psychoanalytical concept of projection as they 'deal directly with the loss of location of the image so that, even whilst it could be said that these works are radically not about the image, they are about spatial *disorientation* [emphasis added] caused by the projection of the image' (Doanne, 2009, p. 165). Consequently, in my thesis, I deviate from the psychoanalytical approach to projection to build an analysis based on affective relationships that emerge from a queer phenomenological framework.

One of the main results of this initial approach to psychoanalysis in the literature around projection was the emergence of certain binaries to address the experience in

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<sup>6</sup> For further exploration see the text *Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus*, by Jean-Louis Baudry and Alan Williams (1974-1975).

projective installations. This mainly refers to a complete separation of the experiences that would be considered phenomenological because based on the movement of the viewer in the gallery (as in works that use multiple-projections), and the necessity to understand projection through a psychoanalytical approach in the experience with works that use single-projections and apply elements such as storytelling, which would presume the need of greater concentration. Some accounts (Turvey *et al.*, 2003; Nash, 2009) address a presumable experience of absorption emerging from the contact with works of the 1990s onwards as too passive and lacking on corporeal engagement, whilst others (Colomina, 2009; Nash, 2009) argue that the process of wandering around the gallery results in a distracted viewer that lacks critical engagement with the moving image. This highlights the binary wandering and absorption as the one most commonly used in the work of scholars writing in the field of moving image installation, even if not directly or explicitly attached to psychoanalytical or phenomenological frameworks.

However, the literature that emerged in the second decade of the 2000s (Balsom, 2013; Bruno, 2014; MacDonald, 2014; Elwes, 2015; Butler, 2019) challenges these binarisms by arguing that a process of absorption does not mean a lack of corporeal involvement, and that wandering around the gallery does not necessarily equate to a lack of critical engagement. This literature uses disorientation to describe the experience within projective moving image installations whilst developing discussions that undermine this binarism. However, disorientation as a phenomenological concept remains unexplored even in this context, as it is always only briefly mentioned to describe the experience with selected artworks. Butler (2019), for example, describes the work *Where is Where?* (2008) by Eijja-Liisa Ahtila as ‘designed to combine a forceful sensory impact with an embodied sense of *disorientation* [emphasis added]’ (Butler, 2019, p. 02), an experience used to describe other works such as *NOW* (2015) by Chantal Akerman, and *Ten Thousand Waves* (2010) by Isaac

Julien. This short review of the appearance of the concept of disorientation reinforces its recurrence in the literature, showing the necessity to advance a more profound exploration of the role of disorientation in projective moving image installations, a work that my thesis proposes to undertake through a queer phenomenological framework.

### **1.3. Notes on methodology**

The previously explored literature approaches the analysis of artworks through case study methods at different levels, which highlights the relevance of using case studies to advance theoretical concerns in my thesis. In the literature review, a case study methodology appears either in the analysis of single cases (Walsh, 2011; Balsom, 2017) or exploration of a group of cases (Connolly, 2009; Ross, 2011; Bruno, 2014; Butler, 2019) that foster the scholars' arguments about projection in conjunction with theories from disciplines such as psychoanalysis (Iles, 2002; Walsh, 2011), film studies (Balsom, 2013, 2017; Bruno, 2014; Butler, 2019), art history (Trodd, 2011) or media studies (Cubitt, 2007; Mondloch, 2010). This literature follows a similar set of procedures to approach these case studies methodologically. The analyses of the artworks start with a technical and spatial description of the moving image installation, exposing elements such as the number and positions of the projections, the presence of objects in the gallery and the places in which the viewers might be positioned. The most common next step is a formal description of the moving image projected and its diegetic elements, indicating the presence, for example, of characters, landscapes, colours, and textures.

The third step is commonly related to an interpretation of this content from the lens of one of these disciplines. Literature that, for example, engages with phenomenology (Iles,



2002; Mondloch, 2010; Butler, 2019) to focus on the experience of being in the projective moving image installations fails to address phenomenology as a method, a set of actions that would change the procedures most commonly used to approach the case studies in an analysis. These scholars tend to use phenomenological concepts to implement a textual analysis, reading the works as a text, mostly related to the field of film studies, thus not focusing on the experience with the artwork. In my thesis, I approach queer phenomenology as a methodology, proposing a series of procedures that could challenge the analysis of case studies as it has been implemented in the literature about projective moving image installations, with a focus on description as the most suitable mode to explore affective experiences and its relationships with a theoretical approach to the artworks, as will be further explored in the section on methodology.

#### **1.4. Queer phenomenology and disorientation**

As mentioned in the previous section, queer phenomenology is the most appropriate theoretical and methodological approach to explore and answer my research question. Sara Ahmed's book (2006) *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, others* is a groundbreaking study that considers the role of the lived-body in the process of orientation and disorientation, categories that appear as a common mode to describe the experience within projective moving image installations. In this review, I point out some of the key discussions raised by Ahmed (2006) that will be the basis for the analysis of my case studies. Ahmed (2006) opens the book with the question 'What does it mean to be oriented?' (Ahmed, 2006, p. 01), an ongoing concern that is discussed throughout the text and leads to an understanding of the role of spatial orientation and disorientation in queer studies. This question is crucial to

my research as I shall situate my analysis from my position as a queer writer that consequently navigates the world from a queer perspective.

Ahmed (2006) argues that queer phenomenology is a methodology that provokes us to view something familiar in an unfamiliar way. As a starting point, Ahmed (2006) considers that we are constantly orientated towards the objects that surround us, and mainly the ones that are familiar to us, which make us recall memories and, in some way, reflect on our bodies' tendencies to act within the space. Ahmed (2006) indicates that this tendency towards certain objects is constructed through a process of sedimentation of practices and gestures that are repeated and thus shape the history of what our bodies can do or are expected to do when relating to our surroundings. A queer phenomenology is interested in understanding how being orientated in the space implies a sexualised experience, attempting 'to offer a new way of thinking about the spatiality of sexuality, gender, and race' (Ahmed, 2006, p. 02). Therefore, a queer phenomenology, according to Ahmed (2006), is about deviating from the rules, from the straight lines that direct us towards objects that make us continue to reproduce the usual and oppressive ways of working and relating to objects, either physical or theoretical. It is about 'how bodies are gendered, sexualised, and raced by how they extend into space' (Ahmed, 2006, p. 05). Queer phenomenology provides an awareness of how our bodies can 'feel at home' by dwelling in a space filled with memories of how to act, as we can recognise what we are facing. Not knowing how to act in the space, clarifies Ahmed (2006), is what makes us disorientated.

Therefore, if a queer phenomenology approaches how we are orientated towards objects, it is necessary to understand these objects as orientation devices, full of a history that will historicise our body through a process of sedimentation of repetitive orientated actions<sup>7</sup>. This means that we will always bring our previous experiences with other objects when

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<sup>7</sup> This indicates an approximation of Ahmed's (2006) book with Judith Butler theories. For further exploration see *Gender Trouble: feminism and the subversion of identity* (2007), and *Bodies that matter: on the discursive limits of "sex"* (2011).

encountering an object that recently arrived around us. Citing Heidegger (1973), Ahmed (2006) points out that the set of actions that we can take towards objects, what they limit us to do with them, compose what they are in the world. The way that objects pull us in one direction and not others means that they orientates us about how to occupy a space, or what Heidegger (1973) calls the equipmentality of objects. According to Ahmed (2006), a queer approach aims to change the equipmentality of an object by analysing experiences that are not usually related to the intended form of that object. To Ahmed (2006), challenging this equipmentality is to create failures, which are new properties that can disorientate the expectations of other bodies when encountering the same failing object. It is only the encounter with objects that makes possible the emergence of failed orientations and, consequently, disorientations.

Ahmed (2006) highlights that this relationship between body and space is not equivalent to an object inside a container. Instead, the body and the direction toward the objects are what shape the space through action, movement and decisions, creating a co-dwelling between bodies and objects. What makes bodies different is how they engage in this co-inhabitation that exist through touch (both physical and affective) and the consequent emergence of sensation, turning our bodies into an object of perception for others. However, some objects will not reach this status of objects of perception, as our orientation, the history of our bodies' actions, will not turn our bodies and gestures towards them. A queer phenomenology aims to discuss the redirection of these sedimented gestures, or the potential emergence of new gestures, towards the encounter with different objects, since we would be aware of the history of repetition that has shaped our bodies.

Consequently, Ahmed (2006) theorises a body that, beyond the universal phenomenological body, is constituted of social history, meaning that not everybody has the same possibilities to act in space. Citing Frantz Fanon (1986), Ahmed (2006) asks us to think

about what is below this tactile, visual and kinaesthetic universal body that exists in phenomenological theory. In this context, to look below means considering what exists underneath the body's surface, dimensions that are shaped by history, race and sexuality. Ahmed (2006, p. 111) exemplifies this context by mentioning how black bodies became historically prevented from freely inhabiting certain spaces because of the racism that converted the black body into a hostile object for the white gaze. In this sense, the history of colonialism was crucial to shaping the contemporary black body's experience.

Recalling this idea of a 'tendency towards' objects, Ahmed (2006) differentiates 'towards' from 'around'. 'Towards' is understood as directionality, implying a physical position and movement throughout the space, which in turn leads the body to face some objects rather than others, and allowing the recognition of what is 'myself' and what is the 'other' as a mutual extension. Being orientated 'around' something, on the other hand, is to make an object a central element of a spatial experience. Rather than moving from one point to another, being 'around' presumes a circling action responsible for establishing connections between an object and our self-representation. Ahmed (2006, p. 116) exemplifies this context by mentioning that we can be orientated 'around' the exercise of writing, which consequently orientates us 'towards' objects such as a pen or a table. Through being orientated 'towards' and 'around' common objects, the idea of collectivity emerges as some bodies' histories share similar experiences of inhabitancy of the phenomenal space. Therefore, there is a greater affinity between some bodies than between others, an approach that is closely related to the ideas of familiarity. Whilst we identify with the history of certain bodies, we need to be familiarised with the objects that make this shared existence possible. According to Ahmed (2006), this familiarity is determined by our capability to reach and act with objects that are not simply physical but also philosophical approaches to the world.

The conclusion of Ahmed's (2006) book is one of the most crucial contributions to

this thesis as it refers specifically to what it means to be disorientated. Ahmed (2006) indicates the uses of the word 'queer' in two main directions: first, queer as a mode to describing what is 'out of place', resulting in failed orientations, and second, as a description of some specific non-normative sexual practices. To Ahmed (2006), considering these uses of queer is essential to incorporating the fact that disorientation does not relate to a form of living. Instead, being disorientated is connected to the living of specific moments of queer/failed orientation. This means that being disorientated is related to how we react, or 'face', to use Ahmed's (2006) word, the moments in which we feel 'out of place'. To unfold the meanings of disorientation, Ahmed (2006) describes a series of phenomena that both conceptualize the disorientated moment and state its effects in terms of re-orientation towards objects and the space. Amongst these phenomena, three are at the core of the experience of disorientation: zooming in, becoming an object, and disturbing the others.

First, Ahmed (2006) describes zooming in as situations in which we are highly concentrated and focused on a specific object and the world that surrounds us and the object begins to lose its contours. A moment of disorientation occurs when we change from one focus, or highly concentrated moment, to another. One moment is followed by another but part of that past object still comes to mind and mixes temporalities. The loss of the object and its superimposition with another followed object is, for Ahmed (2006), a moment of great disorientation. Furthermore, Ahmed (2006) states that sexuality plays a crucial role in terms of choosing which objects we maintain our focus on.

The moments in which we lose the contours of the world are the ones when our bodies enter a moment of crisis. The body becomes an object like the other objects because it fails to follow the lines of orientation with which it was previously involved. Ahmed (2006, p. 160) claims that some bodies are put into crisis more than others. This means that the world itself is shaped by some bodies more than others, which is why failed orientations happen and lead

us to disorientated moments. An effect of becoming an object along with the other objects in the world is ‘disturbing the others’. A body that feels disorientated affects those bodies with which it shares a common ground. Disorientation occurs when this common ground fails to support some bodies whilst experiencing certain orientated lines. At this moment this non-supported body becomes oblique, strange, ‘slips away’ (Ahmed, 2006) from common experiences, sees itself losing the ground and has the choice to embrace this queer moment or look for objects that support stabilisation after disorientated moments.

In conclusion, Ahmed (2006) proposes that moments of disorientation can be a phenomenon that we must learn from, as they allow us to look at and read the world differently, i.e., queer the world. Therefore, a queer phenomenology is an attempt to learn from ‘out of place’ bodily situations to achieve an empathic response to the bodies that feel queer and, due to this, deal with disorientated moments as crucial parts of their lives. In this research, queer phenomenology becomes a theory and methodology to reach the desires and embodiment of my queer authorship, in an attempt to challenge methodologies for writing *about* artworks, attempting instead to write *beside* them as claimed by Katharina Lindner (2018). Furthermore, the use of queer phenomenology is the most appropriate mode to comprehend the disorientating aspects of the experience within projective moving image installations that remains unfolded in the current literature regarding this subject.

That said, queer phenomenology has been used as a methodological tool in a variety of academic fields, including queer approaches to health (Goldberg *et al.*, 2009; Heyes *et al.*, 2016), social sciences (Bremer, 2013), education (Crowley, 2010; Neary *et al.*, 2015; Gunn, 2018), geography (Kinkaid, 2018), and media studies (Tudor, 2018). One of these studies, the book *Disorientation and Moral Life* (2016) by Ami Harbin, previously mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, expands the discussion of disorientation as a phenomenon leading to extended life traumas that make it more difficult for some people to keep going with their

lives, or bring individuals together to raise awareness around common struggles and thus shape collectivities. Although the focus of my thesis is on disorientation as a fleeting phenomenon that happens in the contact with projection in moving image installations, Harbin's (2016) study helps to understand some of the engagements with the disorientation that appear in artworks analysed in later chapters.

In dialogue with Ahmed's (2006) queer phenomenology, Harbin (2016) argues that disorientation is experienced differently according to how people experience issues related to 'gender, race, class, disability, and sexuality' (Harbin, 2016, p. 33). Disorientation, for Harbin (2016), is about experiencing places and situations that were once familiar in an unfamiliar way, not quite knowing where to proceed next after feeling disorientated. Conversely, disorientation can be the result of unanticipated engagements to fairly expected situations, for instance by having to integrate into new communities (Harbin, 2016, p. 15). Harbin (2016) uses the example of our first year of high school as a moment of disorientation in the search for a community and a place to stay concerning this life situation. What Harbin's (2016) studies mainly contribute to my thesis is in advancing discussions of the micro-political effects of disorientation. What happens after we feel disorientated?

Harbin (2016) explores this context by proposing that disorientation has tenderising effects that can facilitate an understanding of what happens after moments of disorientation. According to Harbin (2016), some experiences of disorientation may lead to life trauma or illness, which can prevent some people from thriving in their lives as 'We may need to live with disorientation more often and for longer than we would like' (Harbin, 2016, p. 174). Conversely, disorientation can create mechanisms to move through life differently to overcome these moments of disorientation and prevent further ones from affecting us. Harbin (2016, p. 19) states that disorientations that appear as the result of marginalised socially oppressed identities, such as being queer in a heteronormative context or non-white in a racist

world, have longer life effects. Therefore, the inclusion of Harbin's (2016) work in this literature review is an attempt to expand on the concept of disorientation based on a study using queer phenomenology in a context that considers the queer affects unfolded outside the art world but somehow influencing and shaping how queer bodies potentially move around in the art gallery.

Two particular tenderising effects are of relevance for my research. First, Harbin (2016) indicates that experiencing disorientated moments can prompt people to build *new awareness* about political issues that previously had not interfered in their lives as a re-orientation towards the contact with other people's struggles and leading to potentially empathic responses. This can happen, for example, when people use LGBTQIAPN+phobic terms to refer to queer people and their actions are pointed out as harmful. In some cases, the act of pointing out such discourses as LGBTQIAPN+phobic disorients the person who uttered those detrimental words, which can lead to the raising of a new consciousness regarding their discourse if an empathic response is established towards the person to which this discourse was directed, and consequently their queer life as part of a broader queer context. Therefore, Harbin (2016) claims that the act of disorientating someone else by exposing their oppressive discourses can have important results in political and social life to open space for more diverse forms of sociality to co-exist.

The second tenderising effect is the idea of *in-this-togetherness*. Harbin (2016) claims that some disorientations queer people face throughout their lives can facilitate a self-understanding of individuals as existing amongst a community. To repeat the example used above, at the moment someone voices LGBTQIAPN+phobic discourses a queer person may experience disorientation, even if fleetingly. The disorientating act of queer people pointing out those words as harmful indicates the emergence of an understanding of being part of a larger context of people that live the same oppressive situations. Therefore, an *in- this-*



*togetherness* arises since by pointing out oppressive structures we address the other people that share common disorientating experiences, introducing micro-political stances that help make our community safer from the disorientating moments that a queer person can experience.

Harbin's (2016) discussions complement Ahmed's (2006) approach to disorientation, facilitating the understanding of some of the disorientating moments I experienced whilst in contact with projection in moving image installations, and the potential political implications of the fleeting disorientations that emerged in this context. Throughout the analysis of the case studies, the traumatic appears as a category directly linked to the idea of disorientation. As claimed by Ahmed (2006), sometimes we face situations in which we can clearly and comfortably move, but other times surprising encounters disorientate us towards experiences that 'might be the sight of trauma, anxiety, or stress about the loss of an imagined future' (Ahmed, 2006, p. 19), or about the loss of the predictability of movement in the world. Therefore, the traumatic in this thesis reflects the sensuous and affective result of disorientation as much as it is the cause of disorientation in a circular process.

When referring to trauma in queer phenomenological terms, I am concerned with the fleeting changes in behaviour and spatial or sensuous movement that disorientation can cause to our bodies, for example the moment in which our eyes are surprised when we enter a dark room coming from a very bright environment, a phenomenon discussed in Chapter Two. Whilst it is not the aim of this thesis to understand how trauma affects the afterlife of the encounter with projective moving image installations, it is important to mention that the disorientations of being queer in a heteronormative world directly affected my modes of engagement with the art gallery, as mentioned in the thesis preface. This reinforces Harbin's claims (2016) that disorientation has tenderising effects and, thus, orients queer lives towards very specific modes of affectively navigating certain spaces, for me especially the ones in

which intersectionalities such as class and nationality are moving around. In the next section, I will explore how queer phenomenology and the idea of disorientation have been approached in the literature about moving images, which includes cinema (Lindner, 2012, 2018) and moving image installations (Fox, 2019; Butler, 2019; Cvetkovich, 2021).

### **1.5. Queer phenomenology and the moving image**

As mentioned in the previous section, queer phenomenology has been used in a variety of academic fields to understand queer experiences. However, the approximation of queer phenomenology with the context of moving image theory and criticism remains incipient. In this section, I will explore this recently emerged intersection through the works of Katharina Lindner (2012, 2018), Albertine Fox (2019), Alison Butler (2019), and Ann Cvetkovich (2021). Whilst Lindner (2012, 2018), Fox (2019), and Butler (2019) directly engage with queer phenomenology as a theoretical framework to analyse the moving image, Cvetkovich (2021) engages with broader notions of affect to explore installation art (including the ones with moving images). Katharina Lindner was certainly the largest contributor to the approximation between queer phenomenology and film studies, as between 2012 and 2018 she published articles and a book about queer and feminist approaches to gender and sexuality in cinema. Although the experience with cinema does not entirely account for the comprehension of the queer affective experiences in projective moving image installations, Lindner's work (2012, 2018) provides a fruitful theoretical analysis that can be applied in my research; key concepts include kinaesthetic empathy, queer kinaesthesia, the social cinematic subject, and the lived body. Lindner's (2012) concepts and discussions are explored throughout this thesis to connect the experience of being in the presence of projective moving

image installations and of highlighting this moment as disorientating and formed by queer affects.

Theoretical interchanges between queer phenomenology and moving image installations only emerged during the writing of this thesis, in articles and books published by Fox (2019), Butler (2019), and Cvetkovich (2021). Whilst Lindner's work (2012, 2018) is a crucial theoretical source for this thesis regarding concepts used in discussions in all the chapters, the work of other authors, as mentioned in the previous paragraph, has more specific significance for each chapter. For instance, Fox's article (2019) is of relevance to the discussion of the relationship between light and darkness in Chapter Two, whilst I explore Cvetkovich's article (2021) in Chapter Three for her approach to the formation of small-scale queer collectivities. Butler's book (2019) also appears in Chapters One and Two as a source for discussing the affective and non-binary qualities of experiencing projective moving image installations in connection to the idea of displacement, which characterises Butler's thesis of the deictic aspects of these artworks. Each of these works will be further explored in the following paragraphs. This contextualisation highlights the importance of the research behind this thesis since a field of exploration at the intersection of moving image art and queer phenomenology has emerged in the last four years, through the work of these scholars and my own.

For instance, Katharina Lindner's article *Questions of Embodied Difference: Film and Queer Phenomenology* (2012) discusses embodied differences in phenomenological experiences with cinema. Lindner (2012) indicates that this differential approach is not an attempt to recall essentialist ideas of 'natural biological differences of gender or race' (Lindner, 2012, p. 200), but to indicate the existence of embodied and 'lived' differences formed by memories and affective experiences when engaging with the world, especially how we become involved differently with cinema. Lindner (2012) builds a

phenomenologically based argument that embraces the shift from the optical vision to the entire body, recalling Donna Haraway (1997) to indicate this change as an attempt to challenge the idea of the ‘human gaze’, since it is historically related to white and male-dominated societies. Challenging this means advocating for an experience, and consequently, for criticism that is partial and situated as it is constituted by different bodies that inform the essential embodied characteristic of vision.

Lindner (2012) asserts the importance of considering the levels of experiences with cinema that Jennifer Barker’s (2009) calls skin, musculature, and viscera. Skin implies the level of contact with the other and the relationship with eroticism from surfaces and textures. Musculature relates to the movement and extension into the space through desire, empathy and action, whilst viscera is, most of the time, constituted by elements that are not visually recognisable. Furthermore, Lindner (2012) indicates that Barker’s (2009) theory is based on the mimetic aspects that shape the relationship between film and spectator, leading to an understanding of film kinaesthetic structures as based as much on human behaviour as on the viewer’s actions being mimetic responses to the movements staged in a film. Lindner (2012) indicates that body as film and film as body share muscular habits that allow a relationship of reversibility to emerge.

However, Lindner (2012) points out that, despite its undeniable contribution to the field of film studies, Barker’s (2009) theory is still based on the universal body, which is historically converted into the male, white, heterosexual body, as the unmarked element. Lindner (2012) engages with Sara Ahmed’s (2006) studies to indicate a body that is mobile and malleable and sees in the space the possibility for action through the body’s desires and diverse contacts, although still facing particularly normative spatial configurations in the world. Through the lenses of gender, queer and feminist studies, Lindner (2012) argues for a theory that challenges what she calls the body’s universal structures and general attitudes that

shape film criticism, aiming to approach an orientated existence, including sexual orientation, that leads us to face and extend into the space toward the others differently, thus inhabiting the world in particular ways.

Lindner (2012) notably mentions that queer bodies not only inhabit a shared space differently but are also considered wrong, deviant, and inappropriate. This implies a difference in touching, approximating, contacting and moving experiences concerning others, rather than only the kinaesthetic, tactile and muscular ‘universal structure’. Overall, Lindner (2012) aims to demonstrate that if cinema is a lived-body based on mimetic, reversible and shared experiences with the viewer, then a film becomes a lived queer body in the encounter with the body of queer viewers. This happens not only through the process of identification with characters in the film but through the broader cinematic situation we are orientated towards (Lindner, 2012). Lindner (2012) initiates a discussion about the meaning of the process of identification as a concept that deviates from the psychoanalytical idea of identification as assuming a specular image. Identification is considered an ‘embodied cultural identity’, based on the ‘sensational body’. According to Lindner (2012), the process is primarily affective, and a specular movement can only emerge through affection and previous relations with the world. Lindner (2012) sees this situation as an opportunity to engage with cinema in sensational terms, considering that ‘Films not only provide possibilities for (psychic) identification with particular characters, they also open possibilities for identification with affective situations that are constructed both through various (cinematic) movements, gestures, textures, or rhythms’ (Lindner, 2012, p. 16-17).

In 2018, Katharina Lindner published a monographic book titled *Film Bodies: Queer and Feminist Encounters with Gender and Sexuality in Cinema*. In this publication, Lindner (2018) addresses the female body in the cinema as a powerful element for disruption of normative practices and representations because of its capacity to challenge these structures.

Lindner (2018) narrows the relationship between the embodiment discussions in film studies and the possibility of challenging the contemporary theory by engaging with a queer feminist phenomenology. This is achieved by using a ‘textural analysis’ methodology when examining the female protagonists’ embodiment in films such as *The Tango Lesson* (1997), *Black Swan* (2010), *2 Seconds* (1998), *Offside* (2006), *Tomboy* (2011) and *Bande de Filles* (2014). These films (mainly on themes of dance, sports and feminist cultures and subcultures) have in common the analysis of the corporeality of the female characters, in terms of troubling embodiments that comprise movement, effort, muscularity, tactility, spatiality, temporality and subjectivity that form and challenge ideas of gender and sexuality. These elements provide a sense of sharing that will entice some specific audiences more than others, more specifically those who feel they inhabit the same places in the world that the characters do.

In this book, Lindner (2018) attempts to situate a ‘social cinematic subject’ (Lindner, 2018, p. 15) entangled by class, race and gender characteristics whilst experiencing a cinematic object, especially when addressing the individualities of women’s identities, rather than a broad category of women, engendered by multiple ways of dwelling in the world. Lindner (2018) indicates that using the term ‘queer’ imposes challenging discussions since its neutral gender approach can lead to a territory where a generic, hidden male subject can emerge. Concurrently, Lindner (2018) indicates the importance of approaching queer theory as it opens space for the existence and representation of subjects who do not fit well in categories such as gay, lesbian or homosexual, including ‘women, working-class, non-white, disabled, older, rural and less affluent “homosexuals”’ (Lindner, 2018, p. 25). Lindner (2018) interprets the presence of gender and sexuality discussions in queer theory as essentially unstable and challenging the binary system (including homosexuality/heterosexuality) that comprises the idea of marked differences.

That said, Lindner (2018) highlights that queer theory creates a place for the inclusion of sexual minorities that are integrated by ‘lesbians, gays, bisexual, trans, queer/questioning, intersex, asexual/allies/alternative and includes practices like drag, cross-dressing and transvestism’ (Lindner, 2018, p. 25). The term queer is used by Lindner (2018) to identify a subject, or a mode of inhabiting the world, which is informed by a ‘non-, anti-, contra- (hetero)normative’ (Lindner, 2018, p. 25). Therefore, what Lindner (2018) addresses in her book is a possible unified approach to troubling aspects of queer theory and the representation of the female/lesbian body as a specific form of sexuality, an analysis mainly achieved through engaging with discussions of queer affect and embodiment in Ahmed’s (2006) work. Thus, Lindner (2018) addresses ‘lesbian’ cinema as defined not simply by films about lesbians or produced by lesbians, but in terms of what these films provide to the audience, as a tool for deterritorialization of sexualities and the affective dimensions of a bodily cinematic experience. Overall, Lindner (2018) provides

‘a more specific acknowledgement of the corporeal and embodied dimensions of perception, habits, recognition and desire in an attempt to grasp how certain films resonate (in tactile, muscular and kinaesthetic terms) with particular modes of embodiment and sensibilities as they take shape in a range of corporeally affective scenarios (...) I approach both ‘cinema’ and ‘queer’ from a broadly (rather than exclusively) phenomenological angle, in order to account for the ways in which queerness is embodied, while also working with and through some of the fertile resonances and tensions between phenomenological, Deleuzian, cognitive and psychoanalytic frameworks, always keeping the lived-body (organs, the lot) in mind and ‘close to hand’ (Lindner, 2018, p. 37-38).

At this point, Lindner (2018) provides an understanding of queer as a verb, as an action to take into account when addressing the analysis of a piece of a film. This means returning to the ideas of orientation/disorientation referred to earlier in this literature review. Lindner (2018) mentions Adriano D’Aloia (2012) when addressing the spatialised orientation

that film and viewer share in daily life and that, in terms of a body inhabiting and moving in space, can be described using words such as under, above, upwards, left, right, and beyond. However, this description means a ‘standard orientation’ that is understood as a ‘good’ orientation, as it is based on actions that are learned from the experience of seeing other bodies inhabiting the world, thus turning into a ‘normalised’ body by doing what others do whilst learning how to walk, and how to define personal space. Conversely, Lindner (2018) indicates the existence of a ‘bad’ orientation, which can be described as actions in the space that cannot be easily recognised because they are ‘unnatural’, as if they were inversions of the common image of the world. Lindner (2018) gives an example of the close-up of an upside-down head in a film, which only makes sense if followed by an inversion of the elements that surround this head. If this inversion does not occur, it can risk being interpreted as a non-normal, or ‘bad’, orientation.

All these associations between what is ‘normal’ or ‘non-normal’, ‘natural’ or ‘unnatural’ are based on the *habits* that formed our muscular attitudes around the space (Lindner, 2018). Lindner (2018) states that in moments where the body faces a disorienting situation, a bad orientation, it tends to correct its attitude by redirecting movements, points of view and tactility to achieve the correct spatial experience. Therefore, Lindner (2018) indicates a sense of empathy as crucial to understanding how viewers of a film identify with certain content and try or do not try to correct it since empathic associations tend to lead bodies to an intensified kinaesthetic identification and motor simulation of the movements seen on the screen, either the character or the camera. The notion of empathy, which Lindner (2018) discusses from the works of D’Aloia (2012) and Edith Stein (1989), is understood as the ‘twist’ in spatial orientation to establish a new starting point, from which the viewer transforms their own experience. From this situation, Lindner (2018) argues that a ‘besideness’ relationality emerges, in which rather than advocating for a fusion between the



body of the film and the body of the viewer, the process of empathising is responsible for the emergence of a side-by-side situation in which the viewers see their bodies as quasi-cinematic figures due to shared corporeal habits.

Therefore, to consider this shared experience is to go beyond the ‘materiality of the body (skin, musculature, viscera, synapses)’ (Lindner, 2018, p. 55) and contemplate the body’s sedimentation in its aspects of gender and sexuality, to distance from a ‘habitual’ body that in criticism is usually based on a heteronormative experience. Lindner (2018) considers that this intersected exploration has not been largely considered in film studies, and from my findings, is considered even less when it comes to the analysis of moving image art installations. Citing Sobchack (1992), Lindner (2018) states that this joint approach is crucial to carrying out a non-essentialist analysis, as it comprises the shared capabilities of bodies whilst including the aspects of gender and sexuality that provide a clearer connection with the troubling aspects of a queer theory that considers gender as a fluid facet of the experience of life. Therefore, Lindner (2018) states that a queer feminist approach exists between the discussion of the visceral, muscular, kinaesthetic body and the specific gendered body.

However, an issue emerges when Lindner (2018) indicates that phenomenology is based on the transcendental body that cannot be gendered because this would mean the existence of different transcendental subjectivities. According to Lindner (2018), in this situation, a gendered body would be considered the ‘mundane subject’ (Lindner, 2018, p. 59), for which cultural aspects are of crucial importance to its constitution. Therefore, advocating for queer feminist phenomenology means that is necessary to move phenomenology in another direction and update its debates (Lindner, 2018). To Lindner (2018), phenomenology would have to accept the abandonment or modification of its methodology of reduction and the existence of a transcendental subject, which could turn phenomenology into a relevant methodology for the analysis of a historicised body that appears in contemporary queer and

feminist studies. Consequently, for Lindner (2018), approaching the notion of intersubjectivity, the assumption that we are always culturally and historically located is much more relevant than trying to fit the gendered subject into the transcendental body. Intersubjectivity in this sense refers to the basis for a post-phenomenological approach, which will facilitate the appearance of studies that reveal the normalisation that generally guides our body's experience, leading to a consciousness that could disrupt the familiar aspects of dealing with the world (Lindner, 2018).

Therefore, the main contribution of Lindner's (2012, 2018) work is the appearance of subjects who can identify themselves in terms of race, gender, sexuality, and cultural heritage, bringing along these characteristics as they are crucially constitutive of their experience with the moving image. Furthermore, Lindner's (2012, 2018) approach to the kinaesthetic model of experience and the existence of the sensational body provides a fruitful alignment with my concerns as a queer writer. This allows me to explore authorship elements less and focus more on how the projective moving image installations analysed in this thesis affected me whilst in the art gallery. Although based on film studies, Lindner's (2012, 2018) contribution is crucially useful to the analysis that will be carried out later on this thesis as there are a limited number of writings in academia that draws on queer phenomenology to analyse recent moving image installations. Lindner's (2012, 2018) writings focus on narrative cinema and, as such, do not directly address the sort of installation-based projective artworks that I aim to explore in this thesis. My research intends to expand Lindner's analysis into a discussion of contemporary moving image art, exploring two main unaddressed issues.

First, Lindner considers the process of kinaesthetic empathy with characters in the movies as a possibility to establish a queer connection. When it comes to moving image art, though, the appearance of characters is not necessarily a rule and is sometimes irrelevant to the work. Although since the 1990s there has been a considerable increase in moving image

artworks that involve storytelling (Uroskie, 2011; Balsom, 2013; Butler, 2019) and that are usually exhibited in a single-projection format, a considerable number of works reflect the use of multiple-projection involving multiple-stimuli and are formed by content based on a less traditionally narrative approach, such as the contemporary works of Pipilotti Rist. Therefore, the issue that initially emerges from Lindner's work is how the process of a queer empathy can arise in corporeal terms when there is no possibility for a mimic, habitual, and kinaesthetic relationship between the body of the viewer and a body presented in the projected work because sometimes no human bodies are portrayed. One possibility is to consider advancing the body of film discussion and integrating the space of moving image installations as an important element for the emergence of queer empathy. This leads to the second reason it is necessary to adapt Lindner's analysis to my context of research.

Since Lindner's (2012, 2018) work is based on a textual analysis of the films, which would not consider the specific place and time in which the films were viewed, it is difficult to assess how this contextual information would interfere in the phenomenological experience of watching the films in a cinema theatre or on the television in our living room. In both cases, the modes of engagement with the moving image vary as much as watching moving images in art installations. It is this phenomenological experience within moving image installation in a specific time and space that my research aims to explore. Although Lindner (2012; 2018) does not address these issues, one of the main phenomenological contributions of her work is to open the possibility of starting a queer analysis of how the bodies that seem immobile whilst watching a film on the television of our living room, for example, are in a visceral and kinaesthetic movement. If relocated to the context of moving image installations, this information highlights that a body that is not walking from side to side, or constantly changing positions, is not necessarily a body that is not moving, mainly if we consider a visceral level of engagement that is provoked by an empathic process

connected to the histories and sedimentations of our bodies.

An analysis based on Lindner's approach, such as my thesis implements, helps to understand that the binarism absorption and wandering that has been used for so long to comprehend the phenomenological experience of moving image installations no longer accounts for the variety of contemporary artworks in this field that have appeared since the 1990s. Although some scholars (Iles, 2002; Turvey *et al.*, 2003) differentiate the phenomenological approach of artists using projection in the 1960s and 1970s from the more cinematic, single-screen, psychoanalytically based artworks that emerged in the 1990s, from 2010 others (Mondloch, 2010; Balsom, 2013; Bruno, 2014; Elwes, 2015; Butler, 2019) started to develop arguments towards a non-binary approach of this experience, as mentioned in the first two sections of this literature review. Therefore, my thesis is located amidst this discussion to advance theoretical disorientation of binary positions when it comes to analysing the experiences within projective moving image installations, in my case, from a queer phenomenological perspective. From 2019, whilst this research was being conducted, three important contributions towards the relationship between queer phenomenology and moving image installations were published (Fox, 2019; Butler, 2019; Cvetkovich, 2021), which indicates the relevance of my thesis amidst a recently emerging field of exploration in the area of moving image art.

Alison Butler's book *Displacements: Reading Space and Time in Moving Image Installations* (2019), previously mentioned in this literature review, is an important point of contact between the process of challenging these binarisms and the use of queer phenomenology. Butler (2019) approaches Sara Ahmed's (2006) studies to understand the experience of the viewers in moving image installations with a focus on demonstrating how these artworks are composed of a deictic aspect that leads to a process of displacement in the art gallery. In a close relationship with queer phenomenology, the fourth chapter of Butler's

(2019) book is more specifically concerned with analysing the ‘themes of displaced and migrant selves’ (Butler, 2019, p. 109) as a character present in the moving image, and their relationship with the visitors positioned in the gallery. Butler’s (2019) main argument in this chapter is that films portraying migrant subjects in moving image installations such as *Ten Thousand Waves* (2010) by Isaac Julien, and *The Airport* (2016) by John Akomfrah, act as a powerful reference for the visitors of the installations to employ movements in the gallery, which includes deciding not to move. Butler (2019) claims that a consideration of these works through the lens of an embodied subjectivity is important to analyse installations that understand the visitor as informed by both immobility and movement, ‘combining absorption and distraction and affective and cognitive responses in a metaleptic movement between the inside and the outside of the projected images’ (Butler, 2019, pp. 87-88). Butler’s (2019) arguments are of interest for my research since we share contexts and theoretical approaches to studying moving image installations.

Nevertheless, although Butler (2019) addresses the mutual and simultaneous presence of experiences such as absorption and wandering within moving image installations, an argument that positively undermines the role of binary positionalities, she still works on a hierarchisation of these two phenomena concerning the binary attention and distraction. In the introduction to her book, Butler (2019) indicates a focus on the study of attentive spectatorship, claiming that ‘contrary to the common accounts of inattentive gallery visitors (...), there are increasing numbers of *serious viewers* [emphasis added] who make themselves comfortable, on the floor if necessary, and dedicate time and attention to the work’ (Butler, 2019, p. 22). Butler’s (2019) arguments approximate absorption to attention and critical engagement, whilst undermining the role of disorientated experiences that exist between absorption and wandering as powerful possibilities of relationality, one that is critically affective or affectively critical, as much as a presumably attentive encounter. Butler (2019)

further explores this context by arguing, in dialogue with Anne Rutherford (2014), that the immobile viewer ‘might even be a pre-condition of the most profoundly active and affective viewing experience’ (Butler, 2019, p. 86).

My thesis advances some of Butler’s (2019) binary arguments by demonstrating that affects are already critical, and criticality is full of affects. Affect makes us move in a fleeting and disorientating process of decision-making, by critically pondering different situations to establish orientations, even if these lead to subsequent disorientated moments as a continuum phenomenon. Katharina Lindner’s (2012, 2018) previously mentioned work helps to understand that seeing people seated on the floor of moving image installations, looking at the projections, does not equal attentive spectatorship, which is normally read as more profound and meaningful than the wandering endeavour, as claimed by Butler (2019). Some people might lie on the floor facing the projections for an extended period only to enjoy the cushions in the gallery and rest their legs after walking around, to check their mobile phones, or even to record clips for social media. The projective work of Pipilotti Rist is exemplary for the creation of this affective relationality, and this does not make the experience less engaging than that of Butler’s presumably *serious viewers*. What happens in these situations is that people are affected differently by the moving image installations because of their diverse embodied subjectivities, sedimentations and histories (Ahmed, 2006), which presumes particular modes of spatial-temporal engagements.

In 2019, Albertine Fox published the article *Sensory Experience, Sound and Queerness in Chantal Akerman’s Manic Shadows (2013)* in the *Moving Image Art and Review Journal*. Fox (2019) establishes a connection with Ahmed’s (2006) queer phenomenology, arguing that the experience of the work *Manic Shadows* (2013), by Chantal Akerman, is informed by a queerness due to the employment of ‘deviating sensory strategies’ (Fox, 2019, p. 71) that results in the emergence of queer forms of embodiment. Fox (2019)

understands ‘queer’ as a non-normative form of embodiment that in the case of *Manic Shadows* (2013) ‘manipulates sensory experience to disrupt heteronormative space and restrictive conceptions of female embodiment and pleasure’ (Fox, 2019, p. 71). With a focus on the role of an indefinable sound and the presence of shadows in the article’s case study, Fox (2019) argues that Akerman creates an environment in which the viewers feel disorientated to challenge the role of the eye as the main tool for spatial exploration. The sound functions as a mode to destabilise presumably rigid binaries such as self and others to facilitate the emergence of a ‘queer experience of amorphous sensations’ (Fox, 2019, p. 75), thus embodying Ahmed’s (2006) idea of ‘becoming oblique’.

The most recent contribution to the approximation between queer approaches and moving image installations is the article *It Feels Right to Me – Queer Feminist Art Installations and the Sovereignty of the Senses*, published in 2021 by Ann Cvetkovich in the journal *Feminist Media Histories*. Although not directly engaging with queer phenomenology as its main theoretical approach, as happens in Alison Butler’s (2019) book, Cvetkovich (2021) establishes an analysis from the point of view of a queer affective turn that includes Ahmed’s (2006, 2010) work. Cvetkovich (2021) provides an important contribution to the understanding of projective moving image installations as disorientating spaces of sociality that can foster political changes even in small-scale settings, which directly relates to the exploration undertaken in this thesis. In this article, Cvetkovich (2021) analyses art installations that viewers can enter and inhabit to build fleeting collectivities through gatherings and the sharing of common feelings in affective environments. Amongst these artworks, Cvetkovich (2021) explores *Arkwright Road* (2012) by Zoe Leonard to demonstrate her thesis on the sovereignty of the senses, drawing attention to the work of Audre Lorde (1984) on the influence of feeling and sensation in the building of affective experiences that are not only individual but also collective, highlighting the disorientating aspects of this work

by describing the experiences with sentences such as ‘we’re not quite sure what we are supposed to see’ (Cvetkovich, 2021, p. 46). Cvetkovich (2021) approaches this context through the concept of the affective commons, a force that does not reside in a fixed and stable location but instead exists as a ‘shared sensory experience of its participants’ (Cvetkovich, 2021, p. 34) that has to create possible better futures in this affective sharing, as the present world does not account for their disorientated experiences. Cvetkovich (2021) points out that the affective commons created in the disorientating experience of art installations are not free of conflicts and ambivalences, instead ‘creating a space for what might be difficult conversations or experiences of the antisocial’ (Cvetkovich, 2021, p. 57).

Cvetkovich’s (2021) article makes an important methodological contribution to this thesis by highlighting the role of the description of artworks as a suitable method to capture the affective experiences in moving image installations. By indicating this, I believe Cvetkovich (2021) brings to the surface a gap in the literature around the approximations of moving image installation and queer phenomenology. This thesis employs a process of the description of the experience within projective moving image installations as a queer method to capture the queer affects and disorientations that emerge in this context. These descriptions exist in a non-hierarchical relationship with what is normally understood as a critical analysis. I want to highlight, in dialogue with Cvetkovich (2021), the role of description as a critical process in the analysis of the disorientation that emerges from the encounter with projections in a gallery-based environment. In the following pages, I will approach the methodology applied in order to answer my thesis’ research question.



## 2. Methodology

As previously mentioned in my literature review, disorientation has become a common theme in terms of affectively describing the experience of facing projections in moving image installations. Queer phenomenology provides a way to consider these disorientated moments as a queer experience that emerges in the live encounter with an artwork. In my thesis, I intend to challenge the approach of queer phenomenology used solely as a theoretical framework in connection with a textual analysis as a ‘preferred reading’ (Butler, 2019, p. 22), in the case of Katharina Lindner and Alison Butler (2019), which is mostly applied in the literature around projection in contemporary art. I approach queer phenomenology as a possibility to implement a queer methodology to analyse the affective experiences within projective moving image installations. Jenny Chamarrette (2017) argues there are differences between this ‘preferred reading’ and an approach mainly based on the phenomenological embodiment, more specifically concerning feminist, queer, postcolonial, disability, and critical race studies. According to Chamarrette (2017), a phenomenological approach does not focus on differences between the viewer and a film but explores the entanglements that an embodied encounter with moving images presumes, which, however, does not turn them into a single object. In this situation, Chamarrette (2017) states that instead of focusing on the moving image as a text to be read and dissected by a scholar, as happens in textual analysis, phenomenological accounts change the focus to the specific temporal and spatial moment in which the embodied scholar experienced the moving image.

In a queer phenomenological approach (Ahmed, 2006), this embodied encounter is crucially informed not only by how moving images move us through the kinaesthetic experience of walking, breathing, or shivering but also through the histories and sedimentations that shape our bodies concerning gender, race, and sexuality. For instance,

Chamarette (2017) argues that, in a film-phenomenological account, description plays a crucial role in understanding the affective qualities of encounters with films. The description is understood as unseparated from criticality since the act of describing already takes into consideration an analytical relationship between the viewer's body and its contextual surroundings (Chamarette, 2017), an approach later similarly undertaken by Cvetkovich (2021) concerning installation art, including moving image installations. Therefore, description is the most suitable method for capturing the fleeting disorientations and queer affects that emerge in the contact with projection in moving image installations. More than approaching queer phenomenology as a theoretical framework, in my thesis I highlight its use as a queer methodology that can provide queer, non-normative, destabilising and disorientated modes to analyse the experience within projective moving image installations. Thus, queer phenomenology is understood as a mode to interfere in the academic form, voice, and style of moving image installations' analyses, highlighting the role of embodied description, positionality, autobiographical approaches and first-person voice as crucial for this endeavour. In the following sections, I will expand on the queer methods and methodologies used in this thesis to achieve a comprehension of the phenomenon of disorientation.

## **2.1. Queer methods and methodologies**

In this section, I briefly mention some of the contemporary discussions concerning the use of queer methodologies in an academic context, which relate to the methodologies I apply in the analysis of artworks in my thesis. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1994) has been advocating for a queer methodology since the 1990s, one that is informed by first-person experiences, positionality, and explorations of self-perception emerging from the magnetisation of the

objects that approach our senses. The ‘magnetic queerness’ (Sedgwick, 2003, p. 33) quality of projection in moving image installations is an important base for the development of my thesis. To Sedgwick (2003), queer is not necessarily a matter of sexuality that deviates from heteronormativity, although crucially informed by this, but a critical attitude towards the world in which it might be possible to embrace ‘the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning’ (Sedgwick, 1994, p. 08).

In her book *Tendencies* (1994), Sedgwick takes her own life experience of dealing with a disease, the AIDS activist movement in the 1970s and her close relationship with gay male culture as substantially informing her writing as a queer procedure, which leads to her argument that queer-identified researchers are usually interested in queer biographies. Sedgwick (1994) aims to open space for a discussion of how queerness configures a possibility to approach autobiography as a methodological tool, where pleasure, positionality and desire in finding and analysing an object of study are crucial elements, a perspective shared by contemporary scholars in the field of queer studies (Ahmed, 2006; Love, 2011 cited in McCann, 2016; Doyle, 2016; Johnson, 2016; Jones and Silver, 2016; Patel, 2017; Tweedy, 2016; Di Felicianantonio and Gadelha, 2016).

The debates around queer methods and methodologies gained force again mainly in the field of social sciences through publications such as the book *Queer Methods and Methodologies: Intersecting Queer Theory and Social Science Research* (2010), edited by Kath Browne and Catharine J. Nash, and Volume 44 Numbers 3 and 4 of the journal *Women’s Studies Quarterly*, published in 2016 and edited by Matt Brim and Amin Ghaziani.<sup>8</sup> Brim and Ghazini (2016) mainly define queer methods and methodologies as emphasising antidisciplinarity in combination with self-narration, whilst Browne and Nash (2010) indicate

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<sup>8</sup> A version of this volume was published in a book format in 2019, titled *Imagining Queer Methods*, edited by Matt Brim and Amin Ghaziani and published by the New York University Press.

that a queer methodology is informed by feminist methodologies as it aims to challenge current social relations of power that shape the world based on race, gender, and sexuality. What differentiates a queer methodology from a feminist methodology, according to Hannah McCann (2016), is the existence of the category ‘woman’ as essential for the latter approach. Works such as those of Katharina Lindner (2012, 2018) and Sara Ahmed (2006) undermine this statement by putting together a queer feminism.

In this direction, McCann (2016) indicates that developing a queer methodology comprises the process of queering discrete methods and thus ‘discrete subject positions’ (McCann, 2016, p. 225), aiming to embrace the idea of an ‘unstable’ subject. Consequently, McCann’s (2016) main contribution to the field is identifying that there may be no such discrete queer methodologies, but instead a queer theory provides a way to continue looking at the world that challenges perpetuated conventions and oppressive structures. Therefore, a queer methodology would challenge the boundaries of disciplines whilst building mixed approaches. In this direction, Jennifer Doyle (2006) offers a substantial contribution to the development of my methodology.

In *Queer Wallpaper* (2016), Doyle claims that queering the analysis of an artwork is important to advance an exploration that highlights the relationship between ourselves and the objects we can reach, usually materialised in a queer methodology through ‘injecting a personal or anecdotal voice into scholarly writing’ (Doyle, 2006, p. 347). Doyle mentions Sedgwick (1994) to indicate how specific artworks appear to touch queer bodies more than other bodies because they explore content about experiencing the world from an ‘out of place’ perspective concerning dominant culture. According to Doyle (2006), they offer a map of how to orientate oneself towards objects that provide us with pleasure in a world where queer bodies are still rejected. Overall, the short exploration of these theoretical considerations is a mode to detail and expose how the contemporary perspective on queer

methodologies and theory inform my research methodology. Therefore, my methodology is integrated into a queer context due to the embracement of the perspectives listed below.

**The idea of positionality guides my research.** As previously stated in the introduction to this thesis, I identify myself as a queer man and Latinx American writer conducting research. This indicates the importance of addressing the layers of meanings created from the existence of different subjectivities that could encounter the same artworks as me but would employ completely different analyses informed by their own identities in the LGBTQIAPN+ acronym and other intersections of gender, class, and race. As Ahmed (2006) claims, this is important to consider in a queer phenomenological analysis based on the histories and sedimentations of bodies. In this sense, desire plays a crucial role in what Amy Tweedy (2016) calls a portable method, one that accompanies the researcher during fieldwork and in the writing process, which includes ‘wanting, needing, imagining, and even despairing, that motivates us through our complex and intensely personal research from start to finish’ (Tweedy, 2016, p. 211).

**I aim to explore disorientated moments.** As Ahmed (2006) previously described, disorientated moments are a matter of ‘failure’ in the normal order of the events that orientate our experience in the world. Exploring these moments regarding the experience within projective moving image installations is thus finding what is queer about these experiences. This is implemented in order to understand, from a self-exploratory, first-person, contextual observation, of what these moments of disorientation mean in terms of choosing the objects that I desire to reach out. Therefore, I aim to explore through descriptive means what actions my body takes in the space where the moving image is projected, and how the relationship with the projected content leads me towards or away from the overlaps, dissonances, possibilities, gaps and excess described by Sedgwick (1994) as a queer concern.

**Mixing discrete methodologies is a central perspective.** The two main theoretical

bases for my research, namely Sara Ahmed (2006) and Katharina Lindner (2012, 2018), are crucially informed by a work of mixing different theoretical and methodological frameworks. Therefore, my research intends to employ similar attitudes by mixing methodological approaches related to disciplines such as phenomenology, queer studies, and autoethnography to explore modes of writing about disorientation. I use autoethnographic descriptions as an attempt to stabilise, provisionally through writing, the unstable position of the queer and disorientated subject, and thus to create political resonances for a queer dialogue with other bodies. The next section will account for the description of this process of mixing methodologies.

## **2.2. Queer, phenomenology, autoethnography**

Phenomenology is mostly known through the works of Edmund Husserl (1969, 1970, 1989) and further developments in the writings of philosophers Edith Stein (1989), Martin Heidegger (1973), and Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1968; 2002); contemporary post-phenomenological approaches include Ahmed's (2006) queer phenomenology. Demon Moran (2018) describes phenomenology as being more an approach than a rigorously closed methodology. Phenomenology explores how the tradition (what Husserl calls "sedimentation," mentioned by Ahmed) can orientate our lived experiences as we are all historical beings. Moran (2018) describes the concept of experience and perception in phenomenological terms as

(...) a multi-modal sensory interweaving, not just of the different senses (touch, sight, hearing, smell, taste) and our bodily proprioception, but also as experience filtered by mood and inflected by emotion and various cognitive attitudes. (...). Phenomenology has

always recognised that perception is a multimodal, embodied achievement, an intertwining of various sense modalities (sight, touch) and of bodily proprioceptive movements (called kinaestheses in the psychological terminology of the time), such as eye movements, hand movements, movements of the body (to get near, get a better grip, look more closely), involving looking over the object, pointing, grasping, moving around the object, and so on. (Moran, 2018, p. 86).

Concerning the concept of experience, as explored above, Moran (2018) points out the descriptive nature of phenomenology, which aims to establish relationships between an encountered object and an apprehended subjectivity, taking out of the object its significance as contained in itself. According to Moran (2018), a phenomenological approach describes lived phenomena as they appear to a subjective consciousness; observation plays a crucial role in analysing universal structures such as “perception’, ‘memory’, ‘expectation’, etc (...)’ (Moran, 2018, p. 76), which Moran understands as ‘(...) the science of essential shapes (Moran, 2018, p. 76). Additionally, Moran (2018) states that phenomenology takes ‘perception’ as an essential element for the task of describing experiences, as it allows intuitive access to the senses as the first and most important source of the creation of linguistic meanings, which are also informed by a background of previous experiences. ‘Intentionality’ is understood as a key process that orientates us towards the objects of perception. These objects contain several possible modes of approach, as many as the number of subjectivities that are outside.

In methodological terms, the process of ‘reduction’ is one of the main and most controversial attitudes towards the world in terms of experiencing it phenomenologically. The ‘phenomenological reduction’ is the act of suspending the world as it is given to us (including our beliefs, history, gender, and sexual orientation) to reach what is essential to all in experiencing the world in the least possible distorted mode. This work of suspension aims at achieving the ‘transcendental ego’ and thus a ‘we-intentionality’ or ‘collective intentionality’

(Moran, 2018, p. 82). However, Merleau-Ponty (1945) (mentioned in Moran, 2018, p. 84) emphasised that the ‘transcendental ego’ is not empty but built from an intersubjectivity, formed by a range of experiences lived collectively.

In connection with art history and methods for analysing artworks (emerging mainly in the 1960s and 1970s, during the arising of installation art<sup>9</sup>), phenomenology has permitted an increase in approaches where ‘self-perception’ and ‘description’ were considered. Furthermore, it challenged the idea that the meaning of an artwork is restricted to the historical period when it was produced (Boetzkes, 2010, p. 34). Instead, Amanda Boetzkes (2010) emphasizes that the lived experience of subjectivity towards an artwork and its materiality is in fact what we should understand as a ‘historical context’ (Boetzkes, 2010, p. 35). In order to describe what a phenomenology of art means, Boetzkes (2010) indicates three concepts that are fundamental to the analysis of an artwork: 1) embodiment: the viewer is incorporated by the artwork and not simply related to it; 2) intentionality: the viewer encounters the object covered by intentional interpretative views; 3) modes of confrontation: phenomenology in the history of art is concerned with the description of the disruption of the viewer’s orientation whilst experiencing an artwork where an ‘excess of perception’ develops an ‘interpersonal exchange’ (Boetzkes, 2010, p. 47-48).

As discussed in my review of the work of Lindner (2012, 2018) and Ahmed (2006), what mainly concerns queer scholars in relation to phenomenology is the method of ‘reduction’ and the existence of the ‘transcendental subject’. What Lindner (2018) suggests, which I embrace in my own research, is the necessity to abandon the phenomenological reduction in order to advance phenomenology to a place where the sedimentation of the bodies (women, queer, gay, lesbian, black) is still taken into consideration during the phenomenological encounter and its subsequent description. Consequently, with a descriptive

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<sup>9</sup> For more on this topic see Claire Bishop’s book *Installation Art: a Critical History* (2005).



and interpretative approach, what concerns phenomenology (and subsequently its use in analysing artworks) is how to register the body's experience. Not by coincidence, queer theory also struggles to find a mode of manifestation due to its unstable perspectives.

In my research, I consider the process of writing as a provisional means of stabilising the disorientations and queer affects that emerged in the experience with the artworks analysed in this thesis, to build a mode of communicating this experience academically and politically. Ahmed (2006) states: 'If phenomenology turns us towards things, in terms of how they reveal themselves in the present, then we may also need to "follow" such things around. We may need to supplement phenomenology with an "ethnography" of things' (Ahmed, 2006, p. 39). Therefore, to advance a queer phenomenological approach in dialogue with Ahmed (2006), my thesis is informed by autoethnographic writing. I assume autoethnography in my research as a queer methodology, as described by Stacy Holman Jones and Tony Adams (2010, 2019). For Jones and Adams (2019), autoethnography is characterised by the relationship between the autobiographical self-exploration and the theories that provide us with an understanding of history and with strategies for changing what we find necessary in an oppressive world.

Tony E. Adams and Derek M. Bolen (2017) state that a queer autoethnography 'engages personal experience, reflexivity, memory, and storytelling devices' (Adams and Bolen, 2017, p. 104) critically to address lived events and create intense and vulnerable descriptions of them, taking the form of unconventional modes of academic materialisation through performative writing that engages with the experience of the body in a specific time and space. Beyond these approaches, Adams and Bolen (2017) highlight that queer autoethnographies tend to explore experiences that praise queer modes of embodiment informed by doubt, risks, and embracing vulnerable and uncomfortable affects. Jones and Adams (2019) claim that queer methodologies, of which autoethnography is one, are a matter

of writing queer lives into theoretical and historical frameworks. The most important aspect of autoethnography that informs my research is the process to ‘write-the-self-in-the-culture’ (Jones and Adams, 2019, p. 07), as a mode to challenge what does and does not count as valuable in academic research.

Consequently, researching from a queer/phenomenological/autoethnographic perspective is to take the self-narration of spatial experiences as fundamental to materialise, communicate and intervene socially through the exercise of writing. Hence, I restate that my methodology is part of a context of experimental criticism that considers the approximation between queer phenomenology and autoethnography as part of a ‘queer-life-writing tradition’ (Herring and Wallace, 2021, p. 18). This latter approach gained force through the writings of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1994, 2003, 2010), goes back to those of Gloria Anzaldua (1987) and José Esteban Muñoz (1996, 1999) and reverberates in contemporary scholarship on queer studies such as in the writings of Sara Ahmed (2006), Tony E. Adams and Derek M. Bolen (2017), Lauren Berlant and Kathlen Stewart (2019), Stacy Holman Jones and Anne M. Harris (2019), and Scott Herring and Lee Wallace (2021). The next section briefly describes the use of a multiple case studies methodology as a suitable approach to analyse artworks concerning the methodological contexts explored so far, as it is the most commonly used in the literature around projective moving image installations.

### **2.3. Multiple case studies methodology**

To analyse the moments of disorientation in projective moving image installations through a queer phenomenological approach, disorientation must be experienced as an observable phenomenon, which is one of the main reasons a multiple case study methodology

can substantially aggregate information to a queer phenomenological methodology. A case studies methodology is the most used approach to analyse artworks in the literature around projection, which highlights the importance of this methodology in my research. For my thesis, I engaged with the work of Robert Stake (2006), as he claims that a multiple case study methodology is highly informed by experiencing a phenomenon in its context whilst considering the subjective process of the researcher as fundamental for analysing a case.

A multiple case study methodology is, according to Stake (2006), an in-depth study of a collection of cases that are connected by a phenomenon he calls the *quintain*, described as an element the researcher aims to understand via exploration of a variety of cases that, although different, are connected by the same phenomenon. The quintain in my research is the phenomenon of disorientation. Furthermore, Stake (2006) provides other important considerations to describe a multiple case study and the exploration of the quintain as a common phenomenon: 1) it is important to understand how the quintain works in different environments and situations; 2) observation and experiential knowledge are fundamental in real situations; 3) multiple case study methodology aims more at particularization than generalization to advance theory, not by a sampling logic; 4) the use of narratives is common to describe the quintain; 5) case studies are usually subjective and related to personal experience.

Moreover, although the quintain is the element that gathers multiple cases around a subject, and thus provides the main theoretical development of a study, each case will have questions to be explored. Generally, a multiple case methodology helps me to demonstrate, via analysis of a series of artworks (the cases), how projection in moving image installations can be understood as a disorientation device. Furthermore, given its aspect of situational and observational methods, I can explore the appropriation of queer phenomenology and its self-exploration aspects in the live contact with the artwork. In the following section, I employ a

description of the methods of collecting data, selecting the case studies and analysing them through the context previously explored in this methodological section.

#### **2.4. Data collection and strategies for analysis of disorientation**

My thesis is a multiple case study informed by a queer phenomenological and autoethnographic methodology. The theoretical and methodological discussions raised so far have provided a basis for the process of conducting fieldwork and its subsequent analytical materialisation via writing. In my research, the fieldwork is comprised of visiting a range of selected exhibitions in art galleries that happened whilst I was conducting this study. The initial two criteria for deciding to visit an exhibition were the use of projective technologies in the artwork and the location of the work in an art gallery space.

In some cases, these visits were based on prospective purposes, as in my visit to the 58<sup>th</sup> International Art Exhibition *La Biennale di Venezia*. This case is an example of how to approach queer phenomenology and desire as a portable method (Tweedy, 2016). During my time at this exhibition, I encountered an overwhelming number of artworks, which led me to make choices in terms of which works I would visit. Other exhibitions were chosen due to a desire to explore the work of a specific artist, whose production I came to know via academic literature and believed would make a good case when exploring my research question. This was the case, for example, of the exhibition *Open My Glade* (2019) by Pipilotti Rist. To choose case studies relevant to the final version of my thesis, the following criteria were initially established:

**a) Situational observation.** Given the ‘observational’ and ‘contextual’ nature of both queer phenomenology and multiple-case study methodology, as well as the ‘liveness’ of projective moving image installations, I decided to include as case studies only artworks which I could experience live.

**b) Multiple situations.** To achieve a perspective for understanding my object of study, thus my ‘quintain’, in different situations, I have chosen a balance in the use of projection in the installations out of three main criteria related to the spatial configuration: 1) the use of a single projection; 2) the use of multiple projections; 3) the use of projection in single or multiple formats in conjunction with objects installed in the space.

**c) Exploration of the quintain.** An important part of selecting a case study is to what extent there is a ‘desire’ to engage with it experientially. Therefore, I have taken into consideration my own empathic response to artworks which directly resonated with my personal experience as a queer person (Sedgwick, 1994), as a portable method (Tweedy, 2016). The selected case studies were those in which I could recognise the experiential emergence of the three core phenomena of disorientation stated by Ahmed (2006): zooming in, becoming an object, and disturbing others. It is worth stating that in my first encounter with the artworks there was no expectation in terms of framing them into a specific phenomenon. Instead, the process of recognising the phenomena of disorientation appeared from the contact with the artwork itself, previous to any theorisation or choice of phenomena in relation to which the case study could be analysed. This opened space for ‘surprise’ and ‘unpredictability’ as crucial experiential elements in a queer analysis. After articulating the criteria of selection, I will now describe the methodological process of being in the field and collecting and analysing data.

### 2.4.1. Fieldwork (affective encounter)

**Description:** This stage refers to the moment of encountering an artwork or exhibition in the field research. These encounters are an attempt to experience the artwork in its most immediate possible manifestation. This attempts to capture, as closely as possible, the queer affects and sense of disorientation emerging from the live encounter with the artwork. Using the term ‘encounter’ to describe this action is an attempt to address this moment as one involving ‘surprise’ (Ahmed, 2000, p. 06; Lindner, 2018, p. 04), ‘conflict’ (Ahmed, 2000, p. 06), ‘messiness’ (Love, 2016), ‘[an] open mess of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning’ (Sedgwick, 1994, p. 08), or the unexpected (sometimes pleasurable, other times frightening) where disorientation can emerge as a queer embodied affect. It is worth mentioning that this encounter is crucially informed by the presence of a sedimented body, which brings its own history to the space of the gallery.

**Techniques:** I aimed at first encountering these artworks as an unprepared viewer to experience the artwork with the full possibilities of mess, overlaps, anxieties, desires and pleasures (Sedgwick, 1993) that being there could provide me with. By being unprepared I mean not searching for much contextual and analytical information about the artworks previous to the encounter, apart from the possibility of encountering projective moving images in the art gallery. The aim was to develop a piece of writing just after this encounter happened, either through prose or by taking fieldwork notes.

### 2.4.2. Collection of data

**Description:** This stage refers to a second visit of the selected exhibitions to collect material that could be relevant for remembering the disorientated moments experienced in the first visit.

**Techniques:** I visited the projective moving image installations a second time attempting to write notes regarding spatial settings, voice notes about the first experience with the artwork, photographing, filming, or even immediately redeveloping writings previously done after the first encounter.

### 2.4.3. Analysis

The analysis of the case studies in my thesis is informed by a constant process of ‘switching of codes’ (Anzaldúa, 1987) between academic conventions, theoretical discussions, and queer phenomenological and autoethnographic descriptions. In dialogue with Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s (2003) proposals for experimental criticism, I implement an analysis that is not based on *reading* the works as a text, *explaining* them, or writing *about* them. Instead, I aim to write *beside* them, around a phenomenological experience of mutual contact (Ahmed, 2006), where disorientation emerges, making the encounter and its consequent description disorientated, sometimes confusing, unclear, ambiguous. However, this thesis does not attempt to return to modernist ideas of the autonomy of the artwork as located inside the gallery and isolated from its context outside in the world or to its institutional (that is, ideological) framings. Instead, this thesis is an experiment in

understanding the element ‘context’ as the temporal development of the ordinary encounter between an artwork and a body that brings its own contextual and cultural framings as an affective conflict.

Therefore, I discuss and analyse an encounter that is contextualised through the queer lives that consistently struggle to find affects that resonate with their own bodily experiences, either inside or outside the art gallery. This connects my research to Butler’s (2019) claim that, due to their deictic aspects, ‘moving image installations actually connect the viewers with their own world and context’ (Butler, 2019, p. 21), as previously discussed. Instead of trying to read the artworks as a text, I follow Chamarette’s proposal (2017) by focusing on the connection between the work, the body, and the environment as an entangled continuum. Instead of attempting to unfold the artists’ intentions, I aim to understand how these works affected my body in the precise space and time in which I faced them, focusing on ‘primary, first-hand experiences’ (Thompson, 2017, p. 107) and understanding that sometimes this could mean deviating from the artwork as the main object of analysis. In the end, as Susannah Thompson (2018) proclaims, ‘The critic may be an interpreter if she wishes, but our object is not to *explain* the work of art’ (Thompson, 2018, p. 25). In choosing not to refer to elements such as the artists’ intentions and institutional contexts, I work on exposing the phenomenological queerness of experiencing projective moving image installations from the point of view of queer experiences usually not considered part of a ‘context’ in the literature on projection in contemporary art. This happens because this literature is still based on a universal idea of the body; a situation that queer phenomenology aims to challenge. Hence, as mentioned in the literature review, my research aligns itself with a wave of institutional critique (Tello, 2020) that does not wait for the institution to change, but instead implements creative methodologies to (in my research anyway) live queerness in relation to these institutions. My analysis of the case studies in each chapter of the thesis is based on two main



processes, an affective orientated description and a theoretical exploration, as described below.

#### **a) Affective orientated description**

**Description:** This section describes the experience of first encountering the artworks as an unprepared viewer. Each chapter of the thesis includes two sections on this ‘affect-oriented description’, one per each case study (artwork) explored in the chapter. These two sections offer a description reflecting my own experience of disorientation/orientation in the space of the gallery, thus providing the reader with an affective experience. In order to capture the orientating and disorientating moments of my experience, my writing is based on two key concepts: kinaesthesia (Lindner, 2018) and sedimentation of the body (Ahmed, 2006). They allow me to approach the disorientating and orientating aspects by engaging with the description of the body’s spatial and temporal experience (walking, laying down, looking, sitting) and visceral responses (breath, tight muscles, headaches, fluttering feelings in the stomach), as well as with the history of the body that is facing the artwork. Discussing gender issues as sedimentation of the body against the phenomenological reduction, for example, Katharina Lindner (2018) explores the kinaesthetic features of female characters in films. To establish a relationship between kinaesthesia and sedimentation, Sara Ahmed (2006) and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1993, 2003, 2010) offer a broader discussion of sexuality that involves race, class, and autobiography. This section aims at intervening in the way how we describe the experience of encountering moving image art, deviating from the most common use of textural analysis found in the literature.

**Techniques:** This section is descriptive; it is written in a prose format and uses the following

techniques: performative utterances<sup>10</sup> (Sedgwick, 1998) and a tautological ‘I’ to highlight the self-narration and the first-person voice in sentences such as ‘I walk’, ‘I sit’, ‘I move’, ‘I see’, and ‘I feel’; figures of speech (simile, metaphor, hyperbole, and personification); ambiguous/ambivalent sentences (an important category for phenomenology and queer studies) to highlight confusion and disorientation; decontextualized sentences to address the disorientating simultaneity of information in projective moving image installations. The main references in terms of the craft of writing are Sara Ahmed (2016), Lauren Berlant and Kathleen Stewart (2019), Gloria Anzaldua (1987), and Stacy Holman Jones and Anne M. Harris (2019). In my first attempts to write about the artworks, I noticed that the excerpts which managed to better capture and ‘translate’ the feelings of disorientation were evoked by ‘memories’ of the first ‘affective encounter’ with the work.

## **b) Queer phenomenological and autoethnographic analysis**

**Description:** This section refers to the last part of each chapter, in which I undertake a theoretical analysis of the case studies. In this segment, some presumably binary concepts are brought together to understand how they can instead be approached as fluid concepts that facilitate an understanding of experiences of disorientation.

**Techniques:** In this section, I establish a combined analysis of the two artworks described in the chapter. I review the disorientated moments that emerge in the affective orientated

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<sup>10</sup> According to Sedgwick (1998), ‘J. L. Austin suggested that, at least in principle, it might be possible to distinguish between utterances that merely *said* something (constative utterances) and those that *did* something (performative utterances). The defining instances of performative utterances are those whose utterance actually does the thing described in them: “I thee wed”. “I will my belongings to my daughter Mabel”. “I welcome you”. (Sedgwick, 1998, p. 106).

descriptions in contact with the theories and scholars explored in the literature review. Therefore, the chapters of this thesis are shaped by writings that are informed by the relationship between the ‘immediate and extended context’ (Love, 2013, p. 418) of encountering the case studies.

The main references in terms of the craft of writing for these descriptions and analysis are Jones and Harris (2019) as they inspired my use of two separate sections, one for description and the other for theoretical developments, and Sara Ahmed (2006) and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1994, 2003, 2010) for the constant switching of codes between theory and personal experience. I do not presume that this work can completely reach or translate the affective encounters with the artworks that happened at the time that the experiences were developing. To affirm this condition would be to undermine the role of disorientation in these spaces as a phenomenon that is fleeting and inherently difficult to capture fully in words. Instead, I assume these analyses, including the descriptions, are an unstable, queer mode of capturing the disorientation and queer affects that emerged in the live encounters with the artworks, informed by memory, affect and the material data collected in my second visit to the exhibitions. The uncertainty of memories works here as an important queer tool to put in words experiences that are ambivalent to embrace the ‘ephemera as evidence’ (Muñoz, 1996) of fleeting queer experiences.

In conclusion, my methodology is composed of a self-exploration of the live observation and experience within projective moving image installations to analyse disorientated moments. I recall Love (2016) to indicate that affirming our role as queer academics is important to address what this statement means outside of our academic world, a social struggle that ‘exceed our methods, our countermethods, and our antimethods’ (Love,

2016, p. 348). This queer self-exploration is materialised via writing from and through a self-narration perspective, attempting provisionally to stabilise what is queer in experiencing projective moving image installations. By convening this process, I hope to offer a possibility to explore queer phenomenology as a potential approach to moving image art criticism, especially for those who, like myself, live through queerness and feel ‘out of place’.

### **3. Outline of chapters**

This thesis is comprised of three main chapters elaborating the three core phenomena that form disorientation as proposed by Sara Ahmed (2006): zooming in, becoming an object, and disturbing the others. I organised the chapters around my common engagements with the art gallery space in the live experience within projective moving image installations. The chapters read together are a metaphor for the stages of feeling disorientated whilst moving in the gallery. This thesis orientates the reader through the first encounter with a sensorially excessive environment and its corporeal resonances (Chapter One), the subsequent disorientated temporal development of moving towards the projection (Chapter Two), and the consequent process of gathering around projection whilst looking to the side and becoming aware that we usually share this experience with other bodies (Chapter Three). I organised each chapter around one of the three core phenomena of disorientation (zooming in, becoming an object, and disturbing the others), even though they overlap at some points of the analysis.

Each chapter is composed of the affective orientated description of two of the selected case studies, totalling six in the full thesis, and followed by an integrative analysis that establishes theoretical connections between them. In each chapter, I explore a different key

concept that emerged from my first encounters with the case studies described. Although disorientation is the common phenomenon analysed in this thesis, each artwork brings different approaches to this phenomenon. Therefore, in every chapter, I group two artworks with which I had a sort of common experience that could be explored together to analyse disorientation in projective moving image installations. The specific concepts approached in each chapter serve as a mode to expose and disorientate ways of understanding the described experience in binary terms, such as attachment and detachment, darkness and brightness, gazing and glancing, distance and proximity.

In the first chapter, titled *Embrace the excess*, I explore the disorientating phenomenon of *zooming in* through an analysis of the encounter with the work *Spite Your Face* (2017) by Rachel Mclean and some of the works present in Pipilotti Rist's retrospective exhibition *Open My Glade* (2019). In the section called *Camp aesthetic as a queer strategy of disorientation*, I use camp as a key concept to highlight the detached attachment (Horn, 2017) aspects of the experience with the case studies. I argue that these works are imbued by a camp aesthetic that works as a queer strategy to produce disorientation whilst zooming in on the excessive surface of the projections.

A consequence of zooming in is the process of *becoming an object*, which is approached in Chapter Two, called *Follow the light*, through the analysis of the experience with the works *SaFO5* (2019) by Charlotte Prodger and *No history in a room filled with people with funny names 5* (2019) by Korakrit Arunanondchai and Alex Gvojic. In both of these case studies, a dark corridor exists as a space of transition between the outside and the inside of the gallery. In the section titled *Transits of light: cruising the dark corridor*, I claim an understanding of this dark corridor as a cruising space (the key concept of this chapter) in which disorientation emerges due to the transition from a brightly lit space (outside the gallery) to a darkly lit space (the inside of the gallery and the corridor).

One of the results of becoming an object, and thus disorientated, is inevitably *disturbing the other bodies* that we share the gallery with. In the third chapter, *Look to your side*, I explore this phenomenon by analysing the experience in the work *Swinguerra* (2019) by Barbara Wagner and Benjamin de Burca and some of Steve McQueen's works included in a homonymous exhibition held in 2020. In the section called *Besideness: distance and proximity as disorientations to inhabit the space*, I argue that the positionality, both physical and affective, that a body chooses to take concerning distancing or approximating from the projections in moving image installations affects other bodies, leading to disorientation. On this occasion, a *besideness* attitude (this chapter's key concept) needs to be undertaken to establish relationships with the other bodies and the content of the projected moving images.

## CHAPTER ONE

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### Embrace the excess

## 1.1. Introduction

In this first chapter, I analyse the disorientating moments generated throughout the encounter with the work *Spite Your Face* (2018) by Rachel Maclean, and some of the projective moving image installations included in Pipilotti Rist's retrospective exhibition *Open My Glade* (2019). I argue that in these works a camp aesthetic functions as a queer strategy to generate disorientation by inducing a process of *zooming in* on the surface of the projections due to their excessive qualities. The act of *zooming in* is described by Ahmed (2006, p. 157) as the moment in which we lose the contours of the objects that surround us, as we intensely focus on and are absorbed by a specific object due to its magnetising features. This situation has a close connection with our body's history and desires to turn our attention towards that object. According to Ahmed (2006, p. 157), disorientation emerges in the movement of changing focus from one object to another, resulting in a superimposition of the two and raising awareness of the previous object as a background that affects the contact with the new object. Consequently, an experience of a continuum of fleeting absorption and sustained gestural excess emerges in the relationship with the projections and encourages re-orientation towards the sedimented histories of our bodies. Hence, the process of *zooming in* emerges as an efficient mode to describe the encounters with this chapter's case studies.

My experience with Rachel Maclean's and Pipilotti Rist's works was informed by the disorientation that resulted from the fluid movement of *zooming in* on the colourful and excessive brightness of the projections and the re-orientation of this movement towards the space in which the projections were installed. Whilst seeing these works, my eyes acted as a key element to explore the moving images. However, following Katharina Lindner's (2018) arguments, what developed afterwards was a muscular and tactile engagement once my entire body responded kinaesthetically through a gestural excess that mirrored the excessiveness



portrayed in the moving images. In this latter context, excess appears either through the material aspects of projection (lights and colours) or specific diegetic elements such as Maclean's and Rist's excessive gestures and movements that are closely related to popular culture content.

My encounter with the artworks invoked what Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (2008, cited in Brostoff, 2017, p. 06) called 'camp-recognition'. Drawing on the work of Sedgwick (2008), Marissa Brostoff (2017, p. 06) indicates this camp-recognition as an empathic encounter with a sticky or emotionally excessive and exciting object, one that provokes a process of identification and questioning of the campness, or lack thereof, of the object's producer. In this direction, Richard Dyer (2002) states that 'camp is far more a question of how you respond to things rather than qualities actually inherent in those things' (Dyerr, 2002, p. 52). Therefore, despite the appearance of this questioning movement in the literature around camp, my concern in this chapter is not to unfold any of Maclean's and Rist's previous intentions or involvements with queer and camp aesthetics or methodologies. Instead, I employ an analysis that relates to Lindner's (2018) approach to what films can do and how they affected me through a queerness that arose from a camp-recognition crucially informed by excess and consequently leading to the emergence of disorientation and queer affects. It is about recognising an unintentional campness, as in Susan Sontag's (2018) statement that 'Camp which knows itself to be Camp ('camping') is usually less satisfying' (Sontag, 2018, p. 13).

Camp is therefore the leading concept for the development of this chapter. However, defining camp has never been a comfortable effort, as it is comprised of a series of historical disagreements that shaped its multifaceted characteristics in contemporary culture. Whilst it is not my intention in this introduction to present an exhaustive literature review on the subject of camp, some of the conceptual tendencies found in the literature serve as a mode to

contextualise my use and understanding of camp. I shall start this investment in exploring a camp aesthetic by mentioning Susan Sontag's paradigmatic text *Notes on 'Camp'* (2018), first published in 1964, in which she comprehends camp as a sensibility difficult to capture. Thus, the idea of camp is fully informed by a queer phenomenological approach, as it shares the same slippery qualities with the notion of 'disorientation'<sup>11</sup>. This is because a camp sensibility does not intend to create harmonies; rather, it only exists in fragments that require a 'tentative and nimble' (Sontag, 2018, pp. 03-04) handling if meant to be depicted in words.

Influenced by a similar perspective<sup>12</sup>, Andrew Medhurst (2013) states that defining camp is comparable to 'attempting to sit in the corner of a circular room, it can't be done' (Medhurst, 2013, p. 154), even though he clearly outlines camp as an excessive attitude, a performative action in commitment with the marginal which is mindful of what exceeds the marginal context. Whilst attempting to define the undefinable, Medhurst (2013) exposes how contradiction is one of the main characteristics of camp, one that impacts even the most updated literature on the theme, demonstrated by the writings of Katrin Horn (2017). Some theorists agree that this made it possible for a camp scholarship to emerge. David Bergman (1993, p. 05), for example, provides four main points of agreement: 1) Camp is a style that features elements based on "extravagance", "artifice", and "extremity" (Bergman, 1993, p. 05); 2) Camp is always related to popular culture; 3) Camp tends to be recognised by someone who is marginal to mainstream culture; 4) Camp has a close connection with homosexual culture or at least with desiring practices seen as unnatural (this last affirmation opens up a space to understand the queer turn taken by some camp scholars from the mid-1990s). Furthermore, Bergman mentions the writings of Judith Butler (2007 [originally published in 1990]) on drag queens as one of the most rigorous attempts to revise camp and return its important role of subverting heteronormative logics through the uses of excess in

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<sup>11</sup> The slippery quality of camp is highlighted by Fabio Cleto (1999)

<sup>12</sup> This tendency can be identified in the writings of authors such as David Bergman (1993), Fabio Cleto (1999), Mark Booth (1999), and Olivia Oliver-Hopkins (2017).

order to expose gender as a social construct, although Bergman (1993) states that a polemic exists in the literature on camp regarding whether style and excess are in the object or in the eye of the beholder.

Nevertheless, these agreements have not annulled the fact that traditional academic literature on camp (from the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s) is mainly based on a binary system of discussion, mostly oppositional, the most common being gay camp - pop camp; gay subculture - nongay appropriation; subcultural critique - dominant culture; low camp - high camp; intentional - unintentional; masculine - feminine; straight - homosexual; original - copy; natural - artifice. In this respect, it is important to state that some of these disagreements emerged mainly in response to Susan Sontag's (2018) polemic affirmation that camp is an apolitical aestheticism (a method of enjoyment) due to its emphasis on surface, texture, and style to the detriment of content<sup>13</sup>. In her 58 notes describing camp sensibility, Sontag (2018) raises a few other elements that are of particular interest for this research: It is artificial and unnatural; it uses features such as artifice, exaggeration, the fantastic, humour, theatricality, 'Being-as-Playing-a-Role' (Sontag, 2018, p. 09); it is sometimes both extraordinary and banal. Sontag (2018, p. 29-30) states that camp sensibility is not exclusive of homosexuals (even though there is a close affiliation), but this group is one of the main reasons camp played such an important role in understanding cultural artefacts whilst challenging naturalised ideas of gender and sexuality.

Since the publication of Sontag's (2018) notes, scholars have accused her of erasing the crucial role of gay subcultures in the development of camp as a cultural manifestation, as an attempt to propagate the concept to a larger audience (read by some of the following authors as a heterosexual one). Within this trend, which runs from the 1970s to the 1990s, camp is seen as inseparable from a gay sensibility that recalls the modes of communication

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<sup>13</sup> This assertion is made in note number two of the text *Notes on "Camp"* (Sontag, 2018, pp. 04-05).

between gay men in Pre-Stonewall times (Dyer, 2002 [originally published in 1977]; Newton, 1993 [originally published in 1979]; Babuscio, 1993 [originally published in 1984]; Medhurst, 1991; Bergman, 1993; Meyer, 1994; Kleinhas, 1994). In this direction, less than a decade after the Stonewall riots, Richard Dyer (2002) provides an understanding of camp as a sensibility that historically ‘(...) kept, and keeps, a lot of gay men going (...) without conforming to the drabness and rigidity of the hetero male role’ (Dyer, 2002, p. 49). Camp aesthetics functions exactly as the ‘in-this-togetherness’ discussed by Ami Harbin (2016) in this thesis’ literature review. It emerges as a positive mode to deal with the shared disorientation of a specific part of the queer community, a way to create bounds between people to address and discover the shared strategies for survival that disorientated experiences in the world can create. Dyer (2002, pp. 49-50) asserts that camp works as a strategy that brings ‘fun’ moments, where wit leads the relationship among the gay community to deal with the dangers of a hostile world that rejects non-normative desires.

Following the same trend, Jack Babuscio (1993) reasserts the existence of a distinct gay sensibility that is the direct result of oppression in a heteronormative culture. This gay sensibility, according to Babuscio (1993, p. 20) not exclusive of gay men<sup>14</sup>, creates camp, described as the situational relationship between different agents, never a thing or individual. Furthermore, Babuscio (1993, p. 22) indicates four specific characteristics of camp: 1) Irony: referring to the findings of incongruity between a subject and its context, as in the author’s given examples of masculine/feminine, young/old, sacred/profane, spirit/flesh; 2) Aestheticism: a mode of giving the element of irony shaped materiality, by incorporating components such as emphasis on style through the use of exaggerated (excessive) features, ‘sensuous surfaces, textures, imagery, and the evocation of mood as stylistic device’ (Babuscio, 1993, p. 22); 3) Theatricality: recalling Susan Sontag (2018), life is seen as theatre

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<sup>14</sup> This can be read as important evidence that Babuscio could have developed future ideas in relation to queerness instead of a gay sensibility, as he understands this sensibility majority to be located ‘in the eye of the beholder’ (Babuscio, 1993, p. 20) and shared by not only gay men but also other minority groups.

and all camp behaviours are constructed to be over the top, as a result of which, gender roles are exposed to the extent of being identified as unreal; 4) Humour: inherent to irony, humour emerges as a strategy to build positive explorations of the self, whilst having to deal with confrontational environments.

Although the so-called ‘gay sensibility’ seems to limit the possibilities of camp to function as a far more radical strategy for cultural transformation, it is important to point out its crucial role in returning to camp the political function put aside by Susan Sontag (2018). However, this approach concomitantly fails in addressing a series of other discussions related to class and history (Ross, 1993; Flinn, 1995; Piontek, 2017), the role of women as producers of camp (Davy, 1994; Flinn, 1995; Robertson, 1993 and 1999; Berrick, 2008; Leibetser, 2012; Nielsen, 2016; Brickman, 2017; Horn, 2017) and racial discussions (Muñoz, 1999; Gubar, 2006; Dexl and Horn, 2017; Pochmara and Wierchowska, 2017; Barnes, 2017; Chatzipapatheodoridis, 2017; Hyacinthe, 2017).

In the 1990s, Pamela Robertson (1993) started developing a connection between camp and queer theory, a tendency that emerged in canonical edited books such as *The Politics and Poetics of Camp* (1994), edited by Moe Meyer, and *Camp: Queer Aesthetics and the Performing Subject* (1999), edited by Fabio Cleto. In her writings, Robertson (1999) challenges both the apolitical and the ‘gay male sensibility’ comprehensions of camp. Firstly, Robertson (1999 p. 267) points out the anachronistic characteristics of camp, considering its capacity to mutate and exist in favour of a specific historical period, bringing historical objects to the front to provide a reading that destabilises assumptions about gender and sexuality. Robertson’s (1993, 1999) main contribution, however, is in highlighting women as producers of camp as she locates this concept in a queer theoretical arena, the latter understood as an attitude that attempts to undermine normative comprehensions of the world and that works on intersecting ‘the interests of heterosexual women, lesbians, and gay men,

but which, at the same time, can account for feminist aesthetics and interpretations' (Robertson, 1999, p. 272).

Hence, this chapter is part of a larger conversation about a version of camp that exists in relation to queer theory, which allowed a post-millennial concept of camp to appear, as discussed by Brian M. Peters and Bruce E. Drushel (2017). According to Peters and Drushel (2017, p. ix-x), a post-millennial camp does not pertain to the 'male homosexual' but instead moves towards the fluid idea of queerness, as 'non-normative, countercultural' (Peters and Drushel, 2017, p. x) to include practices such as 'leather camp, lesbian drag king camp, and Chicano/a Camp' (Peters and Drushel, 2017, p. x). This approach resonates in the work of several contemporary scholars publishing in this field since the beginning of the 2000s (Pike, 2001), and especially in the 2010s (Taylor, 2012; Wolf, 2013; Hawkins, 2015; Gillespie, 2016; Horn, 2017; Brostoff, 2017; Peters and Drushel, 2017; Kellerman, 2017; Philpot, 2017; Cusack, 2017; Schottmiller, 2017; Melton, 2017; Oliver-Hopkins, 2017; Levitt, 2017; Piontek, 2017; Peters, 2017; Perez, 2017; Hotz-Davies *et al*, 2018).

In this contemporary movement towards queer theory, Katrin Horn (2017) provides the most fruitful understanding of camp concerning the aim of this chapter for two main reasons. Firstly, Horn (2017, p. 06) recovers the relationship between camp and affect by arguing that a camp sensibility might be located much more in the response to cultural products than to the 'things' themselves, an approach established by previous authors such as Richard Dyer (2002). Therefore, camp appears in the playful irreverence of looking at some artworks, for example, and recognising aspects of the object that elicits queerness through the affective relationships with our bodies' histories, a re-articulation of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's (2008) previously mentioned camp-recognition without the necessity to question the queerness of the camp producer. Secondly, Horn (2017) reiterates previous theoretical developments of camp as an aesthetic strategy that uses parody, irony, and humour through

the employment of ‘stylistic exaggeration, excessive theatricality, or other forms of over-articulation [...] to create incongruities and discrepancies within (popular) texts’ (Horn, 2017, p. 21). According to Horn (2017), this refers to queering oppressive and normative ideas regarding gender, sexuality, and notions such as ‘original’ concerning the text which camp parodies. Thus, camp functions as the materiality of a queer strategy, an approach that appears in the writings of Jody Taylor (2012), John Wolf (2013), Marisa Brostoff (2017), and Elizabeth M. Melton (2017).

Horn’s (2017) approach crucially informs her notion of camp, described as a ‘detached attachment’ (2017, p. 17). Through this concept, Horn (2017) explains that camp functions as a queer strategy to *detach* objects from normative pathways whilst challenging them. Concomitantly, camp creates possibilities for the emergence of *attachments* amongst people that share similar ‘queer values and responses’ (Horn, 2017, p. 17), resulting in a communal relation that I comprehend as intrinsically connected with the idea of ‘in-this-togetherness’ explored by Ami Harbin (2016). Therefore, this communality positions the political and affective aspects of camp in the contemporary sphere of queer theory. I conclude this short review on the concept of camp with Katrin Horn’s (2017) work because she is responsible for highlighting the use of excess as camp’s most common stylistic component and pointing out the usually neglected affective qualities of camp, in which I believe excess plays a critical role.

Consequently, in this chapter, I employ the concept of camp aesthetic as a relational (Babuscio, 1993; Drushel, 2017; Horn, 2017,) and excessive queer strategy that leads to disorientation and the potential emergence of queer affects, which input a subversive exhaustion into the body because of camp’s ‘detached attachment’ (Horn, 2017) aspect. In the context of my encounters with Rachel Maclean’s and Pipilotti Rist’s works, the constant attainment of the excess of light and colours were the most disorientating moments due to the

constant changing of focus between excessive diegetic elements that affected my body through the light of projection. The visual excess was responsible for making my body *zoom in* on the ‘surface of projection’ (Bruno, 2014), leading to a fleeting detachment from the surroundings and thus a moment of intense self-exploration. Whilst in the process of sensorially detaching, I managed to create an attachment to projection and the moving image content. This is directly related to the queer affects emergent from a muscular empathic encounter with the excessive work of the bodies and other elements present in the films and the queer affects that emerge in the gallery as a result of disorientating moments. The experience with this chapter’s case studies existed as a continuum of fleeting absorption and sustained gestural excess throughout the gallery. On the one hand, this is implemented through acts of looking, listening, walking, sitting, or standing still, which allowed my body to encounter the moving images from different levels of kinaesthetic engagement. On the other hand, excessive visceral work emerges through different levels of breathing or muscular spasms, for example, in which my body responded to the campness of the projected moving images.

The following pages of this chapter are comprised firstly of the affective orientated descriptions of the encounter with Rachel Maclean’s and Pipilotti Rist’s artworks, followed by an analytical section called *Camp aesthetic as a queer strategy of disorientation*. The latter is divided as follows: *Zooming in on the camp excess*, in which I explore the role of visual excess in creating a sense of disorientation through the work of *zooming in* on the surface of the projections; *Gestural excess and the exhausted body*, analysing how the visual excess affected my body and orientated me towards the moving images to create a muscular empathy with the excessive work performed by the artists in the moving images and the excessive presence of light and colours on the surface of the projections; and *Re-orientating attachments through camp-recognition*, discussing the generation of attachments through the



queer affects provided by the contact with camp's engagement with popular culture.

### **1.2. *Spite Your Face* (2017), by Rachel Maclean**

I face this golden curtain and my eyes are confined to its brilliance while I glance around trying to understand where to go, and an upsetting tingling seems to travel throughout my fleetingly numb body as my legs appear not to respond to my attempt at taking a step ahead, being afraid I am in the wrong place. The curtain looks somehow out of place in contrast to the white walls; but at the same time, it much resembles the sumptuousness of the building that I have just entered. What if I go beyond the curtain and find myself in the presence of strangers? With tight muscles, I reluctantly open the golden curtain and I am confronted by a sudden darkness, one that disturbs my sight by creating a dark barrier that surrounds my body and prevents me from immediately putting my feet ahead and moving through the space as, for a fleeting moment, I cannot reach any recognisable element that could orientate me onwards.

A brilliance quickly replaces this traumatic movement by attacking my vision with a luminance that colours my skin and blurs my immediate surroundings, reaching the surface of my eye, and leaving me fairly unsettled but invading and energising my body through light and a dazzling sound as if prompting me to move forward amidst the uncertainty of conducting a safe walk in this still dark environment. The darkly lit architecture of the gallery starts to appear slightly odd, along with the unusual vertical projection I can see a few metres away, as its slender and luxurious aspect creates an ambiguous religious setting where a profusion of ornaments, reliefs, and columns are highlighted by the excessive light of the projection.

Loud and comical voices I can dizzyingly hear emanating from the film trespass on my ears as if aiming at occupying every single inch of the gallery, marking their presence in the projections as the point to which I should move, while my eyes are orientated in the direction of several ominous dark silhouettes facing the brightness that, at this point, has pulled me forward to the middle of the room. While I take my position sitting on the floor to the right of and beside these other bodies, the profusion of light engulfs my body, pulling me back to the surroundings as the luminance disturbs my eyes at such a short distance that my head trembles while I frenetically move around, attempting to escape from the confusion and trauma of the brilliance that covers everyone and keeps me away from watching the film.

In front of this almost monument of light, a projection so close to my body that it seems to invite me to perform an act of worship, I continuously move my eyes from top to bottom, turning that profusion of light into an engulfing tool that sticks my body to the ground while I watch the film and continuously look around. What my ears can hear does not allow me to make any response beyond the relationship between the high frequency of the sound and the rather theatrical aspect that conforms to the character's speech, which I can barely understand. The only possible reaction is a frustrating vulnerability for not being able to fully grasp those words. I attach myself to the excessive colours of that surface and the mannerisms of the characters as if I was running away from the narrative of the film because the contact with those indecipherable sounds left me disorientated in the gallery.

I can eventually read 'truth' and hear 'lies can be beautiful' as part of the film, and when subtitles appear, I rely on a hopeful feeling of better understanding the dialogue, while I can also, surprisingly, recognise some words. I can hear 'vagabundo', 'lo declaro muerto', and this uncanny resemblance to my mother tongue makes my body reconnect with the narrative as if providing me with moments of a fleeting pleasure pulling me back to the light of the projection, even if its excessiveness still prompts my head to move around because my

eyes stressfully want to avoid this confrontation. Over the top, colourful, characters appear in the film, one as a boy with his nose growing. Is he Pinocchio? An unsettling moment emerges when a sexual connotation takes over the film while this boy mimics masturbation by touching his nose and another character devours the nose.

In the gallery, we all look to each other as if trying to deviate from the scene through laughter and avoid embarrassment from witnessing that moment together by a character that, for me, revives childhood memories. This mixing of a children's story with graphic sex scenes resonates unnervingly while, once again, it pulls me away from the characters' funny corporeal mannerisms that initially built my experience in the space as I was not able to understand their words. A disturbance moves along with my body as I then witness Pinocchio turning into a violent person and sexually assaulting the same woman. While witnessing Pinocchio's disturbing behaviour, my heaving chest moves oddly through a breathing pattern that seems to compress my insides because of the sensorial pressure of the excessive light that has materialised from this violent scene.

I inhabit the space through the corporeal stress resulting from the contact with this scene, and my body is immobile because I am confused, but still affected by the light of the projection, as if the surroundings have created a lighting enclosure that leads me to this entanglement between paltry and disturbing emotional responses. Attempting to turn my attention back to the film remains confusing as I see some scenes that look like they are being repeated: Pinocchio running; his encounter with the women from the previous scenes; a man in the sky. I wonder now if I had been distracted to the point of not being conscious that the film had come to an end. As I keep seeing the same story running, I realise that it is, in truth, a repetition of the film. I leave the space with this unsettling and intriguing feeling regarding what I may have lost. How could I not notice the end of the film? I am, indeed, fairly aware that something might have been lost on the way in my struggle to recognise the words and

engage with the dialogues. It is this incompleteness that leads me out of the gallery.

### **1.3. *Open My Glade* (2019), by Pipilotti Rist**

The route to *Open my Glade* is confusing; the path is not clear. I perambulate through the woods in the museum attempting to find the right way, getting lost in some sort of labyrinth, until I encounter several underpants hanging among trees. This is the first clue that I may be closer to the exhibition. Inside the gallery, only the borders of the white wall remain white, as a bright yellow projection reaches out and illuminates the remainder. I seem to be pulled towards this surface painted by the yellow light as if I am moving forward along with the projected images. A certain dizziness comes over me as the wall gives the illusion of being displaced due to the movements in the film. The distress of such luminance takes over my eyes and the projections colour my body yellow.

Impressed by the excess of light, I propel my body to walk. I go on numbed because I am overwhelmed, yet embracing the smooth voice that I can hear in the background. Moving around is nostalgic somehow as if the projection's luminance that dominates the space put me into a place of reminiscing, of a ride I have never had, a history I have never lived but which I seem to be part of while in here. The sunset's (or sunrise's?) atmosphere brings along this orange-yellow light that seems to unfurl vertiginous movements while reaching my eyes, as the luminance constantly shifts and seems to reveal and hide some of the peculiar objects I can now identify on the wall. Driven by the progress of the images, these objects act like magnets, they reverberate as an invitation to me to move towards the wall, to get closer and turn my body in a surface of light while witnessing this peculiar collection of pans, fabrics, dresses, plastic bottles, and sponges. While sitting on the floor, I can only embrace the

fragments of each projection, shifting the points of attention, while my eyes move around, extending my vision all the way to the gallery's walls, and still listening to the whispering voice, although I can only understand some of the uttered words.

... good love scenes. They never kissed

Should one end the relationship at its best?

Is this woman in one of the projected films looking for someone? Is she travelling to meet somebody? Is this a love story? I try to concentrate on her words but the interruption of my vision through the bodies of other people walking in front of me makes me slightly move from time to time, deviating from their presence, as if attempting to connect with the story. I turn to the other side of this space as I feel overwhelmed by all these bodies, and I abandon my location yet still intrigued by the confusion of the story. My confusion increases as I move away and reach the next gallery. In this new environment, the moment I see a woman smashing the windows of a car with an enormous flower, my body seems to recognise the scenes, and excitement rises to the surface while I am facing the projections as this work was one my first engagements with moving image art in academia.

Despite that, I enter a claustrophobic space because it is relatively small. The low level of the ceiling seems to compress my body, and the others', on a level that puts the projections on the wall in a position of complete dominance over me. In such an enclosed room, my entire body is blitzed by the profusion of multi-coloured images and my eyes struggle with the blue brilliance emanating from the film. I feel like I am being dragged to the inside of that moving image, confronting the human-scale persona of that woman from a close distance – it is intimidating on a certain level - as if the streets where she walks extend over the gallery just as the projection does over the floor. The lullaby-like song creates a

confusing relationship as there is a delicacy in the quiet melody that emanates; however, its deafening frequency makes the potential relaxation turn into disorientation, and it is difficult not to become slightly agitated while listening to such a thing.

Nobody goes near the projection, and everyone moves closer together as there is not enough space to stand at a distance. There is, for me, an obvious discomfort in getting so close to these unknown people. We all look uneasy while trying to find a place to stand without blocking someone else's viewing and yet still be able to watch the film. I feel the distress in this unsettling scenario but, at the same time, I want to laugh. I enjoy seeing the woman hitting these windows because it reminds me of Beyonce doing the same with a baseball bat in the music video of *Hold Up*. A new energising feeling runs through my insides as I recover Beyonce's video, and the initial excitement grows to create a zone of comfort because it puts me back to an ordinary and daily experience with moving images. Nevertheless, the woman's behaviour is complex, an act of anger that express a subtle endeavour. I can see her walking in a pleasing way, and the flowers that appear in the other projection just reinforce this feeling. However, the results are destructive, each broken window brings with it an even louder sound, contrasting with the soft song already blaring in the background. Along with this, I cannot but help myself continue to sing *Hold Up* in my mind.

I recall Titus Andromedon impersonating Beyonce's music video on one of the most iconic moments of the Netflix series *Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt*. He is so extravagant, camp, and these qualities are in the gallery escaping from the projection and surrounding my body to keep it moving. There is too much light, and too many bodies to occupy the corners of the room. However, there is a re-energising feeling that reaches me as I face this work, helping me to recall Beyonce and Titus Andromedon. As I exit, upon encountering a distant dark corridor, a strange feeling emerges as I sense that I am heading in the wrong direction

and towards an empty space. However, reading 'Help me' in neon lights on the wall a few metres away offers some hope I am where I should be. At the same time, asking for help resonates as a frightening confrontation in the dark while I listen to someone singing loudly, as if a dangerous situation could be the next encounter, and this positions my body on alert as I put one foot in front of the other, moving along on taut muscles that hobble my walk. I have no idea where I am heading to but, on reaching the end of the corridor, I am in a place with an even brighter and more excessive visual experience.

The large projections on the ceiling colour the bodies of everyone lying on several beds as the profusion of light seems to move between darkness and brightness. I feel like I am entering the spatial and temporal suspension of a fairy tale; a fantastic story told by the loud voice of a woman singing - again here - in the style of a lullaby. The entire environment resonates as a child-like experience; without realising it, I arrive in a zone of comfort, an attempt to recover infant memories. Indeed, the woman is singing 'When I was Child...'. Caught up in this hypnotic energy, I move towards one of the beds I can see in the space. As I lie down and fleetingly relax on one of them, one far from the entrance to the gallery, my breathing starts to accelerate and my eyes dart around at this low-level perspective, investigating my surroundings and seeking to prevent the approach of other bodies that could possibly occupy the same bed as me. I feel vulnerable, as if suspended in space, because my position does not allow me to fully recognise the other bodies, and the space beside me remains available for a possible undesired encounter, even though all the brightness coming from the projections on the ceiling seems to pull my body down while the light touches my eyes, pulling me back to the images.

Between the projections on the ceiling and my body on the bed, an excess of elements concomitantly come into view, but they seem not to be part of the space. Instead, they look like spaces opening on the ceiling and leading to another side of the room that might be

impossible to physically reach out to, but which impresses on my body the sense of getting lost in a heavenly-like experience. The other bodies, standing and wandering, are now dark from this perspective as the projection reaches out to them from another position. They appear as additional odd figures interrupting my possible relaxation while being in this bed, simultaneously making it difficult to see the projections that are merging oddly with the colourful images which are moving much more tentatively now.

A distant but loud sound plays as if some liquid is swirling all over the room, and, indeed, the images show these colourful elements under the water of a river, ocean or lake, it is not possible to say, adding a quiet atmosphere that also makes me more aware of the position of my own body, the lethargic feeling of a lucid dream. The light coming from the projection, aggressively extending over my eyes, and the peaceful sound invading the space recreate a sort of daydream and a metaphorical suspension of myself, as if, along with this bed, my body is detached from the current spatial setting to emerge as one more element among the others in the images above me. However, that possibility of having someone sharing the bed with me at any moment constantly pulls me back to the surroundings, to the other bodies moving, as they seem to be trying to find a place to stay. I become aware that one of my legs has never been on the bed while the sound now constantly shifts between the soft watering flow and the women singing, and I can hear again:

When I was a child ...

... in her chest ...

... in her neck ...

From the water, a dildo emerges slowly, and the child-like atmosphere is ruined upon seeing this object, as a sexual connotation confuses me amidst the fantasy-like setting I am in.



Why was that object there? As if lost in the water, the dildo suddenly disappears, but its presence persists in my mind. The oneiric ambience is dissolved and replaced by an ambiguous feeling that follows me to the next gallery, where an overwhelming amount of light remains, and I visualise, from a distance, an immensity of small objects. It is confusing to follow any route while in here as I get lost among the many elements and do not know where to start or which way to go. In this space the objects seem to move slightly because of the motion of the colours in the projection that touches their surfaces, even though they are static objects, such as a sofa, a bed, a table, paintings, and so on, thus acting as an invitation for my body to move and for me to throw my hands forward to access them through an interception of light on my skin. I fail, however.

My hands explore the surface of the blankets on a bed, but never the projection. The latter covers my hands instead of reaching the bed and my body mixes its materiality with the illuminated surface I touch. Some pictures move in their frames. I walk, I sit down on the table, my body is coloured by the projections, and I constantly shift position to look at everything. A nostalgic feeling dominates me again as I rest on the sofa and listen to an idyllic song in the background. This house is so exaggerated, and it somehow reminds me of my grandmother's kitchen. Recovering any 'at home' feelings always makes me feel unstable. I can only feel that melancholy emanating from each object and reaching into my walking body as if building up levels of intimacy and creating a place to rest. It is, in fact, an intimate exploration as each small object seems to tell a story, and it only makes sense as I go from one side to the other and see them all against the oddly coloured walls of the gallery. I want to rest, but this space does not allow a single breath; it is the anxiety born of seeing and touching each of the objects that leads my way.

Whenever I decide to stop, if I try to rest, my body is immediately affected by the excessiveness that surrounds me, by some of the projections that cover my legs while I am

sitting or my full body while I walk around. The other people's bodies look like one of the various objects here as the projections make them fade into the dark spots of the room after their temporary appearances when these bodies are also fleetingly illuminated by the lights. After walking so much, my legs seem to constrain my muscles and restrain my position, as if any further movement could cause me to collapse, and the two large projections at the corner of the gallery, in this sort of apartment, pull me towards them like they are opening a space where I can stretch my legs and rest my back, lying down on one of the big cushions on the floor, while immersed in the projections. They emanate so much light from this short distance, which keeps colouring everyone's bodies. This song, the colourful images just add to a sort of ritualistic feeling of self-immersion, a distraction from the images and a redirection of attention to my own body, also contaminated by the brightly lit space. My work is that of making myself comfortable, of relaxing because I cannot take any more steps for now. I behave as if shifting between moving my body constantly and looking quickly at the projections until my eyes turn out to be my experiential guide because the rest of my body does not seem to move.

The excess of colours emanating from the projections does not reach me as visual violence anymore, and the rhythm seems to follow my own quiet body. Or maybe my body just gets along with what I see. Maybe I am just too exhausted to be able to embrace the excess visually. Perhaps it is my entire body that, in fact, gets engulfed by the light, to an extent that my eyes are only one more element there, yet they continue moving while trying to watch the film. In the next gallery, while I see the kaleidoscopic images that I recognise as being part of *Sip My Ocean* (1996), my stomach seems to contract and dilate as laughter almost escapes my mouth when listening to Pipilotti Rist singing and screaming a fairly famous song that keeps me thinking although I am not able to identify it. Rist sings like an annoying child screaming around the gallery, but the contact with the music invades my core

as a pleasurable conflict. As if attempting to cover the entire room, Pipilotti Rist sings loudly and out of tune:

I don't wanna fall in love ...

This sentence travels through my mind repeatedly, while the song runs on to become a higher frequency tune. It sounds absurd, over the top, ridiculous, perhaps an expression of despair, but my body responds to it, my muscles expanding beneath my skin, my eyes getting larger, and my now heavier arms lie beside me, pulling my full body down and preventing me from moving because the blue light dominating the environment seems to put me in a trance. In the two projections in the corner of the gallery, Pipilotti Rist sinks in the ocean, almost displacing me to her side because the blueness of the room draws me to the projections. I feel mesmerised by the music and the colours, as if my body has no reason to move because the images keep my eyes open in a way that already puts my thoughts in another place, giving me a dream-like sensation once again.

The encounter of the two projections in the corner of the room is a point of dissolution of the images that seems to pull my vision forward as if entering the projection because my eyes are so fixed on the emanating light that the surroundings disappear from my gaze. My shoulder suddenly and discreetly reacts to the excess I face with a small, involuntary movement. I feel I could spend hours in here as the relaxing sensation takes over my body, and, indeed, I have no idea how long I have been watching this film. I get emotionally involved in the song at a level that the minutes pass, creating a self-isolation, independent of the space, an inner consciousness that leads me to a satisfactory position. Exiting the gallery feels like leaving a psychedelic dream to encounter the real and bright world, through surprisingly large windows, leaving me paralysed while staring at the ocean outside.

#### 1.4. Camp aesthetics as a queer strategy of disorientation

How can one be disorientated? Is there any awareness in the process of losing one's sense of orientation? I begin this section by questioning my ability to recognise the effects of being disorientated at the right moment where the loss of my comfortable ground arises. The writing developed in the previous two sections was comprised of descriptions of queer affects and disorientations of my body's history and immediate affective responses to watching those films immersed in the projective environments. Capturing these moments in writing involves putting into words affects that are usually difficult to describe. This is the reason why at some points the use of metaphors emerges as a strategy to give some significance to my body's responses towards the settings I encountered in the gallery. Based on the affective orientated descriptions of the encounters with Rachel Maclean's and Pipilotti Rist's works, this section presents an analysis of the fleeting disorientations and queer affects that emerged in those moments. If, as mentioned before, it is difficult to capture these disorientated moments because they are fleeting and nimble, it is possible to approach them initially through the material elements that shape the environment in which I was located and that affected my body to induce disorientation.

To start exploring this context, I want to point out a common feature that, along with a camp aesthetic, shapes Maclean's and Rist's artworks. In these chapter's case studies, both artists employ an experimental approach to the use of projection. According to Sean Cubitt (2007, p. 416), this experimental approach, which disrupts the foursquare and horizontal use of projection, can be reached by implementing the following actions: 1) interfering in the shape, materials, and reflectivity of the surface reached by projection; 2) changing the projector's illumination or location concerning the screen; and 3) interfering in the space in which the light of projection passes through by placing 'reflective, refractive or filtering'

(Cubitt, 2007, p. 416) elements between the projector and the surface of the projective screen. In a similar search for experimental practices, Chrissie Iles (in Turvey *et al.*, 2003, p. 80) indicates that at the moment a projection reaches the floor instead of a wall or screen, it is commonly understood as an installation, and the space between the projector and screen becomes a crucial part of the work. These types of practices were regularly employed in the 1970s context of expanded cinema (Turvey *et al.*, 2003) by artists such as Annabel Nicholson<sup>15</sup> in her iconic work *Reel Time* (1973) and Anthony McCall in his frequently cited *Line Describing a Cone* (1973).

For instance, in this chapter's case studies, experimentalism is evidenced by the filters installed between the projector and the projective surface in *4<sup>th</sup> Floor to Mildness* (2016) by Pipilotti Rist, which resulted in the appearance of amoeboid-shaped projections located on the ceiling of the gallery and requiring bodily involvements in different spatial levels. Another example is Rist's employment of video mapping<sup>16</sup> technology to highlight the malleable characteristic of projection through the light envelopment of three-dimensional objects such as the sofa and large stones in *The Patience* (2016), part of the sensorially overloaded apartment built as one of the last environments I walked in the exhibition *Open My Glade* (2019). Furthermore, Rachel Maclean's use of a vertical projection acts as an experimental mode to reach queer kinaesthetic responses in the gallery, as it demands a different mode of bodily visceral engagement (for instance, moving my eyes mostly from the top to the bottom of the screen, and vice-versa) to watch the film and highlighting the architectural features of the specific space in which the work was installed.

Beyond the level of experimentalism with the materiality of projection that connects

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<sup>15</sup> For further exploration of Annabel Nicholson's work see Lucy Reynold's thesis titled *British Avant-Garde Women Filmmakers and Expanded Cinema of the 1970s* (2009).

<sup>16</sup> According to Helena Ferreira (2015, p. 68), video mapping or projection mapping is a technique that uses digital software to create deformities in the bi-dimensional aspect of projection to fit the image in the three-dimensional aspects of architecture, objects or irregular surfaces. In the same direction, Yiyun Kang (2020) understands projection mapping as a type of wrapping technique to 'transform objects, often irregularly shaped, into display surfaces' (Kang, 2020, p. 193).

Pipilotti Rist's and Rachel Maclean's works, Sarah Neely and Sarah Smith (2019) locate the work of both artists in the realm of women's performance-based moving image art. I highlight this information because it is the performative bodies of Maclean and Rist in combination with the excessive viscosity of moving images on the experimental surface of the projection that shaped a camp aesthetics and kinaesthetically affected my body, resulting in a tired muscular and visceral (Lindner, 2018) journey through the gallery. This situation acted as a queer strategy to create bodily disorientation and induce the emergence of queer affects through the excess of gestures I needed to employ in the space to engage with the excessiveness of the projection's surface. The following pages analyse the disorientating aspects of *Spite Your Face*<sup>17</sup> (2018) and some works installed in the exhibition *Open My Glade*<sup>18</sup> (2019) described in the previous two sections, through a sequential exploration of the role of visual excess, the implementation of gestural excess that led my body to exhaustion in the gallery, and the emergence of attachments through camp-recognition whilst in contact with popular culture and queer content.

#### 1.4.1. *Zooming in on the camp excess*

As previously mentioned in this chapter, the contact with the excess of luminosity and colours that mainly shapes the surface of the projection in Rachel Maclean's and Pipilotti

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<sup>17</sup> I visited the exhibition *Spite Your Face* in February 2018 at the Talbot Rice Gallery of the University of Edinburgh (Edinburgh, Scotland). The film was screened in loop through a vertical projection onto a large and tall (in comparison to the visitor's bodies) vertical screen located close to the back wall of the gallery and with two benches in front of the projection.

<sup>18</sup> I visited the exhibition *Open My Glade* in June 2019 at the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art in Humlebaek (Denmark). This exhibition was comprised of 47 projective works or objects created by Pipilotti Rist between 1985 and 2019 that were installed outside of the museum and inside the galleries. Inside the museum, exhibition was installed throughout approximately ten galleries that were either comprised of a single artwork, such as in *Ever is Over All* (1997), *Sip my Ocean* (1996), and *4<sup>th</sup> Floor to Mildness* (2016), or a combination of different works in the same gallery, such as in Pipilotti Rist's apartment, where a series of objects and projections formed a single environment with works such as *All, All, All* (2010-2015), *Prisma* (2008), *The Patience* (2016), *Caressing Dinner Circle* (2017), *Another Body* (2008-2015), and *Do Not Abandon Me Again* (2015).

Rist's works is the most immediate element that creates bodily disorientation. Excess is the aesthetic feature that primarily characterises the surface of the projective moving images as camp in this chapter's case studies. Therefore, a camp aesthetic appears as a matter of visual materialisation of queerness, or a queer strategy to create disorientation and stimulate the emergence of queer affects during the encounter with the artworks analysed in this chapter.

In this section, I explore the role of the visually excessive camp aesthetic during the process of *zooming in* on the projection's surface. According to Ahmed (2006), the act of *zooming in* is understood as an intensely focused orientation towards an object that grasps our attention for different and personal reasons, as 'The objects we direct our attention toward reveal the direction we have taken in life' (Ahmed, 2006, p. 32). During this process, the objects around us seem to distance themselves from our senses, creating disorientation in the fleeting moment of changing our focus from one object to another. For instance, some of you may have experienced moments in which you were concentrating on looking at the sky on a sunny day and the light entered your field of vision, blurring what was around you. At the moment you moved your eyes to the right, left, up, or down, the previous brightness remained in your field vision, especially if your newly arrived object of attention was in a darker atmosphere, causing a fleeting visual trauma that led to disorientation.

As another example, Ahmed (2006, pp. 156-157) mentions moments in which we are apparently motionless, so absorbed in our thoughts and visually fixed in a single object that our field of vision seems to blur slightly. In this situation, when someone beside us suddenly calls for our attention, we tend to get slightly scared. This normally happens because we were abruptly recalled from another subjective place, in which we were intensely engaged with some specific thoughts that we tend to describe as 'being in another world or dimension', leading to subsequent fleeting dizziness. I argue that the visual excessiveness of camp aesthetic is immediately responsible for repeatedly creating such fleeting but intensely

focused moments, almost visually hypnotising, during the encounter with Pipilotti Rist's and Rachel Maclean's works. Excess in the work of Rachel Maclean, for example, was previously explored by Neely and Smith (2019). This creates another important connection that evidences the relevance of placing Maclean's and Rist's works together as representatives of a sort of aesthetic that I here understand as camp, dealing with excess as visual materiality, which I argue elicits disorientation. Based on Maclean's assertions, Neely and Smith (2019) describe the artist's practice as inherently 'maximalist', as presented below.

Maclean's works are densely loaded with approximated references to popular culture in an aesthetic style Maclean refers to as maximalist. Maximalism, in visual art context, is more than simply a reaction against minimalism. Rather, it describes labour-intensive practices that result in visually and referentially excessive works; a 'more is more' aesthetics. (Neely and Smith, 2019, p. 167)

Therefore, a maximalist approach, in the words of Neely and Smith (2019), is the direct result of excessive practices. Excess in visual culture is an unstable concept that is driven towards at least two perspectives. Firstly, excess can be understood as everything beyond the necessary, i.e., all the elements that at first would not add any meaningful turn to the reading of a text. This first approach is explored in detail in Kristin Thompson's (1977) canonical text *The concept of cinematic excess*. In this article, Thompson (1977) argues that films are embedded in a unifying force that bonds together all their visual elements to immerse the viewer in the proposed narrative. However, there are filmic components that exceed the narrative and are usually undermined as an experiential factor because they are non-diegetic and counter-unitary, a destabilising force sometimes encountered in the characters' costumes, props, and music.

Thompson (1977) describes these elements as closely connected to style, as both explore the material components of a film. Some visual aspects are so disconnected from the



narrative that they end up leading the viewers to distraction, as they cannot create a sense of unity, and most of the time choose to avoid these aspects as significant for their experience of watching a film. What Thompson (1977) claims is that excessive elements might be considered crucial modes to attain the sense-feeling aspects of a film that surpass the attempt to find hidden meanings or follow a hypothetical cause-effect structure of some narratives, which according to Thompson (1977) are more arbitrary than we may realise.

A second perspective regarding excess is rather linked to the maximalist idea explored by Neely and Smith (2019). According to Kevin Tavin, Mira Kallio-Tavin, and Max Ryyänen (2019, p. 02), the most widespread notion of excess has been understood through the ideas of over-stimulation, over-abundance, extravagance, sublimity, and visual violence related to the senses and embodied sensation, an aesthetic employed to transgress political and affective common senses. Furthermore, Tavin *et al.* (2019) claim that

The discourse of excess can be about extremity. When sense, common sense, and extremity are discursive constituents applied to the body, excess is tied to ugliness and disgust. The latter might include real or metaphorical ‘disgusting’ body fluids, solids, skin, pigmentation, marking, impurities, defects, disfigurements, and so on that are uncontainable and uncontrollable – ‘just too much’. Excess is also the discourse of the undesirable, abnormal, forbidden, taboo, and wasteful. In this sense, excess is often tied to notions of the abject and monstrosity, especially in art and popular visual culture. Excess needs to be hidden in the dark, for it comes into the light (so to speak) that which is beyond comprehension might become too dangerous or exciting – too excessive in itself as ‘an experience’. (Tavin *et al.*, 2019, p. 02)

Through an implied reading of the above excerpt, excess can be understood as closely linked to queer affects, thus developed as a mode to affect the body whilst providing experiences that lead to disorientation and put us in unsettling positions. It is not difficult to find a connection between the concept of excess and a queer phenomenological approach. For

instance, Thompson's (1977) discussion of excess, and Ahmed's (2006) understanding of the concept of background, create a rewarding environment for the exploration of what is 'behind' the body's experience that transiently appears or is extended in time after our encounter with artworks. As previously discussed, a queer phenomenology brings the background to the fore. This relates closely to what Thompson (1977) calls a motivation for engaging with some aspects of films rather than others – in queer phenomenological terms, our orientation towards specific objects. If we review the previously described process of *zooming in* on the camp surface of the projection, it is easy to connect how the background, the objects that may lose their contours during this process but follow us to the encounter of a new object, plays a crucial role in understanding excess as a force that turns bodies inward, in connection with their histories. In my case, excess reconnected my body to the queerness of my life through elements I recognised in the projections as part of a camp aesthetic that once in the past led me to queer bonding.

Whilst encountering the projective moving images in Maclean's and Rist's installations, their immediate excessiveness violently reached my eyes, leading to fleeting paralyses that were continuously replaced by moments of disorientation when changing focus from one excessive element to another of the same nature. In these artworks, a camp aesthetic is shaped both through the idea of exaggeration and over-stimulation and through the presence of elements that seem to be disconnected from the narrative. These appearances ultimately lead to affective engagements that mirror the humorous and ironic aspect of camp or create a possibility of connection with queer affects. For instance, the golden curtain located right at the entrance to Rachel Maclean's *Spite Your Face* (2018) was responsible for the first sense of excessiveness in this work. As a threshold in the space, the curtain acted as an element that first input a paralysis in my body because of the contrast between the golden brightness of the curtain and the white walls that surrounded the entrance door and the hall in

which I was located. Understanding this moment as paralysing is a mode to describe a fleeting interruption of the flow of movement towards the projection, as a result of a disruption that in this case is sensorial. Excess is materialised in this situation through the visual over-stimulation of the gold curtain and as a disruption of the sensorial relationship with the whiteness of the walls around me. Therefore, the curtain works not only as a physical threshold but also as a decontextualised, excessive element that metaphorically prepared my body for the entrance to the gallery by first showing the work's disruptive settings as crucial to the experience with moving images that emerged afterwards.

Facing the curtain was the first moment of fleeting concentration (*zooming in*) on a specific object that orientated me inwards whilst opening the curtain and entering the next room. In the description of this moment, I pointed out my disorientation due to my inability to identify whether I was located in the correct gallery since at that moment the curtain looked rather queer in the space. The visual and spatial disruption caused by the excessive presence of the curtain made me interrupt my movements because it set an atmosphere where uncertainty was established as the main point of contact between my body and the environment. A series of fleeting queer affects (fear and anxiety) emerged as the result of not knowing which way to take whilst facing and focusing on the golden surface from a distance.

Whilst first appearing as a disorientation device, the overwhelming golden features of the curtain worked as a pulling force that prompted me to move immediately after being paralysed, to overcome the dislocated over-stimulation of that element, almost as if pointing to the other side of the curtain as a way to rescue my body from disorientation. However, the simple act of opening the curtain materialised in two different ways the process of changing focus from one excessive feature to another. On the other side of the curtain, a fleeting excessiveness of darkness involved my full body and paralysed it once again, but the brightness of the outside remained in my field of vision whilst I was trying to adjust to this

new scenario, a situation that was immediately replaced by the identification of the projection's light. At the moment the projection appeared in the space as a source of orientation, another affective process was implemented.

The existence of the projection's brightness first set on a surface level the detached attachment characteristic of camp as explored by Katrin Horn (2019). The same magnetising aspects described to pertain to the curtain appeared at this moment as a feature embedded in the surface of the projection. This immediate contact with projection is the moment at which the act of *zooming in* starts taking shape as a sort of extended temporality, one that is closely related to the almost hypnotising characteristics of the excessive projection amidst the initial darkness of the gallery. Seeing the brightness of projection suspended my body from engaging with the surroundings and pulled me forward in the direction of the encounter with the other bodies that faced the film from a short distance. Therefore, I moved towards projection because its visually magnetising features prompted a sort of fleeting affective attachment orientated towards the light. Conversely, I detached from the surrounding environment because of this magnetising aspect, which for a few seconds made me focus intensely on the projection as a source of light that everyone in the gallery gathered around.

These same affects that emerged between fleeting paralysis, disorientating moments and environmental suspension appeared in the encounter with *Suburban Brain* (1999) and *The Innocent Collection* (1985), the first works I described in Pipilotti Rist's exhibition (see page 100). For instance, I previously approached this first encounter as encouraging me to walk, as a result of the fast movement emanating from the light of projection and the curiosity to get closer to the objects I could see attached to the wall. In this case, the bright yellow light that covered the room was the first element that provoked the process of *zooming in*, as my eyes got caught in the projection's surface through the light that covered two full walls of the room. The projected moving images showed what seemed to be footage recorded

from the inside of a vehicle as if travelling around a city during sunset or sunrise. Here, the process of a kinaesthetic empathy (Lindner, 2018) took place at the moment I first contacted the surface of projection, since my body moved as a response to the movements portrayed in the film. I moved into the space because the moving images portrayed a diegetic movement that seemed to drag me towards the wall reached by projection.



Figure 02: Pipilotti Rist, *Suburban Brain*, 1999, and *The Innocent Collection*, 1985.

Photography by: Poul Buchard / Brøndum & Co. Available from:  
<https://www.walpaper.com/art/>. (Accessed: 24/11/2021).

However, beyond the fleeting moment of disorientation that emerged in the immediate contact with projection, some other works affected my body through a more temporally sustained focus on the projection's surface. In this chapter, I approach surface not as the materiality that projection reaches, for example, a flat-screen, a wall, the floor, or an object. Instead, I follow Giuliana Bruno (2014) in understanding the surface of projection as a luminous membrane that exists in the complex zone of tensions between elements such as light, colour, architecture, objects, diegetic elements, and the affects that emerge from contact with someone's body. The fleeting contact with the surface of projection, therefore, cannot be described as superficial in the sense of being emptied of meaningful experiences. On the

contrary, the surface (and the superficial encounter) as explored by Bruno (2014) is composed of texture and depth. According to Bruno (2014), the surface is

[...] fashioned of layers and tissues and contains strata, which are also sediments and deposits. In the fabrics of the visual there are imprints and traces, and thus a visual text is also textural for the way in which it can show the patterns of temporality and history, in the form of a coating, a “film”, or a stain. (Bruno, 2014, p. 108),

As can be seen from the above excerpt, the sustained temporal relationship with the surface contains a spatial and temporal dimension that elicits the appearance of what Ahmed (2006) calls the background, the affective history that follows us and intervenes in our encounters with objects throughout life. Bruno (2014, p. 03) explores this spatial-temporal dimension of the background by mentioning that the reciprocal contact between someone and an object exists as a superficial encounter, in a sense of sharing affective features on the surface of the projection, as ‘the depth of surface contains a depth of experience’ (Bruno, 2014, p. 116). Therefore, this affective encounter on the excessive surface of the projection in Maclean’s and Pipilotti’s works is responsible for the emergence of a camp-recognition and a subsequently enhanced understanding of these works as imbued with a camp aesthetic.

The excessive surface of camp aesthetics, which was once accused of being apolitical (Sontag, 2018) and superficial (as in lacking depth), is instead full of texture and layers. Through surface tension, these elements reveal the background and histories (Bruno, 2014) that led to the embodiment of camp aesthetic as a strategy to reach queerness through a mutual contact with projection and consequent spatial disorientation. Therefore, it was the work of sustained *zooming in* on the excessive surface of the projection that allowed me to go ‘inwards’ (Bruno, 2014, p. 94) and to get in touch with camp as a historical aesthetic that for so long shaped the communality of gay men and nowadays extends to a less stable view of sexuality.



*Figure 03:* Rachel Maclean, *Spite Your Face*, 2018. Installation of the work at the TalbotRice Gallery, The University of Edinburgh (Scotland). Available from: <https://www.trg.ed.ac.uk/exhibition/> (Accessed: 24/11/2021).

For instance, the moment I started watching *Spite Your Face* (2018) at a short distance from the projection and beside the other viewers, the camp detached attachment feature gained power since the excessive light entered my field of vision as a force that trapped me around the bright elements I was facing. These same elements had consequent effects on the architecture that surrounded the projection, transforming the gallery into a continuum of the moving images through the illumination of the architecture that subsequently set the sort of sacred scenario mentioned in the work's description. In this case, whilst the immediate contact with the surface of the projection as a source of light after opening the curtain made me move after a quick moment of paralysis, the maintenance of the journey towards projection was shaped through sustained *zooming in* that incited me to sit on the floor, immobile, whilst viscerally engaging with the excess around me.

This extended focused engagement appears in some contemporary artworks that employ what Catherine Elwes (2015, p. 18) calls a 'form of light worship', such as happens

in the canonical works *Films* (2012) by Tacita Dean and *The Weather Project* (2004) by Olafur Eliasson. In the past, these works occupied the enormous space of the Tate Modern's Turbine Hall to immerse the spectator's body in an environment where light is the main affective and spatial element. In Maclean's work, a camp aesthetic, shaped initially by the excess of light and colours, acted as a force to attach my body to the projection's surface through this sort of worship action. This created a more temporally sustained encounter between my body and the layers, textures, and volumes that existed on the surface.

As mentioned in the description of *Spite Your Face* (2018), the most immediate excessive elements recognised in the film, such as the exaggerated characters, costumes and high-frequency sounds, were responsible for first setting this sticky affective characteristic of the surface of the projection. Part of my attachment to this surface was created as a result of disorientation, or a failure in my ability to understand the English accent in the film, which demonstrated the affective layer of engagement beyond the linguistic developments of an artwork. The failure to access the film through language consequently led me to a detailed exploration of the surface, whilst opening space to access vulnerabilities that put me back in touch with my background when I recognised sounds that resembled my mother tongue. Therefore, the linguistic disorientation temporarily dragged me to a profound engagement with surface as an element that pushed me inwards and into contact with histories and backgrounds that intensely affected my initial modes of engagement with the projection in Maclean's work.

Whilst the surface of the projection orientated me inwards, it disorientated my relationship with the environment as the contours of the gallery seemed to be lost and merging amidst the excessive and ostentatious features portrayed in the film. In this situation, the act of *zooming in* resulted again in the detached attachment feature of camp as described by Horn (2017). The excess on the surface of the projection prompted me to look at the



moving images for a longer period. It attached me to the surface, whilst at the same time turning the space around in a peripheral extension of projection through its illuminating capacities. This situation reinforced Ahmed's (2006) claim that 'some things are relegated to the background to sustain a certain direction; in other words, to keep attention on what is faced' (Ahmed's, 2006, p. 31). This is not to say that my body became completely unaware of its surroundings. Instead, I lost some contours of the spatial background because the attentive and focused gaze towards the film created the restitution of an affective background. The latter was characterised by the affective history of my engagement with the world through a language different from the one I could hear. Thus, facing the surface of the projection elicited some understanding of the blurred, unclear, and sometimes distant or sedimented aspects of what was around, which Ahmed (2006, p 37) describes as the background.

Similar processes of detached attachment to the excessive features of the projection emerged in my contact with some of Pipilotti Rist's works. The first encounter with *Ever is Over All* (1997), for example, which I described as a spatial compression (see page 101), was directly related to the excess of light and colours that reached my field of vision immediately after I entered the small, low-ceilinged room in which the work was installed. Contrary to the first encounter with *Suburban Brain* (1997) and Rachel Maclean's *Spite Your Face* (2018), in *Ever is Over All* (1997), first facing the projection led me to a sustained bodily paralysis that lasted for a long time whilst I was in the room. In this work specifically, the immediate presence of a human figure in the moving image set an atmosphere where my body, even if immobile, seemed metaphorically to enter the image. This happened through the process of *zooming in* on the surface through visceral engagements with the excess I faced concerning the human-scale body. In this case, the detached attachment aspect of camp worked similarly to the more sustained encounter with *Spite Your Face* (2019), in which the projection seemed to envelop the environment to turn the present bodies into an element that composed its

surface. In this space, it was inevitable not to interrupt the light that reached the wall and the floor of the gallery whilst creating shadows on the walls.

However, the most efficient examples of how a sustained *zooming in* works through excess were the works *4<sup>th</sup> Floor to Mildness* (2016), *Sip My Ocean* (1996), and the large double projection located in the corner of Rist's apartment, which screened, in a loop, the films *Worry Will Vanish Relief* (from *The Worry Work Family*) (2014), *Mercy Garden, Retour* (from *The Mercy Work Family*) (2014), and *Another Body* (from *The Lobe of the Lung Family*) (2008/2015). The efficiency of *zooming in* on the surface of the projection in these cases was a direct result of the possibility of engaging with the work in a particularly different spatial level, one that had a direct connection with a presumably comfortable position of the viewer's body, as there was a possibility to lie down on the floor, cushions, or beds located in the gallery. For instance, in *4<sup>th</sup> Floor to Mildness* (2016), part of the experience was informed by the act of lying down on the beds provided in the space whilst looking at the ceiling and seeing the amoeboid-shaped projections presented there (see page 103). In this act, the ability of my body to connect with the surroundings was considerably reduced due to the limited capacity to easily recognise what existed beyond my most immediate peripheral vision. Instead, the excessive presence of projection on the ceiling acted again as a magnetising force that orientated my eyes towards the ceiling in a process of absorption where the background was again only 'co-perceived' (Ahmed, 2006, p. 32).

In this intensely concentrated activity, where my sight seemed attached to the projection, the second facet of excess emerged as I identified, for example, a dildo that appeared in the moving images amongst that fairy tale atmosphere that shaped the space through the noise of the water moving on the film and the lullaby-like song playing. The affective arrival of a sexual-related object seemed to deviate from the affects that were shaped in the space towards a self-exploration related to childhood memories. This object

acted as a disorientation device that implemented a level of detachment from an inner exploration of affective and sensorial early bodily memories towards a reattachment to the surroundings. Whilst before the appearance of the dildo my eyes were the main tool used for spatial exploration, the next moment brought me back to a higher consciousness of the materiality of my entire body resting on the bed, as a level of discomfort arose through a slight change of breathing for sharing that moment with the other bodies in the gallery.

Likewise, in the encounter with the apartment's corner projections (see page 105), the availability of cushions on the floor was an invitation to experience the moving images during a process of relaxation of my body, as up until that point I had already walked a significant distance through the different galleries in the museum and could feel my muscles becoming exhausted. Similarly, in the contact with the projections in *Sip My Ocean* (1996) (see page 106) the existence of an environment where I could lie down to watch the films created a relaxed atmosphere that allowed a more stable and sustained orientation towards the moving images to emerge. However, this stable scenario seemed to work as the necessary transitory stage to create subsequent moments of disorientation that unsettled my body.

In *Sip My Ocean* (1996) specifically, the existence of mirrored images in a double projection, located at the corner of the room, reinforced the process of sustained *zooming in* and consequent attachment to the surface of the projection. The corner of the gallery was here the spatial point of encounter of the perpendicular walls on which the film was projected. This point of encounter coincided with the space in which the two projections were joined, highlighting the kaleidoscopic aspect of the images not only as visual but also as a result of spatial settings. This aspect pointed out the interesting attaching and detaching characteristic of works in which two projections met in the corner of a gallery. In both the works mentioned in the past paragraph, this surface encounter between projection and the walls in the thin line that combined two different dimensions was the spatial point of attention in which a sustained

intense focus in the moving images emerged. Because in *Sip My Ocean* (1996) my main initial point of attention was the joint line, the space around seemed to disappear as a relevant aspect of the work, as if the extremities of the images did not add any information because the movement I could witness and describe as hypnotising existed right in the centre. It was the movement happening around the thin line that joined the projections (and created the mirror image of the bodies and objects that appeared) that was responsible for a process of sustained attachment and *zooming in* to emerge.

Therefore, the presence of large projected moving images in the corner of a gallery seemed to create a space in which the orientation towards the encounter with the thin line detached our senses from the surroundings. At the same time, this process upheld an excessive brightness within my peripheral vision, the former emanating from the extremities of the projections, enveloping and keeping our bodies almost in a state of trance. Maria Walsh (2011) argues that this state exists as an affective space between the spectator and the screen, where ‘the subject is possessed by a strangeness that neither comes from within nor from without, but from an intermediate zone of experience normally unattended to’ (Walsh, 2011, p. 120). This entranced situation results in an affective engagement that disorients the body concerning the surroundings and increases a level of self-absorption that can open space for the exploration of affective backgrounds and histories not appearing on the surface of the body’s kinaesthetic actions. Instead, what comes about is a visceral engagement with the space, which for me arrived as an affective process that resulted in a camp-recognition whilst accessing my body’s queer history amidst this disorientating setting.

However, in some of the fleeting moments of seeing the light of projection, as happened when first facing Rachel Maclean’s *Spite Your Face* (2018), the surroundings were so overwhelming that they increasingly merged within my focus of attention, and the disorienting process of *zooming in* became even more stressful and exhausting. In this

situation, a sustained focus was almost unbearable as it was difficult to focus attention intensely on a single object. This was the case, for example, with the previously mentioned apartment built as the second-to-last environment (see page 105) I walked around in the exhibition *Open My Glade* (2019) by Pipilotti Rist<sup>19</sup>. In this apartment, the surface encounters were informed by the malleable capacity of projection, which existed as a membrane enveloping three-dimensional objects (such as a sofa, bed, desk, or dining table) using video mapping technology to connect them through mutual ‘surface tension’ (Bruno, 2014).



*Figure 04: Pipilotti Rist's apartment, built in one of the galleries of the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, 2019. Photography by: Poul Buchard / Brøndum & Co. Available from: <https://www.walpaper.com/art/>. (Accessed: 24/11/2021).*

<sup>19</sup> Most of the walls of this area that Pipilotti Rist (2019) refers to as an apartment were covered by the work *Reversed Eyelid* (2019), which was composed of the following projective artworks: *I burn for you* (2018); *Your Eye Fluid* (2018); *Caressing Dinner Circle* (2017); *Orange Masterpiece* (2017); *The Patience* (2016); *Two-Stone (calcite yellow)* (2015); *Do Not Abandon Me Again* (2015); *Prisma* (2011); *All, All, All* (2010/2015); *Sparkling of the Domesticated Synapses* (2010); *Enlight My Space* (2008); *Your Space Capsule* (2006); *Lam Lamp* (2006). In loop, on the same two projections at the end corner of the apartment, were screened the works *Worry Will Vanish Relief* (from *The Worry Work Family*) (2014), *Mercy Garden Retour* (from *The Mercy Work Family*) (2014), and *Another Body* (from *The Lobe of the Lung Family*) (2008/2015).



*Figure 05:* Pipilotti Rist's apartment, built in one of the galleries of the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, 2019. Photography by: Poul Buchard / Brøndum & Co. Available from: <https://www.walpaper.com/art/>. (Accessed: 24/11/2021).

Consequently, the present malleable capacity of projection highlights Bruno's (2014, p. 05) comprehension of these surface encounters as 'diffuse, flexible, and permeable'. In this space, the presence of a large number of objects enveloped by different projections initiated a process in which my body attempted to cover all this excessiveness. This happened through walking amongst the objects as a result of desiring to establish a sensorial contact with them. My skin became another surface of contact with projection once I intercepted with my body the space between the projector and the present objects. In works such as *Do Not Abandon Me Again* (2015) and *Caressing Dinner Circle* (2017) (see page 105), the respective acts of touching the surface of blankets and sitting at the dinner table resulted in my body being covered by extremely colourful images. In this situation, my presence, and that of the other bodies in the room, became an essential element to reach a level of experimentalism with the light of projection, as explored by Cubitt (2007), beyond its technological aspects and orientated towards an affective relationship between bodies and the moving images.

Therefore, at that moment my body turned out to be more than a material three-dimensional presence; it became a surface and shared with the projection the same tension that existed on the encounter with the objects located in the room. By interrupting, and thus disorientating, the projection's conventional route (in these cases reaching the blankets or the dinner table), my body turned into a queer force that created affects in connection with the objects. The most immediate, fleeting and intimate (because based on touch), surface contact with the projection is responsible for the emergence of a previously mentioned feeling of being 'at home'. It is important to state again that for me, and a great number of queer people, this was an unsettling and ambiguous retrospective feeling (Ahmed, 2006, 2010; Di Felicianantonio and Gadelha, 2016; Gopinath, 2018) that shaped most of our lives, informed by affective forces such as anger, love, fear, shame, and resentment. 'Feeling home' is in this sense the camp facet of affect, a detached attachment to the queerness of our family histories. The queerness of my body was thus reinstated in the surface contact and tension with the excessiveness of the projections, which was facilitated through the process of *zooming in*.

In these encounters with the mentioned artworks, visual excess shaped a camp aesthetic that led to disorientation due to the detached attachment (Horn, 2017) of my body in relation to the gallery. My eyes acted as the primary element affected by the excess of light and colours, which initiated a process of *zooming in* on the projections and created a fluid movement between an intensely focused viewing and a detachment from the background. Disorientation emerged in the tension and constant movement of attaching and detaching from the surface of the projection, either on the visible kinaesthetic process of walking around whilst changing focus, or the visceral and muscular affective movement (Lindner, 2018) that this surface contact evoked. This argument advances Alison Butler's (2019) and Giuliana Bruno's (2014) ideas that the relationalities in these spaces are composed of both absorption and distraction, or absorption and immersion. Therefore, the recognition of this

process in the case studies reinforces my thesis that the affective experiences in moving image installations are informed by a disorientation of this binarism, to reach a queerness that exists to create a continuum between body, space, and the projected moving images. These different levels of fluid engagement led to the consideration of the role of the gestural excess that my body had to implement in the gallery to engage with the moving images projected, which will be explored next.

#### **1.4.2. Gestural excess and the exhausted body**

As mentioned in the previous section, the surface encounters with projective moving images in Maclean's and Rist's works were informed by a gestural excess. By gestural excess, I refer to the necessity to act through gestures that surpass our comfortable engagements with space and lead our bodies to kinaesthetic exhaustion and can be understood as being composed of both excessive gestures (unnecessary or decontextualised) and an excess of gestures (exaggerated and repetitive). Gestural excess is crucially informed by a 'gestural system of effort' (Simon, 2009, p. 10) that does not act as an input for changing any of the projective moving image content. Instead, this situation emerged in the gallery as a queer affective resonance of the excessive visuality implemented through the overwhelming presence of light and colours, and the performing body existent on the diegetic sphere of the films.

Thomas H. Apperley (2013) indicates that 'gestural excess includes movements made unconsciously and those which are made deliberately as an act of 'style'' (Apperley, 2013, p. 151). For instance, whilst the excessive gestures portrayed in the films through the performative bodies of Maclean and Rist were potentially consciously implemented, the



gestural excess that emerged in my body, as a resonance of the surface contact, existed in the interplay around the desire to walk, lie down, and scan the images vertically, horizontally and diagonally, an engagement that was created by an act of style concerning my positions and desires in the gallery. Ahmed (2006) reminds us that gestures are the result of past histories and backgrounds, and the repetition of these gestures takes us in some directions to the detriment of others. In the contact with this chapter's case studies, the result of this repetitive endeavour was an exhausted body that seemed affectively to mirror the gestural effort and labour portrayed in the films.

In connection with Ahmed's exploration, Katharina Lindner's (2018) idea of a kinaesthetic empathy concerning film helps us to understand how the intensive labour (Neely and Smith, 2019) and effort portrayed in Maclean's and Rist's work in contact with the excess of light and colours emanating from the surface of projection reverberated in the movements of my body in the gallery. Drawing on the work of Edith Stein (1989), Lindner (2018, p. 52) indicates that whilst watching films, a kinaesthetic empathy to the bodies portrayed leads the viewer to a side-by-side attitude, affectively mirroring some of the habits of these bodies or attempting to re-orientate habits with which the viewer's body does not empathise. Furthermore, whilst citing Adriano D'Aloia (2012a; 2012b), Lindner (2018, p. 50) points out that these encounters in which the viewer's body empathises with the moving images are most likely to happen in moments of the film in which intense kinaesthetic effort is implemented, which in the case of Lindner's (2019) study is mainly explored through the analysis of films based on narratives of intense physical endeavours, such as in the dance and sports film.

Whilst Lindner's (2018) analysis is specially focused on the role of the human body in the process of empathising with what is portrayed in cinema, I aim to explore a process of kinaesthetic empathy that goes beyond the human figure and moves towards other diegetic

elements, as well as the installation settings in the gallery. In this regard, Giuliana Bruno (2014, p. 194) indicates that empathy can be understood as a sort of imitation that emerges between someone's actions and the space in which this person is located, opening the possibility to kinaesthetically empathise with environmental elements such as 'colors and sounds, scenery and situations, surfaces and textures' (Bruno, 2014, p. 194). This sort of situation appeared, for example, in the previously mentioned movements I employed whilst following the same diegetic movement of the yellow sky in the projection of the work *Suburban Brain* (1999) by Pipilotti Rist. In this case, no human body was immediately portrayed in the moving images, but the lights moving on the projection and the voice I could hear invited me to move. These moments occurred frequently in my encounters with Rachel Maclean's and Pipilotti Rist's works.

Furthermore, and as explored in this chapter's introduction, camp has always been understood as a matter of style and as part of a set of gestural excess (Newton, 1993; Babuscio, 1993; Bergman, 1993; Kleinhas, 1994; Ross, 1993; Cleto, 1999; Robertson 1999; Pike, 2001; Taylor, 2012; Nielsen, 2016; Cotkin, 2016; Horn, 2017; Sontag, 2018). Therefore, gestural excess is understood here as imbued with a camp style of affective engagement, one that reconnected me to the queerness that shaped my body through the laborious movements (muscular and visceral) implemented throughout the gallery and that emerged from kinaesthetic responses to the excessive environment, as well as the bodies and other diegetic elements portrayed in the films. Therefore, I reiterate here the idea of effort and labour as an important camp characteristic of the gestures implemented whilst in contact with Maclean's and Rist's works.

For instance, Neely and Smith (2019, p. 171) describe the works of Rachel Maclean as built on intensive creative labour due to her multiple roles in the films, in which she acts as a performer and works in the production of props, costumes, and scenarios. According to

Neely and Smith (2019), Maclean's intensive labour and focus on issues related to 'youth, celebrity and beauty, foregrounds a wider consideration of the work of femininity in contemporary culture' (Neely and Smith, 2019, p. 165). In this scenario, the concept of exhaustion is highlighted in the writing of Neely and Smith (2019, p. 171) as a category, which I understand as an affective one, that emerges as a result of this intensive labour related to femininity, which I believe appears as excessive, theatrical and over the top in the acting and other diegetic elements of *Spite Your Face* (2019) and *Open My Glade* (2019). Therefore, the exhaustion discussed by Neely and Smith (2019) is a crucial element concerning the disorientating bodily resonances of the campness of the projective moving images in the art gallery.

In *Spite Your Face* (2018), for example, two layers of violent affective attainment were constructed. First, the excess of light and colours induced a paralysis in my body but at the same time created a restless gaze that acted in the gallery through intensive and uncommon labour. The encounter with Maclean's work was my first encounter with a vertical projection in a gallery setting. As a result of this first and uncommon experience, my eyes stressfully scanned the projection vertically, looking from the bottom to the top as the main mode of engagement, even though scanning the surface of projection existed as a messy and random exploration. In this situation, because my body and those of the other viewers were positioned at a low level relative to the height of the screen on which the moving images were projected, as I was sitting on the floor, my head had to maintain a diagonal orientation towards the top of the projection and the ceiling of the gallery, which caused muscular pressure in my neck.

This muscular pressure, which if sustained can cause muscular stress, tightening, and may eventually lead to headache and detachment from the film, is probably one of the reasons why most people avoid sitting in the first rows in cinema theatres. Because of this

position, I had to move my head constantly in an attempt to relax my muscles and make the experience less muscularly stressful. However, in the case of Maclean's work, this kinaesthetic stress seemed to materialise the effects of the contact with the excessiveness of a camp aesthetic, that functioned as a queer strategy to affect my body by causing disorientation. This brought to the surface of the body an affective disturbance that appeared in the contact with the film's narrative.

In connection with this disturbance, the second nature of work and effort that was implemented in the body was directly related to the matter of women's violence that Maclean explores. As Neely and Smith (2019) indicate, 'The seduction of watching Maclean's work is quickly replaced by repulsion' (Neely and Smith, 2019, p. 170), which connects Maclean's work with the idea of camp as a detached attachment and the grotesque, violent, and distorting strategies of camp's excessive features (Ross, 1993; Flin, 1995; Perez, 2017; Hotz-Davies *et al.*, 2018). Initially, in the connection with the campness of the characters, the surface of the projection acted as an important mechanism for a positive affective relationship with the moving images. However, the subsequent appearance of scenes such as the one in which the main character sexually assaulted their mentor created an atmosphere of discomfort that, as portrayed in the film, resonated in my body. These scenes that related sexual connotations and abuse were the moments in which the previous *zooming in* on the projection and consequent affective attachment were suspended, leading to a detachment from the moving images but a reattachment to the surroundings.

On this occasion, the discomfort of looking towards the projection re-orientated my body to explore the gallery and consequently the other bodies that I shared that moment with. Not by coincidence, this moment was led by a process of looking around and facing the other people's bodies and the gallery's illuminated architecture as a possible rescue from the disturbing and disorientated experience of facing moments of such violence in the film. The

repulsion, which Neely and Smith (2019, p. 170) indicate is a result of facing Maclean's works, appeared in the encounter with *Spite Your Face* (2018) not only as an attitude towards the action of the abuser but also as a sort of self-exploration of shame, guilt, and the affective limitations of my body in its visceral inability to sustain an attachment with the images of violence portrayed in the film.

Consequently, Maclean's work created discomfort for the viewer by implementing aesthetic strategies, which again I understand as camp, that re-orientated the pleasures related to the superficial and more immediate encounter with a colourful and supposedly joyful atmosphere initially portrayed in the films. Disorientation was therefore the main outcome of watching *Spite Your Face* (2018). This disorientation created an exhausted body, as I needed to employ excessive muscular and visceral work to deal with the excessive environment in which I was located. This excessive work mirrors the intensive labour that Neely and Smith (2019) claim is part of the background of Maclean's work and that appeared in the tension of the surface encounter between my body and the projection.

In the case of Pipilotti Rist's exhibition, exhaustion emerged as the result of a process of facing the excessive settings of the gallery and constantly changing the visual focus of attention. As demonstrated in the previous section, this situation was shaped by a restless gaze and a body that continuously moved around, engaging with the artworks at different spatial levels, i.e., looking to the top and the bottom, getting too close to the light of projection, having to walk in the gallery for a large period, sitting down, lying down, touching objects, getting lost in the museum. Consequently, Rist's works stimulated a process of *zooming in* that existed in the fluid relationship between fleeting and sustained attachment to the surface of the projection. In this case, the constant change of modes of spatial engagement with the projective moving images affected my body by causing exhaustion through the excessive visceral and muscular movements I had to implement throughout the

gallery.

In *Ever is Over All* (1997), for example, the previously mentioned affective compression that emerged in the small room in which the work was installed was not only the result of the excessiveness of light and colours emanating from the projection but also an effect of the excessive behaviour of the woman's performance in the moving images. This woman smoothly, confidently, and repetitively broke some cars' windows with a large flower whilst walking on the streets of a city in which a lullaby-like song was playing. This excessive and repeated gesture led to environmental tension when the sounds of the window glass shattering reached my body. In these moments, the repetitive gestures resulted in a process of kinaesthetic empathy (Lindner, 2018), in which each breaking window caused my body to move slightly, but not a movement that resulted in changing position from one location to another in the gallery. Instead, this kinaesthetic empathy appeared on the surface of my body through fleeting and sudden blinking and low-scale spasms that slightly moved my shoulders. This happened due to some moments of surprise for the attainment of the high-frequency sound in the gallery, which loud as it was, seemed to occur right beside my ears.

Those repetitive gestures appeared to criticise the misogynistic idea of women being excessive in situations in which they stand up for themselves in hostile environments, bringing to the surface the question of who decides what is excessive and what is not. In this regard, Julia Skelly (2014, p. 02) reminds us that women and queer people (and their intersections) have been largely accused of being excessive as a result of their desires, public demonstrations of affect, or simply by not agreeing to follow social conventions and normativity that threaten their lives, an accusation that has been used for stigmatisation and marginalisation of a part of the population based on prejudices regarding race, class, nationality, gender, and sexuality (Skelly, 2014, p. 03). Through using camp strategies such as humour and irony concerning this supposedly excessive behaviour, the woman's action

spatially extended this discussion by using excessive lights, colours, and high-frequency sounds combined with the sort of spatial compression towards the projection located at such a short distance from my body's standpoint. This created a level of disorientation from the necessity of my body to maintain a constant shift of engagement through excessive gestures (even if at a visceral or low-intensity level) to cope with the excessive visuality and anxiety generated because of the close presence of the other bodies in the gallery. The encounter with *Ever is Over All* (1997) was thus informed by a 'feel what I feel' or 'put yourself in my shoes' queer strategy that shaped a camp aesthetic.

In other situations, such as in the encounter with *4<sup>th</sup> Floor to Mildness* (2016), a process of kinaesthetic empathy emerged mostly as the result of the contact with non-human diegetic elements and concerning a mysterious human body presence. Pipilotti Rist's body appeared only through a voice singing that here related to body parts (such as eyes and arms) that from time to time emerged in the water portrayed in the projection on the ceiling of the gallery. Therefore, a gestural excess arose here not as the direct result of the kinaesthetic empathy with the work of the repetition of gestures of Rist's performative body. What occurred in this space was an empathic process with the struggle of that body to be in the water, the calmness of the sound of the water running, and the lullaby-like song playing. As previously mentioned in the description of *4<sup>th</sup> Floor to Mildness* (2016), the combination of these elements inserted a level of suspension of senses and immobility within my body.

The process of detached attachment that allowed the appearance of this immobility incited the rise of anxiety about not recognising what could potentially be around my body. As I felt detached from the surroundings, a level of vulnerability emerged due to the possibility of interaction with other people's bodies on the same bed I was lying on. The excessiveness of gestures was thus not evident in the act of implementing several different gestures in the gallery, as happened for example in the excessive movements implemented

whilst walking throughout Rist's apartment. Gestural excess resided in the apparently immobile but viscerally labouring engagement with a surface that seemed to pull the weight of my body towards the comfort of the mattress but resulted instead in an exhausting affective relationality. This appeared mainly from the combination of the affective characteristics of the luminosity and the calming atmosphere created by the sound and the water.



*Figure 06: Pipilotti Rist, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor to Mildness, 2016. Installation in the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, 2019. Photography by: Poul Buchard / Brøndum & Co. Available from: <https://www.walpaper.com/art/>. (Accessed: 24/11/2021).*

However, the affective development of vulnerable corporeal states brought to the surface the appearance of some parts of my body as excess, beyond the common experience of the affective attachment to the projection. I refer here to the moment when, after lying down for a bit, I realised I had never put one of my legs on the bed whilst facing the projections. In this situation, my leg worked as an excessiveness to my body's position, and an element that exceeded the space of the bed, as if denoting that object as not exclusively



formed by comfort, even though commonly associated with this feeling. Therefore, my leg as excess was shaped by a kinaesthetic engagement that was muscularly tense. Even though I could not identify that immediately, the fact that my leg was outside the bed seemed to function as an orientation device, one that could keep me safe and able quickly to leave that position to avoid the disorientation of having someone else lying down beside me.

I would like now to review the issues of a body muscularly struggling in the water. This was a common feature in Pipilotti Rist's works that first appeared in *4<sup>th</sup> Floor to Mildness* (2016) and was repeated in *Sip My Ocean* (1996). In one moment of the latter work, the image of Rist swimming under the water appeared duplicated in the projections located in the corner of the gallery. In the mirror image, Rist applied movements that evidenced this struggle to maintain her body connected to the camera recording. Rist's arms seemed to move, fluctuating among the soft and malleable atmosphere under the water, whilst the weight of her body appeared to be pulled down by the force of gravity. Her cheeks got larger whilst she held her breath, and the artist worked to keep the movements of her body in the camera frame. The resonance of seeing that body was, as Lindner (2012) proposes, a 'sensational engagement' and a 'kinaesthetic empathy' (Lindner, 2018).

Whilst Rist moved under the water and along with the water, my body seemed to mirror that slow but laboured movement at a visceral level to reach a point of attachment to the surface of the projection. At that moment, I repeatedly felt as if I were recreating a fleeting second of unconsciously holding my breath because my body was extremely attached to the blue luminance in front of me. Consequently, my body was grounded in the space as if sinking in the water that in the gallery was materialised via the light of projection. In the gallery, the resonances of these affective, muscular, and visceral adjustments to unusual situations like those under the water in the film, led to what Lindner (2012) calls a sense of disorientation through empathic kinaesthetic encounters.



*Figure 07: Pipilotti Rist, Sip my Ocean, 1996. Installation in one of the galleries of the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art. Photography by: Anders Sune Berg. Available from: <https://www.facebook.com/arkenmuseum/>. (Accessed: 24/11/2021).*

Furthermore, in this space, the high-frequency sound of a song I could not initially identify once again created a hypnotic atmosphere. I felt as if my body had entered into a trance whilst seeing the water moving, hearing the lullaby-like song, and being reached violently by an intense blue luminance that dominated the space. In this state of almost-trance, my body became extremely relaxed whilst sitting on the floor along with the other gallery visitors. However, this relaxation was abruptly disorientated at some point when the voice of Pipilotti Rist started furiously screaming 'I don't wanna fall in love'. This moment of rupture in the relaxing atmosphere acted as a rapid re-orientation of my body's engagement with the space. Whilst before the screaming I had felt my body heavily grounded on the floor because extremely relaxed, afterwards, I felt disorientated in relation to the ambiguous atmosphere set between the tranquillity of the images I could see and the stressful sounds I could hear. In this situation, it was no longer Pipilotti Rist's body that created a sense of kinaesthetic empathy, but the combination of the water moving in the moving image,

the blue light, and the aggressive shift of the sound. My body seemed affectively to follow the environmental situation, starting from an extremely hypnotising attachment to the surface of the projection to a disorientated experience of being abruptly taken out of that initial state of relaxation.

This state of relaxation can be read as a state of exhaustion in the experience with *Sip My Ocean* (1996) and the projections located at the end corner of Pipilotti Rist's apartment, where three different films were screened. Indeed, if my body ended up in such a relaxed relationship with the environment, it was partly due to the exhausting work of walking around a large exhibition comprised of 47 artworks, where the excess of light on the surface of projection was a crucial affective element. As the last works I could see in the exhibition *Open My Glade* (2019), these projections functioned as disorientation devices because of the gestural excess that was implemented throughout the galleries of the museum previous to those final encounters. Because muscularly tired due to the repetitive and excessive gestures of looking around, lying down, sitting down, and touching several objects, my body easily and quickly opened itself to enter into a process of relaxation. Consequently, this relaxation that affected my immobile body lying on the floor was mainly responsible for a process of disorientation that emerged when any excessive content (such as the voice screaming) portrayed in the films reached the gallery along with the projective light.

In this chapter's case studies, an excessiveness existed in the surface of the projection through light and colours, and in the gestures implemented by the camp and performative bodies of Rachel Maclean and Pipilotti Rist. However, the most important point of this thesis is understanding that this excessive camp aesthetic in the films resonated in the gallery through the necessity for the viewer to convey a gestural excess through kinaesthetic engagements with the projected moving images. This excessiveness happened through the repetition of gestures by body parts, such as the hands touching a large number of objects, my

tired legs as I walked around the gallery, the restless eyes *zooming in* on the projection. On a more visceral level, a gestural excess happened in the repulsive feelings that unsettled the stomach, the slow breathing due to relaxation, the fleeting blinking, and the sudden spasms that responded to over-stimulation. In this situation, gestural excess appeared as a matter of camp style informed by personal relationships with the artworks in the moments of detached attachment to the surface of the projection. These gestures and the general connection we established with these works had a relationship with affective backgrounds, some of the sedimented histories of our bodies, which will be explored in the next section.

#### **1.4.3. Re-orientating attachments through camp-recognition**

The immediate contact with the excessive surface of the projection created attachments through the process of *zooming in* on the lights and colours in the moving images. However, another sort of attachment emerged when a camp recognition led me to the background of my experiences, reaching additional layers, textures, and depths of affects that were directly related to my histories of engagement with popular culture and queer content. Therefore, in this encounter, Lindner's (2018) idea of a social cinematic subject, 'entangled by class, race and gender characteristics' (Lindner, 2018, p. 15), emerges as a potent means of responding to the moving images. This is reflected in approaching what has left aside in historical assumptions of camp that were concerned with binarisms such as homosexual vs. heterosexual (Medhurst, 2013; Babuscio, 1993; Newton, 1993; Bergman, 1993; Sontag, 2018) that mostly prioritised the white gay and middle-class secret coding. As previously stated in this chapter, in a post-millennial queer configuration (Dushel, 2017) it is necessary continuously to advance a querying of camp (Piontek, 2017) to move beyond this approach

and keep challenging heteronormativity. For this, it is important increasingly to explore experiences that work on disrupting the binarisms that undermine working-class people's roles in the production of camp, such as low/high camp or pop/gay camp. This is a subversive process that, as José Esteban Muñoz (1999) argues, is implemented by working-class queers of colour due to the process of disidentification within and outside queer culture.

As mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, Muñoz (1999, p. 08) points out that the process of disidentification aims at approaching queerness as comprised of a series of different layers and is thus not monothematic but 'a mode of dealing with the dominant ideology, one that neither opts to assimilate within such a structure nor strictly opposes it' (Muñoz, 1999, p. 11). Muñoz's (1999) idea of disidentification works as an affective force that moves us towards the detached attachment (Horn, 2017) aspect of camp, either as an element of the popular culture product or in our responses to that. This is because to disidentify creates a relationship of feeling part of something whilst denying attaching to the extended and harmful disorientations that hostile situations may put us in.

In this context, to disidentify with specific environments, people, or contents, for example, appears to me as a mode to live queerly, between cultures, classes, and sexualities, and struggling with the background and potential pathways that shape some people's lives and orientations. I argue that queer people with working-class backgrounds, a communality I include myself in, develop an important sense of affective mediation that is directly connected with the concepts of disidentification and camp detached attachment in the queer encounters with environments in which a sense of 'I do not fit in' appears. Because of this sense of affective meditation through disidentification (a detached attachment), a space is opened regarding 'how queer subjects can participate in the mainstream media landscape without having to lose or deny their identity' (Horn 2017, p. 04). The disorientation that emerges from this sense creates moments of labouring affective responses whilst attempting

to simultaneously engage with the film and the gallery, as explored in the previous section.

Therefore, the detached attachment related to the working-class common ground that continuously supports a significant part of the world's population results in raising awareness concerning our histories of affective and pleasurable taste towards popular culture content through mainstream cinema, television and popular music. Denying the existence and the effects of this type of content as part of the affective histories of bodies may only be possible for especially privileged people, who may never have had any issues regarding content's accessibility on different levels (technological, academic, educational), as 'if you inherit class privilege, then you have more resources "behind" you, which can be converted into capital that can "propel" you forward and up' (Ahmed, 2006, p. 137). Growing up queer within a working-class environment revealed to me that the products of mainstream media are mostly what is accessible in terms of creating affective relationships with aesthetic or artistic products that can lead us to a sense of community in this arena. As Ahmed (2010, p. 29) argues, affects are sticky and emerge through 'contact' (Ahmed, 2006, p. 02). Therefore, our bodily contact with popular culture always sticks around as an affective force that keeps connecting us to our backgrounds, as they are part of what Ahmed (2006) calls our sedimented histories.

For instance, a sense of disorientation and building of campness in terms of affect appeared in the most immediate contacts with the galleries in which Maclean's and Rist's works were installed. My experience of visiting places such as the Talbot Rice Gallery<sup>20</sup> and the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art<sup>21</sup> prompted the emergence of queer affects due to the surface tension between a self-awareness of my queer working-class body and art institutions

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<sup>20</sup> The Talbot Rice Gallery is the art gallery founded in 1975 as part of the University of Edinburgh, located in the city of Edinburgh (Scotland, United Kingdom). Source: <https://eca.ed.ac.uk/> (Accessed: 06/01/2022).

<sup>21</sup> The Louisiana Museum of Modern Art was founded in 1958 by Knud W. Jensen and is located in the city of Humlbæk (Denmark). Source: <https://louisiana.dk/> (Accessed: 06/01/2022).

that can be ‘shaped by the proximity of some bodies and not others’ (Ahmed, 2006, p. 132). These are orientations that can sometimes turn the art gallery into a hostile environment for the working-class queer. In these institutions, disorientation arises from the contact with the luxurious walls, the posh restaurants, the orientating etiquette, and the ‘sense of cultural respectability, even erudition’ (Balsom, 2013, p. 39) that the process of gallery-going conveys. The queerness of being in those spaces emerges because of the feelings of not belonging to it, not following a line (Ahmed, 2006), as the backgrounds that are brought to the surface, the conditions of arrival (Ahmed, 2006) of the experience, do not match with the orientated spatial expectations. For instance, the fleeting resistance of moving forward after seeing the gold curtain of *Spite Your Face* (2018), afraid I was in the wrong place, demonstrated the appearance of these affective relationships.

However, this is not to say that these specific institutions are inherently or purposely exclusionary or that accessing them gave no pleasure. On the contrary, this tension emerges from the class issues that are mainly responsible for queer affects and a sense of unpleasurable pleasure and a camp-recognition emerging to rescue me from disorientation. This is not an attempt to build naïve arguments that remove from these institutions their political responsibility in creating far more inclusive environments. However, I decided to focus on how being in the galleries allowed me to access earlier life connections with this particular type of space, as explored in the preface to this thesis, building confidence in inhabiting them. This happens through attaching to the artworks as affective tools for survival in unsettling environments in which we can sometimes feel detached, as happened in the art gallery. The queer affects that emerged from this practice followed my body; they stayed with me throughout the entire experience of seeing Maclean’s and Rist’s exhibitions and were responsible for a re-orientation towards a camp-recognition during the surface encounters with the projections. This resonates strongly with Lauren Levitt’s (2017)

statement that ‘Camp simultaneously express both ironic or critical distance from and affection toward its object’ (Levitt, 2017, p. 173). Between the pleasures of encountering the artworks and the lack of pleasure at not feeling part of the environment, in the process of detaching and attaching, I quickly attached to my most ordinary affective engagements with moving images and popular culture to access a safer common ground that could support my disorientating journey in the gallery.

In the re-orientation of affective attachments with the surface of projection towards this inclusive approach appears a possibility to access camp aesthetic beyond the aspects of brightness and colours of the moving images and towards the narratives developed in the films. In other words, this allowed me to access other layers and depths of the surface of the projection. This situation was partially explored in the previous section through the affective resonances of a performative body and other non-human diegetic elements that created a kinaesthetic empathy (Lindner 2018) on a muscular and visceral level. To advance this discussion, I would like to review some moments of experiencing Rachel Maclean’s and Pipilotti Rist’s works in which a camp-recognition led to the raising of an affective awareness related to ‘in-this-togetherness’ (Harbin, 2016).

According to Ami Harbin (2016), a sense of ‘in-this-togetherness’ emerges in situations in which the affects resulting from disorientation bind people together. Harbin (2016, p. 112-113) uses this concept to highlight how the shared history and experience of queer people allow the emergence of collective strategies to deal with a hostile world, aiming at creating connections that can provide queer bodies with prepared tools to face situations of intolerance. Harbin (2016) states that ‘the disorientations of being queer have politicised individuals in the particular sense of becoming collectively minded’ (Harbin, 2016, p. 113). As demonstrated by the literature explored in this chapter’s introduction, camp functions like this ‘in-this-togetherness’ strategy that for so long kept and keeps queer people together



through a shared aesthetic and affect that permit a process of mutual recognition and safer navigation of the world (Cleto, 1999; Dyer, 2002; Wolf, 2013; Nielsen, 2016; Schottmiller, 2017).

As mentioned before, the process of disorientation that I have been discussing in the works of Maclean and Rist has the specific result of accessing affects that raise awareness of belonging to a group or community, as they highlight feminist concerns (Neely and Smith, 2019), and I argue they are of affective importance for working-class queers. However, because the experience with Rist and Maclean's works exists in the disorientation and fluidness of a relaxing absorption and a mobile wandering, a detached attachment (Horn, 2017), the process of recognising myself amongst the other people in the gallery seemed to be suspended in favour of an affective 'displacement' (Butler, 2019). In this situation, instead of directly relating with the bodies right beside me in the gallery (with which I could not establish any connection), I moved much more towards an understanding of the shared queerness of my body concerning a queer and working-class community that exists and has a history outside the gallery. This awareness of communality that emerged through the surface contact with the camp aesthetic and the projections is closely connected to the encounter with elements that forms what most of the scholars mentioned in the introduction to this chapter understand as camp, such as humour, irony, excess, exaggeration and the detached attachment with popular culture content.

In *Ever is Over All* (1997), for example, after I had spent a few minutes trying to find a place to stabilise my body, the human-scale figure of a woman, which I later found out not to be Pipilotti Rist but rather Sylvana Treski<sup>22</sup>, started to merge in my mind with the images

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<sup>22</sup> Pipilotti Rist provides this information in the video *Pipilotti Rist Interview: Colour is Dangerous*, published on March 16<sup>th</sup> 2016 at the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art's channel on Youtube. I thank Professor Ross Birrell for sharing this information.

of the singer Beyoncé<sup>23</sup> and the Netflix character Titus Andromedon<sup>24</sup>. In this situation, the process of appropriating popular culture content, so common within camp practice, appeared not as the subject matter of the moving image diegesis, but in my affective responses to the encounter with the surface of the projection. The initial disorientation provoked by the excessive environmental settings and the affective retrieval of the figures of Beyoncé and Titus Andromedon, walking around streets and employing gestures similar to Rist's, re-orientated me to a pleasurable restoration of memories closely related to my ordinary and daily engagements with moving images through music videos and streaming content. This case exemplifies Anette Hüscher's (2006, p. 35) assertion that an audience encounter with cultural products can prompt the generation of affective recollections specifically related to repertoire association and collective memory, leading to an experience that is considerably more pleasurable and exciting for the viewer. Beyoncé and Titus Andromedon, as public figures inserted into a popular culture framework, have their work closely connected with repetition as a method to create emotional bonds and build up the repertoire association pointed out by Hüscher (2006). Their bodies repeat, mimic, and at the same time transgress the bodily actions of Sylvana Treski in a context outside the art gallery, but a context that has shaped the affective history of a parcel of the queer community concerning television, internet, and pop music.

However, these pop figures are not cited in Rist's film. Instead, it was Beyoncé's music video that in 2016 parodied Rist's work in a subversive process where pop music video content appropriated moving image art content. Subsequently, in 2017 Titus Andromedon parodied Beyoncé's music video in one of the episodes of *Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt*

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<sup>23</sup> Beyoncé is an American black singer and actress who started her career as part of the girl group Destiny's Child. In 2003 she established a solo singing career in the areas of pop music and R&B.

<sup>24</sup> Titus Andromedon is a black queer character who plays the friend of the main character Kimmy Schmidt on the Netflix series *Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt* (2015).

(2015)<sup>25</sup>, which means an indirect citation of Treski's performative body. Although not mentioned in Rist's work, Beyoncé and Titus Andromedon were still recognisable as deviations from a particular content in my process of recollecting memories, as concurrently, it was the figure of Sylvana Treski that made me recall my relationship with them. Whilst the repetitive lyrics of Beyoncé's song *Hold Up* went through my mind, the gallery was reshaped as a place of comfort due to specific contexts that only my history provided me with. A camp-recognition emerged in the exaggeration and excess that shaped the initial disorientation in the environment, but the figures of the 'pop diva' Beyoncé and the queer icon Titus Andromedon play crucial roles in the development of a camp aesthetic. Therefore, a camp aesthetic emerged not only as part of the surface of the projection but in the work of building affective connections through content that restored a sphere of queerness and collective affects.

This case demonstrates how some works are initially disorientating but can lead to a re-orientation of the experience because of specific contents. In this work, the queerness of disorientation emerged because it led my body to feel unstable due to the projection's surface aspects. However, queerness appeared as an 'in-this-togetherness' effect driven by the affective recollection of the images of Beyoncé and Titus Andromedon parodic content, which turned the experience in the space into a more stable and humorous engagement informed by my history as a queer man immersed in a pop-culture context. I would like to highlight here the role of parody in camp aesthetics as prompting and recovering these affects that are queer, in a sense of reconnecting us with a queerness that is potentially shared with other people. As Katrin Horn (2017) claims, a camp aesthetic works as an 'excessively

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<sup>25</sup> *Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt* (2015) is a comedy show produced by the streaming service Netflix. The show tells the story of Kimmy Schmidt, a woman who is rescued after 15 years of living in a bunker. She then moves to New York City and has to deal with a world she had never seen before. Source: <https://m.imdb.com/title> (Accessed: 06/01/2021).

stylised parody and in-group humour' (Horn, 2017, p.15), one that can foster the building of communality. This reverberates with Ahmed's (2006) arguments that disorientation is not necessarily extended in time if on the way we can find a ground that provides us with comfort because experiential proximities are established. Therefore, disorientated moments can act as the element which productively turns us to our body's history and leads to a self-exploration that provides us with pleasure.



*Figure 08: Pipilotti Rist, Ever is Overall, 1997. Installation in the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, 2019. Photography by: Danilo Barauna.*

However, in this chapter's case studies, it was possible to notice situations in which the appropriation of popular culture content existed as an affective resonance not only due to the work of recovering affective memories but also because its appropriation and subversion were crucial elements in the content of the moving images. For instance, Rachel Maclean's *Spite Your Face* (2018) facilitated the engagement with a popular culture content that potentially existed in the imagination of some of the millennial and pre-millennial visitors

who encountered the work in the gallery as Maclean parodied the figure of Pinocchio<sup>26</sup>, a famous character in international literature and cinema. In Maclean's film, the uncertainty of seeing a possible camp version of Pinocchio, in which excess and humour arose as important features, prompted moments of affective re-orientation. Pleasurable access to childhood memories emerged, bringing background histories to the core of the experience, and providing fleeting muscular and visceral moments of relaxation.

Nevertheless, Maclean constructs a narrative in which 'Pic' (as the character is mostly referred to in the film) turns into a perpetrator. This figure that once brought joy and reconnection with positive affective memories turns out to be a dangerous character that, led by capitalist consumption, uses sexual and psychological abuse of women to reach and maintain the positions of power and passability that his golden skin has provided, as mentioned in the description of *Spite Your Face* (2019). Maclean uses parody to subvert our relationship with the famous character, maintaining some of the characteristics that historically shaped our conceptions of Pinocchio, whilst exposing the darker side of the liar character. This exemplifies Sarah Smith's (2008) claim, drawing on the work of Linda Hutcheon (2000), that 'while parodic reframings do carry with them many of the conventions and values of the original text, they do so only as a prerequisite for critique' (Smith, 2008, p. 209). Furthermore, in the case of Maclean's work, Neely and Smith (2019, p. 169) argue that this critique has a close connection with disrupting pleasures of the texts she parodies to address issues such as gender stereotypes and violence against women. The result of the disruptive attitude portrayed in the films and the ambiguous contact with the character set an unsettling affective response to the surface of the projection. Therefore, it was the camp

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<sup>26</sup> According to Rebecca West (2006), Pinocchio is the main character in the 1883 book *Le avventure di Pinocchio* (*The Adventures of Pinocchio*) by Tuscan writer Carlo Collodi. The book tells the story of Pinocchio, a wooden puppet that becomes human and whose nose grows after lying. West (2006) observes that the story has had many adaptations throughout the years and Disney's cinematographic version is possibly the most famous one.

subversion of Pinocchio's story and my habitual and past affective engagements with the character that resonated as queer and prompted moments of disorientation to emerge due to the mismatch of positive memories and the queer affects that unsettled my body.

This direct appropriation and subversion are part of *Sip My Ocean* (1996), in which Pipilotti Rist creates a cover of the song *Wicked Game* (1989) by Chris Isaak, a version that she intriguingly calls *I am a victim of this song*. As part of the projected moving images, the strident voice previously mentioned works as a camp strategy to subvert the song's content throughout the experience in the gallery. At the time of experiencing this work, I could not recall which song I was listening to, even though I was completely sure I had heard it before, especially when the repetitive and captivating line 'I don't wanna fall in love' took over the space. This repetitiveness of the song, commonly applied in pop-culture content, was responsible for introducing the same collectively shared memory as the figure of Pinocchio in Maclean's work. Here, once again a sense of 'in-this-togetherness' emerged when the famous song was played, and I was sensorially removed from that place through the affective effort to remember my relationship with those sounds.

A queerness was implemented at the moment of trying to recognise the song but not managing to do so because the deviating strategies subverted the connection with that specific pop-culture product. Rist's lullaby/fantasy-like version of *Wicked Game* (1989) was mainly responsible for creating a soothing atmosphere and an increasingly overwhelming feeling as well. When the sound expanded to become a higher frequency voice, one that screamed in the background, the camp strategies of excess, exaggeration, and humorous engagement not only appeared in the space on the surface of the projection but also reverberated through the bodies present in the gallery. In this situation, laughing was the main resonance, one that not only fleetingly connected the gestures of my body and those of the others in the gallery, but also increased a sense of 'in-this-togetherness'. However, the sense

of collectivity that fleetingly emerged was not sustained whilst watching the entire film because the laughing response inserted in my body a visceral struggle to keep my voice low, as an attempt to not interfere with the sounds of the moving images and the other bodies' experiences.

The sense of 'in-this-togetherness' highlights a collectivity that understands queer as shaped by the previously mentioned class issues. Popular culture content in a camp realm is frequently connected with consumption by working-class people (Ross, 1993; Deering and Lynn, 2017), and recognising that song as part of a pop-culture setting highlighted my queer working-class background as much as recalling Pinocchio's story, Beyoncé, and Titus Andromedon did. As Katrin Horn (2017) reminds us, 'camp is [...] dependent on, as much as it is intent on, drawing new demarcation lines between audiences – communities of taste – reflecting its history as a secret code of communication, even in mass-mediated contexts' (Horn, 2017, p. 22). What all the works discussed so far do is to use a camp aesthetic as a queer strategy to create bonds that I believe have a level of connection with the experience of queer people, especially with queer working-class people.

Overall, it was potentially my history and engagement with the 'pop diva' content, an affective relationship present in the life of queer working-class men, which allowed me to find in *Ever is Over All* (1997) support that only existed due to a background built outside the gallery. This exemplifies Alisson Butler's (2019) assertion that moving image installations have a deictic characteristic that puts our bodies between places, which I argue helps in exploring the spaces of the moving images whilst reconnecting with affects that only exist due to our backgrounds. In this ongoing and fluid spatial exploration, the re-orientation of affects through contact with the surface of the projection (as an attempt to undermine disorientation) creates a sense of communality. This can have further developments in terms of community building outside the gallery as it is responsible for a process of raising

awareness (Harbin, 2016) of shared experiences related to gender, race, class, nationality, and sexuality.

## 1.5. Conclusion

In this chapter, I analysed the process of *zooming in* on the excessive surface of the projection in moving image installations in which a gestural process of constantly changing focus from one excessive element to another causes the body to feel disorientated, searching for a form of support in elements of the moving images that could establish a sense of communality. I explored the work *Spite Your Face* (2018) by Rachel Maclean and the exhibition *Open My Glade* (2019) by Pipilotti Rist, implementing the detached attachment quality of the concept of camp as an important means and contribution to understanding the fluid connection between absorption and wandering in the gallery. Camp was approached as an excessive aesthetic and queer strategy formed by other elements such as exaggeration, irony, repetition, and humour that led to disorientation and the emergence of queer affects shaping the relational experience and surface tension between my body and the projections.

Through framing the experience with these works in the realm of a camp aesthetic, I argued that the encounter with the excessiveness comprising the case studies caused my body to *zoom in* and feel disorientated due to the fluid camp aspect of detached attachment (Horn, 2017) to the surface of the projection. Throughout this process of constantly changing the focus of attention, my body was led to implement a set of gestures that I understood as excessive, in order to engage affectively with the projections' overwhelming materiality (for instance, lights and colours) and the excess portrayed in the films, either through Rist's and Maclean's gestures or other diegetic elements. The rise of this gestural excess points out the



role of the style of bodily engagements in the moment of a camp-recognition. The queer affects resulting from this situation worked as a re-orientation towards my body's sedimented histories, brought to the surface during the encounter with the projections, which happened specifically to deal with environments where a sense of not belonging was established. In this situation, the contact with the artwork and the uses of camp as a parody of popular culture content portrayed in the films (as in *Spite Your Face* [2018]) or recalled through affective memories (as in *Ever Is Overall* [1997]), worked to create a supportive ground for affective re-orientation throughout the disorientating journey.

As mentioned previously, projection has the quality of creating physical gatherings around it in the gallery. In this chapter, I explored how this quality exists as a form of affective communality that is not necessarily related to the gathering of the bodies that share the physical space of projective moving image installations. Instead, it occurs as an increased consciousness of communalities (Harbin, 2016) that exists outside the gallery and shapes the sedimented histories of our bodies. For instance, I demonstrated this situation by showing how a camp-recognition of popular culture content made me reconnect with my experiences as a working-class queer man engaged in the communality of queer pop culture. I believe that the presence of the queer affects related to a working-class background emerging through the interaction with popular culture content works as a subtle process of queering the space of the gallery and its sometimes-normative institutional aspects (for instance, not touching or keeping a distance), especially in museums that seem to create a rather exclusive atmosphere.

Therefore, a camp aesthetic emerges in the tense contact with the films through camp-recognition, as an affective response to the excessiveness of the projection's surface. This chapter demonstrated how settings of projective moving image installations where excess is pivotal can lead our bodies to implement a process of constantly attaching to the moving images because of their hypnotizing qualities whilst at the same time attempting to cover the

environment in which the projection is installed, which happens due to the excess of elements or the large number of projective works. We attach to the surface and detach from the environment in a continuous and fleeting back-and-forth movement, in which states of absorption and acts of wandering overlap and exist as queer affects that disorientate our bodies to access parts of our backgrounds and, in the contact with this chapter's case studies, incite awareness of 'in-this-togetherness' (Harbin, 2016).

By approaching the literature on the concept of camp to understand disorientation and the queer affects that emerge in projective moving image installations, I hope to have contributed to highlighting the importance of understanding and using it as a conceptual framework, a material facet of queerness that challenges the binarism of absorption and wandering. Through the implementation of Horn's (2017) concept of camp detached attachment, in the case of this chapter to the surface of the projections and the environment, I aimed to expose how the background of our experiences interferes in the modes and styles of navigating the art gallery, in which the gestures applied have a close connection with our affective relationship with the narrative of the moving images. One result of this detached attachment to the environment, as a consequence of the *zooming in* on the surface of the projection, can be the process that Ahmed (2006) calls *becoming an object*, in which our bodies lose the contours of the surroundings and are detached from their habitual modes of engagement with the environment. This second phenomenon of disorientation will be explored in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER TWO

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### Follow the light

## 2.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter, I explored the role of visual and gestural excess in camp aesthetics as a strategy of bodily disorientation at the moment of encountering projective moving image artworks. In the case studies analysed, the camp detaching attachment aspects of *zooming in* resulting from the visual excess of projective moving images made me lose the contours of the environment and re-orientate affects towards my body in a powerful movement of self-exploration that raised awareness of ‘in-this-togetherness’. Consequently, one of the results of this excessive zooming was the phenomenon of the body *becoming an object*, as discussed by Sara Ahmed (2006), through detaching it from its habitual strategies to navigate the world. According to Ahmed (2006), this is likely to happen in moments of rapid transition.

For instance, in Pipilotti Rist’s exhibition, corridors emerged to separate some of the artworks. This was noticeable whilst transitioning from the first gallery I entered in the museum, where a series of Rist’s early video art was installed, to the gallery where I encountered *4th Floor to Mildness* (2016). The encounter with this work was preceded by a long, dark corridor where at the end of the walk I read the words *Help me* installed on the wall in neon lights. Even dazzling works such as *Pixel Forest* (2016) were installed as transitory spaces between projective rooms, which in the case of the exhibition *Open My Glade* (2019) separated *4th Floor to Mildness* (2016) from the next gallery where the works *Tasmanian Bubble* (2018) and *I Couldn’t Agree With You More* (1999) were installed on opposite walls. Here I mention again the presence of the large curtain located at the entrance door of Rachel Maclean’s *Spite Your Face* (2018) as a threshold preceding the encounter with projection. I point out these transitory spaces to highlight their recurrence in the series of contemporary art exhibitions I visited whilst conducting the fieldwork for this thesis.

In this chapter, I explore the feelings of disorientation emerging from dark corridors as transitional spaces that I experienced in the works *SaFO5* (2019) by Charlotte Prodger and *No history in a room filled with people with funny names 5* (2019) by Korakrit Arunanondchai and Alex Gvojic. I argue that these dark corridors can be understood as a cruising space where queer affects emerge as a result of the disorientation that transitioning from a brightly lit environment (the outside of the gallery) to a darkly lit one (the corridor and the gallery) causes in the body.

Whilst cruising throughout the gallery, the emergence of darkness acts as an impactful affective mechanism, destabilising the body and leaving it unsettled, leading to a detachment from comfortable methods of spatially navigating the world. This disorientation generates anxiety through anticipation of what waits in the next room, prompting the emergence of a series of affects from the queerness that takes over the body whilst cruising the dark corridor, with the nature of the affect being determined by the number of bodies concerned. When entering the next room, located on the other side of the corridor, the impact of the projection's bright light can immediately extend the disorientation in time or re-orientate the body to a stable state that has a close connection with light and darkness along with the moving image content projected in the room.

The dark corridor is responsible for forcing the body to become an object and thus embrace queer strategies to explore the space, as will be demonstrated by the description of the experiences in the case studies. Whilst cruising the dark corridor and subsequently arriving in the room where the projection is located, an intermingling of desire and fearfulness arises, in addition to an encounter with the strange, initiating an obliqueness to the body and making it an object. Ahmed (2006) points out that disorientation can be the result of this process. By *becoming an object*, Ahmed (2006) refers to the weakening of the body's involvement with the world or the possibility of acting upon the space, which 'causes the

body to collapse, and to become an object alongside other objects' (Ahmed, 2006, p. 159). After the sensorial collapse, awareness of the non-hierarchical and mutually affective relationship between body and environment arises. This results from the implementation of 'deviating sensory strategies' (Fox, 2019, p. 71) to explore the space, which Albertine Fox (2019) understands as forming a process of queering in the analysis of the work *Shadows* (2013) by Chantal Akerman.

In summary, cruising the dark corridor is a temporally disorientating experience that makes the body lose its grounding when moving towards the encounter with projection whilst sharing the space with strangers (feelings, people, objects). Therefore, the dark corridor functions as a disorientation device that makes the body 'collapse' when facing the unfamiliar, and in this process of collapsing, bodies may try to find strategies for re-orientation or embrace disorientation as a moment of productive disruption. What is to be done in the absence or excess of light? What strategies does our body attempt to apply? Consequently, it is important to define *cruising* as a key term. Cruising can facilitate a queer phenomenological comprehension of experiencing the transition between spaces with different luminous conditions in which I tried to find in my body, and in relation to other people's bodies, a mode to re-orientate the experience in the gallery. In transitioning, cruising adds spatial meanings regarding the pivotal role of desire in this process of moving towards an unknown object. In the literature of queer studies, cruising is mostly understood as involving a 'significant amount of loitering, waiting and drifting activities (or, perhaps, non-activities) that may ultimately lead nowhere' (Davis, 2018, p. 74).

Considered by Glyn Davis (2018) as a typically solitary activity, cruising has a primarily historical connection with practices of alternative, countercultural, and habitual but not necessarily planned urban exploration among gay men, which resonates in the studies of scholars such as David Getsy (2008), Tim Dean (2009), Gary Needham (2015), and Jonathan

Cane (2019). In mainstream terms, cruising is understood as sex-orientated encounters between gay men in public spaces such as parks or toilets that are well known for the existence of these activities, where desires and non-normative relationalities are brought to the surface. In this direction, Getsy (2008) explores cruising as a fleeting mode of relationality that, although available for opposite-sex couples, has been largely built on same-sex connections and other excluded sexualities who have been marginalised and suppressed in expressing desires and affection in public spaces. This relationality is brought to the surface discreetly through what Getsy (2008) calls ‘low-intensity messages’ (Getsy, 2008, p. 17) between bodies led by mutual queer recognition, avoiding undesired presences to be aware of the movements that emerge in the process of cruising, which occurs in the seconds of exchanging glances whilst navigating streets. Jonathan Cane (2019) highlights cruising as a mechanism that lies on ‘a potential for radical generosity towards the world’ (Cane, 2019, p. 17).

The authors mentioned in the previous paragraph understand cruising as a practice that expands beyond a monolithic sex-drive and goal-orientated endeavour. Instead, cruising can be approached as a non-linear, non-programmatic, and non-straight temporal development towards a non-productive goal (Cane, 2019). Jonathan Cane (2019) states that it is formed by the construction of spaces founded by the reconfiguring of pre-existent spaces, a type of ruin where unexpected encounters can emerge, whilst Glyn Davis (2018) understands cruising as a form of gathering that comprises reading practices between bodies that act in the space to challenge conventional modes of navigating the production of knowledge in the world. Denise Bullock (2004) indicates that cruising lies beyond impersonal and fleeting encounters as it is comprised of an ‘emotional investment’ (Bullock, 2004, p. 5) that is extended in time ahead of the attempt to cruise, in the process of exchanging the ‘low-intensity messages’ (Getsy, 2008, p.17) and in the consequent feedback from these actions.

Tim Dean (2009) describes cruising as a way of life, highlighting the process of sharing pleasures and affects with strangers in this activity and approaching cruising as openness to alterity, vulnerability, and trust during intimate encounters, a relational ethic that acts as a ‘public form of seduction’ (Dean, 2009, p. 177). Dean (2009) refers to an idea of cruising that, as a way of life, can tolerate side by side the existence of aimlessness and the orientation of affects towards the other (mostly a stranger) without necessarily having a specific object of desire. The role of the stranger in the movement of cruising remains Dean’s (2009) central question, particularly because this element stimulates fear and desire. In this discussion, David Getsy (2008) provides a more fluid understanding of cruising:

At the cruising ground or in the cruising moment, the activity can be either telic (that is, having a specific goal as endpoint, such as love or connection) or paratelic (having process and its continuation be the aim). All in all, cruising itself can be understood as a synecdoche of a larger, life-long process of looking for, finding, losing, and looking again for the intersubjective connections, be they based in eroticism, in identification with a community, in love, or in comradeship. (Getsy, 2008, p. 18)

Pertaining to this conceptual expansion, Gary Needham (2015) describes cruising ‘as a mode of exposing and challenging the pleasures and politics of looking’ (Needham, 2015, p. 47). Needham (2015) uses ‘another way of looking’ (Needham, 2015, p. 47) as a strategy to describe modes of engagement with ‘film, art and popular culture’ (Needham, 2015, p. 47) that are consistently nurtured within gay culture, despite being accessible to approaches that lean towards a queer and less stabilising view of sexuality. Furthermore, Needham (2015) emphasises the fleeting temporality of cruising as a potent strategy to destabilise expectations regarding desire whilst cruising, allowing other modes of affectivity and relationality to approach the body, including the feelings of fearfulness explored by Tim Dean (2009).

Needham (2015) brings an important contribution to this chapter as he elaborates the question: ‘(...) are we being cruised by these works?’ (Needham, 2015, p. 48). Is it possible



for artworks to cruise? In the process of encountering projective moving image art in galleries, are we exposing affects that can be reciprocal according to the content exhibited? Do some specific contents and spatial settings provide us with mutual affects that work on re-orientating experiences and rescuing us from disorientated moments? Whether it leads to sexual activities or stops with the encounter of bodies, spatial darkness has always been the most productive environment for cruising to emerge. Tim Dean (2009, p.175) remembers that in darkness we need to trust strangers, particularly because of the openness that darkness permits and the vulnerability that emerges from this situation. For instance, the darkroom, according to Martin J. Goessl (2017), is a space where ‘non-universal or non-formal codes can be introduced’ (Goessl, 2017, pp. 2-3), so queer strategies are thus created specifically at the moment our body becomes an object amongst others in different circumstances.

In this regard, what does it mean to cruise the corridor amidst the darkness in these case studies? What are some of the queer affects that can emerge in the process of transitioning from brightness to darkness, either in the presence of or towards the encounter with the *strange*? In the following pages, I first present the affective-orientated descriptions of *SaFO5* (2019) and *No history in a room filled with people with funny names 5* (2019). I explore the itinerary of cruising the dark corridor, demonstrating that what can be experienced in these moments is unpredictable, as will be noted by the different approaches that the case studies implement when using the fluidity of brightness and darkness as an element of disorientation.

Subsequently, I present a combined analysis of the case studies, beginning with a discussion of the telic and paratelic facets of desire in cruising, searching and/or finding the artworks. Following this, I explore the artworks from three topics: *Facing the darkness*, where I analyse the disorientating moment of first seeing the darkness of the corridor and cruising this space; *Encounters on the other side*, discussing the queer affects emerging from

the extension of disorientation after cruising the corridor; and *Gazing towards the light, glancing around the gallery*, where I investigate the process of kinaesthetic empathy towards the moving images and their potential collective developments within the gallery. I argue that whilst cruising the dark corridor the body becomes an object, in queer phenomenological terms, and turns its direction towards queer affective strategies to navigate the space. This happens because the habitual or normative strategies that we use to navigate the space outside in the world are no longer efficient in trying to find a new ground for support and re-orientation in the gallery. In the aftermath of cruising the dark corridor, a re-orientation can appear due to the emergence of mutual affects between the body and the projected moving images.

## **2.2. *SaFO5* (2019), by Charlotte Prodger**

It is summer in Venice and the sun expands all over this room, with its large, open entrance, where I see a river reflecting all the natural light that reaches the floor that I am standing on, raising heat that makes some sweat run over my body after the walk I have just undertaken. The time passes slowly as I wait for the scheduled screening of the film to start, and when I am called to go in, I realise that others have also been waiting for this moment. One of the gallery staff hands out some leaflets and, holding a flashlight, leads us into another room through a dark corridor that agitates me because of the confrontation with the other bodies so close to mine; meanwhile, I read the leaflet.

Revelations

Fahrenheit

NE-SW

X

Tunnels

Could some of these words be suggesting a sort of geographical location? Is there any relationship with Venice? Are we in the precise space where the artist wants us to be? I feel slightly irritated while my breathing speeds up because of the execution of this highly orientated journey, where the flashlight seems not to open space for my body to move forward as we all maintain a similar pace before we enter the next room. But my breathing also feels impeded by the possibility of not having moments alone with the film and, instead, having to maintain my body close to others throughout the entire journey in this increasingly dark corridor. In this narrow space, our bodies get closer and closer as if we are trespassing in the darkness together. In the imminence of collectively discovering where that corridor leads to, a subtle and rapidly constrained laugh escapes from my lips, and my darting eyes fleetingly encounter those of the other bodies, before my head dips, avoiding further confrontation. I laugh because of an uncomfortable lack of intimacy with these people. How can I enjoy this journey beside strangers? This virtually mandatory collective walk creates, on the surface of my skin, signs of discomfort, and a sort of imaginary personal space arises as I attempt to walk at my own pace, without being interrupted by the other people moving along with me, until I realise that I cannot walk without having to look at the bodies beside me if I want to keep moving. My introvert being appears through the tightening muscles in my arms that quickly spread to my torso to deal with the proximity of others.

We all gather at the end of the corridor, turn to the left, and my body seems to lose balance amidst a darkness that takes away from me any sense of location. My legs are paralysed, the air I breathe seems to immediately stop its route through my throat, and my

eyeballs are touched by a darkness as if I have involuntarily closed my eyelids, even though my eyes are wide open and my pupils have not located any sign of light. I promptly stop moving while I listen to the sound of different languages moving within my ears after the silent journey through the corridor. I recognise the small point of brightness emanating from the flashlight as a dislocated point of light that does not help me to move forward. I immediately raise my arms in an attempt to reach out with my hands and feel through my skin some point of equilibrium in the space, afraid of falling or hitting my body on a wall that I do not even know exists in this room. I perceive my body suspended in the darkness and still afraid of making any movement as I am unable to see where I am heading, and my hands turn out to be the only possibility for exploring my surroundings and stabilising me in this blind gaze.

I feel at risk as my choices of movement are entirely relegated to the orientation given by a small, inefficient and unstable source of light attempting to cover the room and facilitate my navigation in the space. While paralysed, sparks of light seem to stick to the surface of my eyes; they have followed me since the bright entrance into the gallery and are now covering my field of vision, acting as the only possible way to access affective orientation beyond the darkness, as I recall my childhood experiences of lying down on the floor, with my eyes closed, while still targeting the Amazonian sunny sky and the 30 degree heat. My pupils slowly open, adjusting to the new lighting conditions and, while motionless, I start to see what an escaping alternative can be. I walk in the darkness, still moving my hands around as if touching some invisible materiality that helps me to orientate my movements when I see a long bench a few steps in front of me which is promptly occupied by some of the other bodies in the gallery. I identify, also, a dark image projected on the wall far away from the end of the corridor, and I occupy a space sitting on the floor.

My eyes are still adjusting to the environment; I can now see the shapes of other

people and the projection screening a countdown that has, by now, reached 43 seconds, while another source of light allows me to recognise the three-dimensional aspects of the room. In this isolated and comfortable position on the floor, the distress of moving through the corridor and abruptly facing the darkness is replaced by the excitement of my eyes retaking control of the situation, following their previous inability to lead my body. While I sit and wait, my eyes move around this new darkness as if externalising the feeling of impatience that moves through my whole body. In the film, I am following someone's journey to unknown places. I know the artist's voice is narrating these affective movements, but I am not sure if this is about her own life, and I do not know what to look for in the narrative. I remember the landscape of Venice when I see the lions, a symbol of this city; maybe that is the exact place where this film should be.

The blustering sounds that follow the scene and the screening of 'Revelation' is a sort of change of direction. The snow on the ground and the feet exploring it is projected as an astonishing landscape and the uncannily familiar environment takes me back to Scotland. Meanwhile, the subsequent constant changes of brightness through the different projected images once again cause distress for my eyes, creating a primary source of discomfort while I adjust to the unstable luminance, even though I am stable on the floor and have no reason to move. At some point, a mosquito seems to orbit around my head, approaching and retreating, flying as if to invade my ears, a result of the dizzying sound I can hear emanating from the moving images. This irritating sound that we are all trying to get rid of by just waving our hands in the air keeps going and it is not up to me to control the timing of this tinnitus.

Narratives of confidentiality intercept these sounds as an intimate diary is being read out aloud. At the beginning, 'I'm praying to wake up as a boy'. Is it about transition, everything I have experienced up until this point? The light changes in the gallery, the darkness comes through, and more lights constantly invade my vision while there is a

questioning sexuality forming. It is '1984', there is a 'blowjob', and it happened in 'Aberdeen'. This is the only information I have to place the narrative somewhere. Is the narrator searching for someone in these landscapes that I can see? Is this a sexual journey to find love? A journey to find oneself? Is SaFO5 the specific location to go to? I feel like even though I am sitting on the floor, my body keeps being guided on an expedition through the projections, as if SaFO5 is a code needed to reveal someone's identity. SaFO5 seems to be the point where the transitory arrives at the possible stability of the self or a finding of stability through the encounter with the also mutating other.

In the film, it sounds like a queer body is travelling around and queer encounters are being formed, which greatly resonates with my own journey. I feel as if my stationary body is being injected in a flow of thought that is recreating my own biography in relation to these scenes relating to the transit of identities. There are many places to go, many locations to adjust to, and the search for a point to get comfortable in is inevitable. From an aerial view or on the road, 'between her legs', through the lion in the landscape, or the lion's image etched on the glass, the narrator finds a way to point out the search for the subject. She knows the place to go, and the time it takes to get there, but, in my mind, I see that whatever is being searched for is also moving away along with her, fading away from the possibility of any encounter. In the gallery, I dismiss further connections with the other people around me as the encounter with the projected moving image leaves me motionless but bound to that narrative as if I have discovered a belonging to the same 'crossing borders' struggle, and what may be found next.

**2.3. *No history in a room filled with people with funny names 5* (2019), by Korakrit Arunanondchai and Alex Gvojic**

While walking around the gallery, I can hear some distant sounds and I head towards a sort of enclosed chamber among the other artworks I can see in this space. Darkness comes into my view abruptly at the entrance to this corridor, and I quickly move forward trying to reach the bright object I can see a few metres away. It feels like it was an ominous decision to place a stuffed toy (a rabbit to be specific) at the end of this corridor and the strangeness of this encounter pulls my body towards and away from this object, as if it is trying to avoid confrontation with this point of light while my eyes are glued to the luminance of the toy as the only way of finding a way out of the dark corridor. I turn to the left and the whiteness of my eyes is coloured, along with my skin, while I fleetingly tremble and my eyelids move down, constraining my sight as if protecting me from the attack of the three bright and colourful projections I can see on screens located not far from me. Green beams of light move on the ceiling while I watch unquiet people standing while others are sitting comfortably on the floor or lying down on some cushions in front of the projections.

I sit down close to the back wall as an attempt to maintain a distance and I notice by my side a different set of plants that reveal themselves to be the place from which the green lights are derived; this, along with the brightness of the projection, creates an unsettling environment for the other bodies in the gallery. My eyes continuously move from one side to another, attempting to grasp any new information from what I can see in front of me, but my body becomes unsteady, and my arms restlessly hold my weight while I sit on the floor because none of the three projected films makes sense and I am not able to relax while moving between images. Focusing on the films is the hardest work here as people continue to stand in front of me and block one or another projection while the green lights intercept the surface of the images. As I continue to search for a place to sit and watch the films, the ambience infects my body, highlighting the ambivalent presence of these other people, being

both in the space and visually merging with the projection because their dark silhouettes that look like a moving shadow interrupt my engagement with the projections. They seem to put me in connection with my nightclub experiences as I listen to this deafening and dramatic sound that moves all over the room.

There is too much light. The green one continues to move around and the dramatic sound that plays on quickly shifts my affective relation from a dystopian nightclub atmosphere to a feeling of intimidating tension as I watch the three projections and see spooky images of children in a forest. These children pull me back from the dark surroundings to the group of flat surfaces in front of me upon which the moving images are projected. I finally find a place to lie down on one of the cushions and the short distance from the projections only increases the sense of dominance that fleetingly paralyses my body while I attempt to gaze at the films, motionless and fearfully experiencing the excessive brightness to which I am being exposed. The children in one of the projected films look like zombies, a dark substance spreading from their mouths down to their jaws. I shiver on seeing that image, frightened due to the children's behaviour, and my arms and legs are paralysed as if the rigidness that overcomes them prevents the rest of my body from moving away from the light of the projections that keep me mesmerized on seeing the colourful images of what looks like a performative ritual.

A dystopian atmosphere is restored. A place in which I would have no wish to be. Who are these children? In the projected films they look like they are suffering, looking ahead and, perhaps, waiting for redemption. I cannot make sense of the films as I shift from one to another, seeing only fragmented images that reveal elements that look disconnected, and I consequently visually reach for the darkly lit space surrounding me in an attempt to rescue any possible relation with them. At some point, images of the same eye appear in all three projections, covered by a flashing light, the same green that also fills the room, a



woman appears all painted in green, opens her mouth and reveals a flashing interior. The confusion of seeing such ominous elements only increases my compulsion to look around, and the time taken to scan one image increases my anxiety and frustration at not being able to engage with the others. It is impossible to embrace a panoramic view because of the sorts of disturbing images that pull me away from one of the projections from time to time, as if by deviating my gaze, I will be rescued, for example, by some tender images of elderly people in the other projections. While I struggle with the sensorial overlap of the images, the other visitors seem to follow the same chaotic engagement that all these images are offering me. Most of the others do not stay here too long, apart from those who are lying on the cushions. From one of the films, I suddenly hear a loud:

Do you believe in such a place?

It is a place of confusion. Do I believe in the place where these children are? Naga is the green woman who lives in the cave, says the voice-over, and with her body covered in green paint, she seems to dance in one of the three films. I simultaneously look up at the green beams of light, and my head moves quickly to find in these lasers rescue from the sensation of emptiness that seems to open up the inside of my body to the darkness that surrounds me. I look up because any of my attempts to connect with the images fail to address the tiresome and disintegrated nature of these three projections, which I experience like a daydream that moves away from me while holding me in the same place. Is the cave a place for redemption? Am I in the cave? In the films, television news clips reveal the case of the children trapped in a cave in Thailand, the horror and despair of their parents, and that of an entire country. I feel a tender sensation replacing the fear as I now become aware that the children rather than acting scared, as I perceived them, were terrified by the darkness of the

cave and the suffocating idea of possibly never leaving that place. In the midst of seeing such a story, the knowledge of the children's suffering pulls my eyes and attention back to the projections because the sensorial emptiness that had opened inside of me because I could not connect with anything surrounding me is now a space for relating to the experiences of the children.

While the images continue to rapidly change, and a rabbit appears in one of the films, I recall the unsettling encounter with the stuffed toy at the very end of the dark corridor, an encounter that, at this moment, resonates more as a tender welcoming amidst the chaos of the installation. My body seems to relax while my breathing is soothed and my head drops heavily onto the cushion, relieved from the unsettling movements undertaken until now, and somehow mixed with the afterglow of the previous awkwardness experienced within the sphere of excess in this space. It could be a nightclub, but is it a cave? In the aftermath of the distress that has been running through my body, I listen to Whitney Houston and Mariah Carey singing a pop song as a beacon of hope, reflecting the ecstasy and relief at witnessing the rescue of the children in this almost Hollywood-like happy ending to the story, which lasts just until the children disappear from my view and, once again, an image of despair starts to reverberate. As the film disintegrates into darkness, the other visitors get up and the movement in the gallery returns. I am not sure if I was just unaware of my surroundings or if the lack of images in the projections at this point has created this shift in my perception.

From fearfulness to redemption, like a fantasy in the darkness, I guess the life and death exposed here recreated a cycle of vulnerability as I watched these films. There is a world to live in, and there are people who occupy it somehow, and who are filled with histories. Do I pay attention to someone else's history, though? *Emptiness*, *whispering*, *the world*, and *promises* are words that stick in my mind as I leave the space with an emptiness that increases when seeing again the illuminated bunny in the corridor. Life turns out to be

both a horror show and a party, existing between light and darkness; it is abandonment, just like the empty spaces I saw in the films. In the end, it is all an uncanny and morbid encounter.

#### **2.4. Transits of light: cruising the dark corridor**

*Darkness comes into my view by surprise.* This statement illustrates the initial moment of cruising the dark corridor structured at the entrance of the artworks described in the previous pages. Within the dark corridor, a suspension of the senses orientated my body to engage with attitudes that overcame my usual modes of spatial exploration, evidencing Don Handelman's (2005) assertion that '[...] the very sensuousness of darkness drives people to relate differently, perhaps radically so, to space, time and others' (Handelman, 2005, p. 249). Therefore, the interplay of brightness and darkness that emerged before, during, and after cruising the corridor was understood as an element that potentially creates disorientation, resulting in the emergence of queer affects as a strategy to navigate the gallery towards the encounter with projection.

As demonstrated by the affective description of the artworks, the dark corridor installed in the gallery can have different reasons for existence. Through cruising this transitory space, I assumed it was installed as a curatorial choice for a variety of practical reasons. Most evidently, the corridor could facilitate the isolation of the environment in which moving images were located, consequently darkening the room and turning projection into a light that orientated the bodies entering the space. This led to different modes of engagement with that space, concerning the temporality of cruising, with whom I was cruising, and what existed on the other side of the corridor. Amidst the darkness, with the absence of projection, the corridor seemed to provide fruitful engagements with queer affects

potentially related to the kinaesthetic engagements explored by Lindner (2018) and evidencing how ‘Darkness drives us inward, opening into other dimensions of existence’ (Handelman, 2005, p. 254). As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter when referring to the works of Pipilotti Rist and Rachel Maclean, the corridor is not an uncommon feature in moving image installations.

Some of the most exemplary materialisations of this element are probably the corridors built by Bruce Nauman, which, according to Chris Salter (2010, p. 11) begin with *Performance Corridor* in 1969 at the Nicholas Wilder Gallery in Los Angeles. In these corridors, Nauman installed a closed-circuit camera at the entrance and a monitor at the end, which was fed by a live inverted image of the visitor that had entered the space. The closer the visitor’s body came to the monitor, the smaller it appeared on the video, almost disappearing in size whilst walking towards its image. Consequently, Salter (2010) understands that by ‘Breaking with the static reception of the artwork via the live camera, Nauman set out to embed and implicate the viewers in the experience of the artwork, whilst constructing a *disorienting* [emphasis added] unease and complicity between them and the space they inhabited’ (Salter, 2010, p. 11). Bruce Nauman’s *Live/Taped Video Corridor* (1970) is responsible for what Salter (2009, p. 11) calls one of the most quoted pieces of criticism in the history of video art, in which Margaret Morse (1990) declares: ‘To me it was as if my body had come unglued from my image, as if the ground of my *orientation* [emphasis added] in space were pulled out from under me’ (Morse, 1990, p.153).

The dark corridor is also a theme in the writing of Erika Balsom (2013), who mentions the exhibition *Le Mouvement des Images* (2006) held at the Centre Pompidou in Paris. Balsom (2013) describes the settings of the exhibition as ‘... focused on a central corridor of thirteen digital projections of works by Marcel Broodthaers, Joseph Cornell, Marcel Duchamp, Fernand Léger, Bruce Nauman, and others, which confronted the viewer in

a rapid succession to produce a dazzling and *disorienting* [emphasis added] experience’ (Balsom, 2013, p.44). The writings of Morse (1990), Salter (2010), and Balsom (2013) describe the experience of cruising the corridor as intensely disorientating, despite conveying different approaches. On the one hand, Morse (1990) and Salter (2010) identify a fully affective potential in the act of cruising Nauman’s corridor, as it results in a suspension of senses and consequent destabilisation of habitual spatial practices that are directly related to the queer affects discussed in this thesis. Conversely, Balsom (2013, p.43) sees the existence of the corridor in the mentioned exhibition as involving a distracting viewing experience that only corroborates the spectacle-museum that she claims, citing Rosalind Krauss (1990), is so prominent in a late-capitalist era. According to Balsom (2013), ‘In this new museum, the projected image provides a monumental, relatively cheap way of delivering exhibitions with vast appeal. It can fill the large, cavernous spaces of newly renovated museums and offer audiences an immersive experience’ (Balsom, 2013, p. 43).

Balsom (2013) claims that in *Le Mouvement des Images* (2006) ‘No attention was given to the change of format and/or exhibition situation, let alone the fact that the work was installed in a crowded manner in a transitory space’ (Balsom, 2013, p. 45). In these cases, the experience of disorientation emerges in the corridor, either as part of the fundamental settings of an artwork, as in Nauman’s installation, or as a result of curatorial choices, demonstrated by the curator Philippe-Alain Michaud’s self-declared attempt to resurrect the figure of the *flâneur* in art spaces through the corridor installed in *Le Mouvement des Images* (2006) (Balsom, 2013, pp. 44-45). In agreement with Morse’s (1990) and Salter’s (2010) analyses, I approach these transitory spaces as imbued with a potential for disorientation with the consequent generation of queer affects, even if in some cases they are the result of curatorial work. Curatorial choices are not arbitrary acts of the curator, and these spatial arrangements

are usually decided through negotiations with the artists<sup>27</sup>.

In *SaFO5*<sup>28</sup> (2019), for example, the corridor installed generated a disorientating potential for the emergence of an affective queerness that the screening in a cinema theatre could not provide me with. This became clear when I re-watched Charlotte Prodger's film in the Glasgow Film Theatre only a few months later in 2019. However, I do not intend to frame the cinema theatre as a space where disorientation and queer affects cannot emerge. Instead, I want to indicate that the sort of darkness in the space I first experienced in this chapter's case studies displayed a deeper connection with the non-normative settings and fluidity between freedom and suspension of senses that appeared in the gallery. In that regard, Bruce Isaacs (2021) remembers that 'a film is part of that space in which it was first experienced, and that subsequent viewings are entangled in an act of remembering' (Isaacs, 2021, p. 1). Therefore, remembering the disorientating experience of encountering *SaFO5* (2019) in the gallery established a level of disappointment when the queer affects that emerged in the dark corridor did not take place in the cinema theatre.

To approach the experience of the corridor through the concepts of cruising, it is important to reiterate this contextual element: the fact that I first encountered both Charlotte Prodger's and Korakrit Arunanondchai and Alex Gvojic's works whilst visiting the 58<sup>th</sup> International Art Exhibition *La Biennale di Venezia* in the summer of 2019 in Venice, Italy. In the first instance, this may appear a piece of irrelevant information; however, this contextualisation reveals a crucial relationship between searching and encountering that emerges between desire and the process of cruising. A fundamental difference existed when first encountering the two case studies described: the existence of a previous desire to experience them, thus resulting in different affective responses to the artworks and to the

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<sup>27</sup> In the text 'Infinite conversations', part of the book *Ways of Curating* (2014), Hans Ulrich Obrist approaches the role of conversations with artists, specially long ones, as a crucial part of the work of curating.

<sup>28</sup> *SaFO5* (2019) was installed at the *Arsenale Docks* in Venice (Italy), and curated by Linsey Young. The work is composed of a single-screen projection on one of the walls of the darkly-lit space where a bench is positioned close to the opposite wall.

temporal development of cruising the dark corridor. The act of cruising *SaFO5* (2019) undoubtedly goes back to a moment of solitarily wandering through the narrow streets and cruising the small bridges of Venice whilst looking for the site where the work was installed. During this state of wandering, I was accompanied by a sun that made me perspire in a way I had never done in Scotland, despite those feelings being part of a bodily sensation and aesthetic for a considerable part of my life growing up in the humidity of the Brazilian Amazon. Thus, this experience took me back to a familiar place and truly evoked a desire to encounter Prodger's work.

In this context, I recount Ahmed's (2006, p. 56) exploration of bodies' sedimentation, through which she claims that 'what bodies "tend to do" are effects of histories rather than being "originary"' (Ahmed, 2006, p. 56), a perspective similarly employed by Lindner (2018) when adopting 'a model of corporeal sedimentation, where bodily experiences and actions shape and are shaped by what we experience and how we act' (Lindner, 2018, p. 84). By implementing this approach throughout this thesis, it is possible to understand the wandering in the city of Venice as shaped by motivation and desire specifically to find and open myself to the encounter with Prodger's work. This desire was related to previous affective interactions with Charlotte Prodger's films, more specifically in my visit to the installation of *Bridgit* (2016) at the Tate Britain during the Turner Prize exhibition in 2018. Encountering *Bridgit* (2016) and the fleeting memories I could recover were possibly the primary motivation for my decision to cross the frontiers of the British Isles and journey to Italy. More specifically, what stayed with me from this film were the images of rural Scotland and the necessary fluid adjustment resulting from moving between places that Prodger portrayed.

I moved towards *SaFO5* (2019) in search of that movement, as for me that mobile orientation was related specifically to the state of suspension with which moving around countries and languages provided me. Hence, the encounter with *SaFO5* (2019) depicted the

telic characteristic of cruising moments described by David Getsy (2008, p. 18) as the existence of specific desires, orientated, for instance, towards love, sex, community building, or intersubjective connections. This demonstrates how the act of cruising in *SaFO5* (2019) began before the actual encounter with the artwork. Although I had not previously watched the film, cruising towards Prodger's installation was shaped by a specific aim since it was based on the expectation of finding relatively familiar aspects of the moving image content and the potential existence of projections in the gallery that I was searching for around Venice. The rise of these expectations played a crucial role in the emergence of disorientated moments when finding an unexpected dark corridor and what happened after cruising it, as will later be explored.

However, the act of cruising as understood by Getsy (2008, p.18) can have another facet, this being a paratelic characteristic that orientates the experience towards aimless wanderings. In this situation, what emerges is a process of continuously walking around and opening yourself to surprising encounters that may 'lead nowhere' (Davis, 2018, p. 74) or re-orientate you towards a specific goal. This was the case in my encounter with *No history in a room filled with people with funny names 5*<sup>29</sup> (2019) by Kokakrit Arunanondchai and Alex Gvojic. Whilst I purposefully searched for *SaFO5* (2019) around the city of Venice, my encounter with Arunanondchai and Gvojic's work was the result of wandering through the galleries of the *Arsenale*<sup>30</sup>. The encounter with the dark corridor in *No history in a room filled*

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<sup>29</sup> *No history in a room filled with people with funny names 5* (2019) was part of the group show *May You Live in interesting times*, curated by Ralph Rugph. In one of the galleries of the *Arsenale* in Venice, this work was installed in a chamber that isolated the installation from the artworks around the same space. The work installed in this darkly lit chamber was composed of three large projections on screens located in one of the walls, green beams of light emanating from the opposite wall, some cushions positioned in front of the projections and objects located in the space (such as plush toys).

<sup>30</sup> The *Arsenale* is one of the spaces in which the International Art Exhibition *La Biennale di Venezia* is biannually installed in the city of Venice, Italy. On the occasion of the 2019 Venice Biennale, the *Arsenale* was comprised of the group show titled *May You Live in Interesting Times*, curated by Ralph Rugph, and the national pavilions of Italy, Albania, Argentina, Chile, the People's Republic of China, Croatia, the United Arab Emirates, the Philippines, Georgia, Indonesia, Ireland, the Republic of Kosovo, Latvia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Malta, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, the Republic of Slovenia, the Republic of South Africa, Tunisia and Turkey. Source: [www.labiennale.org](http://www.labiennale.org).



*with people with funny names 5* (2019) was initially led by the sound I could hear from outside the enclosed chamber made of wooden walls where the work was installed, which was placed in one of the *Arsenale's* galleries as a mysterious room amongst several other artworks. The low-frequency sound initially acted as a sensory magnet that brought me close to the corridor and triggered a desire to cruise towards the unknown environment on the other side of the corridor. Therefore, another level of cruising emerged here when sound materialised the low-intensity messages described by Getsy (2008), in a process in which only a few indications of the possibility of an affective encounter with the moving images can occur.

Hence, cruising towards these artworks took place in the speculation emerging from the process of looking for something, in which the relationship between expectation and desire facilitated the rise of disorientating moments when these two elements were not matched in the journey. The transitory characteristics of the dark corridor seem to be responsible for the mismatch of expectations and desires because the corridor's existence was unexpected, creating a space for suspension that enlarged the temporal experience before the encounter with the moving images. Whilst moving throughout the darkness of the corridor, my body seemed anxious to seek the comfort that the brightness of projection could bring.

#### **2.4.1. Facing the darkness**

The process of spatial transition and subsequent destabilisation of my body started at the moment of facing the corridor's darkness and not knowing where to go. What made the experience sensorily traumatic was the fact that before cruising I found myself engulfed in a brightly illuminated environment. The outside of the gallery, in the case of *SaFO5* (2019),

and the outside of the chamber in *No history in a room filled with people with funny names* 5 (2019) were both contaminated by brightness, which Gernot Bohme (2014, p. 65) and Nolen Gertz (2006, p. 48) state is the most fundamental aspect of light. At the moment preceding the entrance into the dark corridor, brightness structured the experience of light as a dispersed visual experience, where the source of illumination could not be easily identified. Instead, it was experienced as what both Giuliana Bruno (2014, p. 08) and Bohme (2014, p. 72) call an atmospheric element. According to Bohme (2014, p. 66), brightness allows visual manifestation by helping us to be orientated in the space, which means enhancing the recognition of spatial boundaries and distances, leading to freedom of movement and potential spatial investigation with the eyes.

However, in both case studies in this chapter, the first encounter with the darkcorridor was responsible for destabilising the freedom of movement that brightness presumably places in our bodies on different levels. The contact with these artworks demonstrates how the experience of light as brightness cannot be understood only as freedom of movement, because it can be a means of improving the conformity and standardisation of experiencing the world solely through the eyes. Spaces such as these dark corridors in the galleries are inherently incomplete, in the sense that they only exist as experiences if understood as part of a relational and fleeting transition that takes our body to another place, and this is the moment in which queer affects start to emerge.

I want to reiterate the idea of kinaesthesia as a mode of relationality with something else (feelings, people, objects) that is, according to Zoe Shacklock (2019, pp. 5-6), crucial to understanding the relationship with the surroundings in terms of movement, prompting a potential for the emergence of queerness. This kinaesthetic relationality, or what Lindner (2018, p. 51) calls a kinaesthetic empathy, between my body and the surroundings during the act of cruising exposed how the binarism of freedom/captivity was reductionist if aiming to

understand the case studies' cruising experience. This happened due to the transitory aspect of the artwork's instalment. Queerness here did not exist in the discrete configurations of brightness (supposedly liberating) and darkness, but in the fleeting, shocking, and disorientating experience that emerges between them, and more powerfully, in the metaphorical collapsing of bodies that the darkness provided.

Therefore, entering the dark corridor initially queers any expectation for desired encounters with familiar sources of pleasure. Returning to Needham (2015), in the process of cruising, these unstable moments open up the possibility for different modes of affectivity and relationality to proximate our bodies. At that moment, as explored in the case studies' affective descriptions, facing the darkness of the corridor fleetingly interrupted the process of moving towards the artworks and disrupted the kinaesthetic momentum before an abruptly different mode of engagement could take over my body. I expected to leave the diffused brightness of the gallery's external area to enter a space where the illumination of projection could continue the visual exploration I had been used to until that point. Instead, what I faced were narrow dark spaces with which I should kinaesthetically engage to move my body to another position, clearly unsure of what I might find. As previously mentioned, this disruption was built upon expectations created concerning the possibility of encountering projected moving images in these spaces, either via previous affective engagements with the work of Charlotte Prodger or, in the case of Arunanondchai and Gvojic, the distant sounds that appeared in the process of wandering the *Arsenale* and that served as indications of the possibility of the presence of moving images. It was the fleeting disorientation of facing the corridor's dark entrance that first caused my body to collapse and that destabilised the presumable freedom of movement in the previously illuminated environment.

For instance, in *SafO5* (2019), this freedom of movement was initially disrupted by the hesitation of seeing the darkness and not knowing how to act, but most importantly,

because cruising the corridor was a journey mandatorily accompanied by a group of people and guided by someone who held a small source of light intended to act as an orientation device. On this occasion, the flashlight held by one of the gallery members who guided us throughout the corridor seemed to aim at illuminating the journey, in the sense of making the transition between spaces less visually traumatic. However, the outcome of this illuminating presence turned in the opposite direction. In Prodger's work, the process of cruising the corridor guided by a mobile light affected me much more as a form of a straightening line rather than an aid for the walking journey. As a process of orientation among the collapsing feelings whilst facing the darkness, this flashlight almost completely displaced my body's ability to move around freely. It prevented me from experiencing the corridor as a more powerful state of destabilisation through the darkness, even if at that moment my body felt more fearful of the collapsing than feeling the excitement of the possibility of moving spontaneously.



*Figure 09:* Charlotte Prodger, *SaFO5*, 2019. Illuminated area before entering the dark corridor. Photography: Cristiano Corte. Available from: <https://www.a-n.co.uk/news/> (Accessed: 24/11/2021).

The flashlight became a mechanism of orientation that indirectly exposed the normative aspects of light, as an element providing routes to take you straight to the point at which you should aim to be in the space, in opposition to the messiness that the darkness could instill in the body of those cruising the corridor. Therefore, the flashlight seemed to work on emulating and recovering, through low-intensity messages, the normative paths of wandering outside the gallery in daylight and attempting to avoid disorientation. Nevertheless, despite the straightening work of the flashlight, this same element acted to disrupt expectations regarding the gallery as a ‘space of freedom’ (Balsom, 2013, p. 50) of movement that ‘would facilitate an active engagement with the work’ (Elwes, 2015, p. 155), as is commonly explored in the literature around moving image installations (Knapstein, 2006; Nash, 2009; Cruz, 2011; Venturi, 2013). Erika Balsom (2013) and Catherine Elwes (2015) agree on the complexity surrounding this assertion by claiming that simply equating ‘physical stasis with regressive mystification and physical ambulation with criticality’ (Balsom, 2013, p. 51) is at least ‘absurdity’ (Elwes, 2015, p. 155). Consequently, Balsom (2013) argues that understanding the wandering of the spectator around the gallery and amongst multiple screens as equal to a ‘democratic freedom’ (Balsom, 2014, p. 57) is a ruse that masks its operation as a mode to enhance a controlling society where decentralisation is the expected configuration.

In the normalised expectation of freedom in the gallery, orientated journeys can materialise queerness through the work of maintaining bodies together whilst facing and quickly attempting to understand their affective particularities. As Ahmed (2006) reminds us, ‘it is important, for instance, that we avoid assuming that “deviation” is always on “the side” of the progressive. Indeed, if the compulsion to deviate from the straight line was to become “a line” in queer politics, this itself could have a straightening effect’ (Ahmed, 2006, p. 174). In dialogue with Ahmed (2006), I propose to advance Balsom’s (2013) contribution by

remembering that even though we can understand decentralisation as an expected contemporary force, one that can enhance social control, the disorientating effects of decentralising other social expectations can be an important tool to destabilise normalisations, including ones in art galleries, and to create affective spaces for bodies that do not find support in the current communal configurations of the world. The rigid binarism between centralisation and decentralisation does not seem to foster the exploration of affects that are engendered through the lives of queer people and its environmental resonances.

Whilst the process of decentralisation can be inefficient because it is already expected, it can improve coalitional affects that promote the fight and struggle for the possibility of all types of bodies to exist socially. For some bodies, the disorientating effects of decentralisation are at the core of their life experiences, and the emergent affects are mirrored in the art gallery. Thus, the problem does not reside in the presence of decentralising experiences and their disorientating effects, but in the assumption that bodily experiences are ruled by either centralising or decentralising forces. As the experience of Charlotte Prodger's work demonstrates, centralisation can sometimes be disorientating and vice-versa, exposing how these elements overlap in the world in different ways for different subjects.

Whilst, on the one hand, the flashlight prevents darkness from impacting the cruising moment more efficiently, on the other hand, it disorientates the modes in which unfamiliar bodies normally interact with one another in the gallery. In this case, the flashlight acted upon the bodies that cruised the dark corridor in an attempt to keep them together and embrace the queerness that being physically so close to one another could offer, leading to moments of kinaesthetic empathy (Lindner, 2018) and affective involvements with the bodies that shared the cruising moment. Following Balsom (2013) and Elwes (2015), this situation demonstrates how the assumption that the gallery is a space of elevated freedom is problematic. In the gallery, the flashlight worked simultaneously as a mechanism of orientation and

disorientation providing me with productive outcomes on both sides, which exposed the necessity to think of the relationship of wandering and absorption as increasingly complicated to be thought of in a binary perspective.

Therefore, this orientating object that illuminates the corridor through low-intensity messages of light turns out to be a straightening device that seems to compress the space around the bodies cruising the corridor. The outcome of this compression, which puts the bodies together acting as a group, is consequently a temporal dilatation of the cruising process. Moving beside other bodies in the narrow space of the corridor required more time to cruise because it was necessarily based on slow affective and kinaesthetic adjustments with the surroundings, and the slightly different modes of engagement with the space that these bodies brought to the experience based on ‘silent communication and elaborately choreographed movements between proximity and aloneness’ (Getsy, 2008, p. 16). For instance, walking through the corridor made me look more carefully around the darkly lit space, attempting to identify speeds of movement of the legs beside me to position my feet spatially and move forward, afraid I would injure someone else’s foot. In *SaFO5* (2010), despite a loss of freedom for being spatially and temporarily guided by the flashlight (resulting in a controlled journey), an important rise of affects only existed due to the queerness that the loss of freedom and the collective journey with other bodies provided.

Consequently, the *stranger*, the unknown body and atmosphere that approach, becomes another crucial concept to be explored in the experience with these artworks. I do not point to the category ‘stranger’ as a body or subjectivity that is seen as threatening. Instead, the stranger is characterised by a powerful and unfamiliar affective force that approaches the body and destabilises it to disorientate experiences towards the embracing of uncertainty. Tim Dean (2009) indicates that cruising ‘entails a remarkably hospitable disposition towards strangers (...) a distinctive ethic of openness to alterity and that (...) we

all, gay and nongay, have something to learn from this relational ethic' (Dean, 2009, p. 176), that highlights the sometimes strangeness of our surroundings and our strangeness informed by elements such as fear and desire. Furthermore, Dean (2009, p. 180) claims that cruising is a potent moment for the establishment of intimate contact with unfamiliar bodies, built in a more horizontal relationality that does not suppress the stranger's possibilities to act upon the space in their manner, which reverberates with the affective 'ethics of contact' (Dean, 2009, p. 204) that unfold in the gallery whilst encountering this chapter's case studies.

In *SaFO5* (2019) by Charlotte Prodger, the stranger was materialised through the bodies of the people moving along with me towards the opposite and unknown side of the dark corridor. Because the process of cruising in this artwork was based on a telic (Getsy, 2014) and goal-orientated experience, the distraction and requirement of unexpected engagement with the space and other bodies appeared to disrupt a concentrated self-exploration, deviating the aim of the journey: the potentially pleasurable, personal, and somewhat predictable encounter with projection and the moving images. Therefore, encountering the strangers beside me was another crucial moment of disorientation where the unfamiliar took me out of a centripetal activity, a concentration on myself and my body, and abruptly drew me towards a 'centrifugal openness' (Dean, 2009, p. 210), where the material presence of the other cruisers brought about all the vulnerabilities and affections that emerged from the sensorial clash between bodies.

However, a significantly different development occurred when cruising the dark corridor of *No history in a room filled with people with funny names 5* (2019). Whilst the experience of first facing the dark corridor of Charlotte Prodger's work was at some moments intensely orientated and controlled, the encounter with Arunanondchai and Gjovic's dark corridor was conversely led by freedom of movement and intuitive decisions. These two elements were crucially informed by the low-intensity sounds I could hear whilst wandering



outside the chamber where the work was installed, which located the process of cruising as starting amidst the brightness of the gallery that preceded the entrance of the corridor.

Consequently, locating the process of cruising in this precedent bright space results in understanding the telic and paratelic characteristics of cruising proposed by Getsy (2008) as a matter of temporal distance from the moment we decide to move towards an object of desire. The aimless aspect of paratelic movements can be understood as nothing more than a telic (goal-orientated) encounter and continuity led by an immediate, spontaneous, and unexpected confrontation that is built in a short distance of time to the moment of deciding to engage with a specific activity or to move towards a specific object. The encounters with this chapter's case studies exemplify this situation: On the one hand, I may have started the process of cruising towards Charlotte Prodger's work a few months before watching the film; on the other, the motivation to enter an unknown room, installed in the middle of one of the *Arsenale's* galleries to allocate Arunanondchai and Gvojic's work may have appeared only minutes before acting upon this desire.

If cruising in Arunanondchai and Gvojic's work started amidst brightness, the trauma of transitioning to darkness should appear as well. Nevertheless, the immediate trauma experienced whilst facing the corridor was moderately felt and less disorientating. This freedom of movement during the initial encounter and throughout the process of cruising the corridor resulted from the intuitive choice of moving towards a mysterious room, demonstrating a high level of self-directed exploration of the space that, according to Glyn Davis (2019, p. 75), is paramount to the process of cruising as a solitary activity. This situation turns the traumatic experience of transition into a perceptually safer process, extending the centripetal kinaesthetic movements evoked before facing the corridor.

I cruised the corridor of *No history in a room filled with people with funny names 5* (2019) alone and not mandatorily guided by forces around me, such as the flashlight and the

gallery staff in *SaFO5* (2019), even though the low-intensity sounds I heard worked as a suspended atmospheric orientation device. In this situation, two important aspects shaped the experience of moving towards the other room where I eventually encountered the projected moving images. First, cruising alone cannot be described in terms of the same stressful compression of space and gathering of bodies as previously explored in Prodger's corridor. Instead, because of being informed only by my kinaesthetic engagements, the experience led to a compression of time, a faster temporal development between the moment of facing the dark corridor and the moment of reaching the end of its physical space. It took me only a few seconds to make it to the endpoint.

This temporal compression had a direct connection with the second aspect that shapes the cruising moment in this artwork. I moved faster as I noticed a spot of light at the end of the dark corridor illuminating some object I could not immediately identify at a distance. Therefore, the act of cruising was led by my suspicions, the curiosity to see something I could not recognise and the consequent emergence of a desire to move and discover what lay at the end of the dark corridor. The spot of light turned out to be the main orientation device in the corridor, but beyond that, it took the shape of the strange force that placed in my body a desire to move throughout the space.

The first encounter with darkness in the corridor of *No history in a room filled with people with funny names 5* (2019) was therefore shaped by a level of freedom of movement, low-intensity sounds, a surprise encounter with the unexpected space, and curiosity directed towards the light at the end of the corridor. These four elements functioned as a method to expand orientation and increase a desire to cruise and explore the strangeness of the chamber located in the middle of an art gallery. The fact that freedom of movement existed shaped the choice to encounter the illuminated object, which I later found to be two plush rabbits, allowing my body to embrace an openness to the space around me and the strange force

materialised by the toys. Hence, the darkness encountered in this corridor acted as a mode to envelop the space and gave a crucial importance to the encounter with light at the end of the cruising journey.



*Figure 10: Korakrit Arunanondchai and Alex Gvojic, No history in a room filled with people with funny names 5, 2019. Plush toys located at the end of the dark corridor. Available from: <https://www.blindbild.com/> (Accessed: 24/11/2021).*

Darkness, in this case, helped to create an atmosphere where the movements of my body were shaped around the processes of sensorial collapsing, re-orientating my decisions towards the anxiety of walking in the direction of an unknown, inanimate object. This state of suspension and collapsing of the body that leads to disorientation, as understood by Ahmed (2006), is largely materialised by fleeting moments that can quickly change orientations around the space. In this disorientating process of cruising, the dark setting surrounding me pulled me forward, because again, engagement with the dark walls or the entrance of the corridor seemed to disappear amidst the curiosity that directed my eyes, leading to the weakening of the relationship of my body with the surroundings, as happened in the process

of *zooming in*, explored in Chapter One.

Therefore, the spot of light functioned as a mode to increase a level of kinaesthetic empathy towards the motionless objects (the plush toys) that curiously made me move, consequently suspending most of the affective relationship with the dark corridor and lessening the traumatic aspects of the light transition by enhancing the act of looking amidst the darkness, and more specifically towards the rabbits. This re-orientation of gazing has a close connection with the act of cruising as another way of looking (Needham, 2015, 47). In this place, the rabbits were the strange force destabilising how I walked in the corridor and were responsible for building up new modes of looking, as the process of cruising presumes.

In the corridor, looking towards the rabbits turned out to be a concentrated activity that challenged Needham's (2015, p. 53) assertions that cruising is mainly informed by fleeting moments, as he cites R. Bruce Brasell (1992) to defend the 'cruiser's glance as an alternative to the gaze'. Similar to the telic/paratelic relationship, the act of glancing or gazing can be described simply as a temporal and spatial distance from the moment we decide to invest and act upon a desire to move, leading to a more affectively sustained facet of cruising, as explored by Glyn Davis (2019, p. 75). During the cruising movement, my body seemed to detach from the environment to reach that specific goal of touching the illuminated object, and as a result, the desire turned out to be a force that was goal-orientated from that point onwards. The appearance of a specific aim here was only possible due to the initial drifting and openness to 'surprising encounters' (Tim, 2009, p. 210) whilst wandering around the *Arsenale's* galleries during the 2019 Venice Biennale.

However, what made me decide to move towards the bunnies and not turn around and leave the space when I faced the darkness of the corridor? Earlier I decided to use sentences such as 'I may have started' and 'I may have appeared' to contradict myself and highlight the inefficacy of attempting to locate the exact temporal moment in which these desires to cruise

took some form. The emergence of kinaesthetic engagements with the environment can be easier recognised by feeling the movements, sounds, tightening of muscles, shortness of breath, and facial expressions that occur in our body and that we may be able to recognise by facing the body of someone who is beside us. Nevertheless, some of the histories and habitual engagements related to these kinaesthetic responses will always be difficult to unpack. The minute you decide to move is not necessarily the moment you are affected by a force that makes you move. Frequently, the desire to encounter the artwork is just one of the elements that make you move towards the space of the gallery.

In this direction, the experience of disorientation through darkness could be understood as a moment of pleasure in the gallery that reconnected me with the queerness of my body since darkness plays a crucial role in the development of queer lives. As Martin J. Goessl (2017, pp. 2-3) states, dark rooms are places for the potential appearance of non-normative engagements with a space, as they require a willingness to experiment with the senses. In the process of cruising, this darkness suitably reproduces modes of living and environmental interactions shaped by bodies that struggle to be outside in the world, because their kinaesthetic and affective engagements and encounters with other bodies can be seen as deviant. For instance, dark rooms played an important role in the encounter with mysterious objects in my first engagements with queer sociality and my first close encounters with other queer bodies. It was in a dark room in a gay nightclub, for example, a place permeated by feelings of excitement and shame, that I first attempted any sexual and affective interaction with another person. It was in the darkness late at night that I experienced my first online connections with other queer people and managed to create some sense of community during the isolation of adolescence's explorations. I needed the darkness of a room to open myself up to the development of a queer desire that had encompassed a large part of my life until that moment.

Evidently, the development of facing the darkness in contexts outside of the art gallery and entangled by a process of cruising is far more complex, which highlights a level of privilege in my previous experiences of interacting with darkness as a source of pleasure. The emergence of intersectional approaches in looking at this situation brings to the surface issues such as women facing the darkness in urban spaces, or black bodies seen as threatening in dark streets. Jonathan Cane (2019) indicates how cruising, as a theory mainly developed towards pleasurable urban mobility, can be limited in accounting for black bodies that are constantly interrupted in moving around, and as Ahmed (2006) reminds us, in places where there is no shared support for movements, some bodies will collapse and be disrupted more easily than others. As Getsy (2008) points out, cruising's 'meanings, pleasures, and dangers (both as a literal activity and as a metaphoric ritual) are produced as registrations or resistances to the silencing, oppression, and reprisal enacted upon non-normative sexualities. It gains its synecdochical charge because of its outlaw, queer valence' (Getsy, 2008, p.19). Getsy's (2008) assertions help us to understand the experience of darkness in the gallery as a moment of reconciliation with the queerness that shapes our bodies, some more than others, and the possibility to act upon the queer affects that emerge by establishing ethical and safer relationalities with the environment that can be dangerous outside of the gallery.

Therefore, it is only possible to understand the fluid aspect of cruising, and between what is understood as telic and paratelic, if we point out the inefficacy of attempting to locate the emergence of the first desire to move. This is because these desires arise in an affective relation to the kinaesthetic and temporal developments brought to the surface through fleeting visceral movements. These movements disorientate and re-orientate us towards the unlocatable and habitual histories that produce our bodies' abilities to act upon the space and perceptual conditions. The dark corridor did not take away my freedom of movement; instead, it taught me to act in the space by not relying on my eyes as the only source to relate

affectively with the other cruisers and the corridor. This directly affected my modes to engage with the next space that appeared on the other side, after cruising the dark corridor.

#### **2.4.2. Encounters on the other side**

I had previously started to develop arguments about a space called ‘room’ because at the moment I cruised the dark corridor, a process of disorientation rematerialised due to facing the room on the other side, the space where I could find projected moving images. As explored before, the transition between brightly lit and darkly lit spaces proved to be a powerful mechanism of disorientation, because it caused my body to collapse and open myself to the possibilities of non-normative kinaesthetic engagements in unexpected conditions. This development became even clearer when I approached the end of the dark corridor and was affected by the different types of disorientation caused by the surprise of either not seeing any light or being attacked by an excessive amount of light and sound.

In the case of *SaFO5* (2019), disorientation continued through the visual extension of darkness in the space. Turning to the left at the end of the corridor was once again shocking because the darkness found in this other room increased the suspension of senses leading to disorientation. This process was materialised via a bodily displacement, as the contours of the environment were absent, and I experienced a complete visual disappearance of my body and the other cruiser’s bodies, in an attempt to ‘undermine ocularcentricity’ (Fox, 2019, p. 75). Don Handelman (2005) states that in environments of such sensory detachment, people promptly ‘begin generating interior worlds even as their exterior ones are shot down. In extreme sensory deprivation, the individual curls and whorls wholly within himself, re-forming through the creation of imaginary horizons.’ (Handelman, 2005, p. 252).

Consequently, being sensorily deprived and not knowing where I was located worked as a trigger to look quickly for a place of comfort elsewhere.

At that moment, some flashing points of light almost instantaneously appeared in my field of vision as traces of previous brightness amidst the crescent darkness, and my body quickly re-orientated itself in a centripetal process of self-exploration. This was an attempt to search for affective and corporeal memories that could support the trauma of not finding any ground to stabilise the journey through darkness. On this occasion, the support and sensorial rescuing from disorientation was materialised via the recovering of affective memories of how powerful the light in the Brazilian Amazon is, the place where I spent the majority of my younger years, and where those flashing lights are a constant corporeal experience.

In *SaFO5* (2019), this affective relationship fleetingly dislocated a kinaesthetic consciousness of my body from the gallery to somewhere else, as a result of not being able to see and thus having to create an internal affective movement for the external exploration of the space. In this case, the moving images did not trigger a process of dislocation and consequent disorientation; instead, disorientation emerged from the collapse of desires and expectations of seeing the moving images, for being corporeally affected by the darkness resulting from the absence of the projection's light. This first bodily involvement with the darkroom in *SaFO5* (2019) resonates with Andre Abath (2012, p. 12), who claims that in situations where the absence of light and sound is experienced there is an affective rather than perceptual collapse. According to Abath (2012), at such moments we experience not only the disintegration of senses but also a quick and disorienting dismantling of familiar modes of moving around, which is directly connected to the affective relationships that are built through time with a specific familiar space, such as our bedroom, or in this case, the art gallery. In these spaces, the 'experience of lack of conformity between expectation and perception involves an affective response; it is *felt*, not a perception of absences' (Abath,



2012, p. 22 [my translation]).

Therefore, what the extension of darkness does in this spatial transition is to expose the fluid affects that form the process of cruising and the phenomenological continuum between body and space. This happens due to the surfacing of one of its main characteristics: the constant interplay between an introverted force that acts as a possibility for rescuing someone from disorientation through the sedimented histories of bodies, and the externalising affects that emerge from contact with the environment. In this situation, the collapse of specifically personal strategies of exploration through the eyes led to the identification of other low-intensity messages around me as a potential mechanism of orientation that is so common in the process of cruising, as a practice that is ‘complex and nuanced, involving subtle interactions and negotiations between bodies in particular spaces’ (Davis, 2019, p. 76).

Whilst in the darkness of the other room, ‘another way of looking’ (Needham, 2015, p. 47) is not about improving the role of the eyes, as happens in the movement towards the rabbits in Arunanondchai and Gvojic’s corridor. On the contrary, the room after the corridor of *SaFO5* (2019) turned my eyes into useless objects for orientation, to increase awareness of other senses and other parts of my body, turning my attention to elements that are usually diminished in the conventional illuminated art gallery, such as strangers’ small conversations or other people’s breathing. These other forms of engagement turned out to be essential in navigating the darkness of this room, consequently turning the bodies of the other cruisers into the main orientation device materialised through their noises on the ground and the different languages I could hear but not identify. These hints of orientation acted as an affective listening strategy aiming to locate my body in the space and attempt to find a place of stabilisation. These low-intensity recognitions materialise what Bill Viola (cited in Elwes, 2015, p. 210) calls the ‘undersounds’, which are so recurrent in installations where silence is an important component. According to Elwes (2015)

Viola's neologism refers to the improvised soundtrack that resonates in the 'shared air' of the building, the whispering and fidgeting of fellow spectators, the whirr and clatter of the projectors, the grinding of video players, the rustle and rumble of the spectator's own body and the sudden intrusion of the world outside every time someone opens a door. (Elwes, 2015, pp. 210-211)

In the search for these under-activities and low-intensity messages that could support the cruising journey, my hands played a crucial role in investigating the empty space around my body. Whilst I could not see anything in front of me, my hands tried to feel the darkness through my skin to orientate myself, pushing away any possible approach of a threatening element that could cause my body to fall in the gallery, either by encountering an unexpected wall or stumbling over my feet. The emergence of this frightening, uncertain, and unstable moment shaped the atmosphere for queer affects to arise because it input in my body a strange and disorienting sensation leading to two situations: On the one hand, I attempted to be safe through the action of standing still and waiting for the time to pass whilst my eyes could adjust to the new darkness; conversely, there was a will to move away from that situation due to the disorientation caused by the sensorial collapse amidst the darkness.

Overall, I used my hands to fumble around and waited for a sensorial response, which in the environment only existed through the darkness. This emergent expectation for environmental feedback is described by Ahmed (2006), through the work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1968), as the touch-whilst-being-touched schema that approximates objects but does not merge them into one. Ahmed (2006) claims that 'This model of touch shows how bodies reach other bodies, and how this "reaching" is already felt on the surface of the skin' (Ahmed, 2006, p. 107). In Prodger's work, immediate disorientation and the loss of supportive sensorial grounds appeared as the consequence of a touching action that did not support my body to move forward because the moment of skin contact failed to provide an immediate response in which my hands could hold an object of sustenance. However,

“‘getting lost” still takes us somewhere; and being lost is a way of inhabiting space by registering what is not familiar: being lost can in its turn become a familiar feeling’ (Ahmed, 2006, p. 07).

The act of ‘touching the darkness’, feeling it through my skin, was thus a method to re-allocate and make familiar an environment in which I would not usually find immediate affective support, and in which waiting for sensorial adjustments to take place ‘allows the cruiser to dwell in a distinct register and experience of time, one in which waiting assumes dominance and becomes pleasurable in itself’ (Davis, 2019, p. 78). As Davis (2019) asserts, patience is an essential element of cruising because of submission to temporalities that are not our own, as could be noticed in the act of cruising the corridor guided and accompanied by other bodies. Consequently, in the room after *SaFO5’s* (2019) corridor, the unexpected sensorial shock of the absence of projection or any easily recognisable source of light was responsible for building familiarity among strangers (the dark space or the other bodies in the gallery) through a fleeting moment of disorientation. The emergent ‘palpability of darkness’ (Handelman, 2005, p. 253) and consequent failure of orientation in the space ultimately led to one of the most important aspects of cruising, ‘understood as a disposition of hospitality towards strangers’ (Dean, 2009, p. 194). In the process of cruising, as happened in this case study, Tim Dean (2009) sees the possibility of creating a condition of trust towards strangers, which I believe is the relation that in this situation could ultimately rescue some bodies from harmful extended disorientations.

In *No history in a room filled with people with funny names 5* (2019), the process of disorientation remained because of a new shift between the darkness of the corridor recently cruised and the excess of light that shaped the room, similar to what happened in Rachel Maclean’s and Pipilotti Rist’s exhibitions, as explored in Chapter One. As demonstrated in the affective description of this case study, the entrance to this new environment was

informed by a sensorial shock due to the over-stimulation of the senses caused by the combination of the following elements: the immediate encounter with the light of projections, the green beams of light covering the room, the high-frequency sound, and the considerable number of other viewers occupying the space. Consequently, an excessive and immediate presence of these elements abruptly contrasted with the solitary and uninterrupted experience of cruising the dark corridor. The non-interruption of the fast moment of cruising the corridor brought to the surface the role of temporality as an element directly affecting the level of sensorial distress that brightness can cause in our bodies.



*Figure 11: Korakrit Arunanondchai and Alex Gvojic, No history in a room filled with people with funny names 5, 2019. Gallery located after cruising the dark corridor. Available from: <https://bombmagazine.org/> (Accessed: 24/11/2021).*

In this case, the fact that I rapidly changed spaces from the brightness of the gallery's exterior to the darkness of the corridor, and back to an excess of light in the room after the corridor, did not give my body enough time to adjust sensorily to the different presences and absences of light. Whilst the brightness outside the installation provided me with some sort of

orientation because of its atmospheric aspect, the short temporal transition between a poorly lit space (the corridor) and a brightly lit space (the gallery) caused my body to collapse sensorially because of the excessive presence of light. Overall, because I cruised the dark corridor in a short time since I had no external forces to guide me as in *SaFO5 (2019)*, the disorientation caused by light was far more immediately efficient than the first contact with the projection in Prodger's installation, which points out the role of temporality and movement in the spatial and visual apprehension of objects such as light.

As explored in Chapter One, Giuliana Bruno (2014) remembers that by 'linking the sensation of time to the sensing of light' (Bruno, 2014, p.18) it is possible to evidence how 'the luminosity of the screen of projection is an important factor in the extended experience of (inner) duration and an expanded sense of spatialisation, interiority, and subjectivity that is held and mediated on the surface' (Bruno, 2014, p. 108). Therefore, the immediate contact with projections in *No history in a room filled with people with funny names 5 (2019)* provided me with an extended spatialised sensation as if my body had been fully intercepted and had melted amongst the brightness of the space, a malleable flesh shaped by light as a consequence of my eyes turning into a surface of contact between visceral and subjective exterior spatialisations, a process further explored in the next section.

### **2.4.3. Gazing towards the light, glancing around the gallery**

In both case studies, the projection appears as a disorientation device, either by its immediate absence (and thus, absence of light), as in Charlotte Prodger's installation, or by the immediate contact with the brightness in the next room, as happens in the case of Korakrit Arunanondchai and Alex Gjovic's work. What is now worth investigating is how the

elements that appear after cruising the dark corridor and facing the next room sustain a sense of disorientation that unsettles the viewer's body or re-orientates them towards another form of kinaesthetic and affective empathy with the moving image content projected. Whilst the former assertion acts as an extension of the effects of darkness or the excess of light, the latter can bring the body to an awareness of the fluidity between the senses of orientation and disorientation, which can help to navigate the recently encountered gallery.

The simultaneous experiences of exploring the gallery whilst dealing with the constant transition of settings of light and attempting to watch the films projected enhanced the role of my body as an environmentally affective element, meaning that after the traumatic experience of darkness my body became one more object among the others in the gallery in a non-hierarchical perspective, because the capacity for my body to act within the space was limited. Whilst having my first contact with the moving images exhibited, I could not help myself to endure a process of *gazing toward* the images whilst at the same time *glancing around* and trying to relate to the silhouettes that shared the space with me, comprised of bodies illuminated by projection or bodies disappearing into darkness to position themselves against the light of projections. In a queer phenomenological perspective, 'towards' implies 'a mode of directionality; it is about the direction I face when facing an other, as a direction that can refer to motion and position' (Ahmed, 2006, p. 115), which describes the moment of facing a projection as the heightening of negotiations between watching the moving images and understanding the role of my body's position in constituting the experience of other bodies in the gallery.

Hence, watching the moving images amidst the brightness of projection generates a spatial directionality, one that is eventually replaced by the constant shift of looking directly at the light of projection whilst peripherally looking at the surroundings. According to Sara Ahmed (2006), to orient itself *towards* an object implies an associated understanding of what

is *around*, the latter a concept she describes as suggesting a ‘circling movement’ (Ahmed, 2006, p. 116) in which affects are constructed mutually. Consequently, ‘to be oriented around something is to make “that thing” binding, or to constitute oneself as that thing’ (Ahmed, 2006, p. 116), meaning that looking towards projection whilst orientating myself around it implied more than just the act of looking, but prompted the emergence of a consciousness of the different modes that the light spreading over the gallery affected the elements composing the space. The attention towards projection, the environment, the other bodies, and the queer affects that emerged from this combination appear in distinct modes in each case study.



*Figure 12:* Charlotte Prodger, *SaFO5*, 2019. Gallery located after cruising the dark corridor.  
Photography: Cristiano Corte. Available from:  
<https://www.theskinny.co.uk/>(Accessed: 24/11/2021).

In *SaFO5* (2019), by sitting on the floor of the gallery beside the other cruisers, I could for the first time look at their illuminated faces from a distance and recognise on that surface a potential space for the subtle re-allocation of the queer affects that shaped the moment of cruising the corridor. In this setting, all cruisers potentially shared, on different

levels, an object of desire: the single projected moving image on the opposite wall illuminating the room and our bodies. Concurrently, the film's voice-over set an attentive atmosphere of a collective and intimate journey. This atmosphere developed through the affective sharing of the narrator's words, followed during the experience by constant shifts between brightness and darkness in the moving image, this time informed by different colours and through some sudden transitions of high and low sound frequencies.



*Figure 13:* Charlotte Prodger, *SaFO5*, 2019. Still from the film. Available from: <https://www.stedelijk.nl/> (Accessed: 24/11/2021).

However, this shared affective atmosphere resulted in disorientation from the transitions between brightness and darkness. This is exemplified by the quick initial change from images of lions in the darkness to an overpowering white, snow-covered floor where I could read 'Revelations'. In the gallery, the screened greyscale image of the lions built a fleeting transition between the complete darkness of the gallery and the first appearance of projection. The film served as an element extending the disorientating experience of cruising the dark corridor because the eerie atmosphere of being around strangers was maintained, whilst at the same time the initial low brightness of projection slowly returned my eyes to their function as a method for spatial exploration. In this situation, the low light of projection



was an important element that conferred on the space an atmosphere that facilitated collective engagements by allowing me to see the cruisers once again. Therefore, seeing the other bodies through the light of projection reflected recognition of their role in rescuing me from disorientation and re-orientating me to a safer exploration of darkness along with them. Conversely, the image of the white floor covered by snow that unexpectedly struck the space, and consequently my eyes, appeared as an aggressive source of light that again disorientated the experience because of the sudden transition to brightness.



*Figure 14:* Charlotte Prodger, *SaFO5*, 2019. Still from the film. Available from: <https://www.a-n.co.uk/> (Accessed: 24/11/2021).

Reading ‘Revelations’ whilst seeing two feet moving around on the bright, white image projected set the scene for an exploration of affective transitions that would subsequently develop during the film. These abrupt lighting changes appeared on numerous other occasions, like a constant interplay between fast black transitions that lasted only for seconds, dark nocturnal footage, and other scenes that were replaced by extremely bright images. Examples of these were scenes illuminated by the warmth of what looked like deserts, or the stimulating, fast change of coloured images that mixed in my field of vision. These cases demonstrate how disorientation worked in the environment by employing

fleetingly sensorial traumas that could constantly destabilise the body to re-orientate modes of engagement with the surroundings.

A similar experience came about in the encounter with *No history in a room filled with people with funny names 5* (2019). As previously mentioned, the subsequent sensorial trauma of cruising the dark corridor was in this case led by an immediate overwhelming presence of light emanating from three projections positioned horizontally, side by side on the back wall of the gallery, an experience radically opposed to the initial slow lighting adjustment of the moving images in Prodger's installation. In Arunanondchai and Gvojić's work, the illumination affected my eyes, preventing me from seeing the other bodies beyond their dark silhouettes, which was a direct result of my position in the gallery. Between myself and the images projected, the other bodies existed in the space as mysterious figures that I frequently engaged with through my movements in the gallery, avoiding touch as I constantly had to change positions due to the crowdedness of the environment I was in.

In this overloaded gallery, the other bodies took me back to affects I once built through experiencing dance floors in nightclubs, which was facilitated by the extremely colourful environment and an atmosphere built through transitions of bright and dark images projected and the green beams of light constantly appearing and disappearing in the space. This place required me to engage with the other bodies in the same manner as whilst cruising the corridor of *SaFO5* (2019), i.e., looking carefully at the floor, considerably aware of who was beside me, and beyond that, trying to capture some of the meanings of the moving images screened in front of me. Zoe Shacklock (2019, p. 516) describes how these adjustments lead to the building of a queer collectivity because of their collaborative endeavour through the coalitional modifications of bodies in the space. Drawing on the works of José Esteban Muñoz (2019) and Clara Croft (2017), Schacklock (2019) recalls how these experiences are present on the dance floor, the space I immediately returned to when first

seeing the excess of light in the gallery, a place of kinaesthetic engagements with other bodies ‘through which we become, in a sense, less like ourselves and more like each other’ (Muñoz, 2019, p. 66).

However, whilst navigating that space I at times undertook movements created in an attempt to ignore the existence of the other bodies, as they constantly moved around and left the gallery minutes or seconds after entering it or positioned themselves in a manner that obscured my view of the projection. Through an analysis of the projective works of the artist Diana Thater, Liz Kotz (2012) claims that in these situations the ‘viewer’s bodies may temporarily block the projected images, throwing shadows onto the wall, but such interruptions do not alter or generate the work in any significant way’ (Kotz, 2012, p. 374). However, whilst it can be true that some of these types of shadows will not change the moving image narrative, they can act as an essential element for some projective works. This is evidenced through the work *Permanência* (2007), mentioned in the preface of this thesis, where the shadows developing from the interruption of the projection’s light are the primary element to establish a temporarily affective relationship with projections through the movements of the bodies seated on the swing installed in the gallery. To develop an argument based on Kotz’s assertion (2012), I claim that although the dark silhouettes that appeared to me like shadows and obstacles to reach visually the moving images in the crowded space of *No history in a room filled with people with funny names 5* (2019) do not support any narrative changes, as happens in *Permanência* (2007), they intervene in the affective encounter with the projection.

Through the combination of their dark silhouettes and the moving images, these people interfering in almost everyone’s field of vision played a crucial role in creating an environment that raised awareness of the material presence of other bodies, which facilitated a less traumatic orientation towards the projection’s excessive light. In this situation, the

darkness impressed on the images through these bodies materialised the first queer affective experience of cruising in this other room, because the movement of finding a place to watch the film was essentially formed by the visual interference of the other cruisers' shadowy bodies. According to Albertine Fox (2019) shadows are 'defined by the absence of light, (..) intangible shapes characterised by indeterminacy and indexical ambiguity, suggestive of a worldly referent but never entirely identifiable (...) On a basic level, shadows can express a sense of danger, melancholy or forbidden desire, carrying an aura of mystery' (Fox, 2019, p. 72). The vague nature of shadows, as suggested by Fox (2019), brings to the surface the ambiguity of the environment in which these mysterious presences appeared since in this case, their shadowy aspects could only exist due to the excessive attainment of light that shaped the gallery. If the space is ambiguous because it raises feelings of melancholy through shadows and excitement through lights, it is a matter of queer affective development through an apparent but not completely identifiable and ambiguous collective desire: watching the film.

The desire to encounter the projected moving images was not excluded by the shadows but disorientated towards a confrontation that exceeded the two-dimensional character of projection, contaminating the space with affective negotiations between bodies (mine and those of the other cruisers) regarding positioning myself in front of the projection and being able to watch the film. Therefore, queer affects emerged around the possibility of experiencing the projected moving images not only through my eyes but in the prospect of engaging with the shadows of the other cruiser's bodies as crucial elements to understand the space in which these images were situated. This enhanced the comprehension of projection as a queer affective element that facilitated gatherings through uncomfortable and disorienting relationalities.



Figure 15: Korakrit Arunanondchai and Alex Gvojic, *No history in a room filled with people with funny names 5*, 2019. Gallery located after cruising the dark corridor. Available from: <https://www.carlosishikawa.com/> (Accessed: 24/11/2021).

Sound is another element that decisively affected the experience of seeing the films whilst engaging with the surrounding space, as discussed in the case studies. In *SaFO5* (2019), for instance, the narrator's voice, which I identified as Charlotte Prodger's, dominated the space as an unlocatable element that intensified the feelings of disorientation, as '(...) an unattributed voice or a sound whose origin cannot be identified migrates into the realms of the uncanny, engendering anxiety in the listener' (Elwes, 2015, p. 208). This happened both through the nature of the words I could hear and the almost tired and effortless sounds that initially shaped the atmosphere of the space, confronting and disorientating any sense of location that the narrative attempted to build through spoken words that appeared in the voice-over, such as '1984' and 'Aberdeen'.

In the gallery, this voice proclaimed, 'I'm praying to wake up as a boy' and the existence of a 'blowjob', bringing attention to the existence of questioning gender and sexuality that developed in the space through other acousmatic sounds, defined by Alison

Butler (2019) as an element that leaves ‘the viewer to imagine where it originates’ (Butler, 2019, p. 33). The voice-over seemed to materialise the moment in which ‘artists intuited that once liberated from its role of organising and narrowing the meaning of the image, the indefinite status of the voice-over could work against the cultural grain, evoking (...) subjectivities not represented by the mainstream’ (Elwes, 2015, pp. 212-213). Prodger’s voice-over worked similarly to Albertine Fox’s (2019) analysis of sound in Chantal Arkeman’s work, as an element of ‘sonic dissolution of the self’ (Fox, 2019, p. 74) that opens up possibilities to embrace a subjectivity that is unstable and does not need to conform to specific identity category.

This evocation of queer subjectivities affected me as a mode to re-orientate the unfamiliarity of the gallery towards the building of a supportive environment, evidencing Ahmed’s (2006) arguments that ‘... objects that first appear as the “more and less familiar” function as signs of orientation’ (Ahmed, 2006, p. 30). Hence, a re-orientation happened here as the effect of hearing the voice-over and empathising with a narrative that put me beside a presence I could not see, but whose voice created affective resonance. In this situation, a level of identification emerged through the inducing force to move the *self*, provided by the narrator’s history either in a metaphorical and subjective level or in the literal movement around the world, which resonated within my experiences of living between places and cultures.

Therefore, in the moving images, a narrative evolved around the projection of a transitory and mostly disembodied subjectivity that travelled around, crossed borders, and searched for spaces with a possibility for the development of queer affects. This narrative embodied some of the characteristics of the essay film tradition explored by Alison Butler (2019) as especially appropriate to the multiple forms of moving image installation. *SaFO5* (2019) exposed the fluidity between fiction and non-fiction, for example, a binarism that

Prodger managed to blur specifically through the disembodiment of the voice that did not necessarily conduct the development of the images. Instead, the voice disorientated the subjective position of my body in the gallery, again by inserting a level of personal identification with the non-normative sexualities portrayed. Concerning this situation, Butler (2019) draws on the work of Timothy Corrigan (2011) to indicate that ‘although the essay film may depend upon the notion of personal or subjective enunciation, this should not be taken to imply that it constructs or is constructed from a unified stable subject position’ (Butler, 2019, p. 140).

Thus, it was not in the discreet and stable characteristics of brightness or darkness that this subjectivity found a place of support, but in the fleeting transition between them. The moving images seemed to expand, through their narrative and illuminating instability, the experience of cruising the dark corridor. However, in opposition to the cruising movement, my body and those of the other cruisers were apparently immobile on the seats or the floor of the gallery. The seeming immobilisation was just an apparent feature since kinaesthetic processes of disorientation happen on the level of the ‘visceral dimensions of embodiment and affect’ (Lindner, 2018, p.28) through new fleeting sensorial relocations.

Watching the film, the recurrent appearance of elements such as the lions (most of the time amidst darkness) and the snowy landscapes created a state of continuous movement between places, which resembled the experience of re-allocation and displacement developed at the first moment of entering the dark gallery and connecting the sparkling lights amongst darkness with my bodily experience in the Amazon. Furthermore, whilst the voice-over implied a subjectivity that had no specific place because it was materialised through an unlocated sound mirroring the transitory aspect of the corridor, the appearance of the lions brought my body back to a more conscious sense of location, due to the symbolism of this animal to Venice, the city where I was at that moment. Similarly, the appearance of the

landscapes covered by snow metaphorically relocated me to Scotland, not by coincidence the place where I lived before encountering this artwork, and the country where Charlotte Prodger lives.

These situations reverberate with Alison Butler's (2019) assertion's that 'it is this propensity for displacement that makes installation art an interesting form for the moving image: the possibility of generating meaning from the relationship between the location from which it has been displaced and the site of its relocation' (Butler, 2019, p. 12). The meanings engendered in my body through experiencing the displacements of *SaFO5* (2019) resulted in kinaesthetic engagements that developed towards an empathic consideration of the voice-over's journey, either as the sound that travelled throughout the gallery, or the subjective narrative portrayed in the film.

As a result, the shared journey I experienced in the gallery through the voice-over and the moving images re-orientated the sensorial trauma that affected the process of cruising the dark corridor, moving around the gallery, and the immediate contact with the light of the projection. This re-orientation occurred through fleeting sensory displacements that took my body back to places of comfort, the latter 'a feeling that tends not to be consciously felt (...) Instead, you sink' (Ahmed, 2006, p. 154). It was through sinking into the comfort that affective memories of kinaesthetic spatial engagements could support my body throughout the sensorially disturbing encounters with the film, the dark space, and the other bodies in the gallery. Most notably, a feeling of familiarity appeared in the relocation to the warmth of Venice and the images of the lion around the city, the lights in my field of vision that took me back to my bodily involvement with brightness in the Amazon, and the film's white landscapes, relocating me to a cold Scotland that affected my body's level of energy, the way I moved, and how I interacted with space, as much as the extremely high temperatures of my hometown.



Ultimately, sharing the journey with the voice-over's subjectivity made it easy to share the gallery with the other cruisers, culminating in an exponential rise of trust towards all the bodies present. What followed this development was a kinaesthetic moment of relaxation, where muscles were less tight, my eyes interrupted their frenetic darting to watch the film, and a sort of lighter and less apprehensive involvement with the space emerged. In this scenario, my body quickly learned how to balance the disorientation of watching the film whilst paying attention to the surroundings because the latter became a place of affective support. A re-orientation towards familiarity and a consequent less traumatic experience were only possible here due to the previous work of disorientation at the moment of cruising the corridor, which put me in a place of discomfort and dealing with queer affects that appeared in the movements throughout the space.

I again consider the role of disorientation here to point out the sensorial collapse resulting from moments of displacement that appeared whilst experiencing *No history in a room filled with people with funny names 5* (2019), via filmic elements such as props and sound. As Catherine Elwes (2015) argues, 'our appreciation of the filmic elements of an installation mobilises our ability to read the moving image both as a material phenomenon and as an 'other' reality in a recessed, illusionistic space. We maintain the two forms of knowledge concurrently, drawing our conclusions from these enmeshed conditions of understanding' (Elwes, 2015, p. 146). Elwes' (2015) assertion indicates the affective presence of a body that is located in the space where moving images are projected, highlighting the fluid work of attempting to displace meanings from the gallery to the moving images and vice-versa. As mentioned earlier, Alison Butler (2019, p. 07) indicates this relationship by mentioning that

The prominence of questions of location and dislocation in moving image installation reflects its paradoxical nature: the aim of

installation art in general is to increase the viewer's spatial awareness, to activate spectatorship in a given environment, but moving images undermine that awareness, displacing consciousness of the gallery with sensory perceptions from elsewhere. (Butler, 2019, p. 07)

In Korakrit and Gvojic's work, the interplay between locations explored by Butler (2019) exists in the previously mentioned feeling of resemblance between the gallery and a nightclub, where the projection of moving images seemed to be the work of a video jockey (VJ)<sup>31</sup> and was permeated by what Catherine Elwes (2019) calls sonic lubricants, 'an audio track dominated by a portentous electronic drone or a non-specific rhythmic beat, sometimes accompanied by quavering voices or ornamented by ominous clicks, metallic grinding, the trickling of water or distant rumbles of thunder setting up Gothic tensions that are never resolved' (Elwes, 2019, p. 219). Like the elements described by Elwes (2015), the sound that invaded the gallery in *No history in a room filled with people with funny names 5* (2019) was far more eerily disconnected with the images than any memories I could recover from my nightclub experiences.

The atmosphere was an almost frightening ambience, one that made me engage with the other bodies with distress as I was unable to find a comfortable place in which to remain and watch the films. It was only after lying down on one of the cushions near the projections that this distress abated and I could better engage with the content of the moving images, not having to deal with the shadows of the other cruisers. Resting in that space in front of everyone else increased my attention toward the light of projection whilst returning to self-awareness of the position of my body amongst the numerous elements that shaped the gallery. In contrast to the first overwhelming encounter with the projections in this space, brightness at this moment primarily affected my body to create a sense of kinaesthetic empathy towards the elements I could see in the film.

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<sup>31</sup> According to Patricia Moran (2005, p. 13), this term emerged in the 1980s to refer to the presenters of MTV shows. With time, the term 'VJ' became related to the people who create live audio-visual works either in the art context or in nightclubs, music festivals and raves.

Nevertheless, the increased attention towards projection in overwhelming spaces such as this gallery was an aspect I would describe as a fleeting orientation revealing the fluid aspect of occupying this place. Whilst the brightness quickly turned my attention to the moving images because my body was restless after moving around and attempting to find a place of comfort, the moving image narrative and the spreading light were concurrently responsible for a sort of bodily paralysis when my eyes once again became the main channel for disorientation to emerge. The contact with the projected moving images quickly made me first comfortable, then uncomfortable, attempting to find strategies to overcome these unexpected traumas created by the lights, the shadows, and the awareness of my body positioned in the space. Therefore, disorientation in the space of *No history in a room filled with people with funny names 5* (2019) orientated me to the moving image narrative and the recognition of the existence of other people's histories, which up until that point I had denied because they were a distressing element shaped by the sound and the light that dominated the gallery.

In the fluid movement between attention and inattention, I managed to see other bodies in the moving images and tried to establish connections that could lead me to an affective and empathic encounter, as happened when I was watching *SaFO5* (2019). However, the images appeared to me as a disorientation device. In the film, the distressing atmosphere of the gallery was mirrored by elements such as the eerie sound that followed images of performative rituals with light, and the appearance of the children that I later found to be a representation of the history of the twelve boys trapped in a cave whilst conducting a ceremony of initiation in Thailand in 2018. In this case, a kinaesthetic empathic encounter happened not as the result of sharing affective journeys that supported my immobile body, as happened in Prodger's installation. Instead, kinaesthetic emphatic responses emerged as an effect of watching the history of the children and feeling the resonance of the frightening

times they experienced amidst the darkness.

The impact of this encounter affected my motionless body on the level of the viscera, particularly in the slight changes in the rhythm of respiration and consequent slower movements of my chest. A feeling of anguish arose due to the relationship created with the children's situation, which informed and relocated to the gallery the suffocating environment that existed in the cave where they were confined. Consequently, the displacement of the cave's ambience increased the emergence of queer affects in the fleeting disorientations that existed throughout the transitional spaces between overwhelming attainments of light and the rise of a feeling of emptiness concerning the children's history. The queerness of affects was thus materialised through a sense of vulnerability in the space that Dean (2009, p. 210) claims is so common in the process of cruising, transforming my body into the only possible channel to overcome the atmospheric melancholy dominating the environment. In this situation, I could not count on the support of the other cruisers' bodies to build a collective rescue from disorientation. This process happened due to the feelings of emptiness that overtook me and increased a self-reflexive and antisocial behaviour due to the bodily displacement that occurred between the projected moving images and the visceral relocations of the children's narratives.

Despite this, two other elements supported me in comprehending this affective vulnerability as a tool to establish relationalities with the space and the moving image narrative. Firstly, I previously highlighted the eerie sounds as essential for setting the ambiguity of melancholy and excitement in the environment, but I want to point out the appearance of a pop song as a moment of sensorial rescue from disorientation. As Catherine Elwes (2015) indicates, 'Not only do soundtracks enhance the verisimilitude of the film, but also, increasingly, they tell us how to feel about what we see' (Elwes, 2015, 207). This is exactly what happened when listening to Whitney Houston and Mariah Carey singing *When*

*You Believe* (1998). In the film, this song is played along with television footage of the children's rescue from the cave, setting the first moment where a feeling of hope is combined with the emptiness generated by my inability to take any attitude towards the children. The act of rescuing that happens in the cave and that is projected in the gallery through the moving images is an affective rescue from the disorientation amongst the constant shifts of brightness and darkness in the space. This dramatic song, typical of Hollywood's epic happy endings, played a crucial role in delimitating the time at which the narrative liberated my body from the tension and suffocating atmosphere caused by the children's pain.

The second element that crucially re-orientated the experience towards queer moments was the plush toy rabbits. These objects that appeared as props both at the end of the dark corridor and amongst elderly people in the moving image narrative were responsible for the final queer affect that took place within my body. At the moment the rabbits appeared in one of the three projected images, the queer encounter took place through another affective displacement when I experienced the toy at the end of the corridor as the main orientation device guiding me towards darkness to reach the room where the three projections were installed. Catherine Elwes (2015) indicates that these objects installed in moving image installations act as forces that 'form part of the information we process to orient ourselves in space, and the data we collect about the work simultaneously serves to develop a mental map of the architectural environment as a whole' (Elwes, 2015, p. 43). In *No history in a room filled with people with funny names 5* (2019), this process enhanced a sensorial relocation of the memories of the object into a conflict between the space of the gallery and the moving images. The light illuminating the rabbits at the end of the corridor turned out to be one more metaphor of the life cycle portrayed in the projected images.

The end of the corridor was thus simultaneously the final moment of cruising the darkness and the beginning of a new sensorial relationship with the space, one shaped by

queer affects that fleetingly unsettled the bodies of those who entered the gallery. The uncomfortable feelings resulting from the lights and the children's narrative created a corporeal distress that possibly led some people to enter and leave the installation rapidly. Conversely, some other bodies remained in the space and potentially opened themselves for the queerness of the environment to affect and transform their settled and normative modes of affectively engaging with the overwhelming presences in the room. In both case studies, the experience of gazing towards the projection whilst glancing around the gallery revealed how queer affects appeared amongst the situations where the comfortable and the uncomfortable worked together in potentially creating disorientations that could move our bodies to places of challenging affective engagements, supporting a change of attitudes to the environment in which we were located.

## 2.5. Conclusion

In this second chapter, I explored the queer affects that emerged through the process of transitioning from brightly lit spaces to darkly lit spaces and vice-versa in moving image installations where projection plays a crucial role as a disorientation device. I analysed the works *SaFO5* (2019) by Charlotte Prodger and *No history in a room filled with people with funny names 5* (2019) by Korakrit Arunanondchai and Alex Gvojic through the lenses of a metaphorical concept of cruising. Cruising is here understood as a broader process composed of bodily and spatial movements that exist between the aimlessness of wandering and the role of desire in encountering a specific object, which in these artworks was materialised by a search for projection and the moving images.

I explored the dark corridor, located before the encounter with projection in the

gallery where the case studies were installed, as a space that created fleeting affects resulting from the sensorial transition between brightness and darkness that developed throughout the corridor and after cruising it. The emergent affects were queer because they made my body engage with the space and the other bodies beside me in non-conventional and non-normative modes, ones that I only engage with outside the art world in extreme sensorial situations such as darkness, the latter reproduced in the gallery along with the interplay of bright environmental conditions. Therefore, the appearance of queer affects in the gallery facilitated a reconnection with the queerness of my body by disorientating its kinaesthetic habits. This situation re-orientated me around the encounter with projection as a spatial element that helped me to establish affective relationships with the other cruisers in the gallery, forming collectivities that were queer because they existed in the fleeting disorientation of habitual senses that the fluidity of gazing towards projection whilst glancing around the gallery conveyed, a paramount act in the process of cruising that existed in the encounter with the artworks.

Consequently, the disorientation resulting from cruising the dark corridor and encountering projection enhanced the awareness of my body as an environmentally affective element because it caused my body to collapse sensorially and become an object amongst the others, a process explored by Ahmed (2006) as the result of moments of rapid transition. Through engaging with the vulnerabilities of my body as an object amongst the others because it failed to act within the space, and by having to rely on the presence of other bodies to find a place of support, disorientation emerged as a powerful mechanism to create collective affects.

The approach of these queer collectivities based on kinaesthetic (which include visceral) engagements in the gallery demonstrated that the presumed predominance of the visual attributes of cruising, as claimed by Davis (2019) and Needham (2015), needs to be

challenged. The disorientating but quick replacement of the visual for other forms of space exploration in the case studies, such as hearing the low-intensity sounds and touching the darkness, is evidence of how gazing and glancing are composed of peripheral affects built through other senses, not necessarily through the eyes. Although the latter remains an important tool for disorientation due to its sensibility to the transitioning aspect of light in the corridor and the subsequent experience in the gallery, the effects of seeing whilst cruising are as affective as the mysterious, unseen, but felt presences of other bodies amidst the darkness.

However, cruising along with darkness as a mode to establish affective relations with strangers outside the art gallery context can raise feelings of fear and anxiety that overcome the possibility of a pleasurable experience to approach. In these sorts of situations, Jonathan Cane (2019) indicates that this optimistic approach to cruising in urban spaces opens up ethical questions around whether ‘the pleasures of “merely circulating” reflect the movement of non-white gays and lesbians’ (Cane, 2019, p.17), for example, where this freedom of circulation is commonly interrupted. In a world where the experience of environmental darkness can be as pleasurable as extensively traumatising, the dark corridor and the interplay of light and darkness in the gallery can reconnect the binary orientation and disorientation and build up experiences that are less vigilant and more open to surprising encounters based on affective trust.

The overall experience of cruising the dark corridor and facing projection evidence how the work of opening space to contact moving images through collective affects can function as an efficient method to overcome disturbing aspects of sharing this space with unknown elements, ones that may approach our body as queer and re-orientate affects towards the building of collectivity. Thus, the communion around the light of projection helps to increase the ‘in-this-togetherness’ explored in Chapter One, exposing the ‘social aspect of projection’ (Venturi, 2013, p. 185). Furthermore, Elwes (2015) reminds us that



through ‘... staging what is unfamiliar in an unexpected setting and offering up the uncanny for inspection in relative safety, moving image in the gallery holds the potential to recalibrate the terms of our engagement with our contemporary environment’ (Elwes, 2015, p. 7), which is what occurred with my body whilst *becoming an object* and therefore a conscious environmentally affective element.

As already demonstrated in this chapter, one of the results of *becoming an object* in places of transition such as the dark corridor and in the moment of encountering projective moving image art is *disturbing the other* bodies. In these spaces, a bodily presence can affect and change the strategies for other people to navigate the gallery through collective journeys. The next chapter will explore the disturbance of the decision-making process that occurred in the gallery, in terms of orientating oneself through choices to move within the space in the realm of *distance* and *proximity* to the projected moving images and the other bodies. Between the processes of distancing and approximating whilst moving around the space, a *besideness* attitude emerged as a possibility to create affective relationships with someone else through the kinaesthetic empathy that arose from the queerness of the bodies and other elements portrayed in the moving images.

## CHAPTER THREE

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**Look to your side**

### 3.1. Introduction

*After entering the gallery and embracing the excess, I zoomed in on the surface of the projection and followed the light until I became an object amongst the others in the space.* This sentence summarises the initial two phenomena of disorientation proposed by Ahmed (2006), called *zooming in* and *becoming an object* and analysed in the two previous chapters in the context of projective moving image installations. The result of the detached attachment to the surface of the projection and the transitions of light in the gallery is a disorientated body that ultimately acts in *disturbing the others*, the last core phenomenon of disorientation that will be explored in this third chapter. Ahmed (2006, p. 160) argues that a disorientated body affects the other bodies that share a common ground creating disorientation, especially when these grounds fail to support a subsequent orientated journey. Disorientation happens in the process of destabilisation of both the bodies and the ground as a continuum feature, becoming a phenomenon that continuously moves around the space and affects how people decide to gather around specific objects to build a common ground (Ahmed, 2006, p.160). The disorientation of others affected the way I moved in the space as much as my disorientation affected the other bodies' affective journeys.

For instance, in Chapter Two, I employed a kinaesthetic process that differed from my ordinary and normalised engagements with the space whilst cruising the dark corridor of *SaFO5* (2019) by Charlotte Prodger, which resulted from the contact and attention to the movements of the other bodies beside me. Furthermore, in *No history in a room filled with people with funny names 5* (2019) by Korakrit Arunanondchai and Alex Gvojic, the dark silhouettes of the bodies interrupting my vision of the projections created a situation in which I needed to negotiate my position in the space according to those other bodily presences. This exemplified the necessity to look to your side in the gallery to position yourself in relation to

the other's positions. Therefore, whilst moving around in the art gallery, it is important to understand our role as potential agents of affective transformations in the non-hierarchically sensorial environment produced by the process of becoming a disorientated object and consequently disturbing the other bodies. In this chapter, I explore the moments of disorientation that occurred in contact with the artwork *Swinguerra* (2019) by Barbara Wagner and Benjamin de Burca and some of the works present in the retrospective exhibition of Steve McQueen held at the Tate Modern (London, United Kingdom) in 2020. I argue that the positionality we take in the art gallery concerning the distance and proximity to the projection, both physically and affectively, disturbs the other bodies differently, as it is necessary to implement a *besideness* attitude in relation to the other visitors' bodies and the content in the projected moving images.

Consequently, *besideness* is the key concept used in this chapter to discuss the disorientating phenomena of *disturbing the others* in projective moving image installations. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (2003, p. 08) conceptualises *besideness* as a positionality that challenges stable, hierarchical, and binary spatial positions such as beneath and beyond and dualistic thoughts such as 'cause versus effect, subject versus object' (Sedgwick, 2003, p. 08). Sedgwick (2003) further explains that *besideness* is comprised of 'a wide range of desiring, identifying, representing, repelling, paralleling, differentiating, rivalling, leaning, twisting, mimicking, withdrawing, attracting, aggressing, warping, and other relations' (Sedgwick, 2003, p. 08). This exemplifies Sedgwick's (2003, p. 08) assertion that *besideness* is about creating affective spaces for several objects to exist alongside one another as conflicting elements that can foster the building of collectivity whilst drawing attention to particularities.

In this direction, I understand *besideness* in dialogue with Lindner's (2018) appropriation of this concept, as a spatial and affective attitude to opening yourself to the

‘spaces of possibility’ (Lindner, 2018, p. 05) that shape other people’s bodies according to their positionalities. According to Lindner (2018, p. 05), this is to reach an affective engagement that allows non-normative forms of relationality and queer embodiments to emerge. Therefore, affectively approaching *besideness* requires an attitude of looking to your side, to what resides beside your body, which means close but not equal to you, a distant proximity or a proximate distance that draws connections with the non-binary detached attachment (Horn, 2017) explored in Chapter One. The case studies analysed in this third chapter evoked an experience of disorientation due to the constant and confusing process of having to decide which way to look, which room to enter, which side to walk towards, whilst spatially positioning myself (distancing or approximating) regarding the projections and the bodies that shared the common ground of the gallery with me.

This process of spatial orientation and decision-making is responsible for affectively activating *besideness* as an attitude that needs to be conveyed to face the moving image content, as both *Swinguerra* (2019) and Steve McQueen’s work expose a *besideness* position regarding the relationalities established with the people that appear in their films. They do not seem to represent someone. Instead, these artists ‘speak nearby’ (Minh-Ha, 1992, p. 85) the bodies in the moving images, in the sense that Trinh T. Minh-Ha (1992) understands as not objectifying or speaking from a distance to the subject that speaks, but one that gets close enough to the subjects and amplifies their voices without undermining their competence of speaking for themselves. To speak nearby is to establish a *besideness* attitude to give space to voices and positionalities that are frequently silenced in a heteronormative social arrangement, thus addressing the inequalities inherent in the voices that are allowed to speak easily and make decisions for others.

In the analysis of these case studies, I contrast different processes of accessing these positionalities through the matter of suspensions of freedom of movement, as briefly explored

in Chapter Two. This specific issue came to the surface as these artworks were experienced in considerably different contexts of potential relationalities in the art gallery. I experienced *Swinguerra* in 2019 during the 58<sup>th</sup> International Exhibition *La Biennale di Venezia*, in an environment that was warm, overcrowded, and open for multiple and fairly uncontrolled forms of relationalities. Conversely, I visited Steve McQueen's retrospective exhibition in August 2020, only three months after the first lockdown and consequent social isolation in the United Kingdom due to the COVID-19<sup>32</sup> pandemic. Therefore, in one case the decision of distancing and approximating to other bodies and the projection in the gallery was the result of a freedom of movement informed by ethical decisions. In the other case, distancing and approximating became a controlled experience in the limited capacity of the art gallery to welcome a large number of visitors during the uncertain times of the initial months of the pandemic.

In the following pages, I present an analysis of these artworks considering the role of the *besideness* attitude in establishing affective relationalities towards the objects in the art gallery, these being our bodies, the projections, and the subjects in the moving images. I first offer an affective orientated description of this chapter's case studies and subsequently theoretically explore the disorientated moments with these artworks in the section *Besideness: distance and proximity as disorientations to inhabit the gallery*. In the two succeeding subsections, *Distant proximity* and *Proximate distance*, I discuss the role of positioning myself, distant or proximate to the projection, in the creation of the *besideness* attitude. First I argue that, in moving image installations, projection can sometimes become a peripheral element because the visitors are distant from it, as they have to deal with the

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<sup>32</sup> According to Harald Brussow and Kenneth Timmis (2021), 'COVID-19 is an acute, highly transmissible respiratory infection that is potentially lethal, but often mild, sometimes asymptomatic, especially in the young' (Brussow and Timmis, 2021, p. 4077). Brussow and Timmis (2021) highlight that the COVID-19 pandemic is a 'global apocalyptic event' (Brussow and Timmis, 2021, p. 4088) that has profound consequences in the realm of social, economic, and personal experiences, which lead countries around the world urgently to elaborate different policies for dealing with issues regarding 'healthcare, economics, education, employment, personal liberties, and so forth' (Brussow and Timmis, 2021, p. 4088), including the necessity of social distancing and the implementation of periods of quarantine.

affective disturbance of the other bodies in the gallery. Conversely, I demonstrate how this process can be approached through the lens of affective proximities with the projected moving images that do not necessarily require physical proximities in the gallery. Lastly, the third subsection approaches how articulating spatial distance and proximity can help us to understand the implementation of a *besideness* attitude and its development in the space of the gallery through empathising with the content of the projected moving images.

### **3.2. *Swinguerra* (2019) by Barbara Wagner and Benjamin de Burca**

I wander through the streets of the Giardini in Venice, feeling the sweat running all over my skin and embracing the wetness of my body under an overwhelmingly blue and sunny sky, one that keeps my head facing down towards the warm stone floor since looking up is a sensory battle in which my eyes struggle to remain open while they are led by a nostalgic sensation of having felt this before. The heat of the summer in Venice takes me back to the sticky and humid aesthetic that shapes everyone's bodies and daily lives while walking around in my hometown in the Amazon; the water that runs over our skin and evaporates at the end of the day is the average sensorial response to the environment, one that follows everyone everywhere, and a feeling that I have never experienced again since arriving in Scotland.

A few metres from where I stand, the Brazilian flag flaps smoothly on the national pavilion, and while I walk towards the entrance, my body seems to recognise the temperature that surrounds me as a sign of proximity incited by a potential encounter with a familiar environment. I move into the space, carried by an expectation of finding someone with who I can establish a proximity, one that leads to a certain comfort from being in the presence of

what is easily recognisable. A recognition of language, of a body that could move like me, talk like me, express themselves like me, while at the same time an upset stomach and breathing movement that seems to travel slowly but heavily through my chest and throat, appearing out of the tension of meeting someone that could match those expectations.

I press my shoes against the floor, rapidly changing my movements and almost tiptoeing around as if running away from an encounter with proximities that I am not completely sure I want to embrace. Meanwhile, I distance myself from the main entrance of the pavilion and now, in a room with walls covered with photographs, I walk towards a song I can hear from a distance. While listening to this music, I quickly move towards the confrontation of an overcrowded and bright second gallery, where the natural light invades the space, filling every inch with a clarity that seems to introduce to the inside space the heat experienced outside in a constant rising of the temperature. While walking, I still perspire, this running water sticking my clothes to my skin, because of the almost tropical warmth, one that weakens my mobility, as if the warmth is pulling my body to the ground and turning my feet into being a heavier element that balances my weight in space and orientates my drowsy body.

In this lethargic itinerary, the song I can still hear drags me forward to the encounter of the amalgamation of bodies that, a few metres from me, seem to gather around, compressed by the sounds that, from where I am, still emanate from an unidentified source. I follow the music and consequently start shaping an encounter with these bodies because I can identify the funky beats as something that will lead me to the encounter with the projection. While moving forward, the proximity of the beats is equal to the proximity of the bodies. The high-frequency sounds reverberate in my body as if I am in a nightclub, one that is clearly overcrowded and where dancing is about the inevitable and accidental touching of other people's bodies and the mixing of fluids that pass through our skins. I cannot avoid the touch



of the other while attempting to find a space for myself to further explore the gallery. Inside of me, the tune seems to wander through my bones, energising every inch of my body, and each hair on my arms moves as a result of the random and fleetingly overwhelming movements and spasms that my muscles and organs employ in response to the beat of the song reaching my ears and caressing my skin.

I lose myself amongst the other visitors' bodies as it is not clear which way to go to find the films I am looking for. As this proximity increases the warmth in the space, the fleeting and refreshing wind emanating from the fleeting movement of the fans in others' hands alleviates the sensorial tension resulting from the occasional friction of skins that occurs in the barrier that the gathering of these bodies creates at the entrance to this gallery. The funky beats, however, remain as an atmospheric magnet that keeps me moving towards the unknown settings of the space and to trespass on the space of the mass of bodies I am facing, until I finally identify two projections on opposite sides of the long and narrow gallery. Situated in the middle of the space, between the two projections, I repetitively look from one side to the other, glancing around in a movement that strains my neck, and I mimic the same confusion I notice in other people's behaviour, as they keep rotating their bodies from side to side, reflecting their disorientation.

In a matter of seconds, my head seems to spin around and become heavy as I feel the temperature still rising in my body in the warmth that dominates the environment. I try to maintain some sort of orientation but it is failing to give me any clear direction regarding which way to take. This mirrors my watching the projections on the screens located on the opposite walls of the gallery: I cannot seem to recognise differences in the films that would help me with choosing which way to move forward. I am in the middle of the gallery along with other bodies that seem to be trapped in the same hesitancy as me. Which side should I go to? Do I have to choose one? Can I just stay in the middle? Should I just stay in the

middle?

I turn to the left, throwing my hands forward to intercept the space in between the other people around me, attempting to open a way that will allow my body to slowly move towards one side or the other, breaking the distance from the projection by infringing on the space in which the crowd is gathering in the middle of the gallery. On this side, the music echoes through my body as if an endless gust of wind is attached to the projection and is keeping my eyes open since I can hear lyrics in Portuguese and recognise a queerness in the bodies that I see dancing in the film. The comfort of listening to my mother tongue loosens the tension I feel in my muscles while I push my body against the wall, paralysed by the warmth from the laborious effort of trespassing on the amalgamation of the other bodies. Meanwhile, the tension between the solid wall and the malleable muscle in my arm holds my body safe in this place, away from the others but closer to the projection. From staring at the bodies dancing in the film, my insides still respond to the high-frequency sound through minor spasms released through my muscles from time to time, while one of my legs keeps moving slightly, following the rhythms I can hear.

Watching the people dancing in the film provokes my own body to move as if attempting to sustain the high energy that encloses the space through the fast and uncontrollable beats, where the uneasiness of my tense muscles and the rapid heartbeats of my seemingly immobile body viscerally drag me towards a self-questioning movement. What if I am missing something by not watching the film projected on the other side? While turning around to look back, I face again the other bodies and can identify, at a distance, the slight differences of camera angles in the films. I choose to stay here on the left, as the thought of the stressful journey of moving around in this gallery leaves me unsettled since the struggle to again trespass in the space where all these bodies are positioned does not account for the affective and moving relationships I established with the bodies in the films.

While the song plays, I stare at these bodies in the projection as if recognising in their movements my own possibilities of inhabiting this space, as if their dancing gestures can somehow mirror movements that are not only employed as a means of confrontation in this dancing battle that I seem to also live, here in the realm of a queer positionality in the gallery. The movements of their bodies seem to challenge destructive gender stereotypes of gesturing that, for so long, have shaped my own queer life, my own movements in the space, and damaged the growth of spatial relationalities in so many other lives. Paralysed by the contact with the film, I move back to my earlier experiences in Brazil while seeing myself virtually beside a diversity of people with whom I can establish an affective proximity precisely because their movements gravitate around my daily gestures around the Brazilian landscapes I can also recognise in the film. After a while of standing by the wall and watching the film, I leave the gallery by walking away and crossing in front of the bodies that face the same projection as me, interrupting their view with my own movements that by this moment seems to have re-energised through contact with the familiar bodies in the projection.

### **3.3. *Steve McQueen* (2020) by Steve McQueen**

On a cloudy Sunday morning, I head to the Tate Modern in London, along with my boyfriend, and start the day with contradictory feelings. Something in my stomach seems to move excitedly at the anticipation of seeing a Steve McQueen exhibition for the first time, but an uncomfortable tingling sensation persistently travels through my body carried by rapid breathing as we head to the encounter of uncertain spatial circumstances in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. I feel guilty for being here, maybe because I am indirectly supporting this space while workers protest outside for being made redundant; a feeling that does not

easily disappear and, in fact, follows me into the exhibition. I enter the building alone, led by these unsettling sensations and rapidly encountering invigilators donning acetate face shields in a considerably empty Turbine Hall. An atmosphere of uncertainty is present while my body still struggles to move, afraid of the risk of coronavirus contamination. I feel like I am being followed by an invisible presence that somehow forces me to endure movements and navigate very specific lines on the path to a safe journey through the galleries.

On arrival at the gallery, there is no touching, no queuing, and there are no long talks, only ticket-scanning from a 'safe distance' and an orientation towards the entrance. On entering the gallery, my eyes can only reach a darkness that prevents me from walking as my immediate surrounding are sensorially suspended from the contact with my body, and I do not dare take one step further before allowing my sight to adjust to the darkly lit brightness that slowly arrives in my field of vision. I stand still, searching for any possible pathway while listening to a loud helicopter sound that invades the space, moves abruptly towards my body and fleetingly pulls me away from the light; a light that, a few seconds later, seems to reach my eyes, pulling me towards its source: the projections on both sides of a suspended rectangular screen. I am drawn to the projections and my body trembles slightly on noticing an abrupt appearance of people behind me, a presence I can only feel like a breath of wind on my skin as they graze beyond me. Will it be possible to keep a distance from others in this space? What will keep us distant? Can we be beside one another? What should I do when something as simple as encountering other bodies means taking a risk?

I slowly walk around a screen hanging from the ceiling, where one projection on each side of the surface illuminates a body of other people in small clusters that I can see from a distance; meanwhile, my body seems to unconsciously get even heavier, as if it is preventing me from going any further since the proximities of the others can mean an invasion of invisible spaces in which my body is not welcome because this space is already occupied by

the movements of someone else. I face the Statue of Liberty in these projected moving images from such a short distance that the brightness seems to stick on my eyes and linger around my body as if coating me in thin layer of light that makes the intimidating close-up of the statue's head impress a dizziness that forces me to move forward. I keep moving around the suspended screen as if running away from an attack of light and judgement coming from the disembodied head that also spins around in the film as if searching for a victim, for someone to look at and to connect with.

I seem to embody this invisible helicopter sound I can hear moving around along with it. The high frequency of the sound inhabits the insides of my body as if attempting to escape from me, while also dwelling in the gallery as an ambivalent force that carries my body and keeps it close to the projections. While some images fade and the overbearing sounds continue, the people around me look lost as they shift from one place to another. Are they avoiding each other? Further away, the confusion of new sounds begins to overlap with the helicopter and a strange voice invades the environment. I recognise some antique projectors and move forward because my hands seem to be pulled by a desire to touch the film strips while listening to them moving in the equipment and, consequently, I get close to the small moving images projected on the walls of the gallery. I glance from one projection to another, shivering and sensing a tingling motion over my skin as a response to seeing, in one film, the movements and textures of fingers repetitively pinching a nipple and, in the other film, a fingertip approaching an eyeball.

While that blinking eye in the film is about to be touched, and my body agonizes in the presence of such an action, those sensations seem to reappear on the surface of my skin through memories based on the itching and the ache on the nipples, the agony in the eyes, followed by a weird tender sensation that moves from my stomach towards the bottom of my body, as if gently pulling me down, as a pleasure appearing from the proximate anguish. In

this location, the gallery looks almost empty, but my body perspires amidst the rising temperature in the room and the presence of the gallery's staff following me around the space. I cannot tell if my body is hot or if the warmth is emanating from these antique projectors, but my clothes feel heavier as I cannot breathe easily and all the air I am exhaling seems to get trapped on my glasses, blurring my vision from time to time. The loneliness in the gallery exists alongside the sensation of having some unknown presence always beside me. I fear doing something wrong, making an incorrect direction and heading towards the encounter of an undesired presence, and I can feel the weight of my feet in contact with my shoes carefully grounding the floor as if crossing a tightrope from the anguish of not being in line opens a space for potential fearful encounters.

On my left, I see an image of a child wearing heavy clothes, and probably protecting itself from the cold, in a warming-coloured sunset. Is it a projected moving image? I must get closer to see the movements. Seconds of waiting. There is no movement. I seem to feel the pain in the environment that I share with this figure. The temperature is still high, and the yellow in the photography generates more visual warmth. Far on my right, I live an uncanny encounter with a bed covered by a net that lies in the middle of the room, while a bright squared screen hanging from the ceiling pushes me back to the attack of the light that I first experienced when entering the exhibition. I leave behind the heat of the environment, heading towards an ambiguous, tender and uncomfortable encounter with this bed illuminated by the white light, recalling childhood memories of missing the air under similar nets when trying to sleep, as my body currently reproduces this sensation through a heavier breathing that spreads across my face under the mask I am wearing. I reconnect with my child-body suspended over a similar bed covered by a net attempting to protect me from mosquitos at night in my hometown as if the net was an extension of my body or a capsule that prevented the arrival of the mosquitos as an undesired presence.

Nevertheless, what is undesired here is not clear and although I see the signs on the floor directing me to 'Keep Right', my overriding feeling is one of confusion as I seem to walk towards nowhere. No one apart from me is here to follow these directions: should I keep right? Is it just the presence of other bodies that forces me to follow this straight line? Is continuing to walk straight and follow the line actually the best way to avoid whatever danger might lurk in the gallery? What is the actual danger? What if the danger lies as an encounter on the straight line? Why can't I go left if that could be what saves me from encountering the invisible threat? What do I do if the invisible virus turns out to be a presence in my body?

I am unable to decide my own path as the invigilators demand that I remain in line on the specified route. Here, I experience an orientation to a level at which decisions are taken out of my hands and my body must navigate the space in accordance with the outlined pathways, being instructed not to inhabit the space towards which I was initially directed. I feel the frustration of this disruption emerging through my heavier breathing along with a faster heartbeat due to the abrupt and highly orientated approach of the invigilator, while an uncomfortable shame arises from my attempt to take an unpermitted path. I next face one of the dark corridors which seems to hide the intense effects of the projection. This corridor is slightly illuminated by a yellow light and the visual warmth that I could previously identify seems to re-emerge in the darkness while I make my way towards the entrance. Complete darkness again. The film has not yet begun, and despite the previous yellow light that enabled me to find my way in, the atmosphere here is obscure. The slight fear of bumping into someone arises as the proximity of other bodies increases that sense of danger and leads me to look around, carefully exploring the area, and in the hope to find a place where I can stay. However, there is only so much I can do in this darkness and the contact with the other bodies may be inevitable.

My eyes keep moving as an exercise aimed at illumination; my head turns around in

an attempt to let the most light come through and open the space for me, allowing me to somehow inhabit the darkness comfortably. This only happens with my body close to the floor, and it is by maintaining this low-level position that I can finally recognise the bench in front of me. I can again identify with coming through that frightening feeling of seeing several figures that are oddly sitting there, aligned, motionless, and donning their face coverings. I am highly aware of my breathing increasing in intensity as the heat of the exhaled air spreads all over my damp face, as if the anxiety from the presence of these strangers in the dark is heightened by the use of this mask as I wait in an awkward and deafening silence. As I am unable to see clearly in front me, I hear my stomach rumbling, saliva touching the insides of my dry mouth and moving down my throat, while my embarrassment emerges from the fact that the other people may be able to hear me. As pins and needles attack my muscles, I feel a numbness spreading and making me constantly change my sitting position, stretching and retracting my legs while facing the projection.

In this compact room, the appearance of a large head dominates the image on the wall. While this picture seems motionless, the voice-over echoes within the room as if, at times, whispering in my ears, and then retreating as the sound becomes more distant. This sound moves around, constantly pulling my attention back to the hypnotising image in front of me, as if leading me to explore and discover the minimum movement that could change the trajectory of the death of the head. However, he is dead as he does not move. His brother killed him accidentally. I am nauseous from too much time spent looking at the image and I am attentive to my inner responses while the mask, again, does not allow me to see clearly as my glasses steam. The movement here has to do with dealing with the air entering and leaving my nose and mouth while looking at the motionless head, along with an intimate narrative that dominates my attention, filling me with the sorrow of that loss.

Another dark corridor in the next gallery awaits me, and lights all over the floor seem



to stop me from getting lost in the darkness. The first decision here is which route to take as the corridor leads me towards two identical paths. If I go left, will I lose something on the right? I feel unprepared to take this decision as my body still resonates with a disorientating experience of being previously spatially redirected in the gallery. After so many moments of being strictly orientated, why would I suddenly have the prerogative of choosing my own way? Why am I complaining? The choice is in my hands, but having this freedom feels as disorientating as being constantly re-orientated. In the gallery, a film is projected onto an enormous screen hanging from the ceiling right in the middle of the gallery, and on the other side, I can only see the legs of other people watching the film. They do not move but insert a certain uncomfortable appearance to the room as their bodies are not there as a whole when viewed from this perspective. Their completeness is only possible in relation to the film that I see now in front of me through a bright projection that paints the entire room and its people a shade of celestial blue. While watching the film, my body seems to lose the weight that pulls me to the ground, and sensorially fluctuates, making my head heavier and unbalancing my legs as if a visual nausea is taking over my insides from following the up and down movements of a boat in the film. I move around the screen because standing still only makes me unwell at this moment, and to my surprise, the other side is not the same. What I see here is a funeral. Another death? Is that boy dead? Did he fall into the ocean? I can read 'Ashes' being engraved on stone. Is 'Ashes' the boy I just saw on the other side? I believe I can hear someone saying:

We never knew he was falling into drugs  
Shoot him in the hand

I must move from one side to another. The exploration of this death resonates once

more as if I am witnessing the incomprehensible and uncomfortable suppression of a body. Once again, McQueen brings to the front a black body. In the grave, I can read one more time: '25 years'. Is he a young man who faded into the realm of drugs? Did the drugs kill him? I try to pay attention to the voice-over that envelope the room, but it is still challenging for me to understand the accent, while the light of the projection and the grief of this death leave my body much more sensitive to the viscosity of the immediate surroundings. Any possible stimulus directed to my ears seems to refract towards my eyes, hypnotised by the brightness and acting as a guide for my body, enabling it to move, interrupting the experience of the other people. This visual nausea moves my insides and prompts me to walk as the blue of the ocean on the moving image does not allow me to stand still. It is just this dislocation, the distance from the image of that boy moving up and down, that pulls me closer and propels me to navigate the surface of the projection by wandering through the space. It is only by leaving behind one image that I can recognise and make some sense of the other, not fully and simultaneously reaching but always demanding attention in the space.

### **3.4. Besideness: distance and proximity as disorientations to inhabit the gallery**

The previous two sections described the affective experience of disorientation whilst visiting this chapter's case studies. In this section, I will explore the role of the continuum between distance and proximity as a phenomenon that can lead us to build a *besideness* attitude in the space of projective moving image installations. Barbara Wagner and Benjamin de Burca's work and Steve McQueen's exhibition made me inhabit disorientating environments in which the constant shift between distancing and approximating shaped the modes of relationalities with the projection and the other bodies in the gallery. According to

Anne Cvetkovich (2021), art installations, including the sort of moving image installations analysed in this chapter, are spaces that ‘facilitate new forms of embodied experience, including feelings that take the form of moods and sensibilities rather than specific emotions. Refusing stable boundaries between the interior and exterior of both self and space, it creates new forms of collectivity and sociality’. (Cvetkovich, 2021, p. 44). In the same direction, Matthew Noble-Olson (2016) indicates how ‘exhibition, public display, and sociality are inherent in the practice of projection’ (Noble-Olson, 2016, p. 393) in the context of art installations, which reverberates with Chris Salter’s (2010, p. 53) claim that projection in contemporary art turns out to be an element we inhabit instead of observing from the outside. Hence, my focus in this analysis is not to highlight the discrete characteristics of distance and proximity as two different phenomena concerning inhabiting the space of projective moving image installations. Instead, I argue that these concepts, which seem to be part of an opposed binary, are interconnected as a mode to create relational affects in the spaces we inhabit as social and collective environments.

Proximity can connect us to something to occupy a space but detaches us from the place we leave behind. In this occupation, Ahmed (2006, p. 44) argues that we orientate our attention towards something whilst failing to notice other objects around us. Consequently, distancing from objects we have been attached to means leaving something behind whilst potentially creating an affective contact with other objects. This is in order to create proximities and supportive contacts that can make our positionalities less disorientated as we can detach from harmful affects that may have shaped our lives. Therefore, the continuum between distance and proximity presumes movement. This movement affects others that share the same ground as us, as the desire to distance from or approximate something is informed by the orientated tendencies that shape the history of our bodies: As Ahmed (2006) argues, we tend to orientate ourselves towards what is nearby in that ‘Lines of desire take us

in certain direction' (Ahmed, 2006, p. 114). It is important to notice that in discussing the affective qualities of distance and proximity, Ahmed (2006) refers not only to physical movements of bodies but also to the relationality that is built based on similarly affective, historical, theoretical, or sexual orientations. The experiences with this chapter's case studies demonstrated that distancing and approximating from objects is a decision-making process that is entangled with an interplay of being in the physical space and affective distances/proximities with what resides outside of the gallery and that is embodied through our movements in this same space.

Butler (2019) address the role of distance and proximity in moving image installations by arguing that these works are imbued with a deictic aspect, where binarisms such as 'here and there, now and then, us and them' (Butler, 2019, p. 116) appear and can allow the viewers virtually to access locations in the world that they would not usually be able to, an affective movement that can provide us with affective displacements in the immersive space of the gallery, as mentioned in Chapter Two. According to Butler (2019, p. 137), whilst these binary positionalities can sometimes appear to be fixed, they can turn into a dialogical endeavour. Butler's (2019) analysis of the work *The Enclave* (2013) by Richard Mosse mentions how the spatial experience is simultaneously informed by 'immediacy and distancing' (Butler, 2019, p. 123) to establish empathic encounters with the subjects in the films whilst maintaining a distance from the unsettling human violence portrayed. I would like to advance Butler's (2019) arguments by demonstrating how a process of disorientation occurs not in the rigidity of either here or there, distance or proximity, but in the continuous movement of recognising the materiality and positionality of our bodies whilst establishing a *besideness* attitude with the content of the projected moving images and the other bodies in the gallery. Consequently, the magnetising aspects of a projective moving image, as eliciting gatherings and proximities in the gallery, lead to the access of queer affects that can

disorientate the other bodies located in our surroundings or build queer commonalities that turn the space into a queer space.

I employ the idea of ‘other’, in dialogue with Ahmed (2006), not as a matter of negating or undermining the existence and experience of someone who is not me, but as a form of mutual bodily extension materialised through the queer affects that can emerge from the collision of different subjectivities. Hence, the other is not me but exists in the conflict of occupying a space beside me, where according to Ahmed (2006, pp. 114-115) desire plays a crucial role. A desire to establish proximities with something else as an ‘affective social force, the glue’ (Sedgwick, 2003, p. 18), brings to the experience a consciousness of what is not me. Nevertheless, an affective confrontation does not imply turning this mutual extension into a single body, as to Ahmed (2006, p. 128), establishing proximities does not equal merging with or completely understanding other body’s histories. To identify an ‘other’, thus, is to recognise the limitations of our histories in addressing the diversity of experiences that shape the bodies that inhabit the same space as we do. A *besideness* affective attitude towards the other is a confrontation with the limitations of our bodies in speaking for the other, aiming instead to start ‘speaking nearby’ (Minh-Ha, 1992), which can sometimes even mean ceasing to speak. In this thesis, I have been demonstrating through an autoethnographic and phenomenological approach how the queer affects that emerge in the experience within projective moving image installations can be closely related to the sedimented histories of the body that contact the artwork. However, the movements of our bodies, as informed by these histories, potentially disturb the other subjectivities that inhabit the gallery with us.

In this direction, another important point to highlight is that, in the continuum of distancing and approximating, touch becomes a mechanism to contact other bodies as the result of kinaesthetic engagements with our surroundings. Touching objects is understood here not only as the physical act of touching, even though this desire occasionally emerges in

the encounter with some of the analysed artworks. Touch is also comprehended as the affective movement of disturbing, making out of place, disorientating. In the following pages, I will explore how my body and the ones I shared the space of the gallery with mutually affected and disturbed one another, resulting in kinaesthetic empathic responses that were either orientated towards the moving image content or towards the other bodies that inhabited the gallery with me whilst experiencing this chapter's case studies.

### **3.4.1. Distant proximity**

To distance is sometimes to leave a space towards the encounter with the uncertain, unsettling and disorientating, as the new objects that arrive close to our bodies might not support an orientation that allows us to move forward. Distance is, according to Ahmed (2006) 'the expression of certain loss, of the loss of grip over an object that is already within reach (...) Distance is lived as the "slipping away" of the reachable', in other words, as the moment in which what is within reach threatens to become out of reach' (Ahmed, 2006, p. 166). Hence, the proximity of some bodies can prevent us from moving affectively, but other objects around us may work as an orientation device that redirects us towards more productive ways to proceed with our journeys. According to Ahmed (2006), this usually occurs when similar tendencies are followed, as 'we tend toward that which is near, just as what is near shows our tendencies' (Ahmed, 2006, p. 126), and common ground is built to turn the space of disorientation into a queer space that supports the emergence of queer affects. In the experience with this chapter's case studies, the physical distance from projection, for example, exists because of the proximity of the bodies that prevented me from moving towards the moving images, whilst the contact with the atmospheric qualities of

sound worked to establish affective relationships that orientated me towards the subsequent encounter with the projections. Here I explore how projection can be experienced as a visually or affectively peripheral element that incites gatherings through the fluid process of distancing and approximating from the moving images.

For instance, in Chapter Two, I mentioned how the distant sound I could hear whilst passing nearby the chamber in which *No history in a room filled with people with funny names* (2019) was installed acted as a sort of magnet that inserted in my body a will to move towards the artwork. A similar process happened in the encounter with *Swinguerra*<sup>33</sup> (2019) by Barbara Wagner and Benjamin de Burca, although in this case, I was previously aware of the potential presence of projections when I walked into the Brazilian Pavilion during the Venice Biennale, since having this encounter was led by a specific desire to establish affective proximities with my home country. As previously mentioned in the description of the experience with *Swinguerra* (2019), my initial engagements with the gallery were led by the excitement of viscerally feeling the heat in Venice as a proximity to my body's history of living in Brazil. However, this feeling of proximity underscored an anxious hesitation for the encounter with people I could speak with in Portuguese. This brought to the surface affective vulnerabilities related to and contradictory feelings of wanting to establish proximities whilst avoiding some interactions that could interrupt my anxious movement towards the encounter with the films.

There was obvious distress from the prospect of the collision with other bodies from the moment I entered the gallery. This immediately re-orientated my attention towards elements that could rapidly provide me with clues regarding which way to take to escape

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<sup>33</sup> *Swinguerra* (2019) was installed in the Brazilian National Pavillion located in the Giardini, one of the main exhibition spaces of the International Exhibition *La Biennale di Venezia* in the city of Venice, Italy. The work occupied the two galleries of the pavilion. In the first gallery a series of photographs were installed on the walls. In the second gallery, the films were projected in two screens located on opposite walls of the long space.

from this situation and immediately move to the specific location of the projections. As a result of this anxious distress, the music I could hear worked as an orientation device to avoid the disorientation of potentially encountering other Brazilian bodies in the space, turning my passage through the first gallery, where, by glancing around, I noticed a series of photographs on the walls, into a considerably ephemeral walk. Whilst I distanced myself from the entrance of the pavilion led by the music, by that point I could already recognise rhythms from the north and northeast of Brazil, and I consequently faced a large number of people standing right in the middle of what it seemed a second gallery from which those sounds were potentially emanating.

In the ephemeral cruising of the central space of the first gallery, and whilst walking towards the second one, the disorientation that appeared from the potential and contradictorily affective encounter with other visitors could be rapidly overcome due to freedom of movement since the space of this initial gallery was empty of other bodies. However, the journey in the direction of the sounds led me to the encounter of the materiality of bodies that, at that point, were gathering at the entrance of the second gallery for unknown reasons. This gathering of bodies left almost no space for immediate exploration of the surroundings because their proximities disrupted my previous freedom to walk since the small spaces between bodies did not initially open for me a possibility to move amongst them. They disorientated me. At that moment, I could not realise where to go since their bodies congested the possibilities of movement and facing them produced a process of kinaesthetic struggle when I started to open a way with my hands, to see what in the gallery lay beyond the limits of that amalgamation of bodies.

With my body in the middle of the gathering, the temperature rose, the skin contact became close and sharing the space with the large number of bodies fleetingly removed from me the possibility of decision-making since I could not easily move around. Instead, having



to pay attention to who was beside me became an essential mechanism to negotiate my position in the space to reach the projections that I could see from a distance. The first moments of kinaesthetic empathy as understood by Lindner (2018) emerged here since I could only walk through the space by implementing small corporeal gestures, such as indicating my wish to move forward by slightly touching the arms of other people with the tip of my fingers. In this situation, putting my hands forward and beyond my most immediate surroundings functioned as a gestural excess, as discussed in Chapter One, a possibility to create a space of relationality through implementing repetitive and laboured small gestures in a context where they were the only possibility of opening some space for further exploration of the artwork. Simultaneously, these gestures worked as low-intensity messages transmitted to other bodies to reach an object of desire: the projections.



*Figure 16: Barbara Wagner and Benjamin de Burca, Swinguerra, 2019. Photography: Riccardo Toso. Available from: <https://www.riccardotoso.com/> (Accessed: 24/11/2021).*

As low-intensity messages, these gestures seemed to replicate what David Getsy (2008) argues is one of the main characteristics of the process of cruising, as explored in

Chapter Two, by implementing a fleeting relationality that either made bodies move towards one another or away from each other. In the case of *Swinguerra* (2019), the implementation of these gestures emerged as a desire to distance the bodies that were so proximate to my own, as they disturbed my ability to move around freely. However, in opposition to the darkness approached in Chapter Two, these gestures were implemented amidst a bright environment that, as previously described, seemed to mirror the brightness and warmth of the outside environment. This situation implemented dizziness in my body resulting from the high temperature and the proximity of the others. Moreover, the brightness element formed an experience shaped by the awareness of physical proximity and as a proximity that arose through the more intimate and subjective confrontation of the bodies that competed to occupy a space in the middle of the gallery.

A process of disorientation forms this occupation, as by that point I could not decide towards which side of the long gallery I should move. When attempting simultaneously to watch the films from the middle of the gallery (the space between the two screens where the films were projected) it was almost impossible to notice differences in the moving images that could help me choose one side. Instead, I implemented another laboured and excessive gesture of repetitively turning my head from one side to another, trying to follow the number of different movements I could see in the projections. I empathically reproduced this movement as the result of attempting to deviate from the bodies beside me that blocked my view and prevented me from watching both films. However, these gestures emerged from being affected by the movement of the other bodies turning around from time to time due to the confusion of watching two apparently identical films. This contact put all the visitors into a space that did not provide us with any clear orientation regarding how to approach those two projections facing one another from opposite sides of the gallery.

Therefore, inhabiting the middle of the gallery affected my body as a sensorial

temporal suspension of the process of decision-making. This happened because I could not move forward without having to engage in a kinaesthetic struggle in relation to the others' presence, which consequently put me in contact with a queer embodiment (Lindner, 2018) in the process of implementing unusual gestures that I normally associate with overcrowded nightclubs, as mentioned in this artwork's description. Imagine you are dancing amidst a large number of people in a nightclub: Your skin will accidentally touch another people's, you might become shy when someone faces you, you might deny any further interaction, or you might embrace the gaze as a possibility for building an affective relation. You dance moving your arms, your legs, and your head in different directions, as the sound seems to dominate your full body whilst you respond to the spatiality created by the movement of the other bodies that are not yours, but directly affect your sense of spatiality because their proximity disturbs your dancing movements. This is exactly the experience of queer embodiment that being in the middle of the gallery in *Swinguerra* (2019) provided me with. Now picture yourself dancing in the same nightclub, in the middle of the dancefloor, and you decide to go buy a drink in the bar you can only reach visually from a distance by looking to the other side of the space. You have to open space by positioning your leg amongst other legs, by using your hands to open a way to the bar. By using your hands, I mean not only moving them away from your body. Your hands metaphorically excavate the dancefloor, gesturing with distorted fingers that seem to challenge the normality of their orientation, because the small qualities of your fingers allow you to access the small and empty spaces between the bodies that prevent you from moving. This was my kinaesthetic engagement in the art gallery when attempting to distance myself from the amalgamation of bodies and move towards the projections on the left, whilst the Brazilian music kept viscerally moving my insides.



*Figure 17: Barbara Wagner and Benjamin de Burca, Swinguerra, 2019. Photography: Riccardo Toso. Available from: <https://www.riccardotoso.com/> (Accessed: 24/11/2021).*

At this moment, I would like to repeat a key element of my study as described in the introduction to this thesis: Projection in moving image installations is composed of a ‘magnetic queerness’ (Sedgwick, 2003, p. 33), one that orientates us towards projection and creates disorientated and deviant gatherings and relationalities. From this information, I want to argue that in *Swinguerra* (2019) the two projections facing one another on screens located on opposite walls of the long and narrow space created a sort of affective magnetic field in the middle of this gallery. As previously mentioned in this artwork’s description, the two films projected have only minor and almost imperceptible diegetic differences. Whilst attempting to watch the films simultaneously, through the repetitive gestures of turning my head to each side from time to time, the only immediately noticeable difference was possibly the angle of the camera that recorded the films. Therefore, the two projections were almost identical for the distracted and disorientated viewer inhabiting the middle of the gallery. Consequently, these two projections were each composed of a similar magnetism. Now,

remember the ordinary experience of trying to bring together two magnets. In my practice of trying to do so, these magnets avoid the proximity with one another and create a field of magnetism between them that generates a conflictual space and consequent distancing from each other. However, the space in the middle is still full of magnetic affect.

In the middle of the gallery in which the projections of *Swinguerra* (2019) are installed, this magnetic field is created. The two projections facing each other and with very similar content worked as a mode to keep our bodies pressed together between the images. We forcefully faced and engaged with each other whilst trying to determine what to do, as a matter of practising a *besideness* attitude with the other bodies, which was vital to access subsequently the queer affects emerging from watching the films. The music and the small differences noticed in the films functioned as excessive elements that helped me to decide which way to take, as will be further explored in the discussion of proximities established with the projected moving images.

Whilst in the gallery where *Swinguerra* (2019) was installed the proximity of my body with the other bodies was a crucial element, in Steve McQueen's retrospective exhibition this proximity became a dangerous possibility. As indicated earlier, I visited this exhibition three months after the end of the first lockdown and consequent social isolation that happened in the United Kingdom in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This information is important to consider as the context was responsible for establishing an atmosphere of fear and distrust in the journey around the gallery since the possibility of contamination with the new coronavirus was around and could happen through proximate contact with the other visitors. Therefore, the experience of walking around Steve McQueen's exhibition was a considerably controlled one that suspended freedom of movement in the gallery, disturbing my positionalities due to the social distance rules. This happened through the signs on the floor that stated, 'keep right', the guidance of the gallery's invigilators that

vehemently orientated me towards specific rooms that I could access, or my suspicion whilst avoiding approaching the other bodies. Distancing became a matter of affective survival.

In *Static* (2009) (see page 228), distance appeared as a disorientating affective phenomenon in two main situations. Firstly, the contact with the sound of a helicopter set an environment in which the high-frequency sound seemed to derive from a source right beside my ears that was initially impossible to locate. In this space, I embodied a *distant proximity* from the sound, as this element orientated me towards an approximation to the large screen hanging from the ceiling. On this surface, I could identify a projected moving image portraying the Statue of Liberty<sup>34</sup>, leading me to explore it sensorially through physical approximation with the screen as a possible sonic source. The immediate contact with the projection was similar to the process of *zooming in* as explored in Chapter One, leading to simultaneously attaching and detaching from the projection. By getting close to the large-scale and squared projection my eyes seemed to get stuck in its bright luminance as if hypnotised by the circular movements of the camera, employed around the disembodied head of the Statue of Liberty. At that point, this was indicative that the film was recorded from inside a helicopter, possibly the one I could now hear from a very short distance.

In this situation, a process of kinaesthetic empathy (Lindner, 2018) emerged through the act of constantly walking around the screen in an attempt to find out what was happening on the other side, a process of decision-making fairly similar to the act of constantly turning my head to the left and the right to reach visually the projections in *Swinguerra* (2019). The contact with the film *Static* (2009) impelled a queer embodiment of the helicopter movements whilst I oddly orbited around the screen as if the magnetising qualities of the projection acted as a mechanism to make me establish a proximate contact with the disembodied and

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<sup>34</sup> The Statue of Liberty is a monument located on Ellis Island in the city of New York, United States of America, and, according to the statue's official website, symbolises 'freedom, inspiration, and hope'. Source: <https://www.statueofliberty.org/> (Accessed: 15/01/2022).

apparently meaningless head of the statue. The repetitive appearance of the head seemed to undermine its status as a national symbol, weakening its power to represent the harmful neoliberal strategies of capitalism by turning the Statue of Liberty into an ordinary and meaningless object. As a result, in the initially fleeting, confusing, and disorientating contact with the surface of the projection, the repetition of the Statue of Liberty's head did not immediately raise any affective connection that could turn my body towards an empathic relationship, as happened when the sound of the helicopter made my body move around. Instead, the brilliance of the projection combined with the high-frequency sound dominated my body, disconnecting me from the presence of the statue as an element I could potentially interact with affectively.



*Figure 18: Steve McQueen, Static, 2009. Installed in Steve McQueen's exhibition at Tate Modern (London, United Kingdom) in 2020. Photography: Luke Walker. Available from: <https://www.lukeandrewwalker.com/> (Accessed: 09/08/2022).*

Secondly, getting close to the projection and the sound meant distancing from the separate clusters of bodies I could see inhabiting the same gallery as me. Concurrently, to walk in the darkly lit gallery avoiding contact with the others as a matter of safety meant

establishing closer contact with the surface of the projection. This physical distance from the other bodies, however, did not mean a lack of proximity that undermined corporeal and spatial disturbances and disorientations. The simple act of walking around the suspended screen from such a close distance already interfered with the fields of vision of the people watching the film a few meters from the screen. As I argued in Chapter Two, the presence of my body interrupting the space between the projection and the other people's lines of sight could already be considered an element of affective disturbance. Whilst I could not state what the kinaesthetic engagements implemented by these people were beyond the movements they employed on the surface of their bodies, I revisit here my experience with an interrupted viewing in *No history in a room filled with people with funny names* (2019), where the dark silhouettes of the other viewers in front of the projections initially caused me to feel fairly uneasy. In the case of *Static* (2009), by being the body that interrupted the others' view I acted as a disorientation device, one that established a sort of visual disturbance in the others' experiences in relation to the projection, as I was the only one moving around whilst their positionalities remained stable, watching the film from a single point of view.

Therefore, the main process developing whilst visiting Steve McQueen's exhibition was the above-explored experience of orbiting around the projection, where its magnetising aspects appeared to hold people even if they were at a distance. This happened either physically or by affectively relating to other elements that composed the installation, such as the sound, objects, and the visitor's bodies, without, however, losing the view of the moving images. This was the case with the work *7<sup>th</sup> Nov* (2001) and the combined encounter with *Mees*, *After Evening Dip*, *New Year's Day* (2002), *Carib's Leap* (2002), and *Weight* (2016). In the first of these works (see page 231) the projection of a motionless image of a head's scalp raised questions about the technological nature of the projection, as I could not identify it as either a moving image or photography, which disorientated the prospective encounter



with the artwork as a moving image installation. At the same time, the story I could hear caught my attention as one of these elements that orbited around the projection. In the part of the gallery where I encountered at the same time the other three artworks mentioned above (see page 230), the projection located on another suspended screen, located close to the ceiling of the gallery and above my head, established a distance that approximated my body to the more reachable objects in my surroundings. Whilst the bright, flat, white image of the projection did not seem to add any information that could support my disorientated journey, the bed I could see from a distance illuminated by the light of the moving images seemed to reverberate as a rather odd element that took me back to childhood memories that I would never have expected to recall in the gallery. I briefly indicate these examples to reaffirm the recurrence of the action of orbiting around (physically or not) the projection whilst relating with other objects (the screen, the sound, the other bodies) that appear to be a crucial experience in contacting McQueen's artworks.

Overall, in this section, I aimed to demonstrate how projection can sometimes become peripheral in the immediate experience with moving image installations, which does not mean undermining it as an affective force that pulled us to gather around another set of elements composing the space of the gallery. On the contrary, the distance from the projection, either physical as in *Swinguerra* (2019) or affective as in *Static* (2009), can be a means of establishing queer affectivities with the bodies that are near our body or the ones physically distant from ourselves. In both cases, a kinaesthetic engagement with the space presumes a disturbance of the other and the establishment of disorientated positionalities as a result of the queer movements that we need to employ to explore the surroundings.

### 3.4.2. Proximate distance

What happens when we physically approximate objects? As Ahmed (2006) argues, ‘Some proximities exist to “support” actions – some surfaces are there to support. The work of support involves proximity and is the ground for the experience of other proximities’ (Ahmed, 2006, p. 166). In this short transitory section, I would like quickly to explore how approximating an object, in queer phenomenological terms, means establishing relationalities that can either start supporting our movements in the common ground (rescuing us from disorientation) or create hostile spaces from which we will need to distance ourselves because they can be extensively or fleetingly traumatic and disorientating for the senses. This context can be evidenced in the following exploration of the case studies. I start by reviewing the relationship with the image of the Statue of Liberty that I watched for a relatively long period in McQueen’s exhibition. Whilst I first described this immediate encounter as a *distant proximity*, the sustained gaze towards the disembodied head and the crescent close-up on its face provoked a change of attitude towards the moving image.

If I initially felt hypnotised by the luminosity of the projection, the subsequent experience was informed by a frightening sense of being followed that emerged from the suspicion and possibility of touching someone in the art gallery who could infect me with the new coronavirus. The eyes of the statue became a sort of controlling tool that could see my movements around the screen from every point of view, affectively invigilating my positionality. The context of social distance due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the consequent fearful atmosphere in the gallery interfered with my process of decision-making. The avoidance of approximating other people’s bodies brought me even closer to the surface of the projections. Consequently, the anxiety I described in my experiences with the works in the previous chapters was transformed into a movement of self-questioning regarding the

anxieties that emerged from the possibility of encountering other bodies. At that moment, the lifting of my freedom of choosing where to sit and what distance or proximity from other bodies to employ reverberated as a fairly disrupting affect, even though I normally avoid being too close to other people in visits to art galleries. The imposed isolation in the gallery, which meant a suspension of freedom, replaced the usual communion of strange bodies for a strange communion of unknown subjectivities since proximities were not allowed to happen and even low-intensity relationalities such as laughing together, walking together, and crying together could not happen in a way that effectively put the bodies in touch.

Therefore, I am referring here to the rise of a personal, isolated, and intimate relationship with the projections, one that resulted from the disturbance of the other bodies around, whilst affecting the extent to which the other people could see and spatially reach the projections due to my positionality. In the contact with *Charlotte* (2004) and *Cold Breath* (1999), for example (see page 229), the 16mm projectors and the small-scale images projected on the wall invited me to approach the films, creating around my body a space that distanced the others, since it would be impossible to share it with people due to the social isolation rules. Due to their physical proximity, these two works led to a desire to touch the textures and actions in the moving images and to a curiosity to understand the mechanisms of the projectors. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (2003) states that more immediately than other senses of perception, ‘the sense of touch makes nonsense out of any dualistic understanding of agency and passivity; to touch is always to understand other people or natural forces as having effectually done so before oneself, if only in the making of the textured object’ (Sedgwick, 2003, p. 14). Sedgwick (2003) helps us to understand how the act of touching, either physically or affectively, that emerges from a desire to make contact with these artworks, is formed by a *proximate distance* that is inherently non-binary since we would only decide to touch because we were touched by something, and this happens previous to

any decision to move, as a cyclical and affective mutuality.



*Figure 19:* Steve McQueen, *Charlotte*, 2009. Installed in Steve McQueen's exhibition at Tate Modern (London, United Kingdom) in 2020. Photography: Luke Walker. Available from: <https://www.lukeandrewwalker.com/> (Accessed: 09/08/2022).

Because it was personal, proximate, and intimate, the relationship established here was built on moving away from the projection as a space of sociality. Thus, a kinaesthetic empathy (Lindner, 2018) emerged here, not concerning the other visitors' bodies, but through contact with the bodies portrayed in the films. The repetitive act of pinching a nipple in *Cold Breath* (1999) or a finger approximating an eyeball in *Charlotte* (2004) reconfigured the touch as a disturbing mechanism for causing pain or reaching pleasure in relation to other people, an action that needs to be informed by ethical decisions. In the gallery space, getting in touch with those images from such a close distance affected me as if they were pulling me away from those actions since they caused me visceral discomfort and disorientated my positionality. Leaving the space was the only mode to reinstate a comfortable relationality with the disorientating acts of touching as portrayed in the films. The projections here functioned as a magnetising element that built disturbing affective proximities to create

visceral disorientations resulting in distances between the bodies in the space.

A similar process of suspension of decision-making and intimate relationship with the projected moving images emerged in the contact with Barbara Wagner and Benjamin de Burca's work, even though there was no mandatory and controlling journey through the gallery. The positionality of my body amongst an overwhelming and suffocating crowd of people was decisive for me quickly to implement decisions regarding which side of the gallery to direct my attention to and physically move forward. It was the disturbing and disorientating affects resulting from the proximities of the other bodies that put me in closer contact with the surface of the distant projection on the left side. The previously mentioned space in the middle of the gallery, where a sort of magnetic field was implemented, demonstrated the potentiality of the encounter with projections as forming areas of conviviality (Buckingham, Iles, and Baker, 2003; Connolly, 2009; Lütticken, 2009; Venturi, 2013; Bruno, 2014; Ferreira, 2015; Noble-Olson, 2016) that consequently were areas of conflict (Butler, 2019) and destabilisation (Jäger, 2006) that affectively disturbed the occupants of the space. In the middle of the gallery, the elements that seemed to escape and orbit around the projection were responsible for helping the bodies to choose which side to go to or decide to maintain the disorientating experience of staying between the projections. The latter decision might happen as the moving images could not provide any affective relation that provoked some bodies to move towards them and approximate one of the sides.

In my experience with *Swinguerra* (2019), the elements that escaped the surface of the projection to become environmental, such as the sound, turned out to be mainly responsible for the emergence of a queer affective relationality. I decided to leave the gathering because I could not establish a proximity with the bodies around me. I moved to the left, approximating the projection because of the affective and kinaesthetic relationships that I had started building with the bodies I could see in the films, as they portrayed a queerness

that conversed with my body's response to the contact with the Brazilian music that we were all sharing in the gallery and in the moving images. As Giuliana Bruno (2014) claims, 'Film moves, and fundamentally "moves" us, with its ability not simply to render affects but to affect in transmittable forms and intermediated ways. This means that such a medium of movement moves to incorporate and interact with other spaces that provoke intimate yet public response (...)' (Bruno, 2014, p. 145). By subsequently taking the position of moving whilst affected by the moving images and closely facing the projection, I could finally identify common grounds that put my body in contact with queer affects supporting my occupancy of the space, as the previous contact with the other visitors did not provide me with any commonalities. The potential encounter with bodies that could look like me, talk like me, or move like me, did not happen in the gathering of bodies or in the first steps I took in the gallery, but in the affective displacement of contacting the bodies dancing in the projections.

Therefore, this chapter's case studies demonstrate how distancing from the other bodies in the gallery could create disorientating personal and intimate spaces, as happened in Steve McQueen's exhibition due to the social isolation rules imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. In this context, approximating the projections emerged as a mechanism to overcome the disorientation resulting from the possibility of the encounter with a threatening virus, embodied through the presence of the other visitors in the gallery. As a result, I moved close to the projections. Conversely, approximating other people in the gallery was disorientating when these bodies did not support, and even disturbed, the movements I intended to employ towards the projections, as happened in *Swinguerra* (2019). In the disorientation emerging from the *distant proximity* or *proximate distance* from the bodies in the gallery, a *besideness* attitude emerged as a possibility to build an affective reconciliation with the queerness that shaped this process; this will be explored in the next section.

### 3.4.3. Inhabiting beside

I repeat the question: What does it mean to approximate something? Is it possible to inhabit one space and move forward without necessarily having to leave the previous one? In the two previous sections, I demonstrated how the binarism presumably inherent to the ideas of distance and proximity are instead formed by a continuum of distant proximity or proximate distance. This means that distance and proximity can only exist if understood in relation to one another, as a fluid and non-binary phenomenon that affects what it touches whilst moving to enable connections with different objects that can either support or undermine this movement. It might not be possible to inhabit a space without leaving behind the one we were occupying, the backgrounds, privileges, and histories that affected us, including the disturbing presence of other bodies in our life. However, it is conceivable to move forward carrying along and *beside* us a series of objects and affects that will help the improvement of queer movements because they turn the space into a queer space, providing common grounds for people who may live through disorientating lines. Ahmed (2006) uses the metaphor of a queer table, as a queer space or object, to argue that

(...) queer tables are not simply tables around which, or on which, we gather. Rather, queer tables and other queer objects support proximity between those who are supposed to live on parallel lines, as points that should not meet. A queer object hence makes contact possible. Or, to be more precise, a queer object would have a surface that supports such contact. (Ahmed, 2006, p. 169).

Hence, a *besideness* attitude towards the other emerges in the fluid movement of distancing and approximating from different objects, and of identifying who and what lies beside us, to find a common and supportive ground to build and maintain queer spaces. During this process, we might discover that experiences that look distant may have more proximity with us than we would consider. An experience that is not mine and does not affect

me does not mean an experience with which I cannot empathise and establish a *besideness* attitude to overcome harmful social disorientations that happen, for example, in the life of queer people whose existence challenges heteronormative lines of relationality. However, as stated in this chapter's introduction, this means understanding when to talk beside the other. In this section, I will explore how the recognition of bodies I encountered in a *distant proximity* or *proximate distance* to the surface of the projections, regarding my backgrounds, rescued me from or pulled me towards disorientation in the experience with this chapter's case studies. This happened due to a kinaesthetic empathy with the movements and histories of these diegetic bodies or the installation settings, which led to the rise of *besideness* as a mode of relationality with the moving images.

I would like to review briefly the kinaesthetic experience of being in the middle of the gallery and amongst the other visitors in *Swinguerra* (2019). As previously stated, at that moment it was the suffocating atmosphere and the disorientation generated from the proximity of the other bodies that made me choose which side to go to, even though I was not secure about the differences in the two projections I could see from a distance. The initial sustained visual contact with the content of the moving images projected when I stood beside one of the walls to watch the films can easily be read as the moment in which my body established a kinaesthetically empathic proximity that subsequently led to a *besideness* attitude. Whilst initially watching the film, the first recognisable context was that of a dancing battle between bodies that were separated into two groups rehearsing in a school gymnasium. Some of the bodies in the film moved frenetically in a dance routine that responded to the energetic music playing. This music reverberated in my body as an affective element that provided me with kinaesthetic proximities for listening to my mother tongue and freed me from the almost suffocating environment in the middle of the gallery. Other bodies in the moving images were seated around the gymnasium and orientated desiring gazes



towards the other bodies dancing in the film; I could not comprehend if these were signs of admiration or jealousy. The feeling of watching a battle of dancing bodies began at that point when the second group of people started rehearsing.

Although it was not clear for me whilst in the gallery, the space between the two projections mirrored the kinaesthetic battle I could see in the films. This previously explored space in which most of the bodies gathered in the art gallery, and which I described before as a sort of magnetic field, was created by the affective magnetisation emanating from each projection, which at the end annulled the decision-making process of moving towards one of the sides, creating the fleeting zone of conflict mentioned in the previous section. Therefore, the first layer of a *besideness* attitude emerged in the encounter with the others and the disorientation caused by their bodies, and consequently my body, in the middle of the gallery. As discussed in the first section, it was necessary to embody queerness as a mode to inhabit the same place with other bodies, thus having to implement movements that could only exist in the relationality with the others beside me. Through queer movements, informed by a *besideness* attitude, we all needed to move with each other, move because of the others, or open space for the other bodies to move, if we intended to reach the projections as a collectively desired object.

The subsequent decision of walking to one side seemed to relate to choosing which side of the dancing battle portrayed in the films I was supporting in the gallery. However, it became virtually impossible to distinguish what side of the battle was chosen. This is because by moving to the left and staying there, it became impossible to access the film projected on the opposite side of the gallery since the amalgamation of bodies prevented me from visually reaching the projections and the sound playing around the environment was the same. Through this process, Barbara Wagner and Benjamin de Burca's installation appeared to implement in the space the second layer of a *besideness* attitude concerning their work, since

moving to one side was based on the kinaesthetic reverberations of the act of looking at the bodies dancing in the moving images that, to some extent, affected my body. This affective relationship emerged as the bodies implemented movements informed by a queer kinaesthesia. Lindner (2018) draws on the work of Jonathan Bollen (2001) to define queer kinaesthesia as the modes in which our bodies can move in the space, disrupting social expectations related to our assigned genders. This is to disorientate normative modes of approach to binarisms such as femininity and masculinity, which according to Lindner (2018) are informed by the background of the bodies that implement this queer kinaesthesia, and are consequently intersected by relationships with class and race, as argued by Ahmed's (2006) queer phenomenology.

Lindner (2012) points out how queer bodies inhabit space differently because of the disturbance of binarisms, sometimes leading them to be considered socially 'wrong', 'deviant' or inappropriate' due to the differences implemented in relation to touch, distancing, approximating, and contacting other objects. The black bodies dancing in the moving images, who I later found out through the curatorial text at the entrance of the exhibition mostly identified themselves as non-binary, created a zone of conflict not only to keep the bodies of the visitors together but to keep us beside one another to choose which side to go to in the dancing battle that happened in the films. Meanwhile, we had to deal affectively with the differences in inhabiting the space. It was the contact with the queer bodies on the screen that for me turned the space of the gallery into a queer space after the relative sensorially traumatic experience of inhabiting the middle of the gallery along with such a large number of bodies that prevented me from moving. By turning the space into a queer space, the films provided me with an affective mechanism to initiate a walk on common grounds and thus reconnect with the queerness of my body as a mode to overcome the previous stressful disorientation.



Figure 20: Barbara Wagner and Benjamin de Burca, *Svinguerra*, 2019. Still from the film. Available from: <http://www.papodecinema.com.br/> (Accessed: 09/08/2022).

This argument does not imply that inhabiting the gallery with the other bodies was an unproductive experience. Rather, the queerness of the bodies in the moving images was potentially responsible for maintaining some other bodies in the middle of the gallery for a period larger than the one I undertook, as these other people may not have established proximities with the bodies in the moving images. However, even if a process of kinaesthetic empathy potentially does not emerge for some visitors as a process of ‘in-this-togetherness’ (Harbin, 2016), as seeing themselves in that context, they could have had potentially worked as a mechanism to ‘raise awareness’ (Harbin, 2016) and build an extended *besideness* attitude towards the dancers in the films and the bodies beside them in the gallery. In this direction, a *besideness* in the gallery emerged from the modes of how the dancers ‘speak’ through their movements in the film.

The music video documentary format of *Svinguerra* (2019) opened up space for these bodies to speak for themselves by bringing their dancing movements to the surface of the projections through their own means of social and spatial engagements. Barbara Wagner and Benjamin de Burca created a film in which they do not explore the issues of queer black bodies as if they were part of this context. Instead, they employ a *besideness* attitude, in the

sense of letting the dancers shape their means of showing how their bodies can be portrayed in the moving images. This happens since the dancing movements, which are one of the main elements of the film, are only controllable by each of the queer bodies in their collective relationality for being part of a dance group. Therefore, dancing in this film became a great example of what Lindner (2018, p. 79) states is a spectacular way to re-orientate normative embodiments, opening a space for the gallery visitors affectively to ‘investigate questions of gender, sexuality, and desire by paying attention to ‘movement style, spatial negotiation, or relational positioning’ (Lindner, 2018, p. 81). In the sustained contact with the queer bodies in the moving images a sense of ‘feeling at home’ emerged through recognition of those bodies as part of a cultural context that affectively talked to me as a Latinx American. According to Ann Cvetkovich (2021), this sort of commonality is crucially informed by affect as it intends to underpin alternative relationalities and ‘modes of being, and being with others, when established cultures and institutions might not be available’ (Cvetkovich, 2021, p. 33). In the recognition of a Latinx context, from which I had been geographically distant for more than a year whilst living in Scotland, I quickly established proximities with the moving images because the normative aspects of the art gallery did not support my affective movements amongst the other bodies. Regarding being distant from home, Ahmed (2006) argues that

“‘distance’ is also an effect of an orientation we have already taken, which makes what is “near” closer to us in more than a spatial sense. If we inherit proximities rather than attributes, then we also inherit “who” can and cannot be “brought home”. This means that we also inherit forms of bodily social distance: those that are “at home” (they must be near enough), but who are marked as “further” away even if in the face of this proximity. (Ahmed, 2006, pp. 126-127).

Ahmed’s (2006) words exemplify Cvetkovich’s (2021) discussion of an affective common as not existing in fixed physical locations, but as a sensory experience that is shared by the people who gather around common affectivities. Therefore, the ‘at home’ feeling as

mentioned by Ahmed (2006) does not equal a specific physical territory but is instead a metaphor for a place that supports gatherings. In this context, a *besideness* attitude is about the possibility of bringing someone close to allow them to inhabit a space beside us and make them comfortable even if sometimes at a distance, even if we do not completely embody their histories.

In Steve McQueen's *Ashes* (2002-2015), for example, a *besideness* attitude emerged as the result of walking around a suspended screen where the film was projected, similar to the movement employed in the contact with *Static* (2009) as explored in the second section of this chapter. *Ashes* (2002-2015) was installed in a gallery preceded by a dark corridor like the ones analysed in the previous chapter. However, in the case studies in Chapter Two, the dark corridors were composed of a single pathway, where I entered on one side and left on the other side. Conversely, in *Ashes* (2002-2015), the initial entrance, located in the middle of a wall, presented two possibilities for moving forward, one by walking to the left and the other to the right, almost creating two corridors in the same space. In the confrontation with this dubious dark corridor, feelings of uncertainty emerged as I was unsure if both sides would lead me to the same room and thus towards the same projections. At that moment, there was a fleeting reestablishment of the process of decision-making that had been undermined along the rest of the exhibition due to the social distance rules imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Catherine Elwes (2015) highlights that this ambivalent affective process is common in moving image installations, arguing that

Moving image installations are similarly subject to the contradictory desire, on one hand, to control the viewer's cumulative, internal narrative of the work by means of a 'stations of the cross' approach with the paths of exploration clearly defined and enforced, and on the other hand, to release the viewer to follow their own, undirected itinerary within an open-plan design. Clearly the former approach would create a degree of continuity between visitors in terms of their experience of the work, and the latter would give rise to an infinite

variety of encounters and thus greater range of interpretations.  
(Elwes, 2015, p. 16-17)

Although a common experience in moving image installations, the affective disturbance provoked by being closely controlled and orientated in the other spaces of the gallery created an elusive and suspicious moment when facing the possibility of moving towards whichever side of the corridor I desired. Recovering this freedom of movement in the gallery fleetingly disorientated my process of decision-making as it took me away from the normalised paths that had been established until that point, providing the possibility of taking affective decisions in the space. This situation evidenced how disorientation can work in establishing distances from normative pathways that can undermine affective relationalities. It is important to highlight the context in which these normative pathways were created in Steve McQueen's exhibition. In this situation, the controlling paths acted as important modes to create safer grounds to walk on in the gallery during a pandemic where the proximity of bodies could cause an infection with the new coronavirus. Nevertheless, these normative settings still meant a suspension of freedom that consequently suspended other possible disorientated experiences that could lead to different affective proximities with the artworks.

By choosing to move towards the exit on the right side of the corridor in *Ashes* (2002-2015), I walked into a gallery where a blue luminance dominated the environment through the brightness emanating from the light of the projection, which I could see on the screen inertly hanging from the ceiling. In this space (see page 233), whilst the saturated blue images created an initial idyllic atmosphere, it disorientated me through a feeling that I previously described as visual nausea. The luminance, combined with the images of a person moving up and down on a surface similar to a surfing board or small boat that fluctuated and followed the movements of a blue ocean's water, created a distressing sensorial response

since the previous darkness of the corridor remained in my field of vision in this subsequent encounter. The rapid shift between the first orientated journey through the other spaces of the gallery, the disorientation of this same freedom towards the rebuilding of a process of decision-making, and the subsequent return to a sensorially traumatic encounter with the light of the projection caused moments of disorientation. These moments suspended my body's attention to the surroundings, including the sound, and directed me to the projection as a possible object to establish affective relationships. The movements in the water and the recognition of several disembodied legs of people on the other side of the room made me move forward, led by a curiosity to discover what lay on the other side of the screen. It was only by leaving behind one side of the screen that I could affectively move forward.

This first instated idyllic atmosphere was subsequently interrupted as a result of these movements, since walking around the screen and establishing a proximity with the moving images on the other side approximated me to the history of the man I could see on the previous projection, as I then started seeing images of what looked like his funeral. The initial blue illumination attached my body to the surface of the projection to pull me towards the screen, similar to the way it happened in *Static* (2009). Nevertheless, if in *Static* (2009) a proximity to the subject of the projection (the Statue of Liberty) was led by fearfulness due to the feeling of being followed by the statue, in *Ashes* (2002-2015) the contact with the story of the man affectively re-orientated me, creating some moments of a melancholic *besideness*.

Due to the existence of different films projected on each side of the screen, I established a movement and positionality that were closely related to the kinaesthetic effort of constantly turning my head from one side to the other as happened during my experience with *Swinguerra* (2019), by Barbara Wagner and Benjamin de Burca. However, different from *Swinguerra* (2019), in the experience with *Ashes* (2002-2015), disorientation appeared because of the physical proximity with the projections and the different moving images on

each side of the screen. These two elements reinforced the ambivalence created in the gallery because of the more delicate immediate contact and the subsequent re-orientation of this feeling. Therefore, an awareness of the other bodies in the gallery first emerged in the space of the gallery similarly to the way it happened in *Static* (2019). As my body orbited around the screen on which the films were projected, I constantly interrupted the viewing of the other visitors. This established proximities and started implementing a *besideness* (physical and affective) attitude towards the moving images and Ashes' history instead of paying attention to the positionalities of the other bodies sitting close to one another on the two benches located on opposite sides of the gallery.



*Figure 21: Steve McQueen, Ashes, 2002-2015. Installed in Steve McQueen's exhibition at Tate Modern (London, United Kingdom) in 2020. Photography: Luke Walker. Available from: <https://www.lukeandrewwalker.com/> (Accessed: 09/08/2022).*

On one side of the screen, dominated by the blue luminance, I approximated the body portrayed in the images, which I afterwards presumed was the man named Ashes, playfully



smiling whilst in the ocean. On the other side, I watched the images of Ashes' funeral as, by that point, the contact with this film had pulled me away from the surface of the projection and affectively approximated me again to the surroundings, more attentively listening to the voice-over that told the history of Ashes' murder. As previously mentioned, the moment in which I affectively approximated the content of the moving images shifted the relationship with the environment towards an empathic encounter with the subjectivity of Ashes, a 25-year-old black man who was murdered for reasons I could not surely understand but that input into my body a disorientating sensation. The formal qualities of *Ashes* (2002-2015), the blue illumination, made me approximate to the projection, disturbing the other visitors' experience through my physical positionality between them and the screen. Meanwhile, the approximation with the content of the moving images led my experience through rather unsettling affects, as the confusion that emerged from not completely understanding Ashes' history appeared because further approximations could not be established, as Ashes' experiences were not equal or close to mine.

This non-coincidence of experiences is an important element to review when approaching the establishment of *besideness*, an empathic attitude towards experiences that are not ours. Although it was confusing for me to understand Ashes' history fully due to the experiential and affective distances between our bodies, mine in the gallery and his in the projection, an attitude of *besideness* emerged through the recognition of my limitation in addressing the issues that potentially threatened Ashe's life as a black person. I could never speak *for* him or *about* him since I could never fully embody his history. Consequently, I cannot embody experiences I have not lived but I can activate a *besideness* attitude by trusting the bodies that claim to have lived common, sometimes distant but proximate, disorientating experiences. Regarding walking beside someone else, Ahmed (2006) reminds us that

In refocusing our attention on proximity, on arms that are crossed with other arms, we are reminded of how queer engenders moments of contact; how we come into contact with other bodies to support the action of following paths that have not been cleared. We still have to follow others in making such paths. The queer body is not alone; queer does not reside in a body or an object, and is dependent on the mutuality of support. (Ahmed, 2006, p. 170)

*Ashes* (2002-2015) probably put me into the same unsettling affective place of the people who inhabited the middle of the gallery in *Swinguerra* (2019) for an extended time. As with those people, a proximity to the projection could only be established through disorientation, as an attempt to disturb and affect the bodies who do not live the experiences portrayed but who can move beside in parallel disorientating common grounds, to re-orientate similarly social experiences that are harmfully based on prejudices regarding class, race, sexuality or nationality. As mentioned before, by putting so many different bodies together in the same space, these moving image installations create gatherings that lead to the confrontation of the affects that travel around, affecting everyone mutually. Cvetkovich(2021) reminds us that understanding these relationalities through the point of view of queerness is to approach sensory politics, ‘a way of making space not only for different kinds of bodies but for different modes of perception, and ones that are fully embodied or material’ (Cvetkovich, 2021, p. 46).

Through opening space for a *besideness* attitude to emerge, the projective moving image installations explored in this chapter built spaces of conviviality through the gathering of different bodies and in different circumstances, turning ‘physical gatherings meaningful as the ways people come together to form collectivities, especially against concerns that such gatherings are too small scale or atomized’ (Cvetkovich, 2021, p. 47). Inhabiting the space of the gallery in this chapter’s case studies allowed common queer affects to emerge as possible

mechanisms to disorientate expectations and normative modes of relationalities within the gallery through the constant suspension and restatement of the freedom to move around. These commonalities, however, in dialogue with Butler (2019) and Cvetkovich (2021), are crucially informed by conflict, particularities, ‘ambivalence, mixed feelings and negative affects’ (Cvetkovich, 2021, p. 34). The specific process of empathising differently with the bodies in the films presented in *Swinguerra* (2019) and *Ashes* (2019) exemplifies how these conflicts were created as a mode to destabilise my body through the establishment of affective *distant proximities* or *proximate distances*.

### 3.5. Conclusion

In this third chapter, I explored the last core phenomenon of disorientation, which Ahmed (2006) calls *disturbing the others*, through an analysis of the work *Swinguerra* (2019) by Barbara Wagner and Benjamin de Burca and some of the works in Steve McQueen’s retrospective exhibition held at the Tate Modern (London, United Kingdom) in 2020. I argued that my physical and affective positionality in relation to the projections in the art gallery affected the other bodies I shared this space with, leading to the necessity of employing a *besideness* attitude and demonstrating how the binarism distance and proximity can only be understood in relation to each other. *Besideness* is comprehended, in dialogue with Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (2003), as an attitude that destabilises normative positionalities, again physical and affective, to challenge the establishment of binarisms and hierarchies that can privilege the experience of some bodies to the detriment of others. Therefore, *besideness* opens spaces for common affectivities to emerge alongside each other whilst pointing out the conflicts and ambivalence of creating affective gatherings.

*Besideness* in this chapter's case studies was mainly activated through the process of decision-making and spatial orientation in the art gallery. What would have happened, for example, if I had chosen to walk towards the other side in the dark corridor of *Ashes* (2002-2015)? What if I had chosen to go to the right side of the gallery for the encounter with the projection in *Swinguerra* (2019)? The choice of moving around is directly related to establishing distances and proximities to the projections as an object of desire in these moving image installations. Throughout this chapter, I demonstrated how distance and proximities in this sort of artwork need to be approached through a non-binary perspective since approximating something means distancing from another object, whilst distancing from what you can reach consequently means approximating other elements. This is the reason I have chosen to approach this phenomenon through the ideas of *distant proximity* and *proximate distance*.

Furthermore, I analysed the decision-making process of moving around the gallery contrasting two different contexts concerning the possibility of establishing distances and proximities. Whilst in *Swinguerra* (2019) I could undertake a presumably uncontrolled engagement, in Steve McQueen's exhibition these movements were controlled throughout the gallery due to the social distance rules implemented as a public health policy in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The consequent effect of these particularities was the differences in affectively approaching, distancing, and approximating the objects that composed the gallery, which included my body, the other visitors, and the projections. During this process, a mutual disturbance of these bodies that shared the same ground emerged as a mode to incite disorientation and make them feel out of place. This happened to establish a kinaesthetic empathic response towards each other or the moving image content, the latter informed by the histories of unknown people.

Consequently, in the process of moving around the gallery whilst distancing or

approximating other bodies, the projections could become a peripheral element in the immediate spatial experience, as the bodies of the other people disturbed my freedom of movement in the space, highlighting the potentialities of projection as a magnetising element that elicits gatherings through either proximate collectivities or intimate distances. This happened, for example, in the encounter with the previously mentioned amalgamation of visitors in the middle of the gallery in *Swinguerra* (2019), or through the anxieties arising from the fear of contamination if contacting any other body in Steve McQueen's exhibition. Therefore, disorientation emerged in the confrontation of the movements of the bodies in the gallery, either by approximating or distancing from each other, whilst attempting to reach the projections as a common object of desire. In this context, distance and proximity might imply a level of physical movement, wandering around by leaving a location of the gallery to get physically close to the projections. However, distance and proximity can be understood as a level of absorption, since distancing from one place in the gallery means establishing a sustained proximity with the content of the moving images that will still make you move viscerally. They co-exist as a fluid endeavour. We can get close, but we may see better from a fair distance. Conversely, we may reach a larger number of objects from a distance, but some affectivities may only be created by establishing proximities.

Through employing a *besideness* attitude in this context, the experience within projective moving image installations changes what seems far away from our histories into something considerably close to our affective experiences. *Besideness* undermines the binarism of wandering and absorption by establishing *distant proximities* and *proximate distances*. In the artworks analysed, we affectively move the bodies in the gallery or the films that seem distant from us to our side to move beside and along with them. In establishing this attitude, small-scale collectivities can be built based on the queer affects that emerge from socially disorientated commonalities concerning sexuality, race, gender, and nationality. I

would like to finish this conclusion by rewriting the initial sentence of this chapter's introduction. In this thesis, I explored the disorientating phenomena of experiencing projective moving image installations, which can be summarised and described as follows:

*After entering the art gallery and embracing the excess, I zoomed in on the surface of the projection and followed the light, until I became an object and disturbed the other bodies that shared the same ground whilst looking to my side and choosing a place to stay.*

## CONCLUSION

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**Find your way out**

Feeling disorientated can be a difficult experience if extended over time, which occurs in the lives of people that struggle to develop affective connections amidst a social environment where queer embodiments are seen as deviant and in need of alignment. Disorientation can refer to specific and fleeting moments in our daily lives in which we feel sensorially out of place, unable to make sense of affective encounters, and quickly move towards other objects in the space to find a supportive ground. Finding your way out of disorientation is not an easy process and can lead to new disorientated moments. In my research, I approached disorientation as a set of fleeting moments that emerged in my queer affective and embodied encounters with projective moving image installations.

I called my conclusion ‘Find your way out’ as a reference to the introduction of Sara Ahmed’s (2006) book *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*, titled ‘Find Your Way’, to indicate that finding one’s way concerns the abandonment of certain social and affective places, to embrace disorientation as a way to destabilise normative spatial directions. I tried to find my way out of these normative settings to open a space for moving in the realm of diverse orientations that could result in experiencing queer affectivities. More than a route for the reader to leave this thesis embracing queerness, finding my way out refers to leaving behind queer phenomenology as simply a theoretical framework and moving towards an embodiment of a theory that changed my modes of seeing, approaching, and moving as a queer man. Furthermore, it is about finding a way out of, and advancing, a body of academic literature that does not relate to my and many other people’s queer experiences.

As stated in the introduction to this thesis, the literature approaching the study of projection in contemporary art has largely described the experience within projective moving image installation as disorientating. However, this literature lacked further investigation of the complexities of this concept or a statement of its meaning in their respective works. My thesis fills this gap in the literature to account for the queerness that emerges from being



disorientated in an art gallery. The canonical literature around projection (Iles, 2002; Turvey *et al.*, 2003; Douglas and Eamon, 2009), published in the first decade of the 2000s, is based on binary approaches to the analysis of the experience within moving image installations, in which wandering and absorption are commonly approached as opposite forces that consequently mean radically different levels of criticality and corporeal engagement.

Conversely, the most recent publications (Mondloch, 2010; Balsom, 2013; Bruno, 2014; Elwes, 2015; Butler, 2019), released in the second decade of the 2000s, initiate a discussion around experience towards less rigid differences between binaries such as absorption and wandering or attention and distraction, advocating instead for an approach that considers these elements through more unstable perspectives, and for an analysis of their relationalities instead of discreet aspects. However, this contemporary literature does not advance analytical and methodological approaches to destabilise these binaries in academic criticism, although they set a theoretical scenario for this exploration. My thesis advances this literature by demonstrating that disorientation is an appropriate concept when thinking about the connections and fluidness between supposedly binary concepts used to describe the experience in projective moving image installations. Furthermore, through recovering the study of the role of projection in these environments, my thesis combines the two previously mentioned contexts of published scholarship, advancing an analysis that understands the encounter with projected moving images as a crucial element for the emergence of the sense of disorientation that is frequently mentioned in the literature reviewed in this thesis.

Consequently, my thesis was guided by the following research question: How can disorientation facilitate an understanding of queer affective experiences within projective moving image installations? By analysing my live experiences with six case studies, I demonstrated that feeling disorientated suitably accounts for the description of the queer affects that arise within projective moving image installation due to the ambivalent, unstable,

and fluid aspects of disorientation. Therefore, disorientation accounts for a resistance to experiential stabilisations that reinforce binary positions and can undermine the emergence and analysis of queer affects. As my original contribution to knowledge in the field of moving image art criticism, I argued that projective moving image installations are disorientation devices due to the magnetising aspects of projected moving images, leading people to gather together in the gallery and experience fleeting moments of disorientation that destabilise binaries such as absorption and wandering, thus characterising this process as a queer affective experience informed by the fluidness of kinaesthetic engagements and the sedimented histories of our bodies.

Behind my research question, and consequently, my original contribution to knowledge, lay the need to implement a methodology that could account for the analysis of the fleeting affective quality of disorientation. Consequently, my approximation with queer phenomenology as a theoretical and methodological approach initially emerged due to its connection with the concept of disorientation as an experience that can prompt the emergence of queerness. However, queerness also appeared as a mode to relate to my experience as a gay man informed by queer kinaesthetic endeavours and corporeal sedimented histories, which consequently shaped my modes of navigating projective moving image installations. Therefore, I approached queerness as this affectively disorientating force aiming at simultaneously approximating a broad mode of cultural critique and specific forms of embodied spatial navigation, related to identities pertaining to the LGBTQIAPN+ community.

One of the main issues that emerged during this research was how to capture in words the queer affective moments in which disorientation emerged, considering an embodied subjectivity without claiming to speak for all other bodies that could potentially experience the case studies I analysed. The approximation with Sara Ahmed's (2006) *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* and its claim for the need to implement an

ethnography of the objects we encounter led me to apply autoethnography as an additional methodology. This enabled me to employ techniques like first-person voice, self-narration, and autobiographical notes to address the fleeting disorientated moments in relation to my own queer body in my live experiences with the case studies. This in turn relates to a tradition of queer life-writing as an affective methodology in academic writing and art criticism.

Consequently, I highlighted throughout my thesis that queer phenomenology is a methodology that leads to the exploration of queer affects, mainly the ones emerging from disorientation as an experience of queer embodiment, to implement a broader cultural critique. I approached affects that are difficult to apprehend as they move across our bodies and emerge from them in such a fleeting temporal development that we may never identify how they affected us. It might be easier to describe these affects in relation to what we see, touch, listen to, and smell, and identify how they move and orientate us towards objects that we may find a common ground with. Addressing my body's responses to the projective moving image installations allowed me to access both queer kinaesthetic (Lindner, 2018) elements that do not appear on the corporeal surface (for instance, the rapidly beating heart and accelerated breathing) and their relationships with the histories and movements that shaped my life as a queer body and that could resonate with someone else.

The encounter of the queerness of my body with the magnetic queerness of projective moving images allowed me to access disorientation as a phenomenon that moved me in the gallery, understanding movement as an affective quality that is not necessarily related to physically changing position from one location to another. This happened due to the implementation of the descriptive sections of my thesis as a queer methodology that expands as an analytical endeavour. Hence, by giving considerable importance to an affective orientated description as a method for approaching disorientation and queer affects, I challenged the use of queer phenomenology as simply a theoretical framework. This use is

implemented in the recent literature regarding the approximation of moving images and queer phenomenology (Lindner, 2012, 2018; Fox, 2019; Butler, 2019) that relates to a textual analysis of artworks. I proposed an exploration of methodological procedures that accounted for the affective qualities of the queer embodied encounter with the case studies in this thesis. These methodological procedures are employed as the result of encountering a body of literature that rarely accounts for some rather unstable affective forces that would normally emerge in my encounters with artworks in art galleries. As experimental criticism, my writings were informed by academic writing traditions whilst employing descriptive, autobiographical, and self-narrative accounts of the encounters with projective moving image installations. This provided close access to affects that could enhance the possibility of destabilising binary forces that prevent us from conflictingly and ambiguously moving in the gallery and in the realm of the social, affective, and historical disorientations that shape queer experiences.

Nevertheless, the most challenging aspect in the development of my research was the work of expressing in words, in the descriptive sections, these experiences of disorientation. One reason is that it is impossible to grasp these fleeting moments exactly as they developed in the specific space and time of encountering the case studies, and I do not claim that I employed such an endeavour. Instead, these descriptions are informed by a queer method of approaching these experiences, meaning ambiguous, unstable, and uncertain modes to capture disorientation as a phenomenon that is formed by these same characteristics. Furthermore, the craft of these descriptions was particularly challenging for I was developing my writing in English as a second language. This information might appear irrelevant; however, what is underneath the situation is the relationship between language and affect, and describing affects is even more challenging if you do not have enough vocabulary to approach these experiences. Beyond my struggle, this situation reflects how affect and

language are not part of a binary approach to the world but exist as a relational living experience in terms of feeling, reacting, speaking, confronting, and relating to an array of movements, bodies, and experiences in the phenomenological space.

The three main chapters were organised around the experience of visiting galleries and facing projection in the context of moving image installations, exploring the initial shock of the excess of light (or darkness, as in Chapter Two), the process of moving towards the projection and the sharing of the environment with other bodies. In each chapter I analysed two case studies through the lens of one of the three core affective processes that shape the phenomenon of disorientation, as described in Sara Ahmed's (2006) *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*, called *zooming in*, *becoming an object*, and *disturbing the others*. The exploration of these three affective processes concerning my thesis' case studies suitably demonstrated how the experience of disorientation is formed by other phenomena that were only possible to access in the specific time and place of experiencing the artworks. Therefore, the key concepts explored in each of the three chapters (camp, cruising, and besideness) were not theoretical frameworks that existed before encountering the artworks. Instead, they emerged from the live encounters with the case studies and were then used to employ an analysis based on the experience of disorientation as it happened in the gallery.

For instance, the concept of *camp*, as explored in Chapter One, emerged at some point of the experience from a camp recognition related to the image of Pipilotti Rist smashing some cars in *Ever is Over All* (1997), which pulled me back to affective relations with the pop culture figures Beyoncé and Titus Andromedon. Furthermore, the excess of colours and lights that shaped the surface of the projections in both Rist's and Rachel Maclean's works put my body in the realm of the camp visuality that is so important for some queer bodies. Cruising appeared in the second chapter as an affective and spatial mode to relate with these works and the other bodies in the gallery through embodied histories of my own experience

with cruising in gay nightclubs and darkrooms. In Chapter Three, the approach of besideness became apparent in the affective and conflictual contact with an overwhelming number of people in the gallery, whilst empathically relating to the Brazilian bodies dancing in the projected moving images. Through the study of a series of presumable binarisms that relate to the key concept explored in each chapter, I demonstrated how experiences, actions, and concepts that seem to be opposites existed in an overlap of moments that disorientated my body to make me experience the space from a queer perspective. In the experiences with the case studies analysed in this thesis, the affective encounters reconnected me with a queerness of my own body, as a mode to access vulnerabilities that could lead to disorientation.

In Chapter One, I explored the disorientating experience of *zooming in* on the excessive surface of the projections in the work *Spite Your Face* (2018) by Rachel Maclean and the exhibition *Open My Glade* (2019) by Pipilotti Rist. In this context, I approached excess as one of the qualities of a camp aesthetic, which worked as a queer strategy to elicit disorientation through the process of constantly changing focus from one excessive element to another, leading to disorientated moments in the experience with the artworks. The affective qualities of camp allowed me to explore disorientation through a relational perspective, understanding the moments of walking, lying down, sitting down, watching the films as a continuum of excessive gestures in the gallery that led my body to exhaustion. In this context, a camp recognition of popular culture content worked as a mode to rescue my body from moments of exhaustion and disorientation because they re-orientated me towards histories of commonality that I had built outside the gallery and, thus, provided me with affective support. In this chapter, binary attachment to and detachment from the surface of the projection were explored through the fluid concept of detached attachment (Horn, 2017) to demonstrate that the experience within projective moving image installations, in the realm of an excessive viscosity, occurs in a fluid movement of constantly changing focus whilst

moving around the gallery.

The result of feeling disorientated due to the process of *zooming in* is to *become an object* amongst the others in the space. Becoming an object is the second phenomenon of disorientation explored in this thesis through the analysis of the artworks *SaFO5* (2019) by Charlotte Prodger and *No history in a room filled with people with funny names 5* (2019) by Korakrit Arunanondchai and Alex Gvojic. Therefore, in Chapter Two I focused on the dark corridor that appears in some projective moving image installations as a cruising space, highlighting the process of transitioning from brightly lit environments to darkly lit ones as responsible for creating disorientations before and during the encounter with projected moving images. In the process of cruising, it was necessary to implement queer kinaesthetic modes to navigate the space in relation to strange bodies based on an affective trust amidst the darkness. Hence, approaching the process of cruising these spaces allowed me to implement an analysis based on the fluid connection between binaries such as darkness and brightness or gazing towards the projection and glancing around the gallery.

Chapter Three explored the process of *disturbing the others*, which is touched on in Chapter Two. I explored this last core phenomenon of disorientation through an analysis of the experiences with the work *Swinguerra* (2019) by Barbara Wagner and Benjamin de Burca and a homonymous exhibition by Steve McQueen held in 2020. I argued that a disturbance of other bodies in the gallery is directly related to the positionality we take in the place concerning the distance and proximity to the projected moving images. I demonstrated how the necessity to implement a *besideness* attitude in these environments, one that challenges normative positionalities, resulted in the destabilisation of the binary distance and proximity. Due to this, I decided to implement an analysis of distant proximity or proximate distance, inspired by Horn's (2019) concept of a detached attachment. Distance and proximity were approached as a continuum formed by both physical and affective qualities in the experience

with the chapter's case studies, where the freedom to make immediate decisions to move in the gallery was interrupted by both the proximity to and the distance from other bodies.

Although I analysed one disorientating phenomenon per chapter, they are not as isolated as they might appear to be. Zooming in, becoming an object, and disturbing the others are processes that do not necessarily always happen in this specific order. For instance, I might start the work of zooming in on something else, changing my focus of attention because I became a disorientated object in the space and started looking for other places of support. I can become a disorientated object due to the presence of other bodies that disturb my normative modes of spatial navigation. Although these phenomena appear to be easy to recognise from the affective realm of a queer phenomenological analysis, when they are placed under a microscope, as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (2003) proposes, their modes of passing through our bodies in the moments of disorientation appear fleetingly queer, messy, unstable, and ambiguous. This means that zooming in, becoming an object and disturbing the others might overlap and become one messy thing that disorients our bodies and appears simultaneously for only a few seconds. Therefore, the order of appearance of the phenomenon that I implemented in the analysis of my thesis' case studies is directly related to the temporal development of my experience in the art gallery. In other contexts, this order might deviate from the one studied here.

Furthermore, like any research, my thesis contains some limitations that I point out as necessary to implement, in order to conduct a focused study. Firstly, my research was based on the queer phenomenological account of the fleeting moments of disorientation that happened in the specific time and space of experiencing the case studies. Whilst implementing this framework, I provided a deep understanding of the experience of disorientation in projective moving image installations but only hypothetically addressed the possible political resonances of this phenomenon after leaving the art gallery. In Chapter



Three, for example, I mentioned how the conflicting amalgamation of bodies in the middle of the gallery in *Swinguerra* (2019) could raise awareness and an empathic response towards the history of the queer bodies dancing in the films and, consequently, towards bodies that share a similar queer kinaesthetic engagement with the space outside the gallery. Secondly, as research methodologically based on the combination of queer phenomenology and autoethnography, thus addressing methods such as self-narration and autobiography, my thesis does not aim to speak for all the bodies that could potentially have encountered the same artworks I did. Instead, I explored the concept of besideness in this thesis as an attempt to create experiential resonances with the reader through the exploration of common affects (queer affects, in the case of this research) that emerged within projective moving image installations.

I approach these limitations not to indicate a lack of engagement with these discussions. Instead, I want to highlight them as knowledge gaps that emerge from the results of my research and can be further explored in future original studies, either through my work or that of other scholars. For instance, future research on the intersection of queer phenomenology and moving image art might explore how the disorientating encounter with projected moving images works in the chaos of urban spaces, where the gathering of bodies happens in a considerably different perspective than the more controllable gallery-based context explored in my thesis. What would it mean to return the concept of cruising to the urban space in relation to projections? Furthermore, other research might approach the problem of whether these moments of disorientation experienced in projective moving image installations resonate in political changes, even if in a micro affective and political space. This would lead to an understanding of possible social re-orientation of attitudes towards people that might face disorientation in life due to contact with socially oppressive forces.

As a queer man who embodies anxieties related to affective relationalities in the

social sphere, my experience with disorientation as explored in this thesis highlights a level of privilege of my body as one who is free to walk, to move around the space without being directly interrupted. As previously explored, some other bodies might have different experiences with the contexts analysed in my research. In Chapter Two, for example, I indicated how women and black people can have considerably different relationships with darkness than I have. Therefore, the methodology I used in this research can reverberate in future explorations of disorientation when related to experiences of other socially oppressed groups such as trans people, non-binary people, black people, disabled people, or immigrants.

I hope my research can further an unceasing opening of theoretical spaces in the field of moving image art for the histories of bodies that do not fit in the normative contemporary structures regarding gender, class, race, and sexuality. As stated before, whilst I do not claim to speak for everybody, my experience can resonate with someone else. I hope to encourage these people who share similar disorientations and queer affects with me to share their histories openly in academic research, as a queer affective methodology to challenge and advance the discipline of moving image art criticism to a more inclusive understanding of embodiment in the spaces of moving image installations. Through exploring the queerness of the disorientated experience in these spaces, my thesis becomes an invitation for the exploration of all layers that shape queerness as a common and conflictual embodied affect that can be written in history through the relationship between a diversity of queer embodiments and the encounter with artworks. The disorientations that emerge within projective moving image installations are queer, and they may raise empathic responses in bodies that face disorientation as a common experience that challenges normative modes of affective and spatial engagement towards more inclusive relationships in the social realm.

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