Exploring Spaces: A Series Of Video Experiments

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A Series Of Video Experiments

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APPROVED

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Abstract

My overall intention of this project was use the Honors Thesis Project to apply what I have learned while studying art video to create a collection of successful videos that allow me to work above and beyond the art video curriculum. I was eager to work independently on a long-term project, and the Honors Thesis Project provided me with both an exciting and challenging opportunity to display my academic initiative and creative drive.

Upon completion of the thesis project, I selected six video art pieces that I felt were most successful and relevant to the project theme. The theme of the project required each tape to include an element of visual experiment. Many of the tapes include studies and alterations in perspective, angle, motion, timing, and other manipulation. By creating a trend that runs throughout all of the work, the collection of videos can more easily be viewed as one functional project.

While working on the project, I discovered that although I was creating tapes that fit within the parameters of the project theme, I was unsure of my motives behind creating each tape. Therefore, I chose to use the written portion of the project as a tool to help me answer this question.

The six tapes included in this project were created over a span of two years. It should be noted that only a select few videos were included because of the specific project theme and the quality of the work. Over the last two years, I created video art, both in and out of the classroom, while working in my sketchbook and critiquing with others. As a result, I felt it necessary to include sketches and conversations in the actual written portion of the project. This information compliments the video art generously, as well as helps me answer the essay problem, which is to define my motives in creating the tapes.

Although the six tapes submitted in this project share similarities in experiments of visual manipulation, I was not entirely sure of my motives behind creating them. The written portion of the project has helped me resolve this problem by archiving various materials related to the videos and analyzing them. I have found that there is a reason the experiments I am doing are not entirely scientific. I have discovered that by creating experiments that are in no way professionally scientific, there is a strong sense of irony that creates humor in the videos. It is important to note that, regardless of the work, experiments continue to be used throughout. I have discovered that I not only use these experiments to justify the play in the tapes, but I also use the play to justify the experiment. There is a humor and irony that runs throughout my work, and I believe that is what motivates me to continue working in such a way.

Overall, the Honors Thesis Project was a rewarding experience that has left me with an excellent resource for understanding my video art. The most important outcome is that I resolved the biggest problem with comprehending my current work, and will use this knowledge for creating and distributing new and interesting video art in the future.
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Introduction

In the fall semester of my junior year, my parents decided to check up on my studies with a surprise visit. With no activities planned, I thought it would be appropriate to take them to Spark Art Gallery for a video show, in which I had a video featured entitled *16 Feet*. As if it were bad enough that my parents rejected anything considered art, they also felt uncomfortable in a setting made entirely of persons twenty years younger. Fortunately, they managed to sit through the entire length of the show. Upon leaving the gallery, I asked my parents, who had been quiet for the length of the show, what they had thought of my video. While my father failed to answer, my mother quickly responded, “Well, what grade did you get on it?”

I understand that my parents do not appreciate art, and I have come to accept this. But what frustrated me that evening was not my mother’s response, but my reply. In a rushed attempt to explain the reasoning and purpose behind creating and screening the video, I found myself unable to provide a clear, acceptable explanation. After more questions and confusion expressed by my parents, I realized that I had become just as confused as they were. I had created a work of video art and, even after screening it, I had failed to successfully express my thoughts about it. It seemed that although I had put considerable time and effort into creating the tape, I was unable to articulate it to others. As an artist working with time-based media, I am overly conscious of my decisions when
creating work, but I failed to use my completed work as a means for clearly understanding and explaining my motives as a video artist. For that reason, it was extremely important for me to understand the videos I have made and to create an archive of this knowledge to use as a tool to develop work in the future.

The base of this project consists of six video art pieces that I have completed over the last two years. These works are the foundation of the project and are available on DVD for immediate reference. The supplemental material, included in this written portion of the project, has been exhaustively packaged for my own personal reflection and understanding. It was important to use this information to resolve one very important problem. With all of my video art, it seems that I have difficulty developing a clear understanding of my intentions. Therefore, upon completion of this project, I was able to successfully answer the following question about the six video art works I have created: what are my motives in creating these tapes?

The following page was taken from my sketchbook and may provide the reader with more information on my reasons for creating an archive of material based on the six video art works. This sketch may also serve as a precursor to other drawings and handwritings that have been included throughout this portion of the project.
Project Problem Sketch

**Role** → Serve as an archive of stuff on my **VIDEO ART**

**Problem** → Can’t answer this question:

In my work:
- What is it that I’m concerned with?
- What are my motives behind creativity?

**Scientific** → My work sits here.

I experiment, but I do not completely reject art...

**Art** → I stick to aesthetic roots, yet I attempt a scientific approach...
Video Reel

The project consists of a compilation of my video art from the past two years. I have chosen six videos that I feel are all successful pieces that fit within the same category or genre of video art. Each tape addresses visual experimentation in some way, although the actual experiments differ in each tape. These include studies and alterations in perspective, angle, motion, timing, and other manipulation. And although visual experimentation is stressed in each, there are many other elements present that define each tape individually.

<table>
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The videos have been placed chronologically, by chapters, on the DVD. I have chosen to place them in this order to present a simple look at the progression of my work over the last two years. Although it may not flow as well as if it had been ordered for the best presentation value, the chronological placement...
effectively examines the analysis of key elements that have influenced subsequent work.
Individual Analyses

The following pages address each video individually in terms of a few factors. Each analysis includes a one-sentence summary and personal critiques of each video; supplemental material gathered from sketchbooks and other resources; and technical information such as title, date, and length. Packaging this information in such a structured fashion has enabled me to get a clearer sense of my intentions and motives behind each tape. It has made it much easier to analyze my decision making in the development process and narrowly define my intentions for each tape. It has enabled me to critique the final outcomes of each tape, and from these findings, resolve the overall problem in the project of defining my motives in creating these tapes.
3.2 Individual Analyses Sketch

**PERSONAL CRITIQUES**

**WHY?** ROLE → create a clearer understanding

→ OF WHERE MY WORK STANDS. WHAT

→ ARE MY EXACT INTENTIONS?

(Should be quick, spill it out!)

**SHOULD NOT ANSWER THESE**, BUT INSTEAD

ADDRESS WORK, THEN looked at as whole:

**What am I**

**concerned with?**

**SYSTEMS** → remove work from aesthetics

**AESTHETICS** → distance work from scientific approach
One Sentence Summary

*16 Feet* is an experiment in perspective that challenges the relationship between the camera and the viewer by physically attaching the camera to a piece of wood.

Personal Critique

I originally had trouble finishing this tape because I was convinced that it would be viewed negatively. I thought viewers would be disappointed with the simple idea, the lack of concrete meaning, and the experimental aspect of it. With this in mind, I decided to pay particular attention to the structure and attempt to build a narrative from this material. The end result was a tape that was well received and left many viewers curious of the shooting methods I used, and interested in the directions I could go with similar ideas and techniques.

This is the first tape in the series and, since it is the initial work, it may appear to be less significant than those that follow. However, I do not believe this to be true. Although it is an introduction to the series, it stands very well on its own. It remains a well-rounded tape that is simple yet visually unique throughout its two-minute exploration. It is easy for the viewer to follow because all of the shots stay in one environment and the tape begins where it ends. The climax
involves the loudest and most visually distorted shot, which is the character spinning wildly with the piece wood in hand, and ends shortly thereafter. Structurally, it feels very complete, and it stands as a successful experiment that leaves the viewer wanting similar explorations.
16 FEET

Sketch 1
VIDEO CRITIQUE - 16 FEET

- Title - 16 ft is the length of the board (in some of the shots, I'm not sure if it is only 8 ft, but I think it makes it more interesting if I define the length).
- Shot outside - beautiful that is why I think people enjoy the tape. So much - the grass is green, I'm in shorts and a t-shirt, seems like I'm just playing in a field.
- Use of Clayton (friend) and Remy (dog) - adds a little extra that really makes it work. It's difficult to explain, it is. The dog is obviously more important - makes the tape more playful, more of an experiment (dog is unpredictable, I believe).
- Audio - overall, it's a very quiet tape. During the climax (when I'm spinning), it gets louder, more interesting (sounding like wind). Once again, I wasn't all too concerned with the audio, and kept it natural (at a few points, the audio drops out - camera focused, but I left it there).
- Highlight of the tape is the spinning.
- Idea behind it - so simple, so fantastic - a camera attached to a long piece of wood. What can be done with that? Here is a video that shows you.

- Length - 1 minute over 2 minutes. Short, but it is very meaty, so I think it feels a bit longer than it is. If it were under 2 minutes, I might think it's the cut off for my video.
- This was the tape that made me realize / get me interested in creating more experimental tapes. You can attach a camera to a board and create a simple tape.
- Continuity in tape - outdoors shots, stick always in middle of frame.

Sketch 2
**CORRELATION REPORT**

2004

2:54 min.

**One Sentence Summary**

*Correlation Report* is an analysis of space and time through the relationship, or lack of relationship, between dual images that present various scenes of destruction.

**Personal Critique**

I was very interested in using dual images and wanted to incorporate many of the ideas that came out of creating *16 Feet*. I decided to shoot a large amount of footage involving the smashing and destruction of florescent light bulbs and a glass door. Although this is not the most unique subject matter, I felt it was sufficient for my intentions. I used the dual images very formally, and the title should prepare the viewer for this experiment. Whether the images are synched up, happening at the same moment, or occurring at different times, there remain two images on the screen throughout the tape.

Overall, the tape has a very aggressive feel because of the intentional destructive behavior and use of the male characters. However, I do not think this is a negative attribute. I have altered the material enough so that it removes itself from the reality show realm. Editing the audio so that unnecessary voices and
other sounds were removed and replacing them with ambient street noise has minimized the tape so that it can be understood more of a dual image experiment.

The only sounds that remain are the impact noises, which significantly contribute to the performance and spectacle of the tape. Finally, the fly shots, which have received mixed reviews, are by far my favorite in the tape. They provide a nice contrast with the other material and should suggest that there is a very important reason for being included, which is to set up the intentions of the tape.
CORRELATION REPORT

Sketch 1
CORRELATION REPORT

Sketch 2
**BLACK EYE**

2005

3:25 min.

**One Sentence Summary**

*Black Eye* is a manipulated view of the world through reflective sunglasses that ultimately challenge the viewers understanding of the space within the frame.

**Personal Critique**

I was originally interested in using mirrors as a device to manipulate visuals, but was unsure of how to approach this idea. After much experimentation, I discovered a narrative route to take. It appeared that by wearing reflective sunglasses and pointing the camera at myself, I was able to create a character, and at the same time use the reflection to distort the viewer’s perception of foreground and background. Unfortunately, I ran into a lot of problems when developing a narrative from this visual experiment. I chose to work much more systematically than I did in *16 Feet* and *Correlation Report* by gathering a variety of shots, cutting them down to no more than ten seconds, and ordering them to create a narrative arc. This seemed like an interesting and new approach in creating a tape, but it ended up being somewhat problematic.
In general, when placing varying shots side by side, the viewer is always going to use the previous shot to judge the current one. Therefore, some appear more interesting than others and the timing and order of the shots became the most difficult element. However, the viewer seemed to accept my decisions in editing and the tape was well received. I believe this happened because it is so systematic and simple that it is extremely easy for the viewer to read and as a result easy to absorb and enjoy.
BLACK EYE

Sketch 1
3.14

**BLACK EYE**

Sketch 2

- In car (head out window)
- In pool (backstroke position)
- In shower (shampoo down forehead)
- In swivel chair (in time arts lab)
- Walking through crowd
- In spray room in coma
- On playground swing
- In library

**Build Narrative?**

Start w/ glasses off, put camera in same position, walk through Walmart or some store, find the sunglasses and put them on.

**Break in the Tape:**

Walking fast, stop, cough, walk again

or... pull camera away, pull the viewer out of the space (If they get too uncomfortable)

or... (series of short clips) then long take (passing)
**FLY ON THE WALL**

2005

3:38 min.

**One Sentence Summary**

*Fly On The Wall* makes a simple bicycle ride interesting by exploiting the camera’s ability to challenge our conventions of perspective and ultimately analyze the environment in a new and fascinating way.

**Personal Critique**

The idea for this tape stemmed directly from a shot in *Black Eye* in which I am riding a bicycle while holding the camera to my face. This shot appears so much more interesting than the rest because the action and fast movement of the bicycle adds an additional element to the overall distortion and visual experimentation to make it even more interesting. I decided to work with this idea, but alter the *Black Eye* perspective by working with a lipstick camera and a stick similar to that of *16 Feet*, but make the character-camera connection invisible to the viewer.

The end result is a tape that is more of a performance than any of my previous work. The video is comprised of three shots that hold the viewer in a variety of perspectives normally unavailable to the human eye. I chose to leave it as one long shot because I think the lack of cuts adds to the authenticity of the
very strange and warped camera angles and therefore adds to the overall mystery of the tape. I think most viewers share a fascination with attempting to decode the artist’s methods and techniques for making a tape. With this work, the viewer is introduced to the environment with a shot of the character standing with a camera in his hand. It is confusing because the viewer can see the camera, yet the image is obviously not coming from that camera. Following that shot, the video goes right into the bike ride, in which the viewer once again tries to figure out how he did it. This idea is by far my favorite part of the tape, and it something that I strive for in future work. Creating such a curiosity in the viewer is very challenging and, if successfully executed, is a very powerful element to add to a video work.
FLY ON THE WALL

Sketch 1
"FLY ON THE WALL" Video

Sketch 2
**ADAPTING CLOCKWISE**

2005

4:12 min.

**One Sentence Summary**

*Adapting Clockwise* is an analysis of the ideas and procedures surrounding a visual experiment involving a camera and a rotating fan.

**Personal Critique**

After working with *Fly On The Wall*, I was interested in returning to work that was much more complex in structure. I had thought of the idea of using the motions of the fan as a basis for a video, but was unable to clearly plan out a narrative. In a process that is similar to most my other tapes, I decided to shoot an abundance of footage and work from this material to create a narrative. I decided to take it in a new direction by including other people in the tape, and convince them I was not video taping them when I actually was. I have discovered that authenticity is something that it much appreciated in the media of video. If a performance seems staged, the viewer will be disgusted with the situation. Therefore, I felt it was necessary and justifiable to trick the other performers so that they would act naturally and as a result appear authentic to the viewer.

The character performances are placed in between the visual experiments to develop a pace throughout the tape. I believe the mundane footage of the
characters setting up for the experiments works well in emphasizing the visual manipulation with the rotating fan. It is also interesting to see how each person’s character is created from his or her simple performance. I have found that the viewer is quick to make assumptions about the characters in the tape, and the slightest information that is revealed will help them draw conclusions about those persons. Overall, I think this tape differs drastically from my past work because of the character development and use of dialogue; two things I would like to work with more in future videos.
ADAPTING CLOCKWISE

Sketch 1
3.22

ADAPTING CLOCKWISE

Sketch 2
HOW TO ROTATE:

use treadmill piece and add platform on top

MAY HAVE TO HANDLE AT THIS AND

how it rotates in rooms

AND

Who side feed maybe

CONTINUE mRNA ROOM

UP STAIRS AND 1st Floor

BEGINNING OF VIDEO

JUST CLOTHESLINE

no quick wouldn't last more than a minute

ADAPTING CLOCKWISE

Sketch 3
ADAPTING CLOCKWISE

Sketch 4

As this goes round, so does.

Motor Thing

Camera

1 RAM

It's interesting that video artists recognize/appreciate film/paper work but filmmakers/Pop Hollywood idiots don't care about video work.

testing dog's patience, drop food at 50 sec.
ADAPTING CLOCKWISE

Sketch 5

Push it into a narrative

Baltimore show (Theme)

"Musical Bodies"
LET’S BE HONEST

2006

4:24 min.

One Sentence Summary

Let’s Be Honest is an analysis of the characters, environment, and processes surrounding a visual experiment involving a mounted camera and a skateboard.

Personal Critique

I was very interested in working with other people in my experiments, similar to that of Adapting Clockwise, and decided to work with a camera mount and a skateboard. I decided to shoot various footage, working first with each device individually, and then together. I asked a friend to join me and, once again in a manner similar to the process of making Adapting Clockwise, I failed to tell him that I was recording. This would secure authenticity in his performance and would also help establish his character.

When editing, I discovered that my character was far too similar to that of my friend so I decided to edit out all of my dialogue and appear silent. After showing this tape in class, viewers seemed to really enjoy the two characters. This may have been because they are so different that they are very easy for the viewer to differentiate. My character does not say anything throughout the tape, while the
other speaks relentlessly. As for the narrative itself, it also went over very well. It is paced with the talkative character dominating the environment, throwing out comments in every shot, which helped to tape flow and develop effectively. The tape then progresses into the visual experiments, which should seem natural to the viewer. Overall, I believe this tape is successful because it is so easy to read. The characters are well established in that they are so different and the tape progresses simply and obviously without large jumps or progressions. I believe it is a very enjoyable tape because of this, but fails to explore anything beyond the simplicity that it presents.
Critiques

The following information is comprised of three critiques conducted with various persons over the past year. It is important to not only create personal critiques of my video art, but allow others to submit their views and opinions as well. This allows me to develop new insight and views that I may not have been aware of from personal analysis. It cannot be stressed enough that video art is a very public art form that must be shown to others to exist. What is more important is that the ideas and meaning behind the tape must come through to the viewer. Therefore, it is good to hear differing opinions from a variety of people. Since each critique took ample time, I chose to videotape each critique so that I could look more closely at every comment made.

The three critiques include a Syracuse University professor and artist, an undergraduate biology student, and two visiting Syracuse University professors and Canadian artists. Using an eclectic group of people at a variety of levels will help me gather varying comments, both positive and negative, about my work. For each critique, I played a tape of all my work, stopping in between videos to allow for discussion. I also asked each person to feel free to ask me any questions and to address any concerns about the videos.

All three critiques were video taped, and the following information is the transcript from that document. It has not been altered in any way and reads word for word. The comments expressed by each person are equal to those said on video. The critiques are organized by the date they were conducted, and all videos
within each are organized in bold font by their title, and remain in the order in which they were viewed.
Anne Beffel
Syracuse University Professor and Artist
April 2005

*16 FEET*

Anne: O.K., so that’s an early example of the disorientation of the camera. By means through which we can’t really see. So it’s like there’s an invisible hand at work there. And I think that’s important, because that’s something you picked up on in *Fly On The Wall* and pushed even further. And the notion of whether the artist’s hand is evident is a really important question in art, historically.

Nick: I think this is a definitive example of the artist’s hand because I am always physically connected to this piece of wood.

Anne: Yea, but when it flips the one time, you’re not holding onto it, are you?

Nick: When I’m standing on it?

Anne: Can we reverse it? Let’s look at that first clip.

Anne: Alright, so maybe because you’re walking on it - yea, I guess it is - your hand, your foot, there is a parallel. But it’s still an unexpected interruption.

Anne: So you’re climbing up the board? No, you’re going down the board. But it looks like you’re climbing up the board. So, that
sense of confusing our visual sense of space is really really important. In terms of your artist statement, that is important, for sure. Confusing or confounding.

Nick I liked ending it with what I started with. It’s a nice – it really brings it together.

Anne So there is a circular structure. But I think that notion of confounding our sense of visual space and purposefully disoriented us is really important.

**CORRELATION REPORT**

Anne See this does that too because eventually the fly ends up crossing the barrier. Which is a visual structure that we’re very dependent on. Which is another form of confounding our sense of that space.

Anne And, also, the introduction of the animal, as this sort of unexpected entity.

Nick Yeah, and in *16 feet*, with the dog and its actions.

Anne So that’s definitely something that’s a pattern.

Nick What I really want to do with this tape is take out the laughing and voices, because I think people have a problem with that. And this isn’t supposed to be funny. It’s supposed to look at how the images match up, and how they are different.
Anne So, you’re further confounding our sense of perception not only through space but through timing now.

Nick Yeah I was really interesting in whether the images are synched up, whether they are happening at the same moment, or they are two different. Either way, they are still matched up.

Anne I think the reason why you are trying to confound our visual and spatial perceptions is because you are trying to give us an experience of heightened awareness in experimentation and not knowing what is going to happen next.

Nick It was very hard to work with dual images. It was difficult - I went back to this piece a lot.

Anne Well I think its only effective when you have a specific intention. And in this case, you do.

BLACK EYE

Anne It has a really tightly focused visual field, and the most focused, most tight visual field actually inaccessible to us, because it’s the LCD screen on the camera. So it’s another form of visual obstruction.

Nick I actually edited it since we last watched it. I changed the length of the shots and placed some of them in different spots in the tape.
Anne: That adds a whole new layer of risk. Then we start to figure out that you’re on a bicycle and in a car. It’s almost like you’re a blind man walking around.

Nick: Some people forget that it’s my face in there. Because, it kind of sits in the background.

Anne: And this is a precursor to *Fly On The Wall*.

Nick: The water shot still seems really different. The whole video is made up of very simple shots gathered while going through the day. And I want people to wonder why I would go underwater, like to leave the viewer with something.

Anne: I don’t know about the water shot.

Nick: Is it too different?

Anne: I don’t know. I’m not sure if it feels tacked on. If it weren’t the last shot – if were right after the shower. What it feels like is that you’re walking around in your different environments, trying different activities, but the swimming environment is really different. Because even the car environment is related to walking, which is related to riding a bike. But the swimming environment is about submersion, which is a really different kind of space psychologically and physically.

Nick: Yea I understand how it feels, especially as the last shot. I guess it is just a weird way to end it.
Anne: It’s a really different kind of exploration.

Nick: I feel like if I had followed that shot with something more extreme, it would have worked. But just that one shot, it does not seem to work.

**FLY ON THE WALL**

Anne: It’s really good to watch all your work in sequence like this.

Nick: I included this because, I think it is a way of confusing people. Because they can see the camera.

Anne: Oh yea, so that’s one reason people cannot figure out how it’s made.

Nick: People think this is humorous.

Anne: It’s very funny.

Nick: But that’s what I look like.

Anne: Yeah but none of us think that’s what we look like.

Nick: This is not the original audio. There is no audio on the lipstick camera. But, when I showed it, no one seemed to mind.

Anne: It doesn’t matter. It’s close enough. It’s almost like white noise. It’s wind noise.

Anne: What’s interesting about this one is that the sound starts to sound like it’s underwater. And when you disorient us by turning it
upside down, its almost like you’re swimming. So it is related to your idea with the water shot in the last tape.

**Anne**  Viewpoint seems really important now. It’s like that became very important and now you are pushing it even further by making the viewpoint mobile.

**Nick**  I like the idea of perspective and looking at other videos and trying to figure out ways to change perspective, to create something new.

**Anne**  I think its good- it tells us that it is going to end. And it’s very hard to end a ride like that. It’s anticlimactic. It works.

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**ADAPTING CLOCKWISE**

**Anne**  To me, that’s a whole fascinating narrative scenario. Because, is that his girlfriend? Is this the girlfriend and is this the boyfriend and the boyfriend is making the girlfriend run around? The fact that she does not want to help out with the project - she was pushed into it? And to me, that is further development of characters and that kind of attention is emerging in tapes that you are not so happy with.

**Nick**  Well, a lot of this tape is a lot of the stuff surrounding the actual experiment. It just seemed more interesting to me.

**Anne**  See now this. The fan is becoming a character. Because it’s taking on its own – it has a mind of its own, and it’s fighting you guys.
Anne: So now you become the fan. There is this conflation of all these characters.

Anne: I don’t know about the ending.

Nick: I went back to that shot. I added it after I had finished the rest of the video. I just couldn’t figure out how to exactly end it.

Anne: I think ending it with your frustration is fine. It’s just the bad acting. Earlier in the tape there is a certain point when you have a certain look on your face – it’s really convincing.

Nick: Yeah I guess it seems too staged.

Anne: I would cut it off when you stop it from spinning. It’s a battle between you and the fan- and the camera, and you can resolve it by turning off the camera.
Clayton Houck
Senior Undergraduate Biology major
December 2005

16 FEET

Clayton I felt that 16 Feet was interesting how when you swung around the board with the camera attached to it, that it made it seem as though you and the camera were connected – as though you were not moving, but the rest of the world was spinning around. I thought it was very interesting how it seemed as though you were the center of the universe, you were the center of everything around you, and everything else was spinning but you were standing still. I thought that was a very cool technique and although it might have only been relatively simple, attaching a board to a camera, the way that it turned out, made me wonder is something spinning around him, or is he standing still. It really encapsulated that feeling

Nick A lot of people critique this tape as being just an experiment, really nothing more than that. I was wondering if you had any problems with this, with the lack of real meaning.

Clayton The meaning is what you take out of it. I’ve always felt like any time someone does a piece where they are really trying to get a meaning across, or where they are really trying to convey a deep
meaning, it always turns out a little too cliché, a little too, almost like its fake, like its trying to force a feeling on you. What I like about this is that its not trying to force anything on you. Its just you watch it and you make the termination about how you feel about it. About how it may have affected you, and how you interpreted what you saw. And for me, I just really felt like, its so bizarre. Part of my brain that can reason was against what I was visually seeing. It was a really sharp contrast, they were fighting it out. I also like the dog. It made it seem very hopeful with the sun and the grass, like a Norman Rockwell painting. I think a lot of people can relate to that. I thought it was an interesting touch to try to connect people.

BLACK EYE

Clayton The sound was the most interesting part of it. It was like I had to squint to be able to see the image in the sunglasses and I could see what was sort of around there, and what was sort of going on, but the sound was almost more powerful to understand where you were. Like in Home Depot having that music, sort of shopping music, or the library with no sound at all. It’s all very telling of where you were, rather than the image itself which you can see in the sunglasses. So it’s sort of a reverse of what people go through.
A lot of other animals, such as rats, they smell and they can barely see stuff, so smelling is their primary sense. In humans its usually visually, is how we get things and there is hearing and smelling as secondary senses. But in this case you made it so that our ability to hear what is going on is the primary sense and visually is the secondary sense. Other times I’ve seen people work without an image, and that’s a similar type of idea but I think I like this more because it allows you to still have visual input, but just less of it.

Nick  But when I’m trying to make a narrative out of some shots; create a story, you have to kind of structure it a certain way. A lot of people who have seen this tape put a lot weight on the first and last shots. Any thoughts?

Clayton  It’s all a matter of perspective. If you are trying to push a tape – again I really don’t like that. I don’t think it necessarily really has to have a beginning and end. You just have to experience something, regardless if it has a beginning and end. If the middle’s the strongest part, then that’s great. It doesn’t need to have an explosion at the end. There’s no explosions in this. It’s just letting you experience certain things.

Nick  I might go back and shoot some more, because if you think about it, this tape is never really finished, it could just keep going. I think
I might add some more interesting shots to balance out the middle a bit.

**CORRELATION REPORT**

**Clayton** I’m not too deep of a person, and I feel that this one might have overreached and may have gone over my head. I realize it had cool visual scenes such as the dropping of the light bulbs on someone who had a covering over their face, and someone getting hit by this light bulb. I also understand that you filmed a fly and watched it squirm around, which was a little creepy. I guess I don’t understand how it fits together. I don’t really understand the correlation between the fly and the light bulbs. I also feel that the whole idea of the video was to correlate the time of things, and this doesn’t make sense with the fly either.

**FLY ON THE WALL**

**Clayton** It’s pretty straight forward, for me, which is good, because I’m not an artist. I liked the different visual sides of going around the bike, while you’re biking. I don’t think it wasn’t trying to push across any clear message or emotion – just take it as it is. It made you look at things a little differently. For instance, whenever I go to class, or whenever I bike, I always think, oh you know, I see things
from this perspective. But what if I’m seeing things from an ant’s perspective, how would it look? How would that viewpoint differ? What would I see things differently? That is what I thought was interesting about this, is that there were different angles different viewpoints that the camera had so you could see what it looked like from a foot above the ground and also from five feet above the ground.

**ADAPTING CLOCKWISE**

**Clayton** I think the imagery of spinning around your head and spinning images are just another way of looking at things. But also, it's reminiscent of *Clockwork Orange* type creepiness. And there’s also sort of a mystery there, a mystery that I can’t figure out. Where you’re heads connected to, if it's connected to something, and exactly how these shots were done. A very mysterious video. I don’t know. Some of the parts you could’ve edited a bit more. I didn’t really like seeing things being put together, but I guess that is part of the whole process and I bet some people would enjoy it. But I think it was unnecessary and it lost some of its momentum.

**Nick** I made it more about the process, like the candy bars part, and I like that. Trying to build a tape out of that stuff instead of that. Its more filler stuff, and I understand what you mean.
Clayton: Yeah I can understand that. But you know, time shouldn’t be your main concern. And filler shouldn’t be a concern. It should be all about momentum and to try to drive experience. And to try to show an experience to someone who is watching the art, and not worrying if there is enough filler. That’s just my opinion. But can see that if you see the whole process you can understand what’s going on and understand the piece more.

*LET’S BE HONEST*

Clayton: I don’t think there are enough tricks in this one. After watching some of the other tapes, I think it’s missing that. Like the different riding parts are interesting but I don’t understand why you chose to make the one guy look like an idiot compared to the other.

Nick: It’s not that I am trying to make him look stupid. I was just trying to develop the characters a little. More so than in my other tapes.

Clayton: Yeah I understand that. Maybe I just expected more of a visual experience. It really made me think of all the things you could do with a skateboard, and I was a little disappointed when the video was over and you didn’t do them.

Nick: Yeah, that makes sense. I guess you kind of have a set notion of what you expect in my tapes. That’s the bad thing when you watch them all in a row like this.
Emily Vey Duke and Cooper Battersby

Visiting Syracuse University Professors and Video Artists

February 2006

16 FEET

Cooper So this is a finished piece, it’s done, and this is going in your show, and it’s going to be exhibited as one unit, in a show, or on a DVD?

Nick More of a DVD.

Cooper It’s great. The audio and video are great. The puppy is great. The stuff that the camera does is perfectly interesting and vibrant. The phallic-ness of it all is great. The beginning and the ending. What’s up with your buddy? The guy, the kind of onlooker man, the watcher. It seems like he has a role, I don’t know what it is. I like it. I’m mesmerized.

Nick I think the dog is a nice element to it, but the guy doesn’t really bring too much to it.

Cooper Yes, the dog is a nice element. And the scene that’s the most dramatic is when you are spinning very quickly and the audio cuts out and its ends, and there is a patch of silence. The juxtaposition between the video and audio – and lack of audio, work really well. And I think it’s a great intro. Its quick, its short, its snappy.
Nick  They are chronological. This is the first I did where I messed around with perspective, and physicality.

Cooper  And cameras as objects. Have you seen *Man With A Movie Camera*? It’s all about the camera, as an object that can go and do things that people cannot do. It reminds me of that, but more performance based.

Emily  In certain ways I think this piece is paradigmatic of going on to explore with this project because, especially because of the title. I think that this work is very much about observation and quantification of data about the world and the ways that we use various tools to quantify – specifically the camera. But, it kind of refers because of that to the history of quantification, mapping, and the creation of time- as a concept that you can chop up. So I agree that this is a great sort of head to have to the project. And maybe, can we just watch some more? I want to see more before I say more.

*CORRELATION REPORT*

Nick  That’s not the finished – I took out a lot of the laughing and voices because I really thought they took away from the idea.
Cooper: I think this tape is more useful for critique, what people can do with this, in terms of talking about it, in relationship to our, your exploration of your physical self and the power you have on the world. Seems sort of like a coming of age story. You grow up and you start to think that O.K., I can do things and the things that I do can have an effect outside of my body, there is an outside or my body and an inside, and you are learning how to effect the outside of your body, exploring all the different ways you can have an effect in a physical world. And that is interesting. Well edited—very tight.

Emily: *(Speaking to Cooper)* Explain a bit more about what you mean, this tape specifically, what is happening in this tape is a cataloging of experiments with physical with ones power with physical space. So you see it as being an allegorical for the time a baby realizes flipping a light switch turns on the lights?

Cooper: Yeah.

Emily: That is interesting. For me, this tape is the most explicitly about masculinity. You know, addresses masculinity more explicitly than any of your other stuff. Which I feel is all implicitly masculine in such a powerful way. I always resist saying that because I know that immediately people think of it as a criticism or a dismissal. That is not what I’m trying to say at all. And I know that with girls
if you say that their work that their work is explicitly about
feminism it’s an uncomfortable thing to say. But, you’re work is
pretty heavily gendered even in that it is about quantifying space
and coming to understand the world through empirical
investigation or exploration of the world. This is the first one that
I’ve seen where there has been – this is much less impassive than
the other ones because it’s about smashing stuff. So its much more
emotionally charged. And it’s interesting to me that you took out
the audio, the ambient audio.

Nick  
I edited audio so – I mean left the impact noises.

Emily  
Right but you edited the sound of the people, the people’s voices.
You edited out the subjectivity.

Cooper  
It would play different for sure. It would have less of the feeling
that I got from this which is, was that people doing it were amazing
it was new to them, you know, wow, that’s cool. And that, without
that, it has a risk of becoming dry. It makes it harder to be about –
not me empathizing with the people there smashing things, but me
empathizing with the person exploring the world. But I don’t
know, I can’t say unless I saw it.

Emily  
Yeah, I wonder. It is hard to imagine without seeing it. Right now,
it’s kind of comic. Because people are laughing, and I’m not sure if
that is a plus or not. That it is a bit funny because at the same time
it makes it seem a bit more like dozens of tapes I saw last term saying look its me with my friends and we’re doing goofy things. I think it is important that the work stays consistent, and that inconsistencies between the viewer should seem deliberate. And it is a bit inconsistent in this one that we hear and it becomes more about subjectivity and sociability.

Nick I think also when you take out the voice it loses some, it does not seem as authentic. And some may feel that way. But with the two images I don’t think this matters.

Cooper The two images work really well. It really made me continually be interested and try to figure out what is happening between the images and decode what the differences were.

Nick I called it Correlation Report because you know, its basically matching up two images, and trying to do so differently. Like, when matched up, one is slow motion and one is not in slow motion. The fly goes across the two images. They may look like they are matched from the same time, scene, but they are actually from two different times. So basically just that, trying to experiment with matching up these images.

Emily So again trying to create some sort of temporal cartography in making a map of the relationship between space and time. I’m interested in the way – it’s especially interesting to think that these
works use the trope of science. And, scientists, when they use science, that they use science are using it so clearly to an end. We are experimenting with space and time because we want to find out if we can do, blank. Or we are because our research has led us to this point. And when artists use science it’s so not glorified. I’m left with questions about what’s driving this exploration.

Nick That’s why I think that the voices would take away. If I said, this is just a comparison of the two images. People might think otherwise if I leave those voices. That it might be more about the actions of breaking glass, and nothing more than that. A Jackass or reality show element.

Cooper I think you’re right. Taking out those would push it toward a more genuine exploration. It would be easier to see what you are exploring if we weren’t distracted trying to empathize with these people. Because you don’t know – the sound is not synched with one of the images so you kind of lose that correlation quality, when you’re like, this is one and this is the other, the sound can encompass them both and ties the two of them together.

Emily When we have impact sounds we are seeing impact in both images. I agree that we can focus more on the scientific part of it without the audio of the voices. I think I agree it would be a stronger piece without that audio. We’re not getting enough empathy out of it to
make it really worth our while to watch it in those terms. I still
don’t feel like my question about why these experiments are being
done being answered.

**Cooper** Maybe that’s the whole point of having a compilation so that you
can figure that out when you see them all in context.

**Nick** I originally didn’t have the fly. But I thought that it would kind of
stress the idea that this is a comparison of the images. At the
beginning, it’s only on one side, but then goes across. It doesn’t
really work with the other images, so I wanted the viewers to think
there has to be a reason why.

**Emily** I think that for whatever reason, is working really well.

**BLACK EYE**

**Cooper** I think that one is less successful than the other ones we have seen.
The experiment that you are doing, other than the underwater and
shower and out the car window, they are really kind of unusual
situations, they are all pretty similar, like walking down the street.
I think it looks great, I know why you did it. At first I was totally
mesmerized by trying to decode the reflection and the real thing
and getting a sense of how they spatially go together. But I think it
didn’t work as much as the others – in the exploration effect.
Emily: It’s totally good enough. It works and it’s enjoyable to watch, it’s not boring or irritating. But I don’t think it’s as successful as the other ones because it’s a little bit cute. And your work, one of its strengths is that your work is never cute.

Cooper: A lot technically simpler too. The edits are just cut, just cut, just cut. The audio always cuts with the video and they always go bang bang straight to the next cut. Which is not as complex, especially as the last one.

Nick: On one hand it’s just structured as a series of shots, repetition. And some people think it’s an easy way out. But at the same time, a lot of people liked it because it’s so easy to read.

Cooper: It doesn’t try to trick you by being flashy.

Emily: It’s not confusing because its kind of cute and that means for many many viewers – for a viewer who has the expectation of an art video that is going to be like television – they’ll think it’s terrific. And I have absolutely no problem with that – those types of works are terrific. I just don’t think it’s exactly what you’re trying to make. And, also, it doesn’t ask the same questions about time and space that the other stuff does. You, in that piece, are all of the sudden a persona of your other work. You have much more going on then you just being the experimenter, the scientist and, in that one, suddenly, you’re a character, and you’re wearing sunglasses.
Nick: Do you think it’s because of the beginning and the end?

Emily: No I don’t. I think it’s because we see your face and, as simplistic as it is, you look like you’re in a band. You’re iconic, and the icon is young and cool guy.

Cooper: The beginning and the end are a question though I think. Maybe those are not helping- especially the end. I feel like if you’re going to have an end where there is a reveal, and you finally see what’s going on, it should be more dramatic. You don’t have two black eyes, if there was going to be something that was a real kicker in the end. The end as it is is extremely a let down, you know. You just take your sunglasses off and that’s all there is. Anticlimactic.

Emily: The other thing that I think, I don’t know if you have any idea of reinvestigating this tape. But it would be phenomenal if the things we were seeing reflected in your sunglasses were a lot more interesting or a lot more beautiful. But, like I said, it’s a successful tape, its not a problem at all, its just I don’t think its you doing what you want to do the best.

Nick: I had trouble with the beginning and the end trying to bring it together. I guess I didn’t put too much time into that one as I did to the other. I just added the images together.

Emily: Lots and lots of people have made stuff that simple that has been wildly successful for whatever reason. And a reading could be
made of that piece that’s really complicated but when its contextualized with your other work- but I think it will be great on the DVD for a lot of people it will be the point of entry if they aren’t able to enter into the other work, and for other people its like "yeah whatever".

Cooper  And with the length of the shots – do you have a lot of the shots significantly longer than others?

Nick  Yes. I messed with them until I found a length that I though was the most comfortable for each.

Cooper  Some of them I found like I could look at for a long time, especially the ones when something happens that’s fairly dramatic in the shot. There’s one where you’re walking through the quad and there’s the girls having the conversation and that centeredness and the reality of what’s there is felt pretty impressive. I guess there’s a lot of information on the screen, and with the shots are like 4, 5, 10 seconds tops. Its hard, you’re always buzzing to the next shot before I’m settled in, happy with the shot.

Emily  If you wanted to remake the tape, I think you should go somewhere and point the camera at your face and shoot what was happening around you for hours until something really interesting
happened. It would be a really fabulously exciting way to watch really interesting. But that’s not really your practice

**Nick**  
It’s just hard when you’re using a series of shots, with the timing. One shot might be really interesting, but what do you do for the next shot? It’s hard.

**Cooper**  
You have to have a pace. You could have some that rattle through 3 or 4 shots and then settles down into a nice long one. Or one that has a nice little arc, like with the guy in the library. That has an arc of its own.

**Emily**  
Another proof about making art, especially time based work in school, is that you’re will never have to make this fast again. But once you’re done, you can spend a year shooting footage of your face with sunglasses on. For me, that’s been a tremendous relief.

**Cooper**  
And the other thing that is different about not being in school is that your audience won’t understand the locations as well as they do. Like the shot of the quad – I was like, yeah I know where that is. My connections to the places are completely detracting from the piece and if it were at a different school I would have a completely different read.
**FLY ON THE WALL**

**Cooper** Yeah its really impressive; the object of the camera is great. I don’t know how you did it, I don’t know. The way you don’t know how the camera moves is really awesome. The image of what it is, the person riding a bike, unbroken one shot for that length of time, I’m less interested in that, the shot, then actually how it’s done.

**Emily** I think this piece, once again comes back to the idea of space and time. And doing so in a way that is pointing to scientific inquiry. Kind of like Post Enlightenment science. And I think that one of the things that’s building as we watch the tapes, with the exception of the *Black Eye* one, is this – there is a development of a persona, and it is a persona of a quirky science guy. And that’s great, and people will eat that up, that will work for you. And as for it being mind-blowingly brilliant artwork, I don’t know if it’s enough. I think that right now, what you’re doing, where you’re labor is, is in creating the play of the experiments. But I think you need to take that and bring something else into it. Some other kind of – whether it’s a critique of Post Enlightenment science. In a nutshell, and this is only one way to look at it, you look at the net result of Post Enlightenment science its been the development of this theory, this light philosophy of being, that what’s outside us is true and we can only know it through observation and application of systems that
we’ve developed. There is the real world and it’s quantifiable. And any kind of contingency, or interdependence of systems or people makes something less true, less valid. And that’s a really highly problematic truism. The idea that contingency is weakening. If you were going to say that someone could be held responsible for how fucked up everything is, it might be that worldview. I just think that once you start messing around with these ideas, which I think is great and incredibly interesting, you’ve stepped into really heavy territory that has bearing on – I don’t know if you’re really taking responsibility and ownership for all the stuff you are toying with. And I want to see that as the natural next step.

**Nick**  Well looking at this tape, compared to the last one, after listening to you guys critiquing it, I just felt like after I spent so much time ordering these shots I wanted to going back to something more simple, but at the same time, it ends up being more complex.

**Emily**  Yeah I think this tape is much more complex than the last one, and I love it. It is quite mind blowing. It’s definitely in the top 50 art videos I’ve ever seen. I’ve never seen anything like that before and the issues that it addresses especially taken with the other tapes, are really interesting and important. I kind of wonder whether the technique steals the show. So that’s potentially a problem. And think you should, and there is no reason not to, make ten tapes like
this where you use the same technique and allow the viewer to look at a lot of different situations because its that interesting. It’s kind of stingy to not; we’d love to see more stuff like that. But at the same time, I do think that the way that the persona or character is used in this piece is quite important and interesting, and the creation of these pieces makes me want to stand out and define himself.
Conclusion

After reviewing the personal analyses, sketches, critiques, and the videos themselves, I was able to define my exact motives in creating these tapes. Although the six tapes submitted in this project share similarities in experiments of visual manipulation, these experiments are not entirely scientific. I have discovered that by creating experiments that are in no way professionally scientific, there is a strong sense of irony that creates humor in the work. I can define the type of humor found in this work as subtle yet amusing, incongruous, and often absurd.

While *16 Feet* is a true, playful experiment, the following tape, *Correlation Report*, is more scientific in its analysis of the information presented. But, pure science, or anything close to it, seems to be avoided in the tapes that follow. The playfulness of *16 Feet* returns in *Black Eye* and *Fly On The Wall*, and the humor of the actions is expressed even more *Adapting Clockwise*. Finally, in *Let's Be Honest*, the experiment is not as important as the process involved, and the faults of this procedure create a strong sense of irony in the experiment. It is important to note that, regardless of the work, experiments continue to be used throughout. I have discovered that I not only use these experiments to justify the play in the tapes, but I also use the play to justify the experiment. There is a humor and irony that runs throughout my work, and I believe that is what motivates me to continue working in such a way.
Throughout the project, I worked extensively in my sketchbook to resolve each project problem. Although I could translate this material into a few paragraphs, I believe the sketches are much more useful. The following two sketchbook entries are the most honest and accurate answers to the question asked at the beginning of the project: what are my exact motives in creating these tapes?
WHAT MOTIVATES ME TO DO THIS?

* Why not completely art?
  - The physical manipulation, the trial and error, the investigations, steps and processes are not as appealing to me.

* Why not completely scientific?
  (Scientific process pushed?)

  - loses Ability to function with a narrative. There is something challenging/exciting in creating a work that can be both entertaining and different from experiment footage.

  > In challenging conventions: Presenting visuals new to the human eye!

...so do not be confused!

Although I claim to work on these straightforward experiments, I am still overly conscious of the plot, characters, narrative structure, etc.

BUT...

So why include experiments?

- Why not make narrative from other footage? Next Page

Conclusion Sketch 1
What exactly I'm concerned with is because of the humor that appears when performing these experiments! It is all very ironic, and I think that is very important.

**Irony**

- Scientific experiment gone wrong
- Showing the process, the faults
- The mistakes footage
- Using this in contrast with rich footage reveals a sense of irony

It would be safe to say that while reviewing the footage from these tapes...

- I pay particular attention to the process, the "trial and error" aspect to build a tape
- It is all very playful, definitely not set up like an actual experiment. This is humorous.

Without humor, I would have no desire to continue making these tapes.
Addendum

Being invited to join the honors program was both exciting and enticing, yet working on a thesis project raised many concerns. The added workload absorbed time needed for classes and presented the possibility of hurting my grades. But, upon accepting these responsibilities, the situation appeared as more of a challenge than a burden. Deciding to apply to graduate school, I thought the thesis project would be a great opportunity to see if I am able to work independently toward a long-term goal and reach that goal with a successful, well-constructed project.

It is important to note that although this project is technically submitted as a final copy, it will remain very open to me. I plan to continue working on similar videos and add them accordingly, along with critiques, sketches, statements, and other materials. It is important to leave the project open because I would still like to explore similar ideas. Since the current project is so formulaic, adding similar work to it should not hurt the already finished material, but in fact supplement it quite well. In the media of video, there is always opportunity to create and further explore and expand on ideas. And although completing a project of this magnitude is very important, it is personally more important to structure a base of information from which to work from once I have left academia.

The project provides an archive of material that will not only stand as a useful reference, but also a valuable step in distributing my art professionally. Writing one-word summaries and briefly and concisely summarizing my work,
along with creating a master tape of all my work, can prove to be a useful resource when writing artist statements and distributing artwork. I plan to continue to produce video art after school, and working independently on a project while managing a full class schedule has been a unique experience that has better prepared me for real world challenges.

The project has also helped me show my work. I have found that it is possible to produce great artwork in the classroom but fail to show anything outside of that environment. This project has forced me to gather criticism outside of the traditional classroom, and even show my work at galleries around the area. And, because of this, last year I was invited to join the video collective Discount Video. As a group of students and graduates from Syracuse University, we have set up shows in Syracuse, Ann Arbor, New York City, and Portland. We will continue to market and distribute our work, using strategies we have picked up along the way. In many ways I have used the thesis project as a model for my work within the collective. An artist collective can be interpreted somewhat as a long-term assignment that takes time and effect that may not be readily available. Therefore, the thesis project has proved to be a useful aid as I actively participate and contribute to the collective.

Most importantly, the project has made me truly consider the business side of art. Once I completed my videos, this important approach seemed to take over completely. Artist statements, research, tweaking, and distribution can push the work in the direction of success outside that of the classroom. I have learned as an
artist the importance of truly dedicating oneself to your work. I became completely absorbed by the project, always concerned with archiving materials and continuing to create tapes that I thought would work well with the others. It was also important to make videos that were not too similar. The tapes should be able to stand on their own, and not act as a continuation of a previous work. This strategy became increasingly difficult as the project grew larger and more detailed, and focusing on the original goal seemed almost impossible at times. Yet with all these concerns, along with a devastating technical problem of hard drive failure, I learned to accept the negatives along side the positives when working on a project of such magnitude.

In the end, what began with a minor argument with my parents ended with a project that will prove to be a very useful tool when working on media projects in the future. Although I will review the project with my parents and confidently explain my intentions thoroughly, I still do not expect them to fully understand and appreciate my video art. What is more important is that I have resolved the biggest problem with understanding my work, and will use this knowledge for creating and distributing new and interesting video art.