The Dark Ride :

The Translation of Cinema into

Spatial Experience

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Abstract

This research examines the translation of the visual language of cinema into a spatial experience. An investigation into early moving images reveals the role that amusement parks played in exploring narratives using architectural spaces. This exegesis will address the history of entertainments, in particular the 'dark ride', which have an emphasis on narrative over and above effect.

The practice-based research explores how the iconography and atmospheric qualities associated with cinema can turn into mediated spatial experiences. Through studio investigation, virtual models are built from filmic set pieces; they are adapted, collaged and redistributed into physical installations which offer an original experience of the cinematic scene.

Experiments in early cinematic presentation are key to the new media discourse in which this research and studio practice finds its context. Contemporary installation artists such as Gary Hill and Paul McCarthy will be discussed with reference to the history of immersive spaces, from early cinema to amusement parks, especially with regard to their finding new approaches to the medium and using it to examine critical issues in society. To aid studio development and give unique insight; extensive field research was undertaken at historical sites across the east coast of the USA. Over twenty key popular entertainments were experienced first-hand, from Coney Island's legendary 'Spookarama', to the earliest dark ride in operation, 'The Old Mill' at Kennywood in Pittsburgh.

The research culminates in a final studio work designed for examination: 'Terrorium', a hybrid multi-screen piece, which is complemented by documentation of assorted works exhibited throughout the research program. Outcomes of the project demonstrate a range of approaches to spatial storytelling using digital media as well as an investigation of the aesthetics of these early thematic entertainments.

Statement

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university, and that to the best of my knowledge and belief, the documentation contains no material previously published or written by another person, except when due reference is made in the text of the documentation..

Signed Joel Zika

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Introduction

This thesis outlines the move within popular entertainment from illusion and spectacle to the cinematic experience we know today. The period of change between 1900 and 1940 – and the alternative mediums it generated – is crucially important in understanding the nature of contemporary media arts culture. The combination of technological innovation and art is seen as one of the driving influences of media art, which has a history spanning well beyond cinema or the industrial revolution. This research establishes how experimentation with new technology within theatre and carnival culture led to the formation of a language of immersive narrative parallel to that of cinema.

The late 1800s was a boom time for popular entertainments in the USA. It is here that the majority of research is focussed, particularly northern America, because of its rich and dynamic amusement park culture. The changing role of these parks in society and the subsequent metamorphosis of media is poignant. Early parks exhibited great feats of engineering, luxury and advancement. New inventions such as the Ferris Wheel would be their crowning glory. At this time technology and entertainment met, and were engaged with by a large portion of the community. In the early 1900s, however, changes in urban landscape, the advent of popular cinema, the depression, prohibition and the growing popularity of the car left amusement zones unattended.

Amusement rides inspired by 19th century gothic texts and developed during this period of change are the key focus of the historical analysis and field research. The ghost train, haunted house, pirate ride are all examples of popular gothic texts developed into immersive experiences. The gothic film was one of the prevailing genres of early cinema, many of the earliest feature films adapted popular examples of the gothic text. One of the most famous gothic films. The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari (1920 Wiene), centres around events at the village carnival. The travelling carnival and its sideshows were always portrayed in gothic films as mysterious places. However, in the 1920s the amusement park had also taken on a darker mythological role embodying the divide between city and country ways of life – a theme that can be seen repeated in many contemporary films.

Some of the amusement park entertainments predate their cinematic counterparts; others adapt the cinematic elements to suit a particular architectural space. This research compares

rides to their cinematic counterparts as well as offering an analysis of contemporary visual artists' experimenting in similar areas of presentation and immersion. Paul McCarthy's use of the track system appropriates elements of a Disneyland ride, and combines them with performance to generate a hybrid gallery work. Gary Hill, in his work 'Tall Ships' (1992), redefines spatial parameters through projection, extreme darkness and interactivity to create a disorientation and sublime panorama. Finally Australian artist Callum Morton's work 'Babylonia: a perspective on the translation of the cinematic into the immersive' (2005), through a pastiche of life-sized props and stage elements seduces the audience through an entrance that ultimately leads to nowhere.

It was important to take a practical look at a series of amusement park sites that still exist today, both for theoretical discussion and for use in the development of studio pieces. As part of the Masters program a field research trip was plotted across the north-eastern states of the USA to look specifically at the experiences that these rides generated. With the study aimed at thematic immersive rides it was important to find and focus on those which were created or derived within the period of flux between 1900 and 1940. Twenty sites were visited in an investigation which spanned nine states of the USA. These sites gave rise to vastly different experiences, all from the same era. Rides developed in the 1920s were generally subject to very small budgets, as parks looked to adapt rundown buildings into simple thrill rides. Rides such as 'Spook House' in New Jersey were built into shopfronts with only the most basic of façades. In other cases, such as Ocean City's 'Haunted House', an ornate façade was first added to the original ride in the 1950s but is now part of the ride itself. The early rides used water to transport people through a series of narrative scenes but the electric track and trolley would eventually become synonymous with the ride experience.

First seen in amusement park rides in the mid-1920s, the spatial mapping of a narrative and the ability to control a viewer's experience within space was something that wouldn't be seen in cinema for many decades. The 1950s and 1960s offered their own revolution in spatial interaction but the 1920s and 30s were unique and seminal in regard to a range of concepts, particularly the track and the mechanization of narrative immersion, the most important elements examined in this research. The technique of mapping a space in order to deliver a particular sequence of experiences can still be seen in the way that cinema operates to this day. Entrusting oneself to a small trolley or boat and entering a darkened space is a unique

experience among entertainments. The 'moving camera' that the trolley embodies effectively offers the ultimate in cinematic 'long takes'. These sequences are generated over and over for audiences of the dark ride and are experienced in isolation.

The studio work produced during the Masters program takes its aesthetic influence from the cinematic scene but seeks to house it in a new format of experience. The practice documented is one of installation using projection, printed materials and light. This method allows for a scene to hold more potency; the immersion provokes a questioning of one's interaction with the screen space. The use of animation and illustration in existing studio works has made it possible to generate content that incorporates and appropriates not only images and icons from cinema but from field and historical research. This exegesis also addresses a number of preliminary exhibited works and their development. It shows the importance of understanding cinema's past in order to develop new configurations of it as a medium.

The earliest illustrative works act as studies of the various iconic elements of dark rides: the trolley, the façade and the lights. The 'At Night' (2005) series sees a melding of the technology of the dark ride with an encroaching isolated forest environment, symbolic of the forgotten nature of these rides. These early large printed works explored a large body of found images which were melded together into virtual spaces. 'Façade' (2006) hints at space the viewer might be able to enter by featuring a small person teetering on the edge of a ride's entranceway.

Before addressing the final studio piece for the masters, 'Terrorium', the exegesis will investigate an earlier series of shows, 'Inferno' (2007) and 'Night and Morning' (2008), in particular the modular nature of the work and how its animated, illustrated and sculptural elements have come together to form this final immersive work.

Chapter 1 – The Dark Ride

The dawn of the twentieth century marks a significant turning point in the life of cities: their transformation from traditional city into modern metropolis. As reflected in new architectural projects and plans for urban expansion that have come to characterise the spirit of those times, Anthony Vidler shows us that these changes 'removed the distance that once separated the centre and the periphery, a distance confirmed by the sight of the horizon – the view of nature beyond the walls – from inside the city to outside, and that was reassuring to the dweller enclosed "in the peace of the fortress" as the elemental forces of nature were held back from contact but revealed to view'.[1]

In *Warped Space*, he describes how the shifting perspectives and disorientation associated with this new brand of technologised urban landscape led to a pervading sense of estrangement: 'the estrangement of the inhabitant of a city too rapidly changing and enlarging to comprehend in traditional terms; the estrangement of classes from each other, of individual from individual, of individual from self, of workers from work'.[2] Estrangement, an apt description of the underpinning subjective experience of new, distinctively modern forms of space and visual culture, becomes a key to understanding the aesthetic influences and associated behaviour of its viewing subject.

As people became increasingly alienated from their local environs, they sought alternative destinations in a variety of forms of escape involving physical as well as imaginary sorts of 'transport'. With the increasingly rapid proliferation of new technologies came a number of opportunities to imaginatively escape through dynamic and deeply engaging forms of popular entertainment. Amusement arcades and cinemas offering 'immersive destinations' became increasingly obligatory components of any 'downtown' precinct and became thoroughly embedded within the commercial and social infrastructure of communications and transportation of the city.

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[1] See Anthony Vidler, *Warped Space: Art, Architecture, and Anxiety in Modern Culture*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2000, p.86.

[2] Ibid., p.65.

The expansion of existing rail networks, metro systems and electric trolley cars supported the public's transportation to and from stations or terminal destinations and on the journeys between such 'stops', whether supporting the commute to work or facilitating their leisure and holiday travel. One intriguing extension of such public transportation networks was the 'trolley park', an amusement park established at the end of the line, which served as an escape from the city. The park itself was most commonly found in a remote, isolated space, often a glen, which ensured limited access and facilitated control over the navigation in and out. This idea of a secret utopian town hidden in the woods has found its way into popular culture and the American psyche. The journey to the 'end of the line' becomes a mythological journey into the unknown.

With the advent of cinematic technology in the late 19th century the nature of popular entertainments changed. Before its creation, the devices of contemporary cinema (such as the projectors of light and early animation machines) played a key role in the evolution of other thematic entertainments. The first uses of film technologies were in hybrid environments; they were used in conjunction with or integrated into existing sites at the trolley park. In his investigation of the origins of cinema in France, Richard Abel describes the early stage of cinema history as a 'cinema of attractions': 'Between 1896 and 1904, trick films, feeries and short comic acts became increasingly popular within the variety format of such spectacles as music halls, wax museums and fetes, forains or fairgrounds… narrative cinema gets underway between 1904 and 1907'.[3]

With narrative cinema on the horizon, hybrid spaces were integrated into the trolley park. In April of 1907 the New York Times published an article on the season's latest amusements at what was the largest fairground in the USA, New York's Coney Island. The article headline read: 'Beatific Heavenly Visions and Gruesome Scenes in Hell to be Luna Park's latest Novelty.'[4] Luna Park was one of five main amusement parks among the many independent sites that formed the entertainment district of Coney Island. The first rides were installed in 1867 and by the beginning of the 20th century the park had become a major North American landmark. Of particular interest to this research is the ride launched in 1907 titled 'Night and Morning'. The New York Times article goes on to quote the parks producer Frederic

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[3] Abel, R. 1896-1914. The Ciné Goes to Town: French Cinema, UC press. Page 16.
[4] Author Unknown. 1907. 'NEW WONDERS THIS SEASON AT CONEY ISLAND', The New York Times, part six second magazine section, Page X1

Thompson describing Night and Morning and the experience that its participants would take part in: 'The first room into which the people enter is like a big coffin with a glass top and lid off. You look up through the roof and see the graveyard flowers and the weeping willows and other such atmospheric things. When everything is ready the coffin is lowered into the ground…'

Clearly referencing Dante's literary descent into hell, Night and Morning was one of the first instances of a fictionalised narrative journey, a thematic ride. Categorised as an 'attraction' Night and Morning fitted into a history of panoramic entertainments, wherein the viewer is immersed into a visual scene. The Panorama and Cyclorama had been enormously popular mass entertainments of the 19th century, and had evolved from simple static spectacles to complex moving panoramas. Many of these already existed at Coney Island. In the holiday season of 1907 two more would be launched including a large shipwreck scene and a panorama entitled 'The Feast of Belshazzar'. With mechanised entertainments such as the Ferris Wheel only appearing en masse in the 1900s, large illustration-based experiences were still prevalent in amusement parks as a sort of marvel.

Despite its innocuous title the ride symbolised a change in approach to the ride experience. Night and Morning was groundbreaking in its adaptation of a fictionalised story into an event experience, it signalled a shift in entertainments from historical and scientific marvel to themed and dramatic experiences.

In the 1920s, the 'Dark Ride' was developed and added to the repertoire at the trolley park. Adapting the simple electric trolley technology of the time, these rides created a certain seamlessness, and overall narrative continuity with the visitor's rail journey beyond the gates of the trolley park. These first iterations were based on modifying dodgem cars to run on an electrified track. The path of the ride was carefully mapped out in order to maximise a limited amount of track while still creating the impression of a vast, meandering environment. They also were known as 'Pretzel' rides.[5]

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[5] Anecdotally, this particular name was attributed because a rider was heard to exclaim that he'd felt like he'd bent into a pretzel by the twisting path of the ride (ref. 'Send 'Em Out Laffing' by Bill Luca found at http://www.laffinthe dark.com).

Dark Rides were a strange variation of the popular 'Tunnel of Love' rides, transforming the peaceful seclusion and intimate themes of the latter into fright-filled multi-sensory adventures. William F. Mangels, who revolutionised the American amusement industry of the era, observed: 'Greatly popular at some resorts are the attractions known as Dark Rides. In these, passenger-carrying vehicles, which may be boats, cars, or small trains, pass through dark tunnels or closed-in passages at a very slow speed. Along the way, surprise scenes such as mechanical ghosts, flirting devils, and similar devices pop up to scare or amuse the slowly passing riders'. [6]

Mangels is a figure intimately linked with the history and mythology of Coney Island. He built rollercoasters, such as the 'Rough Rider', and invented the 'Whip' and carousels. He revolutionised the mechanical engineering involved in constructing the rides by building motors enabling the trains to speed up around long curves and up inclines, increasing the sense of speed and exhilaration. He was also responsible for adding thematics to the ride experience, such as having the attendants wear military-styled uniforms in one particular evocation of the the Spanish-American War.

The first Dark Ride was built by Leon Cassidy at *Sunset Lake* in Bridgeton, New York in 1928. After running his own movie house in the 1910s, Cassidy and business partner Marvin Rempfer bought the run-down *Tumbling Dam Amusement Park*, which they transformed into *Sunset Lake*. They turned a disused bowling alley into a sideshow alley, and set about re-creating the attractions. In 1929 a Dark Ride was installed under the pier at *Ramagosa's Sportland* in Wildwood, New Jersey. Indeed, one of the main characteristics of these early rides was their appropriation of pre-existing structures, playing on the cultural mythology of the abandoned and derelict building and their association with fright-filled experiences.

Dark Rides, such as the *Le Cachot Dark Ride* [7] and *Witches Forest* [8] at Wildwood, New Jersey, were highly dependent on iconographical themes. In many cases they used simple triggering mechanisms designed to produce a maximum effect of surprise using limited visual

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[6] http://darkride.com

[7] The *Le Cachot Dark Ride* was in operation until 1986 at *Kennywood Park*, West Mifflin, Pennsylvania. It featured imagery from renowned theme park artist Bill Tracey.

[8] *Hunt's Pier* in Wildwood, New Jersey, started in 1935 by William C. Hunt, was the home to many custom dark rides.

props. Common features that came to define a Dark Ride attraction were drawn from the combination of these following elements:

- an enclosed structure that creates a darkened or dimly lit enclosure;
- the use of lighting in the form of triggered spotlighting or backlight effects;
- a powered ride system based on a passenger vehicle attached to a track that follows a meandering, seemingly random path;
- a reliance on scenography to create the ride experience, which includes forms of spatial trickery and animatronic activation of simple figures, scenery and props; and
- sound effects, which could range from simple triggered sounds, such as horns and buzzes, through to voice-over narration and even complex, full musical scores.

The popular appeal of the Dark Ride was immediate and quickly spread. Cassidy and Rempfer established a company to manufacture, franchise and market the resulting rides. A standard Pretzel ride comprised 5 cars and 350 feet of track. This basic infrastructure would translate into a ride about 90 seconds in duration and sold in 1929 for a purchase price of US$1200. It spawned a rival competitor: the 'Laff in the Dark' ride designed by the Traver Engineering Company. Such rides quickly became ubiquitous features of amusement parks across Pennsylvania, New York and the eastern seaboard. In 1930 a important ride was installed at the Canadian National Exhibition in Ontario. For this particular ride, a large carnival tent with a second inner tent of black canvas was erected to ensure the necessary, controllable darkness. By the 1930s, Pretzel rides were being shipped around the world, taking along with them their distinctive visual style and experience design.

The Dark Ride offers one distinctive example of how technology and entertainment would become closely interlinked. The ability to create dynamic immersive experiences with technology brought innovative new types of narrative spaces to audiences to view and participate in. The emergence of cinema is one such 'image space'. An important example of the impact of technological exploration and the film arts in this formative period is F.W. Murnau's classic film *Nosferatu* of 1919. In this film Murnau creates a distinctive aesthetic of 'gothic space': the framed image reduced to an almost pure iconography with limited depth of field and bleak, simple sets. The apparitions on screen assume a dream-like tangibility through sustained close-ups, a distinctive feature of Murnau's filmmaking. This technique,

exemplified in classic scenes featuring lead actor Max Schreck looming up towards the screen, interjects into the physical space of the viewer like a scary mechanised monster from a ghost train, affecting an obliteration of the boundaries that separate the real from the unreal.

The Dark Ride, both thematically and technically, exhibited parallels with the cinematic movements of the time. A spatial aesthetic culture was developed between these forms of entertainment. While the Dark Ride and gothic film are both expressionistic art forms, intermingling key formal techniques to construct their themes and concepts, the way that the viewer is expected to interact with the ride construction is vastly different from its film counterpart.

Writing in the midst of the era in which cinema made significant advances due to camera technology, special effects and the language of filmic montage, Erwin Panofsky articulated the type of imaginative 'transportation' associated with the viewing experience of film: 'In a movie theatre… the spectator has a fixed seat, but only physically… Aesthetically, he is in permanent motion, as his eye identifies itself with the lens of the camera which permanently shifts in distance and direction. And the space presented to the spectator is as moveable as the spectator is himself. Not only do solid bodies move in space, but space itself moves, changing, turning, dissolving and recrystallizing'.[9] Panofsky's comments about these viewing aesthetics highlight a fixed relationship of the viewer to screen discourse: the cinema-goer is a 'spectator', one who follows and identifies with the lens of the camera, not a 'participant'.

Within the Dark Ride, the viewer's position in the overall narrativity of the phantasmagorical environment is unstable: at one moment this might involve observing a scene or situation take place; at other times, becoming a participatory subject who is directly confronted, whose circulation through the space brings them 'into' the midst of the action. The devices that provoke these feelings are admittedly simplistic but the effect is strong and visceral. Dramatically lit dioramas, recognised by the counterpoint of localised illumination with enveloping darkness, typifies a production technique that is closely associated with the visual style of the gothic film. In the Dark Ride this play of visibility is used to create self-contained thematic environments framed by darkness. When sequentially arranged, they interject and

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[9] Ibid., p.6; with reference to Panofsky, Erwin, 'Style and Medium in the Moving Pictures', *transition*, 1937, p.124-125.

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produce disruptive transitions between individuated settings, offering a succession of set pieces that involve different characters and divergent scenarios. The participant's journey through these themes and spaces acts to link these episodes into a composite narrative experience. This moving experience offers a sequential 'time code' that propels the viewer through the narrative represented in the space, aware of immanent action yet uncertain of what will be waiting around the next corner. The role of the participant is constantly changing and this tension or estrangement is the Dark Ride's unique feature.

The impact of popular entertainment on society, in particular the thematic dark ride, is reflected in the work of numerous contemporary artists. Studio practice often takes the saturated nature of this commercial entertainment and uses it to speak of a broader social issue. A work that takes advantage of the estrangement associated with the Dark Ride experience is Gary Hill's projection based media installation *Tall Ships*[10]. As with the majority of new media exhibits, the work operates solely in darkness with few signals to guide the audience around the gallery space. Instead the projection-based works themselves were the exclusive sources of light in the space, intermittently interrupting the enveloping, cavernous darkness, much like the glowing façades of fairground attractions.

Figure 1. Gary Hill: *Tall Ships*, 1992 Sixteen-channel video installation

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[10] First exhibited in Australia as part of the exhibition *Space Odysseys* at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, the work also travelled to Melbourne as part of *Deep Space*, the inaugural exhibition at the Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI) in 2002. The exhibition, curated by Victoria Lynn, explored new mediated spaces within contemporary art and cinema.

The main length of the narrow space features a series of small white phosphorescent images on either side. This quantity of projected content is quite overwhelming in a space of barely eight metres length by three metres width. Hill's seamless technical approach seduces the viewer down the small hallway; the lights on the wall – like a row of candelabras with flickering cauldrons – are revealed to be ghostly human figures. Having unknowingly journeyed down a dark corridor the 'visitor' finds themselves in a room of apparitions, mutely approaching and withdrawing again, swallowed by the expanses of darkness. The narrative seems familiar but ultimately ambiguous. The estrangement of the lost souls and the viewer, both trying to find resolution in this netherworld, gives the piece its haunting resonance. Hill creates connections with myriad iconic symbols, subtly intertwining these visuals with the immediately sensate and experiential. The work is not (in contrast to much new media work) an interface for a predetermined user interaction but instead offers a deeply resonant, participatory event, your own situation made to feel as strange as that of the ghost-like figures that surround you, gesturing in vain efforts to speak.

Through this highly influential work, which has become canonised as part of the formative history of new media art, an affiliation with some of the characteristic features of the Dark Ride scenario can be recognised; in particular, its synthesising of darkened enclosure, lighting effects and immersive viewing experience.

Figure 2. Paul McCarthy: Caribbean Pirates, 2001-05. Performance, video, installation

In his work 'Caribbean Pirates', video and installation artist Paul McCarthy seeks to re-examine the text of one of the most famous Dark Rides: Disneyland's 'Pirates of the Caribbean'. In doing so he uses many of the mechanisms that make the Dark Ride successful.

The Disneyland ride itself will be discussed in a later chapter, but what is most interesting in the context of this analysis is McCarthy's use of the 'Ride' format as a means of documenting a performance. McCarthy criticises the spectator position the Disney rider takes, the work's violent and grotesque performances questioning the complacent nature of observing such horrors by presenting the most confronting realities possible.

In the Disney ride participants are taken through a village which has been occupied by pirates. McCarthy attempts to return us to a grounded reality by showing his version of the real horrors of 17th century pirate life. Emma Nielson describes the piece's content: 'The viewer sees torture, attack, rape, bondage, sex, blood – it's about restriction and breaking through restriction – or at least the attempt to do so. Pursuing the boundaries. The struggle for power, the dark sides of the soul and its darkest depths all find their place in this exhibition.' [11]

Figure 4. Paul McCarthy: Caribbean Pirates, 2001-05. Performance, video, installation

McCarthy's practice involves both the construction of installations and the performance within them. In the case of Caribbean Pirates, the work's gallery-based presentation sometimes features both video and set pieces from the shoot. Working within a large studio – much like on a movie set – his installations have a camera track which winds its way between the sites of action: a decrepit house boat, a makeshift dock and a dinghy in front of a blue screen, to name a few. These videos are then redistributed across the gallery space, their placement chaotically obliterating the linear nature in which they were captured.

[11]Nielson, E. 2007. Paul McCarthy: The World as Pirate's Lair – LaLa Land, Parody Paradise. *Pulse Berlin*, Volume 3, Page 1.

In this installation series McCarthy re-situates the Disney attraction within the tradition of the Dark Ride, examining an event or a space not as a binary or linear event, but a chaotic, scattered and horrific experience. This re-interpretation of the event by the viewer articulates the Dark Ride's ability to deliver a new and unique spatial experience using a set of icons and set pieces.

Callum Morton's work 'Babylonia' is a sculptural installation which was displayed at Melbourne's Australian Centre for Contemporary Art. Morton's first large-scale work, it featured a 13-metre long island 'floating' on the gallery floor, with an entranceway leading into the side of the island. Inside is a set of corridors; musak plays and a series of doors which cannot be opened surround the viewer.

Figure 5 Callum Morton: Babylonia, 2005
wood, polystyrene, epoxy resin, acrylic paint, light, carpet, mirror, sound

Morton takes inspiration from many cinematic scenes but instead of breaking these up he morphs them together into one singular immersive sculpture. The island he has created is not a realistic facsimile but an obvious fake, as if a part of a 1950s film set were stranded in the gallery. The fake rock façade is bold and intriguing like a dramatic entrance to a theme park. In an interview with curator Juliana Engberg, Morton describes his influences, the long takes and slow paced realism of Michelangelo Antonioni, and the experiential qualities of the

amusement park ride, and the way they are melded together in this work: 'On the one hand, it's L'avventura but it's as much about theme parks and Disneyland. I had visited Pirates of the Caribbean many times… when I construct, the finish I am looking for hovers between mock-rock-theme-park zoo and the real thing'. [12]

Figure 4. Callum Morton: Babylonia, 2005

wood, polystyrene, epoxy resin, acrylic paint, light, carpet, mirror, sound

Morton's Babylonia creates a walk through cinematic experience, an interactive pastiche of the film scene. His influences lie in the filmmakers who explore particular architectures and spaces, and thus, the themed ride becomes key in Morton's understanding of how to re-develop these fascinations in their sculptural context.

In its particular time and place, the trolley park successfully lured people out of the city to escape and explore alternative, imaginary destinations that could be found at a safe remove, somewhere 'else'. The trolley park offered a series of phantasmagorical amusements and simulated polysensory events that overwhelmed the visitor with dizzying, disorientating effect. Today, the direction of the gravitational pull towards escapism draws us deep into the dark heart of the postmodern mediascape. As cities spread out and disperse around the edges, and the neon-lit movie palaces and sideshow arcades of a bygone era transform into suburban megaplexes, vicarious adventures and otherworldly experiences have found their way back from the dark fringes on the edge of town into the very centre of today's cities.

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[12] Quote from audio recording for the Australian Center for Contemporary Art, available at http://www.accaonline.org.au, 2005.

With respect to present destinations of media exploration in Melbourne, we have witnessed the development of a range of new venues for an engaged, entertaining examination of our cultural environment. New media spaces, such as the Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI) in Melbourne, act not as neutral domains but as extensions of the city – our contemporary trolley parks – where we can comment on and examine the overlapping discourses of mediated experiences that fill our everyday lives. In such a hybrid, media-saturated space, unlike a conventional gallery or museum, there is no single 'screen', navigational path or viewing position; instead the viewer is forced to engage, explore and interact.[13] A journey into the centre of Melbourne – to Federation Square, which sits above former rail yards at the intersection of principal routes into and out of the city, and the Australian Centre for the Moving Image – presents an array of mediated interactions for its audience that take place on an experiential plane running parallel to the relative 'commonplace' of the urban environment.

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[13] This mode of subjective viewing experience was explicitly introduced by its inaugural exhibition 'Space Odysseys: Sensation &Immersion'. In her catalogue essay of the same name Victoria Lynn wrote : 'To move in and through space, whether physically or virtually, is to take a journey. Even if that journey is revolving, dynamic, non-directional, it is composed of a set of experiences that will in some form affect the sensations of the person taking it. Embedded within any journey is the set of decisions to leave 'home' and the set of expectations about the arrival in another space and place. A key moment in the journey is the transition from one space into another' (p.11)

Chapter 2 – Field Research

Though the period between 1901 and 1940 is where we find the most poignant examples of the Dark Ride's unique role in defining the way that spaces can be the format for narrative experience; there are many different types of Dark Ride still in operation across the United States and indeed the world. Many of these rides were heavily renovated or redesigned in the 1960s at a time when the iconography of cinema had reached a new mass popularity.

Field research involved an analysis of key sites from this period still in operation in North America. The goal of travelling in person was primarily to find ideas for the production of studio work: new ways of leading an audience through a set of connected images, through a visual world. So much of the impetus for the creation of this studio work had come from a fascination with these sites that a level of authenticity was paramount. An extensive literature search revealed no popular books on Dark Rides, with fan publications such as magazines and websites discussing their mechanics and history but rarely the experience itself. Aware of the low budget nature of these parks the anticipated goal was not to discover technical marvels but collisions of experience and environment, phenomena that could lead to a formula for developing studio works in varied contexts.

Figure 6. Haunted House, Ocean City, MD (photo by J Zika 2007)

Gaining a first-hand understanding of the transgressive nature of the Dark Ride format was important; many of its defining elements seeming born from other defunct spaces, and the content of rides changing from inception to suit new themes or styles. The original Dark Ride was the product of abandoned infrastructure and unpopular culture, which defined it as a medium.

Other academics, writers and artists have examined the popular-culture landscape of the USA through exploratory field research. Of particular influence to this study was Umberto Eco's 'Travels in Hyperreality'[14]. In this text Eco reports largely on extensive travels through North America in search of 'The Absolute Fake', his interest in American culture and entertainment and its use of replicas, appropriation and iconics. In relationship to Eco's writings this study would look at the sites not only for individual interest but also to understand their role in broader cultural geography.

From looking at historical documentation it seemed that a key element of the Dark Ride's development was its relationship to the surrounding environment. Often, parks were pictured nestled in foreboding woods or on dilapidated piers, and it was hard to gain a full visual understanding of this relationship without visiting the sites themselves. One of the strongest visual phenomena to filter from found historical imagery into studio work was the abandoned nature of these types of parks, stranded on the outskirts or run-down and barely used. This impression of dilapidated and forgotten worlds is pivotal to the mythology of the classic amusement park in film and television but surrounding environments would need to be seen in person in order to gain insight into how they affected the evolution of the ride.

Today a key resource for the enthusiasts of dark rides, the 'Laff in the Dark' website, lists 55 rides in the USA still operating, though that number is diminishing. In Pennsylvania alone there are 174 defunct amusement parks,[15] with countless original Dark Rides either demolished or abandoned. In the summer of 2007 when this field research took place, two amusement park sites in Pennsylvania and many more across the country closed indefinitely.

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[14] Eco, U. (1986). Travels in hyperreality : essays. San Diego, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. Page 30.
[15] http://Laffinthedark.com has an updated list of currently active parks across the United States. They were consulted for this project's field research component. Information about defunct amusement parks can be found at http://www.defunctparks.com/ the documentation of sites varies.

Three of the sites visited during field research will be focussed on, each with a different format, history and relationship to their local urban and geographical environment.

Kennywood, home to the oldest Dark ride still in operation, is an amusement park on the outskirts of Pittsburgh, sitting on the edge of the Monongahela River. In 1898 Kennywood Park was bought by the local rail company. Originally used as a picnic ground for workers, the park became a destination for those using the Pittsburgh trolley system. One of the first rides to be set up at Kennywood was also arguably the first Dark Ride ever built. Constructed in 1901, 'The Old Mill' was the first of a genre of Dark Rides set in a fictional abandoned mill.

Pre-industrialized mills used water and gravity to move logs through a series of milling stations, pushing the logs through without the need for motors. When 'The Old Mill' was first built, it used this simple non-mechanical approach to ferry passengers through the course. Within a large ring structure, the narrative progression takes place through images and models decorating the walls of the water trough, which then opens up into large dioramas. These gravity-propelled rides pre-date mechanized trolley cars and are the next step in the historical progression from 'Tunnel of Love' rides[16]. Whilst a tunnel or boat-style ride used similar tricks and shocks to the Old Mill, there is a shift in the latter to a greater sense of immersion within a narrative. In this case the narrative is built into the architectural structure. Over the years the content would change[17] but the format of the mill was kept.

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[16]A precursor to the Pretzel rides, the 'Tunnel of Love' was technically a Dark Ride. For the purpose of this research it is seen as being a key influence but not as thematic as its younger relative.
[17]The Old Mill ride today, whilst still featuring all of its original structure, is branded 'Garfield's Nightmare'. It follows the popular comic book character on a surreal dream journey.

Figure 7. Old Mill Ride, Kennywood, PA (photo by J Zika 2007)

The participant in the ride enters at the point where logs were loaded onto punts and ferried into the darkened space. In the open spaces, where the logs would have been loaded from the water and cut, animatronic scenes of monsters and ghouls play out. Looking at these types of rides today sees far less of a focus on intimate thematics; in the 1930s a new breed of rides referred to as 'Mill Chute' rides were developed. Behaving more like a roller coaster, Mill Chutes lifted and dropped the rider, rather than following a sequence of images or dioramas.

Approaching Pittsburgh from its outskirts allowed me to see the landscape around the park and imagine how it would have looked in the site's heyday. Pittsburgh sits at the juncture of a number of rivers, and routes in and out of the city interweave with the paths of these waterways.

Figure 8. Kennywood and surrounding abandoned buildings (photo by J Zika 2007)

Large bridges traverse not only the intertwining rivers but also a dynamic landscape of steep hills and ravines. Journeying to the western side of Pittsburgh sees many solitary cottages and old businesses overshadowed by enormous fairytale-like trees, some towering 10 metres overhead. With a large Germanic community settling the city, houses have a colonial European feel, many barn-style with exposed wood. With the winding road and horizon all but eclipsed by giant fauna, each part of the travel seems disjointed from the next; despite being only kilometres from the city, each set of houses feels like it could be the last.

In 1968 George Romero set his debut film 'Night of the Living Dead' on the edge of dense Pennsylvanian woodlands only a short drive from the Kennywood site. What would become one of the most important and influential horror films ever made owed its success to use of the natural landscape and the isolation it amplifies[18]. In the valleys immediately surrounding

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[18] A local of the area, Romero used only a small number of sites in his low budget film, with most of the action taking place in an isolated colonial house. The film sets itself in a USA under siege by a disease which brings the dead back to life as zombies. A group of characters take refuge in an old house as the threat from a growing number of diseased outside grows stronger. Throughout much of the film the protagonists work on fortifying the house they are trapped in, stripping every element of the house's interior, using it to cover windows and doors. Shots of crazed arms frantically grasping through pieces of wood would become emblematic of the contemporary zombie film. This ritual the characters go through creates one of the many poetic allegories of 1960s American society. This fortification reflected a isolationist mentality gathering momentum in the USA in the 1960s. But in the suburbs of contemporary Pittsburgh these images seem to echo in real life. Only minutes

Kennywood, large factories lie abandoned, a spooky site so close to what is a lively fun park. Adjacent to the car park, the once beaming lights of the two fast food outlets are obscured by a mesh of wooden boards.

Thinking back to the origins of the ride itself, one can imagine a time when the movement of goods and people along waterways in and out of the city was the norm. This mode of interaction would determine the way that people saw and defined the limits of their urban surrounds. In The Old Mill ride we see another example of the ride experience mirroring and condensing day-to-day interaction with the city.

Whereas later Dark Rides would interlink with a more cinematic sense of ambiguous space, The Old Mill took a pre-existing site and attached a narrative to it. Waves of industrial change in Pittsburgh would give rise to the mythologising of many architectural elements of the city and its surrounds. In the early 1900s it was the mills and barns of the previous century that could act as the canvas for a plethora of eerie texts and immersive experiences. An ever changing industrial landscape in America saw many iconic everyday buildings metamorphose into the sites of myth. The 'Abandoned Mill', 'The Old Mine' and even 'The Hayloft'[19] were all used as formats for the development of Dark Rides throughout the 20s and 30s. In Kennywood's The Mill Ride we see how the evolution of these forms of entertainment are intrinsically linked to shifts in urban and rural landscapes. Such rides give the viewer the chance to travel through an abandoned site, or a replica thereof, and use the anxiety related to these places to build a narrative. Being indicative of the fears of the society during a certain time, similar connections can be made between all types of immersive entertainments and the pervading concerns of the public at their inception.

In Ocean City, Maryland, a Dark Ride with no track exists: 'Pirates' Cove' is a 'Walkthrough Ride'. It has no trolley and is experienced on foot, creating some immediate changes in the temporal experience. The ride's owners (Trimper's Rides), are the oldest proprietor at the site; their grounds encompass a few rides on the promenade facing the ocean, but mostly

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from large new shopping malls entire strips of businesses (most likely opened in the 60s) are largely closed down and boarded up. People pile in hordes onto the bus to be taken to the shopping megaplex only metres down the road. Old shops and bars lay abandoned by the side of the road as if the scenes of Romero's fictional film 40 years earlier had really played out.

[19] The Haunted Hayloft is a walkthrough haunted house ride in Rockwood Pennsylvania. 'A frightening step back in time' is its promotional catch phrase

traditional rides behind the beach. Pirates' Cove features an extensive façade, which looks to have been updated heavily in the 1970s. A detailed full-body model of a pirate protrudes many metres from the front and is accompanied by an enormous treasure chest and skeleton. It is a truly impressive site, one which seems lost on the hordes of summer tourists avoiding the ride in favor of the brighter, less thematic entertainments.

Figure 9. Pirates Cove, Ocean City MD (photo by J Zika 2007)

Despite not having a mechanized track to guide the participant through the journey, there are many ways that the ride controls the experience through animation of the space itself. In this type of ride we see how the Dark Ride experience compiles a set of largely experiential vignettes in order to form a narrative experience. The thematics of the ride are set out early: the claustrophobia of the hull of a pirate ship, the freaky artifacts of plunder and the giddying disorientation of a stormy voyage. Physiological distortion is the main tool used by the pirate ride. Even before entering darkness the floorboards of the queue move backwards and forwards out of sync, moving your left foot forward and your right back. This happens sporadically as the rider attempts to get to the entrance; clambering for balance creates a sense of distrust and expectancy in the ride's structure as a whole.

Particular focus on illusionistic spatial techniques sees this Dark Ride drawing on popular perspective tricks from much earlier in the 20th and late 19th century. In one particular section the riders are led into a room of exaggerated perspective created by the size and position of

vertical planks on the wall. This is an example of the 19th century 'Ames Room' technique, where cube patterns on the floor were used to trick the eye into a false sense of perspective. The most effective of the spatial illusions happens towards the end of the ride; riders are led through an archway and into a tubular passageway. The room itself is actually a rotating tube and the viewers stand on a platform which stretches through to the other side of the tube. The tubular walls seem to have holes punched in them which reveal a bright blue light; the effect suggests a starry night sky rotating above, presumably the view from the deck. As riders walk down the pathway – or perhaps plank – a circular screen at the end of the tunnel spins in time with the walls. Painted on the screen are luminescent dots the same colour as the lit stars. The technique brings about a feeling of sublime vertigo as the room seems to topple over like a ship at sea. The spinning room is featured in a number of Dark Rides, usually using a real room with decorated walls moving around the viewer. This ride shows the influence of popular cyclorama and panorama pavilions of the 1900s, which delivered a standalone immersion similar to this through two-dimensional imagery.

Figure 10. Pirates' Cove (spinning tunnel), Trimper's Rides, Ocean City MD (photo by J Zika 2007)

The importance of the Dark Ride lies in its ability to take all the elements of the narrative text and reorder them as a spatial experience. In the case of Pirates' Cove the journey sews together disparate elements of the pirate story and houses them all in the same darkened space. As cheaply as the idea may have been realised, its nightmare-like collage of imagery is incomparable to any cinematic adventure. The recreation of nautical stories as rides has its origins in the 'Noah's Ark' ride, similar to the pirate ride but thematically less abstract. The

ride's structures were built in the shape of an ark, with all action taking place within the physical constraints of the giant boat. This type of ride was patented in 1920 by Leroy Raymond[20], whose specific vision saw an enormous ark atop a large hill so that it had room to rock back and forth. Today only two Noah's Ark rides still operate, one in the UK at Blackpool and the other in the US at Kennywood.

Today's Coney Island is far removed from the resort megaplex of the 1900s,: a collection of amusement zones huddled together amongst souvenir stores and empty blocks, developers lying in wait to redevelop the area as apartments and a resort, and a caravan advertising 'The New Coney Island' sits in one of the abandoned blocks. There are three Dark Rides remaining on this site now: Spookarama, The Ghost Hole and Dante's Inferno. Of those three, Spookarama is the oldest and offers the most interesting experience. Built in 1955, it is not the oldest ride of its kind but it is a conglomerate of early ride attributes, representative of the end of an era. It is a Pretzel ride very similar to 'SpookHouse' in Keansburg, New Jersey (1932) and 'Laffland' at Sylvan Beach, New York (1934) which are also still running. Spookarama offers the longest ride experience and for that reason is the focus of this section.

To access the ride you must walk down a narrow laneway created by the cluster of rides and sideshows that make up 'Deno's Wonder Wheel Amusement Park'. The Coney Island site is made up of a number of separate amusement zones. Deno's sits behind the boardwalk. Amongst the crammed amusements, Spookarama's façade is largely hidden by the awnings of dodgem cars and slot arcades that sit around it. Trolley cars line up at the front of the ride and face towards the customers. They are tall art deco creations, and despite their bad condition and gaffer-taped mending, they are objects of great beauty. The trolley itself is key to this particular ride and reveals much about the connection between the Dark Ride and the cinematic experience. These particular trolleys are high, tall like the booths of a diner, and blinker any side vision. As the ride begins, the trolley moves up a queue towards the far corner of the site before turning around and progressing toward the entrance to the ride proper. In this outside section of ride, the cart turns the riders to view the back of the control area, making visible the most banal of control switches and power plugs before sharply pulling attention towards the swinging entrance doors. This act of exposing the inner workings of the ride may seem incidental but it occurs in most rides.

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[20] According to Laffinthedark the first Noah's Ark ride was designed and built by Leroy Raymond and installed at Venice Pier, California in 1919.

Figure 11. Spookarama, Coney Island, NY Figure 11. (photo by J Zika 2007)

A glimpse at the controls reiterates the entrusting of oneself to this mechanised journey, and the participant's being unable to in any way control the outcome. This manipulation of your point of view continues throughout the ride, the track moving in one direction while the rider faces another. The pivoting trolley allows the point of view to be spun around completely before coming to abrupt stops. The content of the ride is far less a sequence of dioramas than actions of individual props, quick acts of terror that can be illuminated and seen for only a fraction of a second: an electrocution, a dismembered man, a leering mummy or a piano playing psycho. The elements weave together thematically, approaching from out of the darkness much like apparitions. Architectural space has very little to do with the impact of the journey. A narrative or thematic order is more prevalent than a spatial logic due to the twisting and turning of the track and the trolley itself.

In a contemporary context the best comparison that can be made to the structure of the Pretzel ride is that of cinema's tracking shot. When patented in 1928 the Pretzel ride was defined by two important documents: a model of the trolley and a map of the track[21]. The map of the ride comes with annotation as to where the different visual elements would be triggered, a graphical script for the experience. Long tracking shots were not common in major films

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[21] The patent documents which described the ride heavily detail the electric pick-up system employed on each cart but also the map of the track itself, showing the importance of the layout of the experience.

until the 1940s; in the Pretzel ride, point of view was experimented with extensively from the first pivoting trolleys in the 1920's. With the shape of the trolley framing every tableau cinematically and a triggered soundtrack supplied within the space; the trolley's role as 'virtual camera' is clear.

Re-entering the ride with a flash camera allows one to quickly uncover some of the practical reasons for the ride's structure and pace. Firstly there are no dividing walls at all; in fact, all the props are visible from the one position. The space uses light to control their visibility. The track meanders and curls around the edges of the room, using only the side walls for more elaborate scenes of horror. All other elements are hanging, suspended or sit like a totem around the track; the centre of the room is empty. For the most part the ride uses very little space. The cart detracts your attention from any upcoming fright until the very last second by spinning the participant to face into the darkened inner space.

These three rides alone unveil many unique ways of creating a narrative environment. Some of the techniques are echoed in larger, more contemporary entertainments, the architecture of shopping malls and museums. In these Dark Rides we see not only the genesis of many of these approaches but unique connections to the environment in which they are set and the content they deliver. In many cases the environment and content are linked. Pirates' Cove gives us an understanding of how a site can embody a narrative-rich environment, leading you through that tale in one direction without linear storytelling. The ride gives participants the physiological feelings combined with visual triggers but mixes up the order and sequence, as mentioned earlier as the essence of a 'nightmare'. An disorientating effect like the barrel room still relates back to the broader 'pirate' experience and helps set the scene. This is a technique applicable to studio work that would be employed later in this project.

Spookarama's pivoting point of view and reliance on the trolley track for creating continuity connected the investigation most obviously with the cinematic experience. The ride was also crucial in understanding a different type of immersion, dramatic control of the viewer rather than bombarding or engulfing them with image. In the production of three-dimensional modelled animation, understanding how to effectively control point of view is essential. This ride experience would help in the development of screen-based content for the final studio work.

Most rides build their physical structure to replicate, enhance and promote the experience. Many rides that people grew up with tended to have more exciting façades than the experiences themselves. However there are a small number – like The Old Mill – that have managed to incorporate the entire structure into the narrative experience. The Old Mill led to a broadening of ideas about the site-specific nature of the Dark Ride. Kennywood, a unique park, and the landscape of Pittsburgh will undoubtedly fuel the production of artworks for a long time to come.

Chapter 3 – Studio Work

Recognising the Dark Ride as new way of experiencing the cinematic scene, it was my goal to create a new dynamic studio work within the format. With works generated in a digital space through the creation of three-dimensional ('3D') computer modelling there were a range of possible outputs. The studio projects exemplify this dynamic range of media outcomes with printed works of various sizes, multi-screen animations and digital router cut acrylic shapes. This diverse practice directly correlates with the production methodologies of the Dark Ride creators, who mix media and architecture together to create the desired visual response.

During the course of the research project six minor studio-based outcomes were created, emerging from and reacting to the conceptual investigation discussed in this exegesis. These works have culminated in the development of a major studio work which melds visual research of the iconography and symbolism of the Dark Ride environment with the sensory and immersive methodologies investigated whilst experiencing them first-hand. In the exhibitions 'At Night' (2005) and 'Façade' (2006), print-based gallery outcomes saw an aesthetic examination of the Dark Ride, brought about by the referencing of historical documentation from the period. Exhibitions such as 'Arcade' (2006) and 'Inferno' (2007) would expand that investigation to involve printed works with light, spatial immersion and site-specific narrativity. In the case of 'Night and Morning' (2008) and 'Hocus Pocus' (2008) elements of both aesthetics and presentation technology were experimented with to create hybrid media works. These two works took unusual spaces and worked with projected content, creating the most technologically driven works of the research.

All works are discussed chronologically.

At Night **2005**

Four prints make up the body of work 'At Night', for the gallery-based exhibition in Melbourne 2005.[22] These works appear as a panoramic scene divided into four pieces. The works are huddled together closely across a four-by-four metre gallery space. The image as a whole is of a dark, wooded scene; in each work an object or architectural element is nestled amongst the foreboding silhouettes of elm trees. The far left image of this panoramic scape shows the façade of a hall, the red art deco edge of the building just catching the light. The representation of this building is based on photography of the amusement park in Lake Compounce which was then rebuilt as a digital illustration(see Figure 13).

Figure 12. At Night, Spacement Gallery, Melbourne (photo by J Zika)

The poetic source photography shows a park surrounded by towering elms, simple structures dwarfed by a foreboding natural landscape. The signage on the building has changed countless times through the years. In its final iteration in the 1930s, it read: 'Laff in The Dark', referring to the scared laugh one gets from shock rides. In this re-imaging of the scene the signage has been removed, the ride is lit only by moonlight and the trees have grown right around the façade.

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[22] A prominent Contemporary art space in Flinders Lane, Melbourne, Spacement Gallery was active until 2006.

Figure 13. Lake Compounce, 1930's

This set of works creates a reflection not simply on the changed face of amusements but on the period which saw perceptions of the countryside morph from quaint and serene to dark and dystopian. In the USA specifically, this type of visual study also echoes the sense of abandonment and waste that has befallen many of the country's amusement spaces.

Moving across the 'At Night' panorama from this entranceway we see a trolley car from the dawn of the Pretzel company. The cart lies solitary at the foot of the trees, beside a set of neon arches sitting impotently amid more overgrowth. The apparatus of the entertainment and the superficial façade that lures you in are both stranded out of context within these prints.

Figure 12.1
At Night #1, Photographic Print, 2005

Figure 12.2
At Night #2, Photographic Print, 2005

Figure 12.3
At Night #3, Photographic Print, 2005

Figure 12.4
At Night #4, Photographic Print, 2005

Facade   2006

The entrance into the ride experience is the sole focus of the body of work 'Façade', a gallery-based show for the site 24/7[23] in 2006. A public exhibition space in Melbourne, 24/7 posed an assortment of site-specific challenges. The gallery consists of a large windowed viewing space looking out over a busy CBD street. Highly reflective glass, changing lighting conditions and a large viewing space meant that images for this space needed to take on board many of the attributes of a amusement façade.

Figure 14. Facade 24/7 Gallery, Melbourne (photo by J Zika)

The two works each measure nearly three metres in length. The images of amusement park entrances were designed to offer two points of entry into a fantasy Dark Ride from the street. In stark contrast to the images of 'At Night' these two towering entranceways are pictured as vessels of a white light, which pours out from every part of the structure. In each image a lone figure stands by the entrance, engulfed in the dusty beams.

With a Dark Ride, the experience is largely hidden. Even entering the inside of a ride while it's not running gives little understanding of the experience. These works explore the sublime attraction of the ride entrance and the sacrificing of oneself to the mechanics of such an experience.

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[23] A prominent contemporary artist run initiative in Flinders Street, Melbourne, 24/7 was active until 2006.

Figure 14.1
Facade#1, Façade#2. Photographic Prints, 2006

Arcade   2006

The work 'Arcade' was developed in 2006 as part of the group show '100 Points of Light'.[24] These are the largest print works of the Masters project, inkjet prints designed to fit in the windows of Manchester Lane in Melbourne's CBD. The openings, which sit below eye level, run at intervals for the length of the space, behind the windows an array of neon was placed creating a light box effect.

Figure 15. Arcade (installation shot), Manchester Lane, Melbourne (photo by J Zika)

Utilising this heritage-listed site, the work illustrated a historical story of a young schoolgirl who went missing in an arcade only blocks from the site.[25] The images, each depicting elaborately illuminated entranceways, all feature the silhouette of a young child on the brink of entering these strange abstracted spaces. Visible from adjoining bars and shops the illuminated images meld with other images. Like rides on the boardwalk, the existence of alluring entranceways breaks up and distorts the pathway normally taken through this part of the city.

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[24]100 Points of Light was a curated group show for the 2006 Next Wave Festival, Melbourne.
[25] In 1921 the body of a 12-year-old girl was found in Gun Alley, Melbourne. Because of the event's seedy location the case caused a sensation.The owner of a local saloon was hung for the murder.

Figure 16. Arcade (installation shot), Manchester Lane, Melbourne (photo by J Zika)

Changing the narrow laneway to into a narrative pathway is the primary outcome of this project. The ability to re-structure a story into a space of historical relevance or respond to the pre existing urban environment are key crossovers with field research.

Figure 15.1
Arcade #1, Arcade#2. Inkjet Prints, 2006

Inferno   2007

Originally amusement parks were built like a utopian microcosm of a perfect city – one can look to Disneyland for a more contemporary example. Changes in moral attitudes in the 1920s and 30s were reflected in the moralistic themes of rides of the time. One of the most common thematic structures appropriated by the Dark Ride is that of Dante's *Inferno*. Hundreds of these rides are scattered across traditional American theme parks. Dante's tale is one which fits into the model of the Dark Ride, a heavily visual journey dealing with sin and punishment. Two studio works were developed in response to this re-interpretation of Dante's writings.

The installation 'Inferno' was first developed as a 3D computer model and then adapted into a real life archway for a show of site-specific public works. Using adhesive print technology and cut perspex the work used an array of solar powered lights which illuminated and flashed throughout the night.

Figure 17. Inferno (installation shot). Whitlam Park, Melbourne (photo by J Zika)

The life-size archway was placed on a corner opposite a popular pub in Fitzroy, an inner suburb of Melbourne. Functioning as an entrance into the small park which itself is unused, sparse and largely covered in graffiti. As with the work Arcade, Inferno uses elements of the theme park environment and weaves them back into a public scenario, in both instances creating or alluding to a new way of interacting with the city.
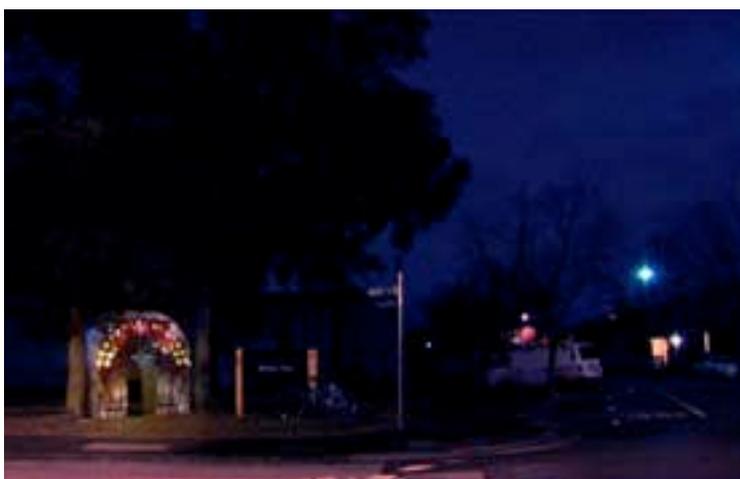
Figure 18. Inferno (installation shot). Whitlam Park, Melbourne (photo by J Zika)

By creating an entranceway into nowhere, Inferno attempts to make sacred the graffiti-tagged landscape of the park and its frequenters. It mirrors the pub opposite, which also features flashing lights and an arched entrance, and the way that its signage and architecture signal its cultural inhabitants.
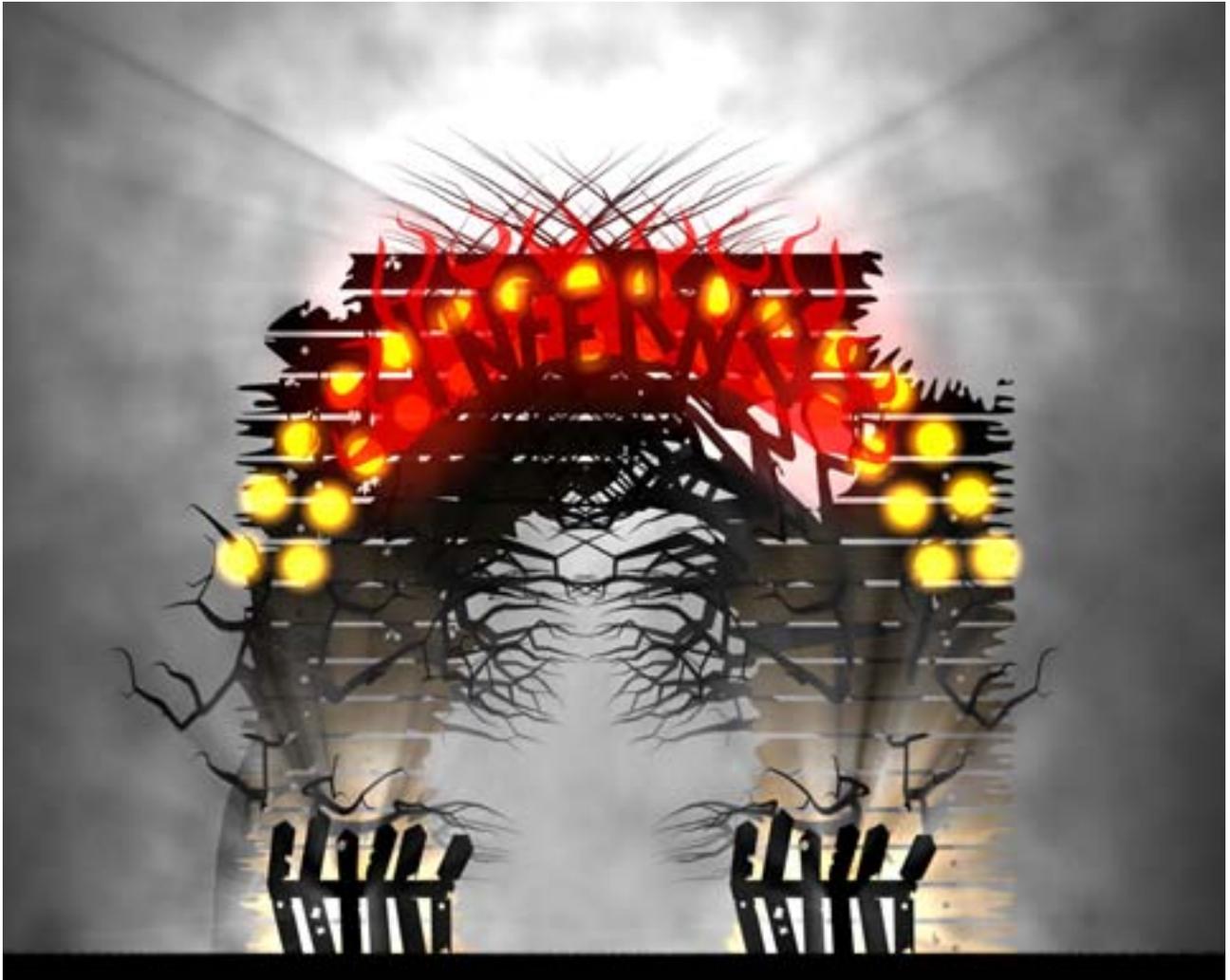
Figure 17.1
Inferno, Inkject Print, 2007

Night and Morning   2008

'Night and Morning' (2008) is a large-scale animated version of a 14th century fresco. The image of Lucifer from a fresco by Taddeodi Bartolo in San Gimignano, Italy (See Figure 20), became the key influence for the work. The piece reinvents the disturbing imagery as an animated work, one made of gaudy flashing commercial neon.

Figure 19. Night and Morning (installation shot), Cube37, Melbourne (photo by J Zika)

The animation spans three screens, designed as a public facade the character of Lucifer moves like an animatronic billboard. Nearly six metres in height and 20 in length, the installation wraps around the exhibition space Cube37 and displays onto the street space outside.

There are three functioning Dante's Inferno rides in the USA, though the original rides were designed by an Italian company. The style of illustration for such rides was always appropriated from the 14th century frescos which depicted the tale. The flattened perspective of these images makes them perfect for the distorted space of the Dark Ride.
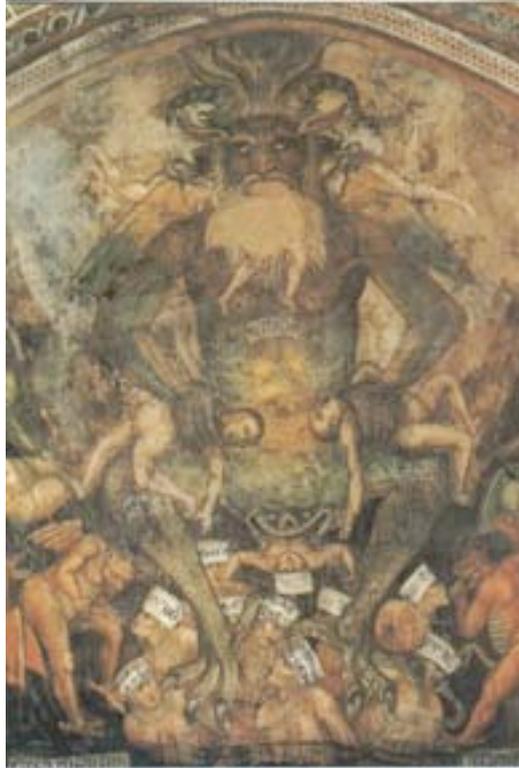
Figure 20. Lucifer. 1396, Taddeodi Bartolo

The use of the wraparound projection array allows the work to create a sense of grandeur appropriate to its content. Not only does the architectural size of the display come closer to reflecting theme park amusements' size, it gives a far better understanding of the immersive qualities of the frescos that have inspired the retelling of this story for so many centuries.

Figure 19.1
Night and Morning, Still from the animation. 2008

Peppers Ghost   2008

A smaller studio work 'Peppers Ghost' was built for the City of Melbourne Gallery show, 'Hocus Pocus' (2008). The show was a historical study of magic and magic acts in Melbourne over the last two centuries. A surprisingly frequent stop on the tour for many famous magicians, Melbourne also spawned some of the world's greatest acts. The Peppers Ghost is an effect developed in the 19th century. It was invented by magicians but quickly became a fixture of pre-cinematic theatrical shows and is still used today. The nature of the effect is to reflect an illuminated image off a piece of glass so as to give the effect of a semi translucent apparition.

Figure 21. 2008 Hocus Pocus (closeup and midshot), Melbourne City Gallery (Photo by J Zika)

As Pepper's Ghost was the opening artwork for the exhibition, patrons were met with an empty fortune-teller's booth. From the darkness appears a fortune-teller doll, a design based on those found at San Francisco's famous boardwalk penny arcades. The doll reads the fortune of the visitor and then descends back into the smoky environment.

Figure 21.1
Peppers Ghost, Still from the animation. 2008

Terrorium   **2009**

Terrorium is the final work of the Masters research. It combines the study of Dark Ride iconography, the allure of the façade and finally the immersive elements of ride participation. The work combines nearly all elements of the previous six studio works into one temporal installation work, creating a combination of immersive cinema and installation space.

The first element of the work is a giant skull, the entranceway to the ride. The structure is cut from black acrylic and its shape is defined merely by a combination of light and smoke that is rising up from behind the structure. The mouth of the skull is big enough to walk under, and around it, the silhouette of trees and other objects stand half-visible in the dark. As riders move under the skull a second entranceway beckons. This entrance is colourful and flashing, the 'Inferno' archway reused here with a small staircase between the arch. A tubular environment awaits the viewer as they walk up the staircase, a barrel environment reaching from above the head to below the feet (echoing the barrel tube at Ocean City discussed in Chapter 2).

Figure 22. 2009 Terrorium (Pre-visualisation), animated installation, perspex, wood.

Figure 23. 2009 Terrorium (Pre-visualisation), animated installation, perspex, wood.

Onto the tube, three projectors illuminate a wraparound image that surrounds the viewer. At the end of the tube a fourth projection hits a circular screen. At first the viewer seems trapped, but can exit from a space either side of the fourth projection. The name 'Terrorium' comes from the children's toy terrarium, in which children would place a number of disparate objects from the garden together to create their own nature scene. Often these devices were used to catch and keep spiders or scary reptiles, which were then able to be viewed up close and held captive. The environment of the Terrorium inverts this pastiche of objects to put the viewer in the middle of the 360-degree space.

Once more being influenced by the Coney Island ride Night and Morning (see Chapter 2), the projected environment first resembles the inside of a coffin, with the walls of the projected tube appearing as velvet lining. Quickly becoming more abstract, the space spins around and the viewer is suddenly in a wooded environment, the projections distorting the image like a fish eye camera. The space changes through a series of archetypal gothic environments including a spooky dungeon catacomb, a haunted school hall complete with ghostly students, a torture chamber and finally returning back to the coffin.

Unlike Dante's Inferno, this is not a descent into hell but a journey through the elements of popular gothic film and horror. It playfully uses the environment to 'fly through' these scenarios with totally different constraints of editing and sequence. The immersive darkened

space that the viewer finds themself in is a powerful tool for changing the environment that exists between one reality and the next and melds them quickly and easily.

This work forms the culmination of the Masters studio research by showing the many different ways in which the elements of the Dark Ride can be brought together to create a new thematic experience. The influence of cinema on the subject matter in this piece reflects the Dark Ride's interlinking with that medium in general. Images and scenes are created as if 'ready to shoot' set pieces but then altered and dispersed to fit within the format of the ride.

Conclusion

The history of thematic entertainments shows us other ways of telling stories, other ways to vividly conjure up experiences from history or mythology. It is an architecture of narrativity where the script is drawn as a map through space, the story only solidifying for the viewer once the ride is over. Cinema has gone on to become the bigger brother of the Dark Ride but its relationship to culture and society is unique in its reflection of morals, social patterns and geography. As an inspiration for studio work the study of Dark Rides has shown dynamic ways to engage with an audience, to bring together different media to suit a space and invigorate often overlooked archetypes of genre cinema.

The wealth of understanding which lies in the different types of Dark Ride provides a rich source of opportunities for other media. Looking at the Dark Ride's origins, before the dawn of cinema, gives us a reflection of the way that cinematic iconography has infused with popular entertainments. In addition we can see the effect that thematic rides have had on film and popular culture. We can get a sense of the way rides and tours have affected areas of cinema and can be cited as influencing other forms of media in the movie "The House of 1000 Corpses" (2002 Zombie). Teenage characters are taken on a hand-propelled trolley ride as a means of forwarding part of the plot. Here we see the use of spatial storytelling within the cinematic narrative. The hand-propelled nature of the experience could refer to early amusements or simply fit the poetics of the film. But importantly the ride is portrayed as a storytelling device, used instead of perhaps a tired montage sequence. It is in respect to its storytelling prowess that the Dark Ride should be best thought of; as mechanical storytelling machine. The acceptance of these mechanical and special effects as devices within cinema relies on a common perception of the ways a dynamic story can be told. In the last five years the Dark Ride has made a resurgence in its prominence within popular film, exemplified by the film 'Dark Ride' (2006 Singer) where a group of kids are trapped inside an abandoned ride.

The early history of the Dark Ride is a poetic tale and some evidence of it still remains in the few Pretzel rides still being operated. The studio work has benefited and morphed as a greater understanding has been gained of the ride experiences and the world they existed in.

The initial proposal to begin investigation cited the possible benefits of the Dark Ride as a model for installation works. Furthering to this, the studio work and the ongoing practice of the artist have been affected strongly by the broader experience of the amusement park and its cultural significance. Chapter two shows the influence of the location of the theme park to the thematics within, and this understanding has informed the artist's approach to installation within cultural sites.

The façade has become a more prominent element in the aesthetic focus of studio production, as its role in summarizing the experience is something that creates a lasting impression on anyone engaging with the amusement zone. In studio works the façade was used as a starting point in building illustrative forms; the gaping archways and entranceways of printed works from 2006–8 are seen incorporated together in the final studio piece.

The Dark Ride consistently showed integrated, practical examples of immersive storytelling using a non-linear narrative. Key examples such as Pirates' Cove gave the work a free model for constructing an installation environment. The final work of this research project is built as a constant experiential journey that moves through a series of changing aesthetic environments. Studio work beyond this point will continue to adapt and combine various models of the Dark Ride to suit new media installation. In this Masters project only a small range of techniques were employed in the final piece, coming only from a selection of historical sites that exist; many rides were not mentioned in this research and many more are still to be visited. Their potential influence offers an exciting trajectory for this research.

Traveling to sites added to the research an insight into the cultural world that surrounds Dark Rides. Looking at early rides showed key links between industry, landscape and urban growth on the shape and tone of the experience, often using the abandoned urban landscape as key influence.

Nowadays, while traditional amusement park Dark Rides shut down, a different breed of ride has begun to reinvigorate the genre; stand alone haunted attractions now dot the countryside of the USA and international locations. Whilst essentially Dark Rides, these contemporary iterations incorporate extensive live performance, site-specific narratives and, often, live music. In Japan, the largest ever Dark Ride was constructed only three years ago. It features a

45-minute walkthrough experience in what appears to be an abandoned hospital. Hundreds of actors fill the space, playing zombie doctors, insane nurses and crazed patients. In Pennsylvania 'The Bates Motel' explores the plotline of Alfred Hitchcock's famous film 'Psycho' (1960). Using a real farm and motel, the interactive ride continues the tradition of site-specific installation in a format it has coined as 'Agritainment'[26].

During this research an extensive network of Dark Ride enthusiasts were discovered, passionate people, many with family connections to the industry or deeply personal memories of these types of entertainments as a child. In writing this exegesis it was important to share in that passion and also participate in the tradition of creating spooks and haunts, experiences to share. This body of artwork takes a preliminary look at this extensive industry and culture. While it is a complete body of work in itself, it is also the beginning of a larger investigation.

participatory medium, and their connection to cinema means they will always be responding and morphing to extend popular cultural imagery and texts. This exegesis has shown how the origins of the Dark Ride can be used to develop new studio artworks, but its scope is not limited. There are new forms of Dark Ride continuing to be developed regularly, new experiences that must not only be rigorously studied but also participated in and enjoyed.

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[26] The term 'agritainment' generally refers to the conversion of farming properties into tourist destinations, http://batesmotel.com uses the term to describe the horror themed amusement precinct which takes place on an old farming property.

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