

THE RECURRING DREAM

Sophie Barrott | Statement

Dual Screen Video Installation. 15 min, 15 sec LOOPED

Lost in a landscape that is as visually alluring as it is deeply cynical; faceless protagonists drift through the depths of memory, colliding the *real* with the *virtual* in an immeasurable void of time and space. Road trips, sexual encounters, death, escapism, dualism and dream-like visuals intertwine lived experiences with filmic *Hyperreality*.

Part hazy nostalgia, part dazzling lens flare, *The Recurring Dream*, is a looped dual screen video installation blurring the lines between reality and fiction. Abstract, non-linear, juxtaposed nuances of experience find their mirror in cinema; surrendering themselves to chance overlays and subversions; through an ultimately voyeuristic, acutely positioned female lens.

Based in fact, alluded to in fiction; semi diaristic scenes are juxtaposed together to create a non-linear cyclical narrative with no real resolution; no finite end and no clear beginning. Narratives, characters and landscapes are visually teased and tormented, but ultimately destroyed. Double exposed, abstractly coloured and distraught in their in-summation, on-screen relationships and encounters are never fulfilled, and no wider truth ever achieved.

Continued from my work *The Aesthetics of Losing Control*, in an ongoing experimentation with imagery and narrative and its ties with desire, intimacy, sexuality and the projections of internal/ external worlds and psychological states of mind. My process has been to collate clips, merging photographs and videos, re-filming, refracting and distorting personally significant filmic imagery – a technique that has quickly become representative of a wider theory of Jean Baudrillard's *Hyperreality*, and my own tendency for storytelling- making visual, thematic and narrative links in a vast seemingly unconnected media landscape.

Re-appropriating, re-envisioning and reclaiming established and personal film works; altering their conception, speed and sensuality aligns itself with a generation of women responding to the disparate representation of a sole female voice in a cinematic landscape that's almost entirely dominated by the male gaze. Seeing the camera lens as *other*, a voyeuristic, curious character in itself, with the ability to interrupt a conversation mid take – bursting into a room without permission. The video plays upon this visual curiosity and the desire to look intermingling with a fascination of likeness and recognition; the human face, the body, and the interaction between the human form and its surroundings. Furthering both my own understanding and perceptive lens of portrayal through subverting conventional ways of seeing/ perceiving an at once abstract and visually confusing overlay of imagery, (Laura Mulvey's essay *Visual Pleasure in Narrative Cinema*.)

Struck by the beauty in banal details – my focus has become the out of focus, and what resides in the outer realms of perception – just beyond the frame or clear line of sight. At any point, beyond recognition and clear depiction lies our experience of colour; my work delves into the point where the simplicity of colours moving in synchronicity can evoke an intended emotion. Each video encompasses different paradoxical shots and scenes blurred and slowed down to a point where, they become disparate from their original sources.

Living in a muted world afraid of the excess of pigments, my own experience of colour has become vital to my work; I've continually attempted to reflect an immersive, almost psychedelic environment in my videos- expressing my own aesthetic experience of the world at large.

My practice is also continually inspired by the work of Sue De Beer, whose hallucinatory video works mirror my own fascination with the nostalgic and melancholic. De Beer's video works, *The Ghosts* in

particular, evoke her search for a certain type of character focus, someone completely at the edge, and constantly in danger of losing themselves. Like De Beer, I'm interested in how thin that line is, exploring the edge between the creation of the self, and complete and utter destruction. Comparable to the Nietzschean concept of the *Dionysian* in regard to excess, my work has previously explored a collapse of boundaries, in particular relation to my excessive use of colour and sexualised figure expression.

My process has been to work on producing an aesthetic language that directly relates to those who influence me. Stylistically I borrow the speed and melancholy from the voyeuristic uninterrupted steady-cam takes, and *following* style of Gus Van Sant's *Death Quadriology* (*Paranoid Park*, *Elephant*, *Last Days*, *Gerry*). Along with evoking the haunting melancholy, colour palettes and perfected art of Sofia Coppola's emotional passivity in the pastel havens of *The Virgin Suicides* and *Lost in Translation*. Most notably in this work I have emulated the hue drenched Kodachrome film look - a nod to a *Giallo* inspired otherworldly colour palette and romanticised notions of Technicolor nostalgia.

Mirroring my treatment of the imagery, I have created a soundscape that is as visceral and visual as the video itself. In collaboration with fellow artist Kyle Brown, we have worked to produce a layered, experimental audio composition combining synthesizer, voice, guitar, Marantz field recordings and snippets from films and personal conversations relating to the visual imagery. The collaboration has allowed me to explore relinquishing a portion of control over a work in allowing another to respond to my own sensibilities in regard to mood and tone - whilst still maintaining my desired *Auteurist* hand. Created using a Midi Keyboard and Logic Pro X, the piece draws upon my own experience of narrative cinema and the physical welling up of experience when a particular note/ chord resonates with a specific memory. We have combined digital with naturalistic recordings to convey an alternative soundtrack that builds within the non-linear story arc- referencing soundtracks such as *Disasterpeace (It Follows)*, the Michael Andrew's *Donnie Darko OST* and the frequent audio distortion and manipulation used by Director David Lynch to create his disturbing interior worlds.

Intended as a subversion on a traditional cinematic setting, the installation of the video plays upon ideas of trance and immersion in an environment. Likened to the willing surrender of the cinemagoer to the imposed ideals of the director, I wanted my film to reside somewhere that it would be a conscious decision to sit, wait and fully succumb to it.

Lost in an obsessive experimentation with my video works, and the works of others, the idea of a director attempting to make the same film over and over resonates with the repetitive thematic and visual signifiers that underpin my video works. Rooted in my interest in film theory and the eye of the Auteur, *The Recurring Dream* references a lifetime of image processing; and is a hallucinatory vision quest into the falsehoods, the fantasy and non-reality that confuse a deeper sense of identity, and memory.

Watch the Video here: <https://youtu.be/m0QP3fkFe-Q>