Chapter 9

Signs of the Three: Process and Composition in Works by Bruce Elder, Izabella Pruska-Oldenhof, and Blake Williams

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This chapter discusses works by three filmmakers. What they have in common, aside from living in Toronto, is that the works selected for discussion are heavily "processed" in some technical sense. A good deal of the analysis and description that follow derives from interviews in which they were asked about their process of making these particular pieces. However, these are not question-and-answer discussions nor are they intended as profiles of the artists. Instead, I have combined critical descriptions of the films and sought to place them in the context of the three filmmakers' careers.

Bruce Elder

After Michael Snow, Bruce Elder is the most proficient and productive experimental filmmaker in Canada. He has completed one massive film cycle, organized as "The Book of All the Dead." It assembles his output from 1975 to 1994 into a thirty-six-hour panoply. Elder is now at work on a second cycle, "The Book of Praise," begun in 1997 and ongoing, now at four lengthy individual films. In addition, Elder has written a series of five large scholarly books devoted to experimental cinema.[1] In his long career as professor at Ryerson University mentoring student filmmakers, he has seen a number of them become colleagues, including Izabella Pruska-Oldenhof, now a professor at Ryerson.

Made six years after he began making films, *1857 (Fool's Gold)* was completed in 1981. This is a long time ago in terms of technical resources available to an experimental filmmaker. Most of the computer assistance and technical apparatus used for this film was "homebrewed" as Elder once put it. The principal resource was an optical printer, and the film's composition is bound to it closely.

1857 came at an important juncture for Elder. He had made a variety of short experimental films since 1975. While these were admired and he sometimes reworked his footage extensively (as on the dance film *Look! We Have Come Through!* [1978], which reanimates the photographed performance), other of his films were cut from his shoots simply and directly, as with his buttery erotic meditation, *Sweet Love Remembered* (1980). It seemed Elder was cycling through avant-garde styles (including the Brakhage-like *Permutations and Combinations* [1976]), but he was yet to seize on a style of his own. This was unusual in a decade of experimental film that saw artists tied to structural cinema or neo-narrative or some other format that itself had a theoretical rationale. These had in effect become form-genres that had protocols, not binding but widely followed, that indicated the extent to which the form an artist took up revealed his or her commitment and identity – in short a textual project consistently linked to a form and a format. Instead of this kind of connection to formal type, and nudging his diverse films into shape one by one, Elder was making work that suggested he would be an experimental-film academic, not unlike his contemporary Rick Hancox, who similarly joined stylistic variety to meticulous process in making impressive short films. Both of them were employed as filmmaking teachers.[2] Their works showed the pedagogical virtues of being both flexible and exemplary, aligning with their jobs of imparting variable film processes to students.

With *The Art of Worldly Wisdom* (1979), however, things changed. First, Elder extended the film's length from what had been his customary quarter-hour to fifty-five minutes; second, he pursued a multi-frame format, achieved through optical printing; third, he composed the work from 16mm diary footage. The energy of the film is manifested in the editing of the fragments on four inner-screens semi-synced to the correspondingly complex sound mix, making both tell a story by associations woven in and out of depicted moments of autobiography. The pulse of the film's assembly comes from Elder's own voice (the texts he reads mix his words and quotations) set continuously in a mix of snippets of wild sound and pop music. The sound–image montage directs the viewer's attention to one portion of the quadra-screen, then pushes it over to a different frame. The process is sound–image montage, and behind it, the demands of *Worldly Wisdom* are apparent to viewers right on the screen: they are forced to divide attention and catch the film's drift from frame to frame cued by sound. *Worldly Wisdom* tells its story in two roughly equal parts: first a sketch of Elder's biography, then his two brushes with death, the first a near-murder on the street in the Near East scarcely glimpsed by the camera he was carrying (though he shows what he got) and then from a wasting disease, the physical effects of which Elder records in long takes off a mirror in which he stands naked beside his camera tripod. *Worldly Wisdom* seemed, and still does today, a personal and searing work – a document of a young life that seemed to come to an early end. Elder was thirty-two. The film was his first significant success and earned him reviews from as far away as Los Angeles, and a public in Toronto.

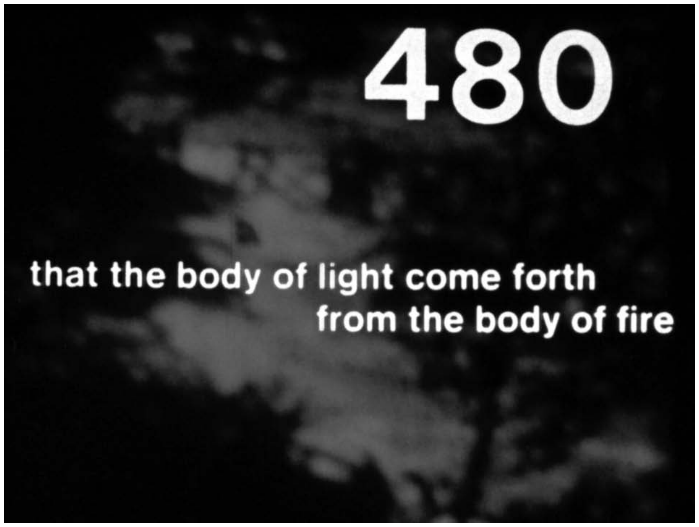
9.1
Still from Bruce Elder, *1857 (Fool's Gold)* (1981).

It was the kind of film that could be made only once, however.

1857 seems the opposite of *Worldly Wisdom*, a kind of structural film. The soundtrack replaced Elder's autobiography with a sizable portion (about 5 per cent) of Daniel Defoe's *A Journal of the Plague Year* (1722), the author's lengthy documentary novel of the 1665 Great Plague in Britain, read by Elder, who explains: "the film began with the Defoe."[3] Visually accompanying the read text are supertitles taken from passages from Ezra Pound's *Cantos*, math formulas, and some quotes in Latin. The soundtrack is again centred on Elder's voice, this time slightly altered and accompanied by semi-abstract sound effects and music that sometimes almost buries his reading. The film is divided into numbered sections, twenty-one of them, in a film that runs for thirty-three minutes.

This type of audio/visual/lexical mixture – quoted supertitles and lengthy recitations of texts – was then a novelty for Elder. However, it would soon contribute to the architecture of enormous stretches of his long-film phase. This would begin in 1982 with the three-hour-long *Illuminated Texts* and reach through *Lamentations* (1985) and *Consolations* (1988). Each of them roughly doubles the length of its predecessor. This audio-lexical supplementing all but ceases in the eleven-hour sub-cycle *Exaltations*, which Elder broke down into feature-length installments released from 1992 to 1994. It marked the first significant change in his style since 1982.

In this broad sense, *1857* provided a formal template and complexly signals the process that Elder would undertake for the extended works he was about to begin. Nonetheless, it should be said that Elder's stylistic variety, evident in his first films, never deserts him in the later long films. In every film there are acted passages, insertions of found footage, and occasional abstract or cartoon-like



9.2
Still from Bruce Elder, *1857 (Fool's Gold)* (1981).

computer graphics. In *Illuminated Texts* and the two films after it, long montages of Elder's diary and travel footage (as in *Worldly Wisdom)* are extensive, and only taper off with *Consolations*.[4]

On the other hand, *1857* differs in that it contains only a handful of found-footage images, looped, and heavily processed by optical printing. This compressed treatment of a limited range of images aligns the film, loosely, with structural cinema, as does Elder's catalogue text at CFMDC, in which he describes the film's components:

> Four types of visual forms appear in this film: photographed scenes, written texts, mathematical symbols and numerals. The course of the film is charted by the transformations, which these images undergo. The film has a narrative form, but … one that is developed purely in terms of the manipulation of the colour characteristics of the images. The texts included in the film are drawn from Ezra Pound's "Cantos." They serve, in the first place, to involve the spectator in the process of reading. Furthermore, Pound's text is ideal for exploring fairly completely the range of relations that can exist between image and text. The soundtrack of the film is constituted by both musical and non-musical sounds. The non-musical sounds that occur in the early portion of the film are "natural sounds" that might occur in nature along with the depicted events.[5]

The transformations of the image advance in increments and then their progression rises to crescendo and then decrescendo, loosely matched to the rising drama of the flatly reported gruesomeness in Defoe's text as it descriptively follows the course of the plague. The climax is then followed by its relaxation into a coda. In his text, Defoe offers the relieved survivors' religious interpretations of the plague.

The graphic architecture Elder generated is compressed and powerful. It would be worked and reworked through the long films to come. However, only one more time in "The Book of All the Dead" would Elder reach for the optically printed picture density and propulsion he does in *1857*, and that would be the final reel of *Illuminated Texts*.[6]

I am suggesting that much of the form of Elder's film work flows from *1857* right through the early 1990s, and offers a key to Elder's filmmaking process over the long haul. However, *1857* also belongs to a period when image processing with the optical printer (or re-photography techniques approximating it) often coupled with a dense, insistent sound mix, was a prominent procedure in Canadian experimental film. The trend began in 1970 with Jack Chambers's *The Hart of London*[7] and, more often noticed, David Rimmer's *Variations on a Cellophane Wrapper* (also 1970).[8] The reliance on optical printing probably climaxed with the completion of Al Razutis's two series, *Amerika* (1972–83) and *Origins of Film* (1973–80). Razutis's masterpiece of processed images is one of the earlier pieces that was later made part of *Amerika, 98.3KHz Bridge at Electric Storm* (1973). The process of these films relied on techniques of image degradation/reconstitution to generate a flashing diagrammatic reduction of a given image to linear elements, usually filled in by moving panels of electric colour. The image degeneration is usually pursued to its logical end. In Rimmer's films, the process occurs gradually. In Razutis's films, the reduction happens fast and with percussive effect. The optical printer can yield a baroque image of super-saturated colour and can offer a quick slide into and out of abstraction. Iconic elements dissolve to lines and areas of intensely coloured light. The use of optical printing promoted splashy virtuosity, which Razutis indulged in with incandescent effect.

Rimmer would never be surpassed for the patience, simplicity, and elegance of his forms or imagery. Only *Cellophane Wrapper* approaches Razutis's preferred velocity. Closer to the stripped-down, highly modulated style of certain structural filmmakers like Ernie Gehr, Rimmer characteristically exfoliated single images, as in the silent *Surfacing on the Thames* (1970) and *Narrows Inlet* (1980). He did this by following the logic of a single procedure – a slow frame-by-frame advance in the case of *Surfacing* and a single, looped, jittery pan (taken from a small boat) of a lakeside as the veil of image-treatment lifts to reveal a lightly fog-shrouded shore. Razutis preferred hard-charging image effects, explosive soundtracks, and furious editing. He was a dramatist of the optical printer, welding it to his whole process, which was to take a single or a few strips of footage and subject them to transformations at a sledgehammer beat. While obvious in significance, his best films were detonations of the cinematic images and promoted a corrosive apocalypticism and a rocking excitement in equal measure.[9] A lyrical artist at heart, Rimmer stilled images for consideration, and his work possesses a tempered skepticism. He approached his best films in a process of observant decorum that asks only for one epiphany per film, which duly appears with lucid, mild surprise.

Coming about a decade later to the format, Elder's *1857* lies between these two artists' work. The formidable presence of such films as Razutis's best work set a challenge to make a film with comparable technical force. A fair number of optically printed films were attempted by various hands, making it, for a time, a leading process in Canadian experimental cinema. Its reign concluded when digital processing replaced optical printing as a means to exploit the plasticity of the film image. Optical printing sets an interesting threshold. It is basically analog re-photography that can alter an image to the point where its photographic testimony to a profilmic reality mutates into something more uncertain, light-based, and chemically charged in its contours. In effect, films like these peel back to the photo-original filmstrip by stages (which was Rimmer's inclination, as in *Narrows Inlet*), or forward into a mechanism of dissolution usually headed in the direction of abstraction and steely cold, intense colour design.

In *1857* Elder uses optical printing in this second way but moves gradually, first by using longer loops of footage (than did Rimmer or Razutis), and second by a comparatively slow graduation (like Rimmer) in the treatment of loops until the film accelerates, which *1857* does forcefully in its later sections. The film's early images (a rowboat, for example) seem to be just tinted versions of the original shots. The development of the images is roughly cyclical, subject to similar changes at each appearance, at least until Elder approaches the long climax and the montage becomes percussive and the images approach the state of abstract colour fields. The film also inserts flicker effects (recalling Paul Sharits) alternating with the fully coloured images. The film's overall structure is more than just a declension of visual effects, however, and leads to an aesthetic-moral emotion, informed by Defoe's measured report of the plague's physical ruin of its victims. The tumult on the screen suggests a synecdoche of the violence tearing the plague-ridden body. *1857* is also complicated by the viewer's effort to comprehend it. That comprehension might require seeing the next film, *Illuminated Texts*, but the viewer's association of a disaster like a plague, voiced with measured exactness, is fused with the pathetic anecdotal detail of Defoe's text and Elder's unaccentuated reading, and the stormy seascape eventually whipped into visual fury.

The imagery takes us to sea – first in the rowboat and then a seascape – and tortured tree-scapes whipped by wind on shore, the tumultuous sea scanned from landfall. All the while, Defoe chains us to a city as the pathogen follows its monstrous path to an end. Elder builds the image to colour-filled flat pictures and the montage, replete with flickers and pulses of colour.

Elder recalls that this was his first film to use such a combination of language, voice-over, music, and image. Most decisions involved processing the footage, first deciding on the source material and the technical means. The material was always to be film stock with no computer interface. Elder did not, however, wholly "discover" the film in its making without prior concepts. He recalls that the thinking behind the process of composition begins with the mathematical idea of a *field*, by which he means a set of objects on which certain operations can be performed (like addition or multiplication) and that remain members of the field. Elder says that the critic Hugh Kenner, in "Field/Art,"[10] established this new model of artistic composition. Kenner was an early student of Marshall McLuhan, who supervised his dissertation. McLuhan's influence on Kenner was to suggest that an artwork can be an assemblage of standard parts, which the artist then begins to process as a montage. This is the model of art Kenner sees in James Joyce and Ezra Pound (the poets in which he specialized), and, a generation later, the idea reappears in Carl Andre's sculptures and Hollis Frampton's films. These ideas lead to ideas of the "module," as in Andre's sculpture; in his case the elements are made of rolled steel, which he heats. Some unit is selected, then treated to develop variations, and the pieces are then arranged into a composition. In the case of *1857*, Elder regarded the set of shots, which were a limited set, as a matrix, which he subjected to a set of variants, like colour, softness, compositing. The looped set of shots were treated as modules and these were processed in a set of treatments on the basis of a mathematical formula.

Most of the images used in *1857* come from a film treatment of Joseph Conrad's *Typhoon* made for high school instruction. Elder made copies on an optical printer and then transformed them by making analogues of field structures. There was no digital interface. The mathematical supertitles overlaying the image allude to a theory of "representations" formulating the question of how to represent complicated structures. The film is numerically sectioned into twenty-one parts and the imagery is mathematically *arranged*. Paul Mellor's soundtrack and the texts have a looser development. The soundtrack consists of the following elements: Elder's reading, sound effects, music, and Karen Skipmore's improvised vocals, which were recorded last.

The notion of *1857* was to have an array of elements appear simultaneously to be apprehended together, but they cannot be. Like *Worldly Wisdom,* the film creates a divided attention. The pieces in the film are associated. For instance, the Pound verses are obscure (as usual) but Elder's selections allude regularly to *The Odyssey*, our culture's primal sea voyage, and so the sea imagery rhymes with the Pound texts; and the plague, Defoe explains, arrived in London by ship. The unity of *1857* is "mechanical," says Elder, and this was deliberate. He adds that in contrast "an organic work is made by someone who transforms every image into the work's personality – in Brakhage's case, his own personality." In a work like *1857*, "the maker does not have the same dominance, but loosens his grip on the whole. This elicits a different response." Elder compares this to the difference between scanning vision and focus vision. The former involves a scattering of attention, and the entering into what McLuhan referred to as "acoustic space" (meaning a space in the round that cannot be controlled perceptually by a directed gaze). The focal intensity of a work like *Wavelength* is, in contrast, controlled by devices that force the viewer to attend to the advance of a dominant element (in Snow's case, the zoom) while the scanning vision of *1857* directs the viewer's attention to different elements.

The passages he chose took the shape they did while he was processing the film in the optical printer and deciding on where to place them. He then took the texts to a printing shop, where they were typeset, and Elder then filmed them on high-contrast Kodalith film stock. After choosing the passages to be used, he decided where to make a composite of titles and processed images. The durational component – how long each loop lasted (and they vary a lot) – is not an aspect of the matrix but was controlled by chance, but a chance constrained by being mapped to a set of values.

The Defoe text was the beginning point for the film – "the social disease category, Defoe took the plague to the social level" is what struck Elder. While only a fraction of *A Journal of the Plague Year* was read into the film, the excerpts seem replete. What impressed Elder about the Defoe was his "spirituality and utter sincerity, though *1857* was anything but a sincere text." There is, Elder adds, running through "The Book of All the Dead," a tension that arises "when artists make work of conflicting positions." In one sense, film is "not an art of creating, or transforming everything, but a gathering of what is given and stringing it into wholes." On the other hand, "there is Neo-platonic sense of transcending the material by creating a perfectly formed whole." In practice, "artworks do not resolve the tension, but only state and restate it."

When he made this film, Elder was teaching and thinking specifically of Rimmer's films *Blue Movie* (1970) and *Watching for the Queen* (1973), "which make allusions to photographic practice as a way of transcending the real and so on, of making such a composite as Charles Baudelaire declared for modernism, both transitory and eternal." Optical printing suggests the latter. "The effect of optical printing has ties to surrealism, or reading *against* the registry of the real," he adds. The choice of the selections from the *Cantos* suggests a "light-mystique alluding to Neoplatonism." But the recurring line about "artificial paradise," he says intentionally, "carries ambiguity; will this work carry us beyond the everyday, or is it 'fool's gold'?" Elder describes the finalized film as "a bit rickety, not wholly integrated and certainly not transcendent."

Izabella Pruska-Oldendorf

Izabella Pruska-Oldenhof has moved steadily to the forefront of Canadian experimental filmmakers. As a co-founder of the LOOP Collective (1996–present) she exerts significant leadership and can count on a supportive circle of creative peers. LOOP organizes screenings and gallery shows, and successfully reflects the ad hoc approach to much art and film exhibition today in Toronto.

In *fugitive l(i)ght* (2005), Pruska-Oldenhof stages an investigation into image rhythm and succession of colour-and-light frame studies. The material she uses derives from passages, which she variously magnified, of Edison Company movies of the "Serpentine Dance." This was a dance-and-light stage performance act originated by Loie Fuller. Fuller was a US vaudeville performer (born near Chicago) who became famous in Paris during the 1890s. She mastered, earlier than most, a range of techniques that demonstrated how electrical light was flexible enough to compose light on stage and capable of controlled mobility to allow the musical and rhythmic movement of swirling fabrics. Fuller's achievement was without precedent and took Paris by surprise, and at just the right moment. European cities were at the time in the process of being electrified.

The filmed dances, shot in the Black Maria in New Jersey by the Edison Company in 1895, the second year of the company's commercial production, featured Annabelle Moore and Crissie Sheridan, who were two of Fuller's many imitators.

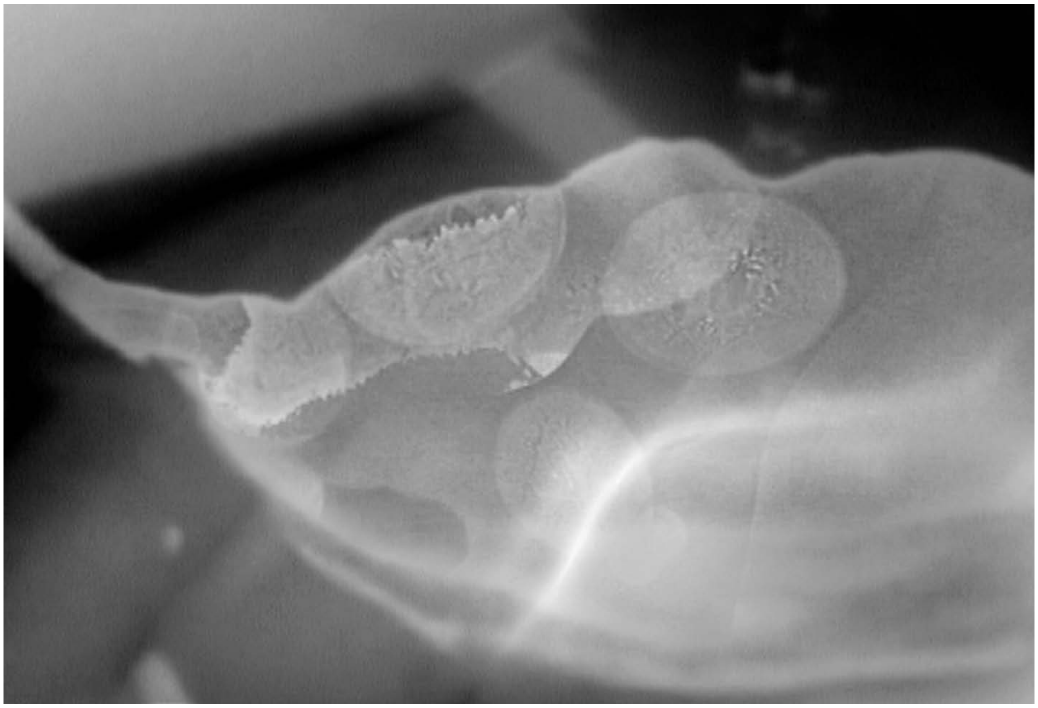
At this stage, Edison's filmmaking was "experimental" cinema in the raw, original sense and is a subject that might draw the attention of a filmmaker who knows Hollis Frampton's writings and has seen his remade early-cinema pieces like *Gloria!* (1979)[11] that run through the unfinished "Magellan" cycle. While dance figures elsewhere in Pruska-Oldenhof's work (e.g., *Vibrant Marvels* [2000] and *Pulsions* [2007]), dance films from early cinema do not otherwise appear as her subject matter. This has been the first of her films in which such a specific historical figure as Fuller is featured, at least indirectly.

fugitive l(i)ght may be Pruska-Oldenhof's best film. Her approach – really her whole effort across her filmmaking – could be described as a two-step business: setting up a constraint followed by free improvisation in image processing. In this case, the technical retrieval, after shooting or reshooting her previous films, marks her constraint at the start of the film's preparation. All the material in *fugitive l(i)ght* comes from the Edison films. The images were magnified on a 5× progressive formula, from mere closing on the original dancing figure (taken in the characteristic Edison full shot), to micro-close-ups at 500× on light and fabric that become, in visual effect, abstractions. This set of programmatically controlled choices then left the filmmaker free in her process of composing the film. In this case, the range of material was small but the scale of magnifications enormous. Re-tasking the found footage that was derived from ideas about Fuller herself and what her dances suggested in advanced French art at the turn of the century informed the process of compositing the film.[12] The shape of the film into sections is somewhat linear, moving from abstract blobs to screen-full colour fields in motion to glimpses of dancers.

The experimental filmmakers that have impressed Pruska-Oldenhof are mostly well-known mid-century figures. They include Michael Snow and Joyce Wieland. Her close study of Stan Brakhage stands out in her films and in her interviews. In a sense, a more technologically inclined filmmaker than Brakhage, though a great admirer of him, Elder stands behind these films – though well behind.[13] Pruska-Oldenhof does not see herself as the type of heroic form seeker that Brakhage was, although she finds the forms and methods he devised worth experimenting with. Pruska-Oldenhof knows intimately what his films look like and how they behave, what their visual scale is, and this is reflected in the way she usually composes with close visual rhythms. She also knows that imitating Brakhage is not in the cards. Believing that Brakhage was right about some key things involved in the process of filmmaking is different from imitation, and the distinction serves her well, but she has rendered such ideas much more prepared, intimate, and settled in their form than the influence of Brakhage might suggest.

Pruska-Oldenhof sheds off admiring the heroism, in other words, and digs into the job where it matters: her immersion in her materials. Once their parameters (or constraints) are set, these allow her to pursue the decisions in their proper time and ensure their fluidity. The solutions to be found get resolved by holding on to the film's self-composing. This is her core process: seizing on intimations set to unfold from her material. Or Pruska-Oldenhof puts it, "I like the weave of having a rough idea of what I am doing, but then allowing the work itself to direct me."[14]

Although she found a showcase for the earlier *Light Magic* (2001), her first photogram film,[15] in the CFMDC's *Made by Hand* (2005) compilation, Pruska-Oldenhof usually later used digital aids. While it was made manually (and she reports that was in reaction to her first digital films like *Vibrant Marvels* [2000]), in *Song of the Firefly* (2002), she transferred the material to computer for processing/editing, but cut the film "off-line" and did not add any digital effects. She "then hand-cut the 35mm photogram original according to the digital off-line edit matching it frame-by-frame."[16]



9.3
Still from Izabella Pruska-Oldenhof, *fugitive l(i)ght* (2005).

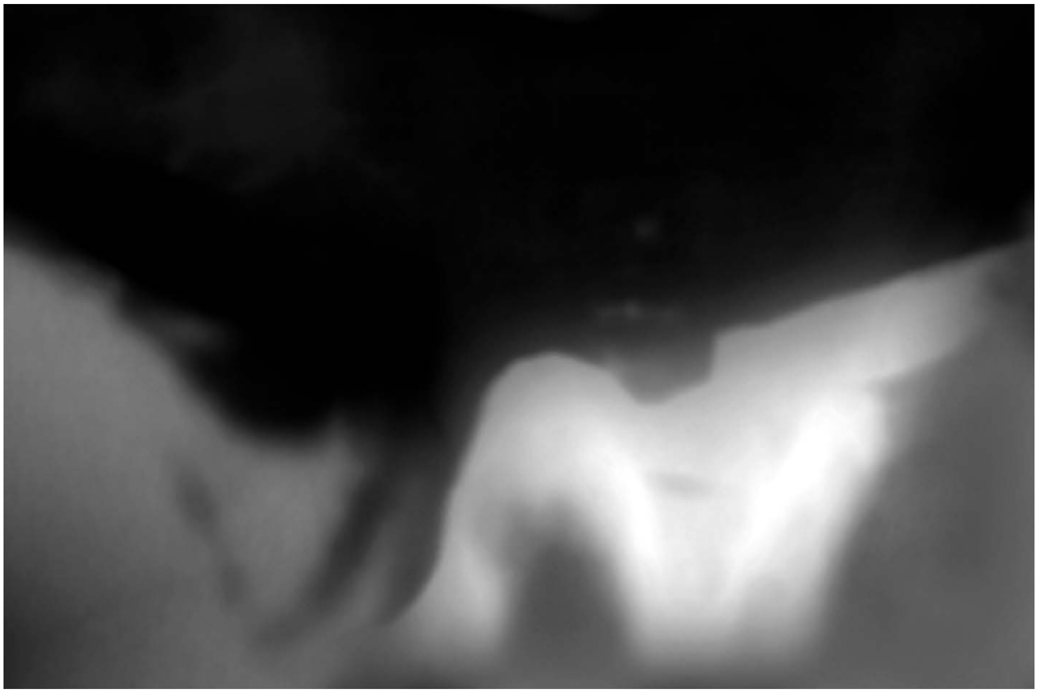
Made by Hand did not have the impact it deserved perhaps because it came and went without sufficient discussion. It also lacked a convincingly argued programming rationale.[17] The more interesting outcome came from the later *ReGeneration* program at CFMDC. For this series seven filmmakers selected films that shaped them and were commissioned to make films of their own in response. By this time, LOOP was strategically coupling its efforts with events happening on the art gallery front, a convergence and mutual recognition that LOOP would continue to promote with its programs. Pruska-Oldenhof, for example, recently created a major photographic-cinematic installation piece, *Relics of Lumen* (2016), at the Ryerson Image Centre.

Song of the Firefly was made in 35mm, and the pure quality of light and the liquefaction of the images that Pruska-Oldenhof achieves make it a breakthrough for her process: her film passes through a flashed plasticity into haptic flesh-like light effects. Following the same method as she did in *Light Magic*, the filmmaker composed bits of plants and dead insects on the film surface. The film is an obvious allusion to Brakhage's *Mothlight* (1963), though one wonders if Brakhage intended his to be a unique film or the beginning of a procedure others might work with. This was followed – but after six years and commissioned for ReGeneration – by Pruska-Oldenhof's further confrontation with Brakhage, *The Garden of Earthly Delights* (2008), named after Brakhage's own 1981 film. In his film, he once again applied insects and plants directly onto the film surface just as he did with *Mothlight*, though this time Brakhage worked in 35mm and used a light table. Coming after *Light Magic* and *Song of the Firefly* (2002), Pruska-Oldenhof's *Garden* is eight minutes of startling images, and the film dances well on screen. She almost makes the format her own.

With these three films, and others between them, Pruska-Oldenhof completed a focused internship with a rhythm- and light-based filmmaking and developed a fluid mastery over the use of the digital interface; these features would become the core of her artistic process thereafter. The films Pruska-Oldenhof makes vary quite a bit, and do not so much progress in a line but arrange themselves in recursive fashion. Though she speaks of one film growing out of another, the proximity seems to run to twinned films; the third or fourth is usually a fresh approach, for better or worse, or a visitation to a theme developed earlier. Her films so far comprise a cinema of clustered stand-alone projects, not cycles or series.

Nonetheless, there is a local trajectory, as Pruska-Oldenhof explains, that arrives at *fugitive l(i)ght*. It starts with a different fascination with insects, in this case not their corpses but living insects in flight that Étienne-Jules Marey carried out with his "chronotophography" of the 1890s (contemporary with Fuller's fame, as it happens).[18] In the spiral of their flight she saw the "double ellipsis," and then noticed a corresponding pattern in the Edison Serpentine Dance films. That resemblance sparked the project that became *fugitive l(i)ght*.

When she writes on Loie Fuller, Pruska-Oldenhof emphasizes the way her dance performances are enabled by choreographed, coloured electrical lights. She then goes on to interpret the association of the electrical modernity that her dances inspired in contemporaries in the arts—including the poet Mallarmé. Her essay channels her observations of the contemporary responses to Fuller through Marshall McLuhan's interpretation of early abstraction (Picasso and Klee for example) as an intimation of the age of electronic media. In Fuller's time, electricity itself was the wonder of the age. Fuller became a Parisian phenomenon while Europe was being widely electrified. Writers and artists produced speculations about what she suggested or even symbolized.[19] Concurrent with this technical transformation and its cultural impact, Fuller became, for the French, an emblematic modernist figure, frequently depicted in paintings and lithographs, remarked by poets, and rendered as a sylph-like icon of art nouveau.[20] Pruska-Oldenhof quotes Tom Gunning's observation that Fuller developed her dance into an abstraction but with a sensual attraction that appealed across class and cultural boundaries.[21] In a nut-



9.4
Still from Izabella Pruska-Oldenhof, *fugitive l(i)ght* (2005).

shell, she astonished those who came to see her and became someone whose significance went well beyond a vaudeville attraction, though her reputation never reached into academic dance and the modern dance rebellion. For many years she was forgotten.

It takes a leap of imagination to feel much of Fuller's impact on the French avant-garde of the 1890s surviving in the Edison films. Even aside from the fact that they were performed by a copycat, these are short static-camera works taken in full to long shot against the Black Maria's blank background. The lighting is flat and steady. Annabelle performs her imitation of Fuller's Serpentine Dance in short bursts. But Pruska-Oldenhof finds much in these films and then develops what there is to work with. In making *fugitive l(i)ght* she derives the implied abstract, rhythmic energies hidden in the antique movies.

It is an odd feature of very early films that they often possess a vital spark of action or gesture, a pulsing energy shed off by human presences, often tucked into wide and deep shots full of scrambling figures. It was Ken Jacobs who disclosed this feature of early cinema with his revelatory *Tom Tom the Piper's Son* (1969). Of course, Jacobs had to tear the original *Tom Tom* apart (through re-photography) to get at the human energies jangling away in the wide-shot tableaus of Billy

Bitzer's 1905 original film. The Edison dance films differ. They put their energetic figure front and centre of the frame. It is the fabric the dancer wields and animates – in a cluster of micro-rhythms of light shimmering from yards of fabric – that generates the film's energy. Edison's dance films were hand-tinted, perhaps in an attempt to gather in the theatrical effect of coloured lights; the surviving efforts leave only a smudged intention of the colour left behind – though this augments their abstractedness.[22]

Looking at the films, Pruska-Oldenhof picked up these suggestions of what to retrieve and how to do so. Informed by her study of the terms of Fuller's Paris reception, she *saw* these mobile shapes of cloth in extreme close-up – in effect transposing Fuller's field-of-energy effect to lighted motion at high magnification, not visible in the full and long shots of the originals. She printed the image at various blow-ups, devised a "system of five" magnification procedure going to extremes until she hit 500×. She downloaded the material from the internet, having discovered the films for herself while assisting on Elder's *Crack, Brutal, Grief* (2000).[23] She then decided to process and work through the original rhythm and light in undertaking the composition of *fugitive l(i)ght*. For Pruska-Oldenhof, the film signified considerable intellectual investment, which comes out in her Fuller essay and in her discussions about the filmmaking process.

She came to *fugitive l(i)ght* having worked on a dance piece with choreographer Crissie Sheridan, who composed for three dancers. Pruska-Oldenhof wanted to incorporate the Serpentine Dance footage then. But the project took on a life of its own. Each clip was processed differently by multiplying the magnification by 5×, and then she began working with superimpositions. She treated the black and white footage using a computer program to separate out colour. She controlled the clips by speeding them up and slowing them down after magnifying the image size. At other times, notably toward the end of the film, she used approximately normal size and speed. The preliminary decisions about the material gave her a rich range of imagery (from a uniform source) before she entered into the process of composing *fugitive l(i)ght*.

At high magnification, the original Edison dance images were unreadable except as abstract light shapes and rhythm. But as the film develops that rhythm approaches the regularity of the dance. Later images of the dancer become pronounced, first following the derived metre of the dance, then as pictures. The play between representation and abstraction (what Pruska-Oldenhof discerns in Fuller's dance itself) elaborates the film's sections as the viewer is gradually placed in suspense between seeing pure light and shape, and seeing objects, and then – with some surprise – of seeing the swirl (or cascade) of fabric, the body and then face of the dancer. There is no marked sectioning – the film is graduated over a span of almost ten minutes in a fluid fashion – though Pruska-Oldenhof does deploy two fade-outs and a number of contrasting passages that Colin Clark's very attentive musical score accentuates.[24]

The film begins as a curved blue shape intrudes from screen right and, hesitantly with several retreats, fills the screen with the blue then white light as it moves to the centre then retreats, leaving the screen again a black void. This goes on for about two minutes, and leaves us wondering if this blobby blue thing should be sensed as arising from some deep place, as arriving from off-screen, or as an unveiling of the void (the Black Maria is a visual void). Finally, there is a more permanent modulation to its full screen presence and, through superimpositions, becomes a much busier image: at first an ambiguous shape entering the void, the bright light becomes a field with some depth in which new coloured shapes arise and mingle across the whole screen. The first glimpse of the dancer shape, almost wholly abstract – "angels' wings" Pruska-Oldenhof calls them – form a figure, but all that we see is a white diagrammatic shape, not just literally but exceptionally figurative at this point. *fugitive l(i)ght* then veers to abstraction, and the regular arm gestures of the dance set off a swirl of colours, which go to pastels and thin washes. Pruska-Oldenhof holds back the representation hinted at here for over a minute and then goes to a break, a fade acting as black void. The dance figure now appears as a mobile abstracted silhouette fringed in a strong blue. Here is where the double ellipsis, the figure eight, becomes pronounced for the first time (it is also the moment when the diagrammatic look of optical printing takes hold). She then recedes for a recap and then fades out.

Back from the dark, the viewer sees white close-ups of a portion of the dance costume, which look a bit like wobbly flying saucers or spinning bowls, followed by a radically abbreviated remake of one of the Edison films, with full shots of the dance, but covered with supers of white light; then, dramatically, a close-up of the dancer's face appears.

Veering away again into a long section of abstraction in red and white, the dance is remade in coloured light. This is followed by a dark screen and a fleshy form contoured by light, trembling softly in the lower-right frame. This passage is an interval to the return of the angel-wing silhouettes until a flurry of amazing shapes that all recall and mimic the dance play at the threshold of representing and abstracting. Now, Pruska-Oldenhof introduces shots of dancers behind her dancing shapes, cutting between mildly degraded pictures and near-abstract pulsations of light. The film slows now and there is a blank screen, as if the film had ended, but it hasn't. The last section opens with a soaring white pillar (of water, the filmmaker explains) that becomes light, and the dancer reappears; from this point the previous tension of figurative and abstract becomes a collision of shots and aggressive applications of light. The shots come close to the dancers, not close up, but to full or medium shots, and we can see their faces. The film ends with an abstract night dance (the film earns this analogy) in black, purple, yellow, and red.

Blake Williams

Blake Williams is the youngest filmmaker to be discussed here. Born and raised in Houston, Texas, he studied art at Tufts University's Museum School in Boston. Williams made his way to Toronto in 2008, attending the Toronto School of Art for a year. He then successively enrolled in two graduate programs at the University of Toronto, Visual Studies at the Department of Art and the Cinema Studies Institute, where, following his second MA, he started work on his PhD. Since coming to Toronto, he has made over a dozen installations, videos, and digital films (he started making works in 2005). The programs he attended enabled much of this work. The studio the Toronto School of Art made available to him occasioned *No Signal* (2009). The advantages of the studio setting, Williams says, lay with "technical things." Williams adds that his working environment influences what he does. He believes that all his work seeks to "manifest the hand of the artist in a digital context." That remark, repeated more than once in interviews, is a bit too faint to constitute a principled stance but does begin to hint at his process and points to the fact that Williams did not come to making art through film per se, but through the teched-out gallery-centred domain that was once accurately called "video art." His comfort with hybrid media is salient. Yet Williams has, in his Toronto pieces, aligned himself with filmmakers. He customarily exhibits beside them in a theatrical projection-screening format. These screenings and this format have considerably raised his profile. Williams contributes articles to the Toronto-based film magazine *Cinema Scope*, has been dispatched as their correspondent to Sundance, and also involves himself in film programming with critic Kiva Reardon through director Kazik Radwanski's Medium Density Fibreboard Films. Williams's works have appeared in most of Toronto's experimental film showcases, reviewed favourably, though so far only briefly, and usually by filmmaker-critics like Stephen Broomer.

His recent preference for technical format is a version of 3D. Williams came to be recognized chiefly with the pieces made in anaglyph 3D, starting in 2012 with *Many a Swan*. The screening of the film that will be the focus of this discussion, *Red Capriccio*, at the Toronto International Film Festival's Wavelengths in 2014, announced his breakthrough. Writing in *The Seventh Art*, Stephen Broomer refers to Williams's 3D pieces as his passage into maturity.[25] They certainly raised his reputation since 2014 in the form of Williams's most high-profile screenings, notably in the New York Film Festival's experimental sidebar programming. Williams reports that his interest in the 3D format came not from experimental predecessors like Ken Jacobs but from Werner Herzog's *Cave of Forgotten Dreams* (2010) and Jean-Luc Godard's *Adieu au langage* (2014). At first, Williams says that he wanted to remake Michael Snow's *Wavelength* in 3D, but his first 3D effort was *Many a Swan,* followed by *C-LR: Coorow-Latham Road for Those Who Don't Have the Time* (2013),[26] shot in a flat format. It is in that film that Williams finds a sturdy and simple structure, unusual for him. In contrast, *Many a Swan* feels like a technical experiment in bending space, using geometrical (triangular solids) computer constructs on which he seems to "project" portions of travel footage from the Grand Canyon, also featured separately in a found-footage montage. What better place to film the extreme depth of field that 3D exploits? The film has its named muse in the origami artist Akira Yoshizawa, who has a short cameo at the end of the piece.

At fifteen minutes, *Coorow-Latham Road* consists of a continuous travelling shot (taken from a car) while driving down the titular road, a secondary highway. The set-up does not directly recall *Wavelength* as much as it does, however faintly, Snow's later landscape–road trip film *Seated Figures* (1988). The landscape that the camera traversed is flat and unchanging with some low trees and bushes. The sky is blue. The apparently continuous take is rhythmically punctuated by frequent digitally made dissolves. The tiny ellipses appear as little more than mild destabilizations of the image and are cued loosely to a softly modulated acceleration and deceleration of travelling speed. At about three minutes, it becomes certain that the camera is also simultaneously panning gradually to the left from the eyes-forward perspective. The delayed discovery of a fundamental camera repositioning *does* recall *Wavelength*, which announces its fabled zoom only some minutes along. Gradually, Williams shifts the viewpoint to a side-seat view, and the effect of the dissolves differs: trees now pop in and out of existence. The effect – which ceases when the camera completes its 180-degree rotation and faces the rear as the road and landscape now recede – inverts the effect of the progression down the road and the dissolves with which the film started. *Coorow-Latham Road* indicates that Williams is familiar with structural landscape films (landscapes appear in most of his films) but went about making his own playfully (the tech-effect dissolves) and rigorously (the pan is a three-way parsing of perspective and screen time).[27]

Depart (2012) is the film that preceded his first 3D work and is a good place to begin to navigate the challenges Williams set for himself. The first part of *Depart* uses spectacular found footage of an outer-space rocket launch, followed by a series of passages that brings a variety of images and diagrams together – for example, a beautiful shot taken from an airplane at dusk (or dawn) with a subtle computer course-track overlay in the lower-left corner. This is followed by a display of sped-up air control computer screens. *Depart* is about tracing trajectories (the diagrams derive from "positioning software") just implied by lavishly seductive images that do not, of themselves, indicate any visual direction. There is, for example, a charming passage that shows children playing at dusk. Tiny diagrams that trace their play gestures appear on the screen. The difference between calculating measurement and being absorbed in the images generates the film's tensions. Then *Depart* pauses and pivots, landing for a long take of a large, empty room dramatically illuminated by slanting exterior light. Eventually a wispy column of tiny "sparkles" faintly dancing overlays the image. The effect is enigmatic and its connection to the rest of the film is perhaps doubtful, or just elusive. It suggests that Williams likes to "put things" in a film whose relationships are for him intuitive and often right, when they work. But the challenge lies in finding the relations for himself and the viewer. This is, for him, a question of process in both what he includes and how he makes it a composition; for Williams, resolutions can be elusive. *Depart* engages in subtle mapping in minute segments that are spectacles, large and small, until he calls a halt with that room.

Overall, Williams is a nervous compiler of images but not an anxious one. He seems especially drawn to large, dramatic perspectives, just as he is attracted to unpromising sources of digital materials – TV bits, computer apps, etc. – that his "artist's hand" tries to grasp and shape. The compositor of these materials perpetually faces being – and this is the pivot of his process – their challenged composer. Williams is also unusual in his inclination to select spectacular images, like the Grand Canyon or a glacier landscape, a dawn or dusk sky, and to position them beside others – small, slight, and intimate – in diagrammatic constructions. The dualities of his selection process offer the virtue of manifesting an artist's hand in a digital environment. His caprices at selecting images reveal an excellent and catholic taste, and a desiring eye when behind the camera or in front of computer screen. He is, in turn, a remarkably tactful and considerate composer. The dualities are critical to his composing process and lend his video-films their energetic, at times grand, visual pitch, but the composing process, some of the time so far, remains unsteady enough to yield results that are occasionally puzzling. It is when Williams sticks closer to a structural-film parametrics of form, or is able to disclose a theme, that he is able to contain-contrast the imagery and raise them to dynamic and ordered form. This is the notable achievement of his 2010 piece, *A Cold Compress*, one of his best and most modest works that can be seen as an early companion to *Red Capriccio*, the film in which Williams becomes most assured with the 3D format.

A Cold Compress opens with the sound of a projector and a matching flicker effect in the lower-left portion of the screen, the rest of which is black. The effect resolves, while still flickering, into a faintly illuminated small bush seen low on the screen. Williams holds the image to give us ample time to raise a question: is the black field in which the lit bush is set more screen space – say, a black, rural Texas night – or a technically determined void? The answer comes when the small illuminated bush is left behind and similarly lit landscape objects progress as the camera moves rightward across the screen. It is where the light goes that we can see in the night.

In its simple form, but articulated with tricky rhythm, *A Cold Compress* recalls the camera tropes of structural filmmaking, which seem to have formed Williams early and can be seen not just in *A Cold Compress* but in a different way with his first achievement in the 3D format, the ten-minute *Baby Blue* (2013). *Baby Blue* opens, as does *Depart,* with space-age found footage. This time it is a clip of astronauts prancing on the moon as a TV commentator (whom we see briefly) remarks on the contrast between the desolation everyone anticipated they would encounter on the moon and the brightly white, frolicking astronauts, who, the commentator gravely observes, found "beauty there." This is followed by a short excerpt of an astronomy lecture – as we look at what is almost surely a planetarium show – about how stellar luminosity allows scientists to scale distances of the stars from the earth. The rest of the film, which displays Williams's intuitive knack for "putting things in a film," is composed of a panoply of shots that, by implication, are drawn from that lecture fragment and concern kinds of luminosity and the distribution of light in 3D, both in motion and at static distances. The montage has the orderly randomness of a later Warren Sonbert film, yet its visual theme is bound more simply than Sonbert's slippery montages around a single conceit, a short catalogue of luminosities and spatial distances. In some ways, *Baby Blue* is the best synthesis of the Williams's duality, a real accomplishment of his intuitive process, and a reason to regard his 3D work as an advance.

As it happens, Williams also thinks that 3D is his passage into maturity, which he sees chiefly as the issue of finding a compositional whole, provided for *Many a Swan* by the origami conceit and Williams's own take on *Baby Blue*: "working out the imagination of a Cyclops in 3D," so the motifs are drawn around "a film of imprisoned gazes of various subjects unable to see outside themselves." The other compositional device Williams deploys in *Baby Blue* is that all the found footage consisted of horizontal motion, "panning an element to get a 2-3 delay which allows the 3D effect." Anaglyph 3D uses red sienna filters, "basically convincing your eye of three dimensions." Williams was drawn to it through the making of *Coorow-Latham Road*, made from Google Street View footage, "which

9.5 and *Opposite* 9.6
Stills from Blake Williams,
Red Capriccio (2014).

already does peculiar things to space because of wide-angle lenses." Behind this development in his films, however, Williams worked a good deal in sculpture and installations, which had a conscious 3D effect and convinced him that one could be fresh while working with 3D. Williams prefers working with found footage for these pieces, in large measure because "they allow me to evoke places and objects I had no access to without travelling."

Red Capriccio is a 3D film in four parts: the first, and most dramatic, is a four-times-recurring, fragmented, hand-held "track" onto a lone police car with all its flashers going at night on a street in an anonymous suburban parking lot terrain. The passage, which takes a bit less than half this seven-minute film, merits close examination – it is Williams's most intent use of 3D as an electric colour effect. The section begins as the camera approaches the car at some distance, allowing the viewer to see it in environmental context. The sound starts with a crude rendering of synchrony with environment with a bashing sound, until an instrumental crescendo emerges from the sonic murk, sounding very much like the resounding final chord of Strauss's *Zarathustra* used in *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968). Before the camera reaches the car – it takes about forty-five seconds – it slides to the left for two seconds, then shifts back to the full-frontal view and Williams then cuts to a rear view of the car, retreats to a higher angle, then cuts again, to a much closer side view as the camera shakes a bit in its route toward the front of the car.

The crescendo ends just before the cut, but then resumes, after a brief interval of the murky sync sound. Williams now goes to a fade lasting five seconds. The second sequence slightly shortens the distance by clipping the start of the approaching camera, and the crescendo ends a bit sooner, then holds the rear view for a longer time, returns to the front view as the music resumes, then goes to the

side view – rapidly. The fade-out is shorter. The third sequence starts with a severely truncated approach to the police car, with the crescendo ending even sooner. With the leftward slur of the camera, and the cut to the rear view, the camera now rises and retreats noticeably, then a cut goes to the side view with a strong sense of camera wobble. The fourth sequence shortens the approach even more and goes to the rear view, and then, for the finale, flickering views of the car are cut together rapidly, chopping up the previous shots, for ten seconds, followed by ten seconds of very brief colour fields of red and blue with a few afterimages of the car.

The rising intensity of montage is not the only or even dominant effect. Rather, it is the red and blue flashers of the police car. At first the blue-red seems to emanate from the car, which appears, at the initial distance, just like another object in the wider field of view. But on each round of the sequences, the flashing coloured light assumes increasing predominance over the screen space. Although we still see the car by the fourth round, it seems to exist as a whole but shrouded in a violently pulsating field of red or blue light, a dramatic transformation that logically cedes to the colour fields. The drama of the change is greatly augmented by the music.

The section ends abruptly as Williams cuts from a red colour field to a lightning strike in the distance. The lightning seems to suck the final red panel into its vertical slash down through the night sky. Two more lightning bolts appear. This segues into a very partially lit shot of two children with their fingers intertwined, then a nighttime highway ride, seen from the front, and then the rear, as a truck's lights appear and disappear, then a long take of a dark highway with the head beam projections bending and discolouring to the effect of the 3D. The next shot is static, showing an underpass in a muddy ambient night light. The next shot is a slow-motion approach to a brightly lit crash (it seems), then a cut to more highway (forward view), and then a slow movement under overpasses at dawn or dusk with the camera aimed at the sky. The sound here is another murky sync underlay over which classical music plays. The overall effect is desolate and solitary – in other words, oddly mimetic of a night drive, a kind of highway tone poem.

The third part of the film is short: a headlight – or perhaps large flashlight – illuminates the front of a modest, otherwise darkened, house at night. Here Williams uses the same sort of narrow, single-source light he used for *A Cold Compress*. The final section, which might be the interior of the house (this is Williams's account), shows theatre lights that might be in use at a dance club, accompanied by electronic dance music. There is no one there. The film has a coda – a small toy police car spinning around in close-up, the only thing lit in the shot.

This description suggests that *Red Capriccio* is a sort of night song, which begins in the kind of false drama that flashing police cars bring with them to any scene – and in this case there is no scene at all in the camera's view but the car – and runs through that odd banal-desolate feeling of highway night driving, here rendered in a bending, almost fluid visual manner, so that the final solid, lit interior is a relief, as well as a problematic resolution for the film.

Williams sees *Red Capriccio* as a film approaching abstraction (something he has not done previously), which resulted from "playing the process" to "discover the experience of a pure blue and pure red." But he only "discovered it in making the film." It was not the iconography of the nocturnal scene of the flashing police car, plausible in a police film, that drew him and that likely compels viewers; rather, it "was this footage that had this particular redness and blue-ness."

The title of the film comes from a musical form, loose in structure, known for its informality and improvisational character. It is often whimsical. Paganini wrote the best known of these in the nineteenth century; *Capriccio* (1942) was the title of Richard Strauss's last opera (this composer also figures in the police car section).[28] In addition, the term refers to a minor genre of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century painting, and this is why Williams used the term for his title. The capriccio is a fantastical landscape with architectural ruins and a "crazy mix of periods and conditions." Williams remarks that the overtly dramatic first part "could have been the whole film" at two-and-a-half minutes, but

> it seemed too simple and unfinished. So, I went looking for police car footage but wound up with the Montreal Turcot Interchange and came upon the "Red Capriccio" idea – the

car and word "capriccio" joined and through that the architectural ruin and decay related to auto travel and the highway exchange. Then I went through a long process of warping, shifting, and bending, finally settling on a pretty straight treatment that heightened the 3D process, but without depth illusions. The last part of the highway image is a triangle like a pyramid and it has its own music (the classical piece) and while the opening section works like *COPS* (the TV reality show), the two lights that I coloured red and blue and the music that gets louder as we enter the house and pass through it. So, there is a little sketch of a plot. There was no preconceived narrative but what felt right after moving the pieces around.

Notes

1 Elder began writing about experimental films at about the same time he began making his own films, the mid-1970s, with a lengthy essay on Jack Chambers. For most of the 1980s he concentrated his writing on Canadian cinema, culminating in *Image and Identity*: *Reflections on Canadian Film and Culture* (1989). In the 1990s, in part inspired by his growing friendship with Stan Brakhage, Elder wrote a short catalogue book, *The Body in Film*, for the Art Gallery of Ontario, to accompany a film series there, and followed it with *A Body of Vision: Representations of Image of the Body in Recent Film and Poetry* (1997), mainly treating US experimental filmmakers. *The Films of Stan Brakhage in the American Tradition of Ezra Pound, Gertrude Stein, and Charles Olson* (1998) served as the culmination of this series of writings. In the new century, he turned to 1920s avant-garde cinema with *Harmony and Dissent: Film and Avant-Garde Art Movements of the Early Twentieth Century* (2008), the first half of which concentrates on the German abstractionists of the early 1920s (Walter Ruttmann, Viking Eggeling, and Hans Richter), and the second half on Sergei Eisenstein. Its companion volume, *Dada, Surrealism and the Cinematic Effect* (2013), deals with the films that grew out of these two movements. Wilfrid Laurier University Press in Waterloo, Ontario, has published all his books.

2 At Sheridan College in suburban Toronto, Hancox helped inform a significant number of experimental filmmakers – including Phil Hoffman and Michael Hoolboom, and Richard Kerr – while making his best films. For the last two decades, Hancox has been teaching in Montreal.

3 All quotes are from the author's interview with Elder.

4 *Consolations* changes styles a bit, with the frequent use of single takes separated by fades. In that film, the titles appear separately over dark backgrounds.

5 Canadian Filmmakers Distribution Centre catalogue (cfmdg.org).

6 Although Elder climaxes the final segments of *Lamentations* and *Consolations*

forcefully, he relies on editing and sound mixing. There is a later reprise of the highly processed visual crescendo of *1857* in the digitally made *Eros and Wonder* (2003).

7 Although this is a rarely noted feature of Chambers's film, the long opening movements rely on exacting re-photography of found footage and photographic archival material.

8 Rimmer explains that he also re-photographed the short looped piece he used for *Cellophane Wrapper*.

9 Razutis stopped making films after the early 1980s and now works in digital media, a drift already anticipated by the electric charge running through those films.

10 Hugh Kenner, *Flaubert, Joyce, and Beckett: The Stoic Comedians* (Boston: Beacon Press 1962).

11 Frampton delivered two elegant and worked-out explanations of why he thought early cinema was important for experimental filmmakers: "For a Metahistory of Film: Commonplace Notes and Hypotheses" and "An Invention without a Future" in *On the Camera Arts and Consecutive Matters: The Writings of Hollis Frampton*, ed. Bruce Jenkins (Cambridge: MIT Press 2009), 131–9; 171–82.

12 Pruska-Oldenhof has written an interpretive essay on Fuller, "Loïe Fuller's Serpentines and Poetics of Self-Abnegation in the Era of Electrotechnics," chapter 2 in *Oxford Handbook of Screendance Studies*, ed. Douglas Rosenberg (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

13 Pruska-Oldenhof assisted as researcher for Elder on *The Films of Stan Brakhage in the American Tradition of Ezra Pound, Gertrude Stein, and Charles Olson* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press 1998) and on his 2001 film *Crack, Brutal, Grief*, composed entirely of internet download materials.

14 From interview with Izabella Pruska-Oldenhof.

15 The photogram films of the LOOP Collective as a whole suggest a devotion to analog images by going straight to unlensed light and the photochemical effects. The 1920s practice is associated with both constructivism (Moholy-Nagy) and surrealism (Man Ray), and it is from the latter that the imagery and rhythms seem to come. As a set, the photogram films are probably the strongest cluster of works from LOOP. None of these surpasses Pruska-Oldenhof's. But, unlike the optical printing showdowns of the 1970s, these photogram films are not in competition but drive toward accumulation and consolidation for an analog process that the group champions. These are films that at least equal the jewel-like over-illuminated quality of very good digital image projection.

16 Interview with Pruska-Oldenhof.

17 *Made by Hand: Experimental Works for Educational Environments* (2005); now a compilation DVD from the Canadian Filmmakers Distribution Centre.

18 One of Pruska-Oldenhof's Ryerson colleagues is Marta Braun, the leading North American Marey scholar and author of *Picturing Time: The Work of Étienne-Jules Marey* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1992).

19 Pruska-Oldenhof, "Fuller's Serpentines," 47.

20 Ibid., 45.

21 Tom Gunning, "Loie Fuller and the Art of Motion: Body, Light, Electricity, and the Origins of Cinema," in *Camera Obscura, Camera Lucida: Essays in Honor of Annette Michelson*, ed. Richard Allen and Malcolm Turvey (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press 2003), 80–1.

22 *Annabelle Serpentine Dance* was directed in 1885 by William Kennedy Laurie Dickson and William Heise, who also ran the camera. The film's popularity led to at least four more dance films of the same type (some danced by Crissie Sheridan), and the series continued until 1897. Given the date, the original, *Annabelle Butterfly Dance* [1894]), and the earliest sequels were probably exhibited first on the Kinetoscope, an electrically driven Edison peep-show apparatus set up in "parlours" dedicated to them. The company shifted to a US version of the *cinematographe* the following year after the Lumières demonstrated their device in 1896. Originally called the Phantoscope, Edison purchased it outright from its inventors and renamed it Vitascope and continued to film Annabelle and Sheridan dancing in imitation of Fuller until 1897. Gunning observes that Edison's films were by no means the only imitations of Fuller made in this period. See Gunning, "Loie Fuller and the Art of Motion," 78.

23 *Crack, Brutal, Grief* consists wholly of downloaded and processed internet material, much of it dance and dance-related.

24 Pruska-Oldenhof remarks: "I provided Colin [Clark] with several LP records of Wagner's *Ride of the Valkyries*, which Fuller used as musical accompaniment to her 'Fire Dance' and another, later, variation of her 'Serpentine Dance.' Colin detests Romantic music, it is too excessive and overwrought for his musical tastes, which tend toward minimalism. But he stuck to it and worked with the materiality of the LPs to create crackles and various other sounds reminiscent of electric currents and other noises. He stripped the details of Wagner's composition while I work in the opposite direction, adding colour and more detail through superimpositions and magnifications" (correspondence with Pruska-Oldenhof). Clark's music for the film consists of two tracks at a time. The first element sounds like the electric crackle of a very badly tuned radio heard at a distance (or perhaps a gramophone from long ago). The second track behaves melodically like an oboe, flute, or clarinet but its timbre always sounds like a mollified electric shriek or a low drone (especially at the start). The soundtrack's effect is oddly comforting, and then dramatic. It is rhythmically an excellent support. For example, Clark makes the dramatic later

sections subtly emphatic without obtruding.

25 See "Sightings in Stereo: Blake Williams Interview" with Stephen Broomer, http://www.theseventhart.org/main/speaking-lightly-blake-williams-stephen-broomer. Since the screening of Williams's recent feature-length 3D film *Prototype* (2017) at the Toronto International Film Festival, discussion of Williams has begun to widen. See Phil Coldiron, "Prototype (Blake Williams)," *Cinema Scope*, cinema-scope.com; Nick Pinkerton "Small Wonder," *Artforum International* (21 September 2017), artforum.com.

26 Williams is playing on the title of Snow's 2003 DVD "remake" of *Wavelength for Those Who Don't Have the Time* achieved by dividing the forty-five-minute original *Wavelength* into equal parts and superimposing them (and the soundtrack segments).

27 The film was made wholly of found footage, taken from Google Street View.

28 Paganini wrote twenty-four capriccios. No. 24 (1817) was the last, and most often still played. Strauss's final opera *Capriccio* op. 24 was subtitled "a conversation" and was first performed in 1942.