

Video as craft: how engaging with media art collections can re-constitute experience and restore the experimental spirit

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Abstract

The turn of the new millennium was a time of generational changes in technologies, materials and inquiries in experimental arts. The 2020s will see many not-for-profit media arts organisations marking their fourth and fifth-decade milestones. What stories will their collections tell, and what new stories will be composed when (re)visiting these works?

In this paper, I look back to the rapidly evolving decades of the 1990s using an autoethnographic method with a focus on Australia and Hong Kong. I present the case study of my video works through the lens of craft to highlight how the haptic and the social dimensions of making influence the stories we (re)tell. I locate the workshop and the cinema as sites where experiments invite open dialogues and exchanges about materials, techniques, processes, tools, and experiences. I argue that attending to these dimensions in how we experience artworks of the past restores the experimental spirit within our stories.

I hope to show how an active embodied engagement with media artworks and collections has the capacity to re-constitute experience afforded by the creative act.

Keywords

Experimental Arts, Media Art, Video, Film, Craft

Introduction

This paper frames video-making as a craft—a shared and cultural practice—to explore how we (re)tell resilient stories within shifting temporalities in ways that reconstitute experience and restore the experimental spirit. Here, shifting temporalities encompass the changing generations of experimental media artists as well as tools, materials, and contexts. I argue that meaningful engagement with media artworks of the past must entail a deep interaction with the processes of making and experimentation. In this paper, the story of experimentation at the cusp of technological transition is told through a personal account of electronic video art practice from the mid-1990s to the early 2000s in

Western Australia and Hong Kong. In this recounting, I tease out two significant dimensions in the making and archiving of media artworks: the haptic and the social. I propose how attending to these aspects can keep the experimental spirit alive.

This paper focuses on the period when the video medium was moving from analogue formats to digital platforms. These reflections stem from both my cultural and creative heritages as a student, an artist, and a researcher in experimental arts. My studentship in the 1990s exposed me to the European and North American modernist film traditions (and archival collections such as Australia's National Film and Sound Archives). My artistic practice developed closely with the experimental film and video communities in Australia and Hong Kong, through the curation of screening programs and tours. As a researcher, I grow my connections with two media art organisations in Hong Kong: Hong Kong Art Centre (HKAC) and Videotage and engage with their collections of media works: the Independent Film and Video Awards (IFVA) collection and Video and Media Arts Collection (VMAC) respectively.¹ These collections of works have been brought together by organisations, who have determined that the works are of value to their histories and philosophies.² In response to the conference theme of (re)telling resilient stories, I ask: what are the limitations and possibilities afforded by the migration of cultures and the migration of technological platforms in these shifting temporalities?

In this paper, I approach the central question of retelling stories in shifting temporalities in three parts. The first introduces a case study—an auto-ethnographic examination of two video works I produced in the 1990s. This account details the experimentation with processes and materials in the social space of the workshop and the cinema informed by historical media art practices. The second section applies the lens of craft to the experimental media arts practices outlined in the case study. Here, the theoretical position

¹ Hong Kong Art Centre is a non-government art organisation established in 1977. The Independent Film and Video Award was created in 1995. IFVA was re-badged Incubator of Film and Visual Media in Asia to broaden its scope to Asia. See Hong Kong Arts Centre, IFVA website, accessed November 21, 2023, <https://www.ifva.com/page/?langcode=tc&id=3WLjc6yOQOM>. Videotage is a not-for-profit media arts advocacy organisation founded in 1986. See Videotage website, accessed November 21, 2023, <https://www.videotage.org.hk/vmac/about>.

² HKAC's section that organises IFVA holds a collection of winning entries. This archive is not open to the public. Videotage enters into written contracts with artists on the collection of their works. The collected works can be previewed on the VMAC website <https://www.videotage.org.hk/vmac>. Artists whose works are in these collections are remunerated when their works are exhibited, screened or distributed.

established by Walter Benjamin via Esther Leslie provides a framework to consider the two key dimensions—the haptic and the social—in the making and reception of artworks. In the last part of the paper, I present a conjecture of how the complexities born out of the relationship between technological changes, economic forces, and social relations shape the emerging new media arts ecologies and the creative industries at the turn of the new millennium, cognisant that a close examination of these factors deserves a study in its own right and is beyond the scope of this paper. I conclude by speculating on how retelling stories through active engagement with media artworks within collections has (re)generative potential to reconstitute the social and haptic dimensions of making to restore the experimental spirit.

Old Earth: ground covered

I begin with stories of how the crafting of films and videos intersects an individual practice with media arts communities, collections of past works, and the broader evolving material landscape. This story shows how the physical interactions with materials and tools and the conversations with others embed the memory of making into artworks.

In 1993, the late Peter Mudie, a Canadian filmmaker and a former member of the London Film Maker Cooperative, curated *Dusting off the Other*—a program of experimental films from the 1920s to 1970s.[1] Sixteen millimetres (16mm) film prints were loaned from various archives around the world and screened at the Film and Television Institute’s cinema in Fremantle, Western Australia. Over three months, the weekly screenings from the archives were attended by the film art community and university students. I was amongst the student group taught by Mudie. At the University of Western Australia, Mudie introduced experimental media practice to our undergraduate curriculum via a workshop model. The viewing of past works was combined with discussions of the film medium together with the social, cultural, and political contexts of their making, and the theoretical expositions of these experiments in their times. Correspondingly, students were provided the equipment, facilities, and workshop time to experiment with materials. My early oeuvre created on 16mm and analogue video formats was deeply indebted to the exposure to these historical experimental practices.

In 1995, I made a video diptych: *Old Earth* and *Static with White*, using original materials sourced from my family’s super-8 reels. I acquired a functioning projector and using a DIY technique I learnt from working with 16mm, I ‘telecined’ the film ‘off the wall’ using a loaned S-VHS video camera. The uncommon video format restricted viewing to the S-VHS deck in the shared editing suite at the university. The suite had a video mixer attached, and having left it to the previous user’s settings, as I viewed my tape I unwittingly introduced a ‘special effect.’ The mixer passed the transferred super-8 footage through a threshold and reduced the images to two tones. Figures and objects in the

foreground became white shapes while static from the second source filled the remaining space. For me, this flatness replaced the sentimentality inherent in ‘home movies’ with a desired layer of anonymity. For *Old Earth*, I used the same mechanism to blend footage of my parents’ wedding with plain red. I scanned a letter from my maternal grandfather written in his practised calligraphic hand with ink and brush, creating stills in the same colour scheme of red and white on black. In the letter, my grandfather wrote: “old earth” (老土) in place of “old style” (老套)—a colloquial Cantonese term denoting a set of outdated values held by an unfashionable older generation (Fig 1).



Figure 1. *Old Earth* (1995), video still. Courtesy of the artist.

My grandfather was living in Canada when he wrote to me in Britain. He counselled me to not reject the old ways of doing, thinking, and feeling, now that I was living far from home. We owe much to this old earth, he said. No matter where we go we will always have roots in this old soil. His proposition became the premise of the video.

Old Earth begins with a red-and-white stationary shot of high-rise buildings viewed through a window. It cuts to texts moving across the screen to the sound of a super-8 projector. The story begins with “My mother collects photographs,” “She organises them into volumes,” “Chronologically.” The brief scene ends with the Chinese character of “I” (我) from my grandfather’s letter. The premise of this first section is writing an autobiography as a school assessment. Running lines of text across the screen reveal information about me and my immediate family including names, dates of birth, and adopted nationalities. These running texts intercut with film stills from the treated super-8 footage and other Chinese characters in my grandfather’s hand including the words for “home” (家) and “to be born/ to live” (生). The second part is silent and consists of the treated wedding footage in red and white (Fig. 4). I selected gestures that expressed the rituals of the wedding and fashioned them into short loops (Fig.6). These loops are intercut with my grandfather’s writings accompanied by English words that translate their literal meanings, vernacular usage, or pronunciations.

In the process of creating the work, seemingly incongruous materials and sources were woven to form layers stitched together by technological transfers, textual language (mis)translations, and gestural expressions in the (re)telling of stories. *Old Earth* inscribes stories as experienced onto surfaces of media substrates, imprinting traces of open narratives to be shared. I continued experimenting with this accidental technique in *Static with White* (Fig 2). In this work, inscribed in the running texts that intercut footage from a home movie shot by my father were his family's Catholicism and the diaspora of my mother's family.

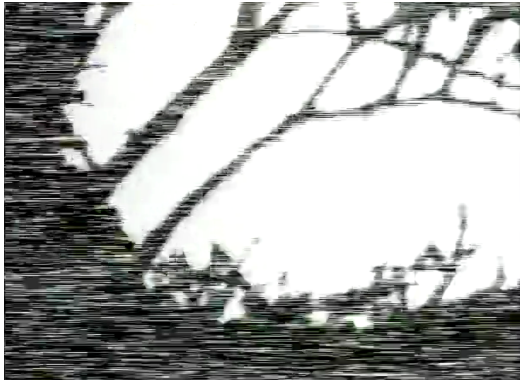


Figure 2. *Static with White* (1995) video still. Courtesy of the artist.

In 1996 I made *Virtual Memory is Running Low* using direct methods on 16mm acetate film stock. Like modernist artists whose experimentation with media materials I encountered in the *Dusting off the Other* program, I (re)invented techniques by using technologies at hand. These included colour photocopiers, printable transparent adhesives, sticky tape, software, and digital scanners. In scouring for old film equipment, I found reels of standard-8 films of unknown origins, adding to my existing collection of discarded 16mm footage. I experimented with new methods with my peers. We created templates in word processing software to place text within individual film frames but discovered that the unavoidable mismatch between the digital and physical realms would cause the words to drift in and out of frames (Fig. 7). We learnt to embrace these imperfections as analogue imprints of the corporeal world. Each scanline laid down by the colour photocopier, each crack exposed by flaked-off pigment, and each air bubble trapped by clear sticky tape were magnified in the projection. When the standard-8 film was too small to view without access to a suitable projector, I stuck the found footage onto clear film leaders, realising that the narrower gauge was simply 16mm stock split lengthwise. Running the prepared film strip through a projector, I was greeted with images of a family

in a faraway place and a faraway time (Fig. 3). The inclusion of physical materials, make-shift processes, hacks, and serendipity created a rich tapestry of textures and stories that are not fixed. The title “Virtual memory is running low” comes from a computer operating system warning of its imminent shortage of space to store temporary operational calculations. The idea of humans running out of memory inspired the film’s playful questioning of the writing of memories. In the last half of the film, images begin to disintegrate from the crystal-clear standard-8 footage to colour photocopies with degrading image resolution, to black and white images, echoed by the decaying sound quality.



Figure 3. *Virtual Memory is Running Low* (1996) film still. Courtesy of the artist.

These experimentations occurred in contexts—with peers, in shared editing suites, in classrooms, in screenings, and in cinemas. I co-curated the *Metalux: West Australian Experimental Film and Video* program with Redmond Bridgeman in 1997 to take experimental films and videos made by our peers using a range of materials including 16 mm, Super-8, Hi-8, S-VHS, 3-D software and a zoetrope made with *Mechano* to audiences in Australia. *Metalux* was screened at the Film and Television Institute before travelling to the Art Gallery of New South Wales in partnership with Sydney Intermedia Network and with funding support from the Australian Film Commission and Screen West.³ *Metalux* gained a positive critical review in the nationally distributed *RealTime*. [2] During this time, international film festivals had embedded experimental film and video programming, where my early works were selected for screening in New York, Melbourne, San Francisco, and Hong Kong. Entering my works into national competitions also opened up possibilities such as having my work screened on *Eat Carpet* on the Australian national broadcaster SBS Television. The distributed exhibition of my creative works connected me with the previous generations of experimental filmmakers in Australia, which led to an

³ *Metalux: Film screenings of WA experimental works* was screened at the Film and Television Institute, Fremantle, Western Australia on 24 September 1997, and the Domain Theatre, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Domain, New South Wales on 1 and 8 October 1997. Sydney Intermedia Network or SIN was later renamed dLux Media Arts.

opportunity to be included in *Cantrills' Film Notes*.^[3] In these myriad ways, I joined communities of artists and audiences of experimental practice through making, sharing, and viewing.

My works also enabled the renewal of my connections with Hong Kong where I engaged with the experimental arts communities cohering around the Hong Kong Arts Centre's Independent Film and Video Awards (IFVA) and Videotage. There, I encountered different forms of storytelling using the moving image in experimental ways. I curated *Self-made Cinemas: Hong Kong Independent Film and Video* from the works collected by IFVA and Videotage. The screening program toured five cities in Australia in 1999 in partnership with state-based non-profit media organisations including the Film and Television Institute and Multimedia Arts Asia Pacific. It received funding support from the Australia Film Commission, Screen West and the Hong Kong Arts Development Council.⁴ At this time, Hong Kong artists approached a period of major political transition with the creative use of diverse materials and techniques. Their experimentation with media technologies and materials explored how memory, and memorialisation are performed and experienced. The moving image became the medium of shared memory. For both the artists and the audience, experimental media activates the freedom to remember, locating a past in the present, locating a present in the future.

Video as Craft: the haptic and the social dimensions

Both the stories of film celluloid and analogue video are stories of constant change. Media art practice revolves around experimentation with the materiality of these changing systems. Applying the lens of craft can reveal the tensions between aesthetics and technology inherent in this practice, which historically derived from artistic inquiries that take medium-focused and process-driven approaches to co-opt unfamiliar technological materials for art-making. Like craft, this practice of experimentation requires negotiations with bodies, materials, tools, and the environment.

This concept of video as craft is underpinned by Esther Leslie's essay "Walter Benjamin: Traces of Craft" where she unpacks the recurring motifs of craft and craft practices in Benjamin's body of writings.^[4] Benjamin's "The Work of Art in the Age of Technical Reproducibility" tells the story of change.^[5] In the industrial age, undermined by the automaticity of machines and standardised uniformity of mass-produced products, *Erfahrung*, hands-on know-how, practical knowledge learnt through the hands, and wisdom born of experience, was replaced by *Erlebnis*,

the merely lived-through experiences, generated by the subjugation of the human body to the unvarying rhythm of industrialised society. Leslie writes:

Benjamin's understanding of objects—craft objects, mass-reproduced objects—includes essentially an understanding of experiences to be had with objects, and memories evoked by objects or encoded in objects—memories of objects in all possible sense.^[6]

For Benjamin, "[t]o touch is to know the world"—objects embody knowledge and experience through *haptic perception*.^[7] Through the lens of craft, media artworks are regarded as objects that embed the experience of the world in the process of making.

Tim Ingold proposes that "Craft [is] a way of telling" and *hapticality* is the artist's self-awareness of how her connections with the ecologies of making and her broader community of peers and audiences enable her to tell her stories.^[8] Ingold layers Fred Moten and Stefano Harney's concept of *hapticality*—"the awareness of feeling others feeling you"—onto haptic perception to emphasise how the dynamic and responsive dialogue that occurs in practice between humans, materials and environments shapes making.^[9] In my account of *Old Earth*, haptic perception describes how I joined "with others, including the materials with which one works, along with other people and things in the environment" in the experimentation of my family's super-8 home movies and navigating the Super-VHS editing environment.^[10] Hapticity is my awareness of these relationships that guide the telling and re-telling of stories to an audience. Hapticity located a common ground on which I could share stories written in my grandfather's hand with an audience. *Old Earth* is the craft object that holds the knowledge, experience, contexts and of its making.



Figure 4. *Old Earth* (1995), video still. Courtesy of the artist.

⁴ *Self-made Cinemas: Contemporary Hong Kong Films and Videos* in Australia was at the Film and Television Institute, Fremantle, Western Australia on 31 August 1999, the Chauvel Cinemas, Paddington, New South Wales on 1 September 1999, Queensland State Library Cinema, South Brisbane, Queensland on 4 September, Mercury Cinema, Adelaide, South Australia on 7 September 1999, and Quantum NT, Darwin, North Territory on 2 October 1999.

The account of *Virtual Memory* is equally imbued with haptic relationships with materials, processes, and technologies. Hapticity was present in the forms of the cinema and the workshop. For the students, *Dusting off the Other* was a pivotal moment when they encountered modernist avant-garde and experimental films—a hitherto entirely unexplored form of the moving image—for the first time in the traditional space of the cinema. This juxtaposition of the unknown within a known space gave rise to an awareness of the situated environment such as close proximities with other bodies, of film prints being projected from the bio box, and the passing of time. This embodied experience was transferred to the workshop environment informing conscious experimentation with the medium. In working directly on developed film stock and leader, *Virtual Memory*'s use of the direct film technique built on the pioneering work of Norman McLaren and Len Lye in the 1930s as well as its continual re-invention by Harry Smith and Stan Brakhage in the 1960s.[11] The cameraless technique expanded on the Modernist formal experimentation with light in graphics and abstract forms unfolding over sequential pictorial frames. The last ten seconds of *Virtual Memory* consciously exploited the frame-editing technique employed by Peter Kubelka to reduce film form to its barest components of black (opaque) and clear film frames to create the finale that ended with a blank screen when 'virtual memory ran out'. My early works were realised with a critical awareness of the film apparatus as constructs of the cinematic experience—the central tenet of the structural films of Hollis Frampton and Michael Snow.[12]

These accounts point to how the initiation, development and continual evolution of the craft object occur in relation to the complex social dimensions of physical spaces. The cinema and the workshop are the primary sites of such haptic and social interactions. The workshop has historically been the place where dialogic conversations with materials and with others unfold, underwriting the continual re-invention of techniques, technologies, and relationships. Recounting the slow transformation of Medieval workshops into Renaissance ateliers as sites of making, Richard Sennett writes that:

technical innovation changed cooperation in the workshop. Technical change unsettled its social relations. Rituals based on the shop hierarchy were subverted. Dialogical exchange was at the heart of the experimental method, and remains so.[13]

Experimentation has been at the heart of media arts. Physical participation and social interactions in the workshop create shared experiences that drive experimental practices. The cinema as a social space has also been critical for these dialogic exchanges and embodied interactions that occur iteratively across divides and generations. The twenty-first century ushered in generational successions in the arts and

technological platforms. When physical workshops and screening venues are no longer emphasised as places of gathering, how then can the haptic and social dimensions restore the *Erfahrung* of making and keep alive the experimental spirit of the community?



Figure 5. *Virtual Memory is Running Low* (1996) film still. Courtesy of the artist.

Stories we (re)tell

The year 2015 marked the fiftieth anniversary of the London Film-Makers Co-operative (LFMC).[14] A year-long program celebrated the LFMC's success pivoted on the communal ethos and practice of sharing technologies, skills, knowledge, and know-how through workshops, exhibitions, and open screenings. While Julia Knight, Peter Thomas and Maeve Connolly acknowledge the challenges of this cooperative model in the production, exhibition and distribution of experimental artworks in an increasingly complex landscape, the significance of such collections and their longevity need no argument.[15] The 2020s will see many media arts organisations in Australia and Asia marking their fortieth and fiftieth anniversaries. Re-telling their stories will likewise entail revisiting their collections. What stories will be (re)told? In a continually evolving landscape of experimental arts, how do we remember, engage, and interact with works of the past that allow us to access the haptic and social dimensions of making?

Researchers, scholars and artists are actively engaging with archives and collections in creative ways. Louise Curham and Lucas Ihlein's Learning and Teaching Cinema is an exemplar of activating historical Expanded Cinema works through re-enactment strategies.[16] In re-staging the work, artists, researchers, and audiences once again access the haptic and social dimensions of the original making process, and the interactions they inspire.

My continual engagement with HKAC, Videotage and their collections also revealed how resilient stories are transmitted through haptic and social connections in the forms of embodied research. In viewing the works in collections (IFVA collection at the Hong Kong Art Centre's office and VMAC in the Videotage's site at the Cattle Depot Artist Village), my physical presence enabled in-person conversations with artists and art workers as well as participation in

community screening events.⁵ Hong Kong-based media art scholar, Linda Lai (2018) speaks of the inseparable relations between experimental arts and citizenry. She writes:

a responsible contemporary citizen must not let go of issues of sight and sound creations in our digital culture... Digital culture does not take the form of government, but addresses our affect directly; it is aesthetics as well as sentiments that the marketing logic of the culture industry contains and homogenizes, unifying the way we remember and feel about the past. [17]

Lai urges “responsible contemporary citizen[s]” to attend to “the ‘surfaces’ of things handed down to us from the past.”[18] In my research of Hong Kong experimental arts, I encountered videos that interrogated the homogenised and glossy surfaces of packaged histories from both personal and collective perspectives using a range of analogue and digital materials. My attention to the processes of experimentation in these works opened my ears to hear voices that speak to dissensus and loss at a time of great transitions. Together, these moving images weave stories, memories, and history into a textured openwork fabric of place. In 2016, I participated in Videotage’s thirtieth-anniversary exhibition *No References* held during ISEA 2016 and listened to stories of Hong Kong media arts.[19] For Videotage’s fortieth-anniversary in 2026, I am contributing to Videotage’s (re)telling of their stories through an investigation into the employment of blockchain to register works in their collections as well as the experimentation with Artificial Intelligence (AI) in remastering videos and films such as *Old Earth* or *Virtual Memory*. These interactions will produce new stories told through renewed haptic and social connections with media artworks as living processes rather than finished products.

In the Australian context, the last decades of the twentieth century were filled with the possibilities of new technologies and emerging platforms. Organisational restructuring responded to shifts in government agenda and commercial interests, which substantially shaped the experimental arts ecologies. While the art economy is complex and beyond the scope of this paper, it is important to acknowledge the influence the intersection between experimental arts and the market has on what works were made, collected, and archived, in other words, the stories of Australian media arts. At the turn of the century, new cultural policies in the arts sector were implemented through public

funding schemes, mixed public and private investment models and the growing creative industries.⁶ At the same time, media art organisations and artists strengthened their networks with increased connectivity. As evident in my stories, these connections were vital to the dialogical exchanges between geographically dispersed communities.

While the sense of excitement of possibilities enabled by new technologies was shared, tensions between generations of makers and mediums grew all the same. Some not-for-profit art agencies widened their scope to include a broader range of media, while others merged and reorientated their operational agenda.⁷ Arts funding can have the unintended effect of turning cooperation into competition and in turn risks fracturing communities. Connolly comments that the blurring of public subsidies and private investments where the “growing interdependencies between ‘public’ and ‘private’ art economies” in the early 2000s when the mobility of artworks increased, influenced what may exist in art collections.[20] In Australia, not-for-profit media art organisations have taken the responsibility to preserve Australian media artworks exhibited in their programs, including Scanlines, Audiovisual Australia, and Archiving Australian Media Art project.[21] As these anniversaries approach, how will the communities retell these stories to encompass diverse perspectives? How will the haptic and social qualities that connect makers and audiences be restored?



Figure 6. *Old Earth* (1995), video still. Courtesy of the artist.

⁵ For example, through a passing conversation, I was invited to the screening of Fredie Chan Ho Lun’s *Open Road After Harvest* on the roadside outside the Sha Tin Railway station. This period of research in Hong Kong occurred during the final months of the Umbrella Movement in 2014. This timing placed me in a critical context with these works.

⁶ Funding and policy changes at the time include the establishment of the Australia Council for the Arts’ Hybrid Arts grants, the closure of the Industry Cultural Fund at the Australian Film Commission in 2000, and the merging of the Australia Film Commission, the Film Finance Corporation Australia (FFC) and Film Australia Limited to form Screen Australia by the acts of parliament in 2008.

⁷ Changes in organisational structure and scope include the Sydney Intermedia Network, previously the Sydney Super-8 club, renamed as dLux Media Arts in 1998. In 2017, the Film and Television Institute in Western Australia merged with ScreenWest.

Conclusion

In this paper, I use craft as a lens to look at the haptic and social dimensions of experimental video art as a cultural practice. The story in and of *Old Earth* presents a window into the processes and practice of experimentation at the cusp of technological and generational change. My retelling presents an account of haptic and social connections between the medium and the community of students, artists and audiences in the making and sharing of artworks. I highlight the role of physical spaces—the workshop and the cinema—as shared sites for experimentation. Sennett writes,

The workshop has been since ancient times a model for sustained cooperation... The complications of craft labour were joined to the family value of continuity across generations.[...] Workshops present and past have glued people together through work rituals... through mentoring... through face-to-face sharing of information.[22]

Similarly, our embodied interactions with collections and archives can perform the rituals, mentoring and the sharing of information, whether in cinemas or exhibition spaces, reactivating the haptic and social dimensions of making to (re)create shared memories and stories.

The context in which we retell stories is important. The Australian account presented in this paper is not a lament, but a call to attention to how generational changes (of artists, audiences, technologies, and policy environments) influence what is created and what is collected, hence what stories are (re)told. I hope to show through my stories of Hong Kong media arts that the social and haptic dimensions connect artists and audiences to the place despite geographic distances and shifting temporalities. In re-visiting the archives, the storyteller can re-tell resilient stories through haptic records of experimentation in media artworks as craft objects in the context of a changed material environment.

The haptic and social dimensions inherent in experimental media artworks imbue them with the power of *Kraftwerk* as conceived by Benjamin, capable of restoring *Erfahrung*—lived experience. Embedded within *Kraftwerk* is a one-to-one direct physical relationship between actuality as experienced and physical materials—an indexicality that defines recording technologies. Leslie writes,

The photographic object brings objects closer for inspection, providing an imprint of traces of the world. It reveals traces (*Spuren*), not of the potter's handprint, but of the objective modern world'.[23]

Moving image practices, whether chemical-based film, electronic video, or digital imaging, similarly map the imprints of the world, not as a reflection but as traces, onto the

textures of the technology that produced it. The *Kraftwerk* Benjamin extolled is motion picture films. In transmitting the rhythms of life through recording and playback, the moving image reconstitutes the social aspects of storytelling. Video's inscription of actuality as experienced onto materials is (re)stored in the replaying of physical relationships through a collective experience of stories. When re-activated the moving image can restore *Erfahrung* to the artist and the experimental spirit to the community.

Keeping the experimental spirit alive means re-visiting works as living practices rather than finished products, *As Kraftwerk* or as craft objects, media artworks embodied the resilient stories of the processes and relations between artists, tools, materials, audiences, and environments. Activating works of the past is to re-play the dialogic exchanges within the ecologies of practice, creating new connections with the present contexts. The haptic and social dimensions in how we create and experience media artworks can re-constitute the loss of togetherness that crafting affords human and creative communities.



Figure 7. *Virtual Memory is Running Low* (1996) film still. Courtesy of the artist.

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