But a moment in time: Space, stasis and fragmented narrative in the work of Simone Hine
Emily Lush

A light, a release, a thud; in Simone Hine's video installations and performance works, movements are reduced, refined and relieved of their overarching narrative to create an abridged sensory experience. They are experienced by the viewer just as they are performed by the artist on screen or stage: as a set of staccato vignettes. Hine uses theatricality and moving images not merely to critique formulaic cinematic devices but to reimagine the meanings they produce. This deeper understanding is achieved through experiments with stasis, repetition, the gaze, and the role of the female character, emphasised variously by extracting and rearranging familiar narrative sequences. Hine's work transcends cinematic tropes and contributes to our evolving understanding of the ways space and time, stillness and motion—as represented by the static art object and dynamic format of cinema—can combine.

Since graduating from QUT with Honours in 2000, Hine has developed a powerful visual language; a light source penetrates a darkened gallery; an object is caught in perpetual motion. Site specific and time based, Hine's multimedia creations combine performance, multi-channel video and installation that, together, tease apart narrative structures to render a non-sequential, non-linear element of an undefined whole. She first exhibited in several Brisbane artist-run initiatives (ARIs) before being selected for the Institute of Modern Art's 2001 edition of *Fresh cut*. Hine has since relocated to Melbourne where she co-founded the Screen Space and Beam Contemporary ARIs. Her curatorial work, like her own art, is informed by the dynamic between defined narrative and imagined reality, a tension that is perhaps best summarised in her essay for *Hold*, a group show Hine curated at Screen Space in 2010:

> Whether the work suggests a cinematic trope or lived experience, it is in moments of stasis that the desire to move beyond the frame becomes evident. We, as audiences, are not left to our own devices free to imagine any narrative we care to, instead each of the works purposely leads us towards predefined narratives or experiences, but give us the freedom to embellish.[1]

This potential to "move beyond the frame" necessitates an infrastructure from which to transcend. Hine's solution is much more elaborate than a traditional viewing screen; instead, she erects structures—sometimes small, closed-off compartments, sometimes life-sized rooms that are left open and porous. Her use of antechambers represents both a conceptual and physical 'staking out' of a third space within the gallery. Caught between viewing platform and stage, these constructions serve two purposes: firstly, to contain the installation or performance and secondly, to create a responsive surface onto which video works can be projected. As Jessie Scott observes, these constructions reflect Hine's broader interest in "what happens outside of it, what happens when the camera moves away".[2] Time is confused by the permeability of the structures. In *Timepiece* 2011, Hine's repetitive movement of scrunching and throwing paper, visible through a front window opening, gradually seals the gap between the rear of Hine's office structure and the looped video beyond. A degree of permeability is necessary to form a passageway by which the viewer enters and becomes a part of the work. Like an empty film set, these vessels can be experienced from 360 degrees, with no clear delineation between façade and inner workings.

Enclosed spaces appeared early on in Hine's work. For *Type* 2003, exhibited at the now dissolved ARI, The Farm, video works were contained in lidded boxes that were supported by plinths rooted in a bed of grass. By comparison, the structures used in Hine's more recent installations, such as *No use crying*, first shown in Melbourne in 2010 and recreated for *Ex post*, have increased in scale. In *No use crying*, the room—designated by two walls and a floor—partially encloses a frozen scene that is at once an independent entity, but still connected with the outside gallery space through the unity of darkness.

Set in the intimate space of a family kitchen, *No use crying* simultaneously presents two stages of narrative—gestures in real time (a video of a bottle in hand, which then falls to the floor), and the remnants of those gestures. The installation component of the work is not a recreation of the scene on film, but rather the leftovers of the 'set' where the footage was captured. This is a narrative where beginning and middle are fused into a repetitive sequence with only the end taking firm (and physical) form. The viewer is led through an anecdote that has been distilled to its most essential elements—light, grasp, flinch, thud, spill. With only these visual markers, the viewer is forced to imagine the broader narrative that might accommodate such an episode: the back story, characters, narration, soundtrack, and finer details. Without a formal narrative to contextualise the work, the viewer is left to reconcile these snap shots with an imagined reality. Immortalised on film as new cinematic memories, these moments are imbued with great value and consequence, which forces the viewer to reappraise seemingly mundane gestures "that consist of only a few seconds on screen" and are expanded "into significant individual works".[3]

Hine's use of light plays a significant role in her works. In *No use crying*, the refrigerator light is trained on the emanating milk puddle just as a spotlight might be focused on a stage performer. In *Interior* 2006, this motif takes shape as a slither of internal light that escapes through a door left ajar. For *Preview of a work not yet complete* 2000, a spotlight shines on Hine herself who lies subtly twitching. This is taken further in *Displace* 2001, which casts a similar figure both in real time and

on screen, drawing attention to the viewer's tendency to navigate the world through mediated channels.

Hine's preoccupation with what occurs off camera is again revealed in her repetition of physical space. In *Corridor* 2009, echoing on the screen the physical environment that the viewer occupies further complicates the viewer/participant tension. Filming the video component within the installation itself mirrors the nuances—for instance, the spill pattern of the milk on the floorboards—to create an uncanny viewing experience. As described by Weise, "there is certainly something strangely fascinating about physically inhabiting a space seen previously on a cinema screen, or in recognising a familiar place from our daily lives transformed into a cinematic memory".[4] Hine provides a voyeuristic insight into a private setting. Nowhere is this more pronounced than in *Interior*, where action and consequence are again paralleled in film and performance installation through an elaborate staging. Hine's cinematic language—complete with costume—echoes pantomime; these are highly produced and calculated scenes.

Both *Interior* and *Timepiece* experiment with the gaze to dislodge meaning and interrupt narrative flow. Reviewing *Timepiece*, Scott writes of a performance that pitted the actions of concealing and revealing against each other. Hine "danced close to the edge of breaking character—occasionally she would look up and peer out of the viewing frame, but it was unclear whether she was 'seeing' us, the audience".[5] In these instances, the gaze is returned. In *Watching* 2005, the implied voyeurism of the viewer is threatened by the possibility of the returned gaze. Alternately, in other works, this possibility is eliminated, as in *No use crying*, where the active character is all but absent, and the installation component of *Transpose* 2001, which only partially reveals the active body in a state of motion.

When considered from a feminist perspective, Hine's interest in the dynamics of power elicited by the gaze has particular resonance. Her disruption of narrative and the act of re-engaging with moments of insignificance recalls background details being brought to the fore. Hine's re-imaginings "whereby lesser (or just female, and therefore neglected) characters of famous literature or history are fleshed out and given starring roles in new stories"[6] is heightened by the use of repetition and unfinished sequences. As described by Scott, "the evocation of the frustrated, proto-feminist, professional woman—trapped in a repetitive performance, moving but going nowhere … is highly loaded".[7] Hine's own femininity is used to characterise scenes of trauma, whether that be the Snow White-esque figure in a glass box, a woman breaking through the glass ceiling, or the more every-day ordeal of accidentally dropping a glass bottle.

To apply the term stasis to Hine's work must involve both dimensions of the word itself: inactivity and equilibrium. In the frozen moments of her performances, the audience may find themselves frustrated through unresolved repetition. However, they may feel an innate sense of balance—balance between motion and emotion, the static and the perpetually moving, femininity and the male-driven discourses of art and cinema, theatricality and the unremarkable, and, most poignantly, reality and the imagined. In the blending of dichotomies, Hine reevaluates our

understanding of narrative sequence and how we experience motion and static picture alike through the frame.

Emily Lush is a freelance writer and editor. She graduated from QUT with Honours in Creative Industries in 2011, and now works for local magazine *Peppermint*, and online arts journal *The Maximilian*. Her writing has appeared in numerous publications including *Das 500*, *Independent Press* and *The Thousands*.

1. Simone Hine, *Hold* [ex. cat.], 2010, http://heidiyardley.com/library/file/Hold%20Catalogue.pdf.
2. Jessie Scott, "Timepiece: Simone Hine at Kings," *Picture Skew*, 25 October 2011, http://pictureskew.net/2011/10/25/time-piece-simone-hine-at-kings/.
3. Kyle Weise, "Corridor," *Blindside*, 2009, http://www.blindside.org.au/2009/simone-hine.shtml.
4. Ibid.
5. Scott, *Timepiece*.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.

Born in Brisbane, Queensland, 1978. Lives and works in Melbourne.

Education

2005 (Cont.) Doctorate of Philosophy, School of Culture and Communication (Creative Arts) University of Melbourne

2000 Bachelor of Arts (Visual Arts) (Honours, First class), Queensland University of Technology

Selected Solo Exhibitions

2011 *Timepiece*, Kings ARI, Melbourne

2010 *Rooms,* fortyfive downstairs, Melbourne

Process, George Paton Gallery, Melbourne

2009 *049,* Kings ARI, Melbourne

Corridor, Blindside, Melbourne

2005 *beneath*, Loop, Melbourne

2004 *On this a night like any other*, Brisbane Powerhouse, Brisbane

2003 *type*, The Farm, Brisbane

2002 *fragment*, Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane

Selected Group Exhibitions

2010 *Kings x Kings*, Kings ARI, Melbourne

Invitational, Level ARI, Brisbane

2006 *poly, Metro Arts, Brisbane*

high light, Ipswich Art Gallery, Ipswich

2005 *con:text*, Metro Arts, Brisbane

Locus voci, State Library of Queensland, Brisbane

high light, Blindside, Melbourne

2004 *The click*, Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane

2003 *The click*, Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane

post-performance, The Farm, Brisbane

2002 *Prime*, Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane

2001 *Fresh cut*, Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane

2000 *11:11, Metro Arts, Brisbane*

Next Gen, Metro Arts, Brisbane

Orations 2, Soapbox Gallery, Brisbane

1999 *Hatched*, Perth Institute of Contemporary Art, Perth

Collaborations

2010 *Ultimate time lapse mega mix*, Federation Square, Melbourne (with Linda Neil)

2009 *Landscape*, Trocadero, Melbourne (with Linda Neil)

2007 *New passion club*, Judith Wright Centre of Contemporary Arts, Brisbane (with Linda Neil)

Selected Curatorial Projects

2011 *Framed*, Level, Brisbane

2010 *Hold*, Screen Space, Melbourne

2010–now Co-Director and Founder of Beam Contemporary, Melbourne and Screen Space, Melbourne

Simone Hine