

A Concordance to "Some Quick Time Movies"

Michael Szpakowski

"Everything is connected"
V.I. Lenin

http://www.somedancersandmusicians.com/Some_QuickTime_Movies/index.html

Artist Statements

I mistrust the convention of the artist statement. It seems to me the artist is often the least equipped to tell us what her work is about even when this doesn't lead to either banal or totally outrageous claims. Nevertheless, I'm always happy to answer questions about the movies. It's somehow easier to respond than to make claims, and the responses, for me, are technical -- how I made the things; background (where, when, who) -- or biographical, especially given the diaristic quality of the whole sequence. There aren't special, hidden, intentions, which I can choose to speak about or not, behind the pieces. Your guess is as good as mine.

Editor's Note: To eliminate redundancy, all listed online files are/were available under the URL
http://www.somedancersandmusicians.com/Some_QuickTime_Movies/

Cherry Blossom

Are poems written on such themes as 'Going to view the cherry blossoms only to find they had scattered' or 'On being prevented from visiting the blossoms' inferior to those on 'Seeing the blossoms'? People commonly regret that the cherry blossoms scatter or that the moon sinks in the sky and this is natural; but only an exceptionally insensitive person would say, 'This branch and that branch have lost their blossoms. There is nothing worth seeing now.'
Kenko, "Essays in Idleness," translated by Donald Keene.

cherry blossom loop
cherry_blossom_loop.mov
early spring
early_spring.mov

Childhood

I had a fantastic childhood, enveloped both by unconditional love and a rigorous and sometimes joyless Puritanism -- the confluence of the Methodism of the industrial North of England and the Cold War -- at a time that now seems like an episode from the history of an alien planet. A childhood, too, dominated by the experience of being the son of a refugee and of his

tales of how to shake off wolves in the woods, of skating down the Pripyat river, of living for six months in a hole in the ground and rescuing people from burning tanks. This made the world outside the suburb of Sheffield where I grew up seem, by turns, infinitely dangerous and infinitely inviting.

Of course it was both.

the heart and what it does
/the_heart_and_what_it_does.mov
pages from 'the childrens encyclopedia'
pages_from_the_childrens_encyclopedia.mov
things past
things_past.mov
the scottish war
the_scottish_war.mov
the scottish peace
the_scottish_peace.mov



Collaboration

One of the things that excite me about the digital is that it makes possible a new sort of collaboration with both other artists and with non-professionals. Digitization makes the simple juxtaposition of different kinds of work straightforward, or enables a kind of framing process that, done sympathetically, enriches the work of both parties.

I've used this a lot in the arts education work I do and it gets applied here in the five collabs with my daughter Anna.

the scottish war
the_scottish_war.mov
the scottish peace
the_scottish_peace.mov

Collaboration, cont.

dream

dream.mov

poem

poem.mov

poem (version)

poem_version.mov

orpheus

orpheus.mov

Compression

The movies sometimes get shown offline. This is problematic as I spend so much time getting them as small as possible for delivery on the Net but occasionally inadvertently overwrite the original high quality files or make substantive changes after compressing. The Net is what they're for; it's where, to me, they feel right. If I get a chance to show them offline I often pretty much completely remake them from the original raw footage. I used to hate that, but now it tickles me that there are these subtly different versions of things with the same title out there.

The Domestic

Of course travel is lovely and broadens the mind and often makes for interesting art (if one avoids the post-card trap) but the domestic, the backyard, the ordinary -- this seems a real test to me. I really do believe everything is connected -- the general is in some sense encoded, or at least clued, in every particular.

my secret garden

my_secret_garden.mov

a self portrait in my father's house

a_self_portrait_in_my_fathers_house.mov

shed

shed.mov

day and night in the garden

day_and_night_in_the_garden.mov

time machine

time_machine.mov

a tiny opera for anna

a_tiny_opera_for_anna.mov

man with a pot of white chrysanthemums

man_with_a_pot_of_white_chrysanthemums.mov

fruit machine

fruit_machine.mov

Drawing

Like singing, drawing was one of those things that the English education system in the early 60s pretty much assumed one could or couldn't do.

I was always a "couldn't do." I'd still feel embarrassed in the extreme to present drawings I did simply as drawings, but making them part of a movie, of a process (applied drawing) somehow legitimizes them,

at least for me. Making them involves intense pleasure and intense frustration in equal measure.

pentimenti

pentimenti.mov

karina

karina.mov

kingfisher

kingfisher.mov

Epiphany

I would like to think there are moments of epiphany in at least some of these pieces.



Flowers and nature in general

My parents loved flowers -- they didn't greatly care for art, but they loved flowers, they loved nature.

Their implicit aesthetic was very 19th century, very Romantic, and I imbibed it young and wholesale.

On a Saturday afternoon we'd walk the countryside at the edge of the Peak District, and ever so often we'd stop and someone would say, "Look at that, isn't it beautiful" -- a stream, a tree in blossom, a fungus, the sky, a frog, a bird. Or we'd stand and look at the A57 Road in the valley and marvel that the cars all looked like toys. Or we'd say that the rain and mist were very beautiful in their own way, too.

spring flowers of the peloponnese

spring_flowers_of_the_peloponnese.mov

cyclamen

cyclamen.mov

a walk to pins del bisbe

a_walk_to_pins_del_bisbe.mov

after ovid

after_ovid.mov

cherry blossom loop

cherry_blossom_loop.mov

Flowers and nature in general,cont.

early spring

early_spring.mov

budapest

budapest.mov

Found objects and appropriation

It struck me recently that although I've been quite curmudgeonly about the innovations and methodology of a number of 20th Century artists in the line of descent from Duchamp etc., much of what I do would have been unthinkable without them. Sherman and Nauman for the performative, Warhol for repetition, just about everyone for the found object. It's just that what I do is a kind of conservative, domesticated, applied distillation, where one ceases even to be conscious of things that once represented innovation and simply reads as natural the extended language made possible by these pioneers.

teach yourself russian

teach_yourself_russian.mov

karina

karina.mov

found poem

Found_Poem.mov

art

art.mov

a found dance

a_found_dance.mov

from a greek hotel room

from_a_greek_hotel_room.mov

pages from 'the childrens encyclopedia'

pages_from_the_childrens_encyclopedia.mov

the scottish war

the_scottish_war.mov

the scottish peace

the_scottish_peace.mov

digital film. Once more, the frame becomes a natural basic unit. So one could say that it's easier to feel Brakhage as a direct influence than, say, Acconci. Although what's actually happening is maybe a kind of dialectical synthesis -- the technology allowing more inclusivity of influence and practice.

through the looking glass

through_the_looking_glass.mov

portrait of the artist in his studio (2003)

portrait_of_the_artist_in_his_studio.mov

metamorphosis

metamorphosis.mov

budapest

budapest.mov

jo,dancing

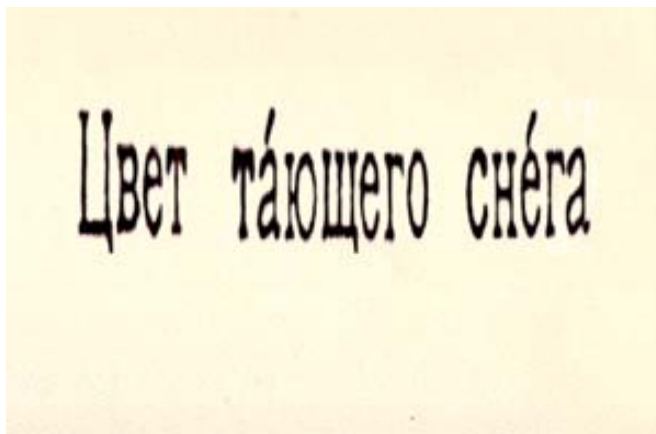
jo_dancing.mov

transfiguration

transfiguration.mov

portrait of the artist in his studio (2005)

portrait_of_the_artist_in_his_studio_2.mov



The Frame

It seems to me that the detailed frame-by-frame control that the computer allows over present-day video makes this practice more akin to the experimental film tradition than to the kind of art video that preceded Intelligent Agent 4.4.2

Loop

One of the most wonderful things about Quick Time is the ability to set it to 'loop' or 'loop back and forth' -- instant installation!

portrait of the artist in his studio (2003)

portrait_of_the_artist_in_his_studio.mov

cherry blossom loop

cherry_blossom_loop.mov

early spring

early_spring.mov

transfiguration

transfiguration.mov

portrait of the artist in his studio (2005)

portrait_of_the_artist_in_his_studio_2.mov

song

song.mov

Mobile phones

I resisted buying a mobile for a long time, then I got one with a camera and snapped away.

I relish the lo-fi-ness of it (although that's going now as the machines "improve").

Although I do usually carry a camera around, the mobile definitely made for a looser, more spontaneous way of taking images for a while, and the gloriously tacky onboard image editor shaped one piece in its entirety.

transfiguration

transfiguration.mov

found poem

Found_Poem.mov

train entering liverpool street station

train_entering_liverpool_street_station.mov

the red shoes

the_red_shoes.mov

Music

I write all the music for the pieces. Occasionally, I play and / or sing it; more often it's typed into Sibelius and then sent to a software sampler.

It's an interesting challenge, writing miniatures for miniatures. I almost never (spot the exception) match note to action -- it's more a case of creating a piece of music that has the same length as the movie, with an internal logic that is musical, then slamming them together and watching what happens.

from the prelinger archive

from_the_prelinger_archive.mov

walk from london bridge to liverpool street 22nd

october 2003

a_walk_from_london_bridge_to_liverpool_street_22oct.mov

kingfisher

kingfisher.mov

song

song.mov

early spring

early_spring.mov

teach yourself russian

teach_yourself_russian.mov

karina

karina.mov

smile

smile.mov

Naivety

I think I'm something of a naïf although I'm not really clear whether this is something one can actually know about oneself. Thinking about what it is that I do I conclude that my aesthetic was pretty much complete in my teenage years and it's this:

There are things about the world that move me in one

way or the other -- I want to make work that will somehow, almost telepathically, communicate some of that feeling and its context to a spectator / listener / whatever.

I know -- it's neither big nor clever.

Performance

Some of the work is me performing. But there's a more substantial performance thread -- my daughter recites poems or tells a story, my friend and collaborator Joanne Thomson dances, walks, and smiles here and there, a bunch of Hungarian musicians descend from the sky.

Some of the young people I work with on theater projects appear -- in fact it's not so much the performance but the fact -- and the circumstances and effects -- of performing that interest me. The expressions of intense concentration on the faces of the young people in the dioscuro move me deeply.

the dioscuro

the_dioscuro.mov

dream

dream.mov

smile

smile.mov

walk

walk.mov

myth

myth.mov

poem (version)

poem_version.mov

jump

jump.mov

the neon pizza man VS. Busby Berkeley

the_neon_pizza_man_VS_busby_berkeley.mov

and then the devil appeared

to the poor shoemaker

and_then_the_devil_appeared_to_the_poor_shoemaker.mov

Repetition

I try not to repeat myself, at least outside the pieces that employ repetition as a structural principle.

Self-portraiture

I do this more and more. Not just in this work, but in everything I do. And as I feel myself age, the compulsion to do it becomes stronger. I worry that it represents vanity or egomania but I do work hard to be honest and observant.

portrait of the artist in his studio (2005)

portrait_of_the_artist_in_his_studio_2.mov

Self-portraiture, cont.

a self portrait with my father lukasz szpakowski
Self_Portrait_With_My_Father_Lukasz_Szpakowski.m
ov

the firebird
the_firebird.mov

the watcher
the_watcher.mov

a self portrait in my father's house
a_self_portrait_in_my_fathers_house.mov

after ovid
after_ovid.mov

return to my native city
return_to_my_native_city.mov

Sheffield

City of my birth and upbringing. It haunts my dreams when I'm away and fills me with amazement and melancholy when I'm there.

return to my native city
return_to_my_native_city.mov

shalesmoor
shalesmoor.mov

on campo lane
on_campo_lane.mov

time machine
time_machine.mov

shed
shed.mov



Software

Photoshop,
Debabelizer, Director,
Premiere, Sibelius,
Kontakt, Sound Forge,
and, of course, the
wonderful Quick Time
Pro.

Some Quick Time Movies

I started making these in mid-2003 and since then have made nearly 70. I think the sequence will go on as long as I do.

Song

I never thought I could sing when I was a kid; then, for much of my life as a musician, I had to -- to illustrate a point here; to show someone how to interpret a passage, there. I'm never going to have a great voice but it does; and I like the making-myself-vulnerable that comes with singing in these pieces -- again, I can't imagine having decided to do this without Nauman or Sherman.

a tiny opera for anna
a_tiny_opera_for_anna.mov

song
song.mov

This Is Just To Say
This_Is_Just_To_Say.mov

orpheus
orpheus.mov

fragment
fragment.mov

Time Travel

You can do it of course, and travel sideways, too, through the things that could have been and never were.

time machine
timemachine.mov

myth
myth.mov

return to my native city
pages from 'the childrens encyclopedia'
pages_from_the_childrens_encyclopedia.mov

dream
dream.mov

a self portrait in my father's house
a_self_portrait_in_my_fathers_house.mov

Trains

I love trains.

train entering liverpool street station
train_entering_liverpool_street_station.mov

triptych
triptych.mov

**walk from london bridge to liverpool street 22nd
october 2003**
a_walk_from_london_bridge_to_liverpool_street_22oct
.mov

Unity

One more reason for the decision to present the movies principally on the Net is that, to me, they seem to form, quite naturally, a unity there; but a unity in which the thematic and technical links between them can be explored subtly and gently -- offline pretty much necessitates an ordering, which highlights this or that theme and its development or otherwise. The current listing on the index page is broadly by date of making -- this underlines the diaristic qualities of the collection. Each new addition, it seems to me at least, minutely alters the overall feel of the whole. New connections between pieces arise, old ones shift a little.

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