

**DO YOU THINK IT'S OVER?: PERFORMANCE AND THE "THIRD PLACE" OF
GREENLAND'S ART HISTORY**

by

David Winfield Norman

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Abstract

During a performance piece in August 2015, Greenlandic performance artist Jessie Kleemann carried out an homage to a past artwork by Greenlandic-Danish artist Pia Arke: an ephemeral installation composed of used coffee grounds that Arke herself destroyed upon conclusion of the exhibition that had included it.

In order to elucidate the relationship established in Kleemann's work, this thesis will undertake a close analysis of individual artworks by the two artists. The existing literature has portrayed these artists as lone figures, divorced from the mainstream of Greenlandic art, and they have rarely been compared to other Greenlandic artists, yet I argue they share a common method: a performance of history. This thesis will examine the durational and resonant aspects of both works, and through them argue that performance stages a responsive encounter between subject and object, and between historical references and the present. This thesis will highlight how performance has played a much larger role in reevaluating cultural discourses in Greenland than the existing literature suggests.

Kleemann and Arke approach history through the durational aspect of temporality. I argue that in their oeuvres, the work of history occurs as a durational process of both presentation and re-presentation, where both the past and the present play active roles in forming historical knowledge.

Preface

This thesis is original, unpublished, independent work by the author, David Winfield Norman.

All translations from Danish are mine, unless otherwise noted.

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At last, while recognizing the many voices that have coalesced into this thesis, I gladly acknowledge that whatever faults or inadequacies that remain are my own.

Introduction

A woman paces through the Anchorage Museum's atrium, moving slowly as if she were in a trance, surrounded by a ring of spectators all carefully holding their distance. A mound of used coffee grounds rests in the center of the room. The aroma of coffee reaches all visitors and, perhaps against their will, implicates them in the performance's sensory *mise-en-scène*. As the woman snakes her way through the audience, she wraps individuals in a single length of white tulle, further entangling the relation between subjects and objects.

She is not making it easy on the three official photographers, two with video cameras. One dismounts her apparatus and follows on foot for a while. This videographer clearly struggles to keep up, trying in vain to record every detail. At one point the artist holds up a wooden dowel and points at another photographer who is attempting to hide behind a row of visitors. She makes him the object of this gesture, transforming the spectator into part of the spectacle. These dutiful chroniclers are not as removed from the action as they might like to believe.

With this performance at the Anchorage Museum on the 28th August, 2015, Greenlandic artist Jessie Kleemann (b. 1959) implicitly summarized some dilemmas that underlie the general exclusion of performance art and performative practices from Greenland's art history.¹ In this performance, Kleemann referenced a past artwork by Greenlandic-Danish artist Pia Arke (1958-2007), an ephemeral installation composed of used coffee grounds that Arke herself destroyed upon conclusion of the exhibition that had included it. By performing a reference to an artwork that no longer exists, Kleemann challenged conventions that frame historical artworks as securely past, inactive and divided from contemporary viewers and researchers. Likewise, she

¹ I had invited Jessie Kleemann to perform at the Anchorage Museum in connection with the panel discussion series Curated Conversations, co-curated by artist Sonya Kelliher-Combs (Iñupiaq-Athabascan).

encroached on the space of the viewer, progressively weaving subject and object together. This strategy has not been without controversy. In the past, Kleemann has been harassed, laughed at and physically attacked during performance works that stress her gender and often involve Greenland's cultural heritage in a manner many find irreverent or grotesque. She writes,

My works and especially my performances seem offensive to some because I permit myself to use our cultural heritage as part of my work in a different and unpredictable manner. [...] In the slow process of writing history, many vulgarities have been deleted. The community prefers the good things, the amusing and perhaps also the respectable.²

By referencing marginalized, neglected or forgotten materials, Kleemann challenges the discourses that have excluded them. Greenland's official art history, dominated by two main texts, has often been complicit in such selective memory. In Bodil Kaalund's *Grønlands Kunst*, [The Art of Greenland] which established the foundation for the field, the author disavows Kleemann's controversial reinterpretations of historical objects and instead describes her practice as an unmediated, culturally-determined link to the past: "What we today call performance was also used and known in the old culture. Now as then, the performer aroused both delight and great fear."³ This volume does not address the provocative elements of her practice nor her stated interest in artists associated with Fluxus, such as Nam June Paik whose work she encountered in the early 1980s, and to whom she partly attributes an interest in transitioning from print media and theater to video and body art.⁴ Although the second text, *100 Years of Greenlandic Art* by Jørgen Trondhjem, rejects Kaalund's anthropological framing, it describes Kleemann's

² Jessie Kleemann, "Qivittoq: A Phenomenon and a State," in *Qivittoq*, ed. Iben Mondrup (Copenhagen: Hurricane, 2012), 12-13.

³ Bodil Kaalund, *Grønlands kunst*, third revised edition (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 2011), 316.

⁴ Mette Moestrup, "Qivittoq, Qivittoq, Orsoq – Interview med Jessie Kleemann," *Legenda* 9 (2010): 71.

performance practice in just a single sentence in the context of artists' choices of media: "Jessie Kleemann, with her background in theatre, used performance art and the latest medium, video."⁵

While these authors have made valuable contributions to the field by establishing a chronology for Greenlandic art – from the Dorset culture to the introduction of painting and printed media in the eighteenth century, and beyond – their emphasis on ethnicity (in Kaalund's case) and the sociological implications of changes in artistic style and media (in Trondhjem's) has inadvertently excluded artistic practices less bound to these disciplinary divides. In 1994, Pia Arke herself contributed a scathing critique of the dominant discourse that demonstrates this very issue: "There is something that shows me that there is a tendency – at the larger exhibitions [of contemporary Greenlandic art] – to ethnographize [*at etnografisere*] them. Namely that the ethnographic materials always create the basis for [contextualizing] the art that exists today."⁶ As Arke argues, this reliance on an ethnographic or sociohistorical frame assumes that Greenlandic art's primary significance is either culturally-specific or ethno-nationalistic. In effect, this discursive frame marginalizes practices that have refuted these categorizations.

This is perhaps most visible in the treatment of Jessie Kleemann and Pia Arke in art historical and critical literature. While Kaalund's text has been in publication since 1974 with frequent new editions, significant passages on Kleemann and Arke only exist in the most recent edition of 2011, even though they were both active since 1980. Both artists are typically portrayed as lone figures, divorced from the mainstream of Greenlandic art, when in actuality both have actively participated in and challenged debates surrounding Greenlandic art and its

⁵ Jørgen Trondhjem, *100 års grønlandsk billedkunst – En introduktion til billedkunsten, kunsthistorien og kunstverdenen i Grønland siden 1900* (Copenhagen: Turbine, 2011), 75.

⁶ Pia Arke, "«Lad os lytte omsorgsfuldt.» Bemærkninger vedrørende udstillingen "Den flyvende Kajak" på Brandts Klædefabrik i Odense," *Sermitsiaq* 5 (1994): 15.

related institutions. In critical literature, both artists have rarely been compared to other practicing Greenlandic artists, including one another, an oversight this thesis will address.

Pia Arke was born to an East Greenlandic mother and a Danish father in Ittoqqortoormiit/Scoresbysund, East Greenland, and lived most of her life in Denmark. In her art practice she probed, in her words, “the silence that surrounds the bonds between Greenland and Denmark.”⁷ Her work blends the remnants of official history, culled from textual and photographic archives, with personal mythology and memory. She often returned to photography to articulate the tension between “the ethnographic object,” the Other that ethno-historical discourse exposes to view, and “the ethnographic subject” that projects an ethnocentric worldview onto its object.⁸ Since her far too early death Arke has received academic appreciation outside the borders of Greenland interest circles following curatorial collective Kuratorisk Aktion’s extensive research into her lifework and research practice. With the exception of Kuratorisk Aktion’s own thorough and nuanced analysis, this critical literature most often focuses on the ethnographic and historical content and context of her projects, with less attention to her historical methods and their theoretical underpinnings. Specifically, the role of embodiment and textual performance within her approach to history has yet to be substantially considered. As I will argue, her photography often becomes the vehicle for establishing an affective continuity and reciprocity between subject and object, and between historical references and the present.

In contrast, Jessie Kleemann has received almost no attention in scholarship aside from the aforementioned texts and the collection of descriptive essays in her artist monograph. This is

⁷ Pia Arke quoted in Kuratorisk Aktion (eds.), *Tupilakosaurus: An Incomplete(able) Survey of Pia Arke’s Artistic Work and Research* (Copenhagen: Kuratorisk Aktion, 2012), 8.

⁸ Pia Arke, *Etnoæstetik* (Århus: Kunstitidsskriftet ARK, 1995), 31.

entirely disproportionate to her level of activity and the strength of her art practice. Kleemann has been at the forefront of expanding Greenland's art institutions since the start of her career. From 1977-79 she studied at the Tuukkaq Theatre in Fjaltring, Denmark, a theater company and acting school for Greenlanders, after which she studied printmaking at the Nuuk Graphic Workshop, later renamed the Nuuk Art School. At only twenty-five she became director of the Art School, a position she held from 1984 to 1991. During this time she became the first Greenlandic artist to work with video and performance art while mentoring many of Greenland's most experimental young artists and regularly organizing major exhibitions and events.

Kleemann often utilizes objects associated with Greenlandic traditions, approaching them as affectively and historically charged contingencies rather than specifically "Greenlandic" signifiers. She adopts these references not primarily to revitalize past practices, but in order to embody the affective and historical resonances that emanate from them and thus facilitate an encounter with multiple cultural and historical doubles, all as participants. In spite of her refusal of pure cultural specificity and interest in modernist and neo-avant-garde legacies in addition to spiritual and secular Greenlandic performance traditions, critics frequently describe her work as "shamanistic." By suggesting that her work is a self-conscious re-creation of past cultural practices, rather than a transgressive reinterpretation of them, this actually refutes some of the more transformative aspects of performances of cultural heritage. Whereas the cultural specificity narrative suggests that the present serves a utilitarian purpose to revitalize a dominant past, I argue Kleemann challenges the dominance of present or past, proposing instead the need for reciprocity between both.

While they exhibited together on several important occasions, most notably at the exhibitions "The Flying Kayak" at Brandts Klædefabrik in Odense in 1993 and "The Red

Snowmobile” at the North Atlantic House in Copenhagen in 2005, these were survey exhibitions, aimed at representing a comprehensive breadth of contemporary Greenlandic artists rather than providing concentrated, analytical studies.⁹ As such, Kleemann’s and Arke’s mutual contributions to these important exhibitions did not initiate comparison. In grouping Arke and Kleemann I suggest that despite their differences in methods and media they share theoretical concerns that have until now gone unacknowledged. Both artists have refused to be written into a closed realm of cultural-specificity, continuing to open new avenues for understanding.

This thesis uniquely focuses on performance. Performance has rarely been accounted for *as* performance – as a medium as well as a method – within Greenlandic art historical writing, which generally divides performance art from theater, dance and other performative media even though these have historically intertwined in Greenland.¹⁰ For example, while the Tuukkaq Theatre, operating between 1975 and 1994, is credited for revitalizing East Greenlandic mask and drum dance traditions, critics rarely note that the theater and acting school emphasized experimentation with the visual arts, often supporting productions, site-specific installations and exhibitions dealing with topics at the social and political margins. One such example is Nuka Lyberth’s graduation project, the installation and solo performance “White Sahara in the Dimension of Darkness,” a production concerning homosexuality and the AIDS crisis.¹¹ By

⁹ The two artists first met in the late 1980s while Kleemann was director of the Nuuk Art School and Arke was living temporarily in Nuuk, but this is not widely known and no art historical literature mentions their early connection.

¹⁰ For a substantial historical analysis of theater in Greenland, centered on the contributions of visual artist Hans Lyngé, see Inge Kleivan, “Hans Lynges rolle i Grønlands teaterhistorie,” *Tidsskriftet Grønland* 44:3 (1996): 105-150.

¹¹ Erling Dissing, “Tukak-Teatret i Fjaltring,” *Tidsskriftet Grønland* 42:1 (1994): 30. Aside from the documentary photography exhibition “Gay Greenland” in 2013-14, and drag artist Nuka Bisgaard’s (aka Nuka the Diva) participation in the 2012 exhibition INUIT LIVE at Museet for Samtidskunst, Roskilde, to date there have been no other examples of Greenlandic theater or exhibitions dealing as openly or predominantly with LGBTQ+ concerns.

directing attention to performance, this thesis argues that this body of work has played a much larger role in reevaluating cultural discourses in Greenland than existing literature suggests.

More broadly, I argue that Kleemann and Arke engage performance in a manner that reveals a metonymic link between history and temporality. The role of metonymy in performance was first theorized by Kristine Stiles. Stiles notes how performance operates as simultaneous presentation and representation, as actions that create representations in the same moment that they occur within a seemingly coherent, self-contained time.¹² This metonymy of representation and presentation further extends to the intersubjective continuity between subject and object established during performance.¹³ With this in mind, I argue that certain representational practices traveling under the sign of “history” implicitly evoke temporality, and likewise that certain presentation-oriented performances nevertheless traffic historically contingent references in and out of the present in a manner that reflects on history. In this sense, I argue for a concept of history as a performance of ritual repetition that simultaneously sets historically contingent references into new configurations, as *both* citation *and* action.

The concept of history underpinning this thesis is strongly influenced by the work of Walter Benjamin, who suggested history is the process of actively setting the past in meaningful contact with the present. Benjamin’s concept of history is melancholic, understanding melancholy as a pervasive mood or disposition that compels us to longingly look to the past. Benjamin’s approach is generative, less concerned with preserving the past than with facilitating the past’s continued participation in the present. History, as I argue in this thesis, is not a neutral

¹² Kristine Stiles, “Performance,” in *Critical Terms for Art History*, second edition, ed. Robert S. Nelson and Richard Shiff (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 75.

¹³ Stiles, 83.

or universal concept signifying a past either fully accessible to the present or fully subaltern and only accessible in re-presentation. History is a melancholic operation in which the past, present and other temporalities participate through representational and presentational performances. Additionally, history as process involves embodied systems of action and re-performing of memory, what performance theorist Diana Taylor calls the repertoire. Describing how cultural memory in the Americas exceeds the colonial legacies projected by logocentric histories, Taylor notes how in performance, “Forms handed down from the past are experienced as present.”¹⁴ This notion of performance sees history as always actively in development and embodiment not only as a means by which cultural memory is transferred, but as the content of cultural memory.

The concept of temporality, similarly, arose in the Renaissance to describe a relationship to time based around human life in contrast to a divinely-determined universal or “world” time, as Catherine Soussloff has analyzed.¹⁵ Temporality reflects an evolving appreciation for the role the human sensorium plays in actively shaping meaning by rendering time perceptible. As Soussloff writes, “A conception of temporality leads the viewer through performance/installation to the recognition of the present as historical and to the past as bearing upon it.”¹⁶ As Soussloff analyzes, the durational aspects of these media underscore that the present is a process of continuous production and transformation rather than a universal, eternal state. In this sense, temporality complements the critique of historicism Benjamin offers, in that historicism frames

¹⁴ Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 24.

¹⁵ Catherine Soussloff, “Art History’s Dilemma: Theories for Time in Contemporary Performance/Media Exhibitions,” *Performance Research* 19:3 (2014): 94.

¹⁶ Soussloff, 95.

the past as a distant, eternal object and history as the analysis of a causal progression of events.¹⁷ Benjamin's concept of history, in contrast, addresses how the past *presents* itself in the present to produce historical consciousness that was impossible to grasp in the past's own time.¹⁸

My approach to history, as well as those demonstrated by Arke and Kleemann, implicitly evokes temporality by suggesting that the past does not remain chronologically fixed, or chrononormative. Chrononormativity, as queer theorist Elizabeth Freeman has defined this term, describes how historicism regulates individual and collective embodiment by defining the present as more evolved and meaningful than the past.¹⁹ In opposition, Freeman addresses methods for writing history erotically, by emphasizing present desires for contact with the past, a concern expanded on by art historian Mathias Danbolt. In a method Danbolt calls "touching history," he attends beautifully to the desire to mutually touch and be touched by the past through interventions into "unfinished histories of injustice," a desire that uncovers "pasts that are not passé and presents that are not only present."²⁰ I further evaluate these and other theoretical conversations throughout this thesis to elaborate on my suggestion of a performance of history based on simultaneous representation and presentation, citation and action, which addresses pasts that are sensuously intertwined with the present. In this light, the past is never a secure origin, the present never merely given, and history becomes a stimulating endeavor to create reciprocity between the two.

¹⁷ Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 263.

¹⁸ Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," 255.

¹⁹ Elizabeth Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 3.

²⁰ Mathias Danbolt, "Touching History: Art, Performance, and Politics in Queer Times," (PhD diss., University of Bergen, 2012), 383.

The critique of historicism is particularly relevant in light of the dominant periodization of Greenland's political history. Greenland studies generally divides this history into the pre-colonial era, the official colonial era that extends from Danish colonization in the eighteenth century to 1953, when Greenland's colonial status ended and the territory was fully incorporated in the Danish kingdom and entered the so-called "decolonial" era, followed by the "postcolonial" Home Rule era beginning in 1979 when Greenland assumed significant autonomy, expanded in 2009 with the Self Governance legislation. I acknowledge the limitations of this periodization as well as the ambivalence toward postcolonial thought in Greenland. In early anticolonial writing on Danish colonialism, scholars often positioned Greenlanders as victims of modernity with no agency. This gave rise to resistance to postcolonial critique in some Greenlandic circles. Literary critic Birgit Kleist Pedersen has analyzed how (largely Danish) scholarship's insistence on the colonial as the dominant framework for discussing Greenlandic identity often results in re-victimizing, re-marginalizing and silencing the voices this discourse endeavors to make speak.²¹ Kirsten Thisted has suggested that a persistent insistence on discussing Greenland's colonial history buries Greenlanders' aspirations to futurity.²²

While I am receptive to these criticisms, and agree with the caution against repeating patterns of victimization, I am also wary of Pedersen's proposed solution to this ambivalence: "It is high time we move on!"²³ This claim reflects the dominant use of "postcolonial" within Greenland studies to describe a period following an allegedly concluded coloniality. This

²¹ Birgit Kleist Pedersen, "Greenlandic Images and the Post-Colonial: Is It Such a Big Deal after All?" in *The Postcolonial North Atlantic: Iceland, Greenland and the Faroe Islands*, ed. Lill-Ann Körber and Ebbe Volquardsen (Berlin: Nordeuropa-Institut der Humboldt-Universität, 2014), 285.

²² See Kirsten Thisted, "Gamle og nye fortællinger om Rigsfællesskabet mellem Danmark og Grønland," *Baggrund*, 6 December, 2014, last accessed 17 August 2016, <http://baggrund.com/gamle-og-nye-fortaellinger-om-rigsfaellesskabet-mellem-danmark-og-gronland/>.

²³ Pedersen, "Greenlandic Images and the Post-Colonial," 307.

periodization thus disavows the myriad ways that colonial power imbalances remain active beyond the official colonial era's dissolution. Not only do Pedersen and Thisted, among others, *not* "move on" from the colonial past – in article after article they return to the colonial specifically to abandon it again. They thus engage in a melancholic return that by so insistently attempting to bury the past, reaffirms the past's claim on the present.

The first chapter of this thesis considers how in spite of such attempts to bury the past, multiple pasts dance together, coalescing into a developing "now" of history. In it I analyze two series of photographs by Pia Arke: a selection of annotated photographs from Thule, Northwest Greenland and a small group of images taken with a camera obscura. This chapter argues that Arke's photography stages an encounter between multiple pasts that reciprocally influence one another in order to frame the present as historical. The second chapter turns toward temporality to consider the many times that continue to meet within this present not only in a single moment of historical recognition, but as a long duration of performance. I explore this through several works in a series of events involving Jessie Kleemann and performance art collective Wolf in the Winter. Kleemann led and organized this series that took place in Nuuk and Sisimiut over two weeks. These performances insistently demarcate the present while simultaneously writing disparate historical, cultural and narrative references into the temporality of live performance. One of the first large-scale, international art projects of any kind to occur in Greenland, certainly Greenland's first multi-artist performance art event, and a transitional point in Kleemann's practice, this event has shockingly received no mention in Greenland's art history. The third chapter returns to Kleemann's performance described at the beginning of this introduction, as well as the installation by Pia Arke it references. In this chapter I argue that a performance of history does not insist on the absolute alterity of the past. To the contrary, this performance

stages a responsive encounter between past and present, in which both past and present participate. Throughout this thesis, but particularly in this chapter, I write dialogically with these performances, rather than understanding my interpretations as self-contained and distanced from them.

When Kleemann concluded her performance in Anchorage, she asked an audience member, “Do you think it’s over?” Although Kleemann was referring to the duration of her own performance, if recontextualized her question could just as well refer to the historical artwork her performance references. This offhand, but insightful question inspires my analysis. These performances metonymically evoke temporality and history, like presentation and representation, as two porous concepts that mutually signify one another. Relying on art history and performance studies, but also drawing from the fields of film and media studies, dance studies and queer theory, this thesis will carry out close analyses of individual artworks in order to show how these artist have enacted history as a durational process that attempts to stage a responsive encounter between the past and the present, both as subjects.

Chapter 1: Thule Farewell? Pia Arke's Dundas Photographs

1.1 Remains to Be Seen

Mudflats stretch from left to right, overlapping into the coastal sea ice that recedes into a high, foggy horizon. This simple panoramic photograph has been cropped into three uneven parts with no shared dimensions. Small paper clippings with the letters A, B and C have been pasted near the horizon line, and handwritten annotations along the frames identify the location: Bylot Sound, seen from Dundas at Thule, Northwest Greenland. Across sections of the frames the artist has written names of navigators and naval officers, dates of expeditions and citations drawn from the volume *The Place Names of North Greenland* – some are written quite clearly, others smudged off.²⁴ The smallest photograph in this group shows the only distinctive point in the landscape: a profile view of the flat-topped Mount Dundas that dominates the coast. The annotations surrounding this image from the frame are the only ones in the series that allude to a history of naming prior to colonization. The full annotation reads: “Umánaq. The Greenland name of Dundas Fjeld meaning the heartshaped (76 V. 97)”.²⁵ This first group within a series of photographs Pia Arke took in 1992 and '93 presents Thule as a vast, still landscape surrounded by near-illegible traces of the site's seemingly absent historical depth.²⁶

²⁴ Kuratorisk Aktion, 140-1. The frame annotations are all translated by Kuratorisk Aktion.

²⁵ Kuratorisk Aktion, 141.

²⁶ The eight photographs from Thule described in the first two sections of this chapter were exhibited as a series on at least two occasions – in 1996 during a solo exhibition at the Modern Museum in Stockholm, then in 2003 for Arke's mid-career retrospective. During the 2003 exhibition the frames and annotations were added. Arke seldom categorized her works into “series” or “groups,” and individual photographs from this series were exhibited on other occasions, so my designation here is purely for practical purposes. Each “group” of photographs should be understood as an individual artwork.

In addition to the information relayed in this group, a separate photograph hints at a more contemporary layer of geopolitics. The dark wings of two cargo planes remind us that Thule, among the most northerly inhabited sites in the world, is the site of a U.S. air base. Visible crease lines over the image show that this photograph had been folded four times before it was framed, and the rough rubbing on the right side suggest it has seen particularly strong wear.

The second group, comprised of four framed photographs, shows four angles of a dilapidated house. Most of the windows are boarded up. Garbage is scattered on the surrounding moss and a small pile of snow remains next to the threshold. The sterile, generic compositions echo the survey style of the first group, and the writing atop the frames subjects the house to taxonomic descriptions, if somewhat hesitant ones. Unlike the others, these excerpts are not drawn from official documents, but from a piece of prose. Along the first frame is written:

Let us say: the house, as an example, for instance, this chosen, excellent, quite special house; what it represents, and polar plain to the house and back again across the abandonment itself, set in motion by a pretended movement, a feint by which the image lays its membrane across its motif²⁷

Along the second frame, the writing adopts a more ethnographic tone:

The house minimally maintained by nature's own balsam of aridity and cold, stopped or braked in its process. Immobile. For days not a wind moves and the air is still inside the house. It is holding its breath or has already expired or both, from the most withheld ten-
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I might ask in turn: like this house, is the possibility of historical consciousness “holding its breath” in these photographs, or “has it already expired”? Their banal composition and subject matter seem to provide no avenue for a flash of realization to enter. The annotations, however,

²⁷ Kuratorisk Aktion, 144. The more poetic text inscribed on the frames of the second group was composed by Arke's brother, Erik Gant.

²⁸ Kuratorisk Aktion, 145.

eagerly offer up meaning by surrounding the images with discourses of colonization that frame the site. The text, added ten years after the photographs were taken, foregrounds the visual rhetoric of measurement and observation, but its content provides no novelty or critique that might foster a dialectical revelation. The pasts this writing reveals, characterized by aggressive naming and observation visibly absent from the site, only heighten the images' "abandonment."

The artist's own historical record does not help close the gap between the present and the fractured past. In their extensive research of Pia Arke's estate, research files and exhibition history, Kuratorisk Aktion uncovered an installation view from Arke's solo exhibition of this series at the Modern Museum in Stockholm that shows another panorama photograph of Mount Dundas, of which no negatives or prints exist. Like many other fragments of the artist's oeuvre, it is simply "lost."²⁹ Arke's far too early death likewise meant that much was left unsaid and incomplete, the end of her life as the end of her archive.

These practical limitations for the historian nevertheless complement the artist's research-based practice. Throughout her career Arke studied how the colonial archive both produces and bears the traces of fractures, strategic erasures and policing of truth, particularly within the naturalization of the colonial relationship that occurs in survey practices. Accompanying political and economic exercises of colonial power, the textual production of naming and mapmaking actively veils the hands that hold power over authorizing history and narrating the past.

The textual rendering of the site looms over the visible site like a shadow. As a visible sign on the margins of the photograph, the text articulates the invisible histories, power relations and affects that saturate the site. These textual renderings threaten to overpower the landscape

²⁹ Kuratorisk Aktion, 380.

itself, even as they echo the survey format's visual rhetoric, by performing a deeper history that seems lost in the photographs that provide few narrative clues. Extracting historical knowledge from the silence of landscape, text performs itself as a hermeneutic of the visual. By visualizing the site's invisible past, the imposition of text challenges the photograph as a vessel for meaning.

While the text makes a claim on Thule's historical record, the photograph claims to stand in for the site itself. The genre of landscape further thematizes the ideological truth claims of photography in that, as W.J.T. Mitchell has described, this pictorial strategy naturalizes a cultural image of the natural world as a space of unmediated authenticity beyond human subjectivity.³⁰ Seen as a process of production of identity and concealment of ideology, landscape becomes yet another avenue for the colonial to extend itself. In contrast to the inscription of Thule's history as a history of proper names, the landscape genre embeds the historical operation of conquest into the image of the natural world itself. Through the orders of visibility and invisibility in both text and image, the writing empties historical significance from the photographs at the same time that it offers them historical context, through both extractive and implanting operations.

While it may be tempting to read the text as the ghost of the past (or official history) that encroaches on the present of the photograph, both text and image make historical claims at the same time that they address the present. Although each is ghosted by absences, the historical frame returns to fill in the loss of historical identity in its photographic double, and the image of landscape reciprocates for the text. The text operates not as a sign of the past's alterity, but as a reciprocal double to the historically-rooted genre of landscape. Both text and image perform this operation of abandonment and return, and together they offer up Thule as knowable object. Yet

³⁰ W.J.T. Mitchell, "Imperial Landscape," in *Landscape and Power*, ed. W.J.T. Mitchell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 15.

because text and image merely reiterate one another, they fall silent in the project of forming historical consciousness that ruptures the chrononormative progress Benjamin addressed.

In this constellation of historical claims that does not necessarily deliver historical consciousness, Arke grapples with the ambivalence of the project of history itself, a quest for meaning that attempts to name the past while always bearing the danger of regenerating a chrononormative order of events. Perhaps signaling this ambivalence, Arke often attributed several titles to her artworks, as in the second group in this series, on different occasions titled *Imaginary Homelands*, *Ultima Thule* and *Dundas "The Old Thule"*. The second title returns to the origin of the Greek name "Thule" as a mythic location close to the sun, a name given to the region by Danish explorer Knud Rasmussen who first colonized Thule in 1909. "Dundas" reminds that when the former Thule Colony was abandoned to make way for the American air base, the settlement was renamed once again. Finally the first title, referring to an essay by Salman Rushdie, announces an ironic identification. This series depicts one of Arke's actual former homes, in one of several "homelands." As a child Arke travelled from place to place for her father's work as a telegraphist, one of those places being Thule, where the family lived from 1962-65. Yet as a Danish-East Greenlandic family working on the base, they were visitors.

The Danish-style house stands in contrast to the traditional turf dwellings of the Inughuit, the original inhabitants of Thule and a distinct people from West and East Greenlandic Inuit, with their own language and cultural practices. As Arke's brother Erik Gant writes, reflecting on his childhood in Thule, "I don't remember anything about military installations on our side of the bay, but instead the ruins of the Inughuit's houses watched from the peninsula's north side,

where us kids tumbled about in our exploration of the surroundings.”³¹ Their homes, however, are not only abandoned but entirely absent from Arke’s photographs as well as from the present Thule. If the text shadows the landscape as a ghostly, yet apprehendable, double of visible absence, the absent trace of the forced relocation of the Inughuit emerges as a proper specter. Both text and photograph, as technologies for crafting historical narrative, omit them. The only hint at their former presence is in the annotation “Umánaq. The Greenland name of Dundas Fjeld”, a note that already positions the “Greenland name” as secondary to the colonial. Still, this very absence re-performs their relocation, and so, creates a space for a silenced history to return.

Since 1953 Greenland was considered a Danish *amt* [municipality] with corresponding representation in the Danish parliament, after Greenlanders voted to end the territory’s colonial status in a 1951 referendum. Though national ambitions had existed in Greenland since the early twentieth century, desires for equality grew during the Second World War when Greenland temporarily withdrew from occupied Denmark and initiated bilateral agreements with the U.S. With the rise of the Cold War, U.S. interests in Greenland persisted, giving rise to what Gant calls a “cartographic doubleness” in Greenland’s geopolitics, a swing between “map and playing card” as the U.S. continues to affirm Danish sovereignty over Greenland, while U.S. military activity remains effectively unrestricted – the colonial power never without its military double.³²

The same year that Greenlanders voted to end the colonial era, as a condition of Denmark’s NATO membership the U.S. was granted permission to expand the Thule Air Base in

³¹ Erik Gant, “Fangere eller fangede?” *Hæfter for Gæstfrihed* 3 (2004): 108.

³² Erik Gant, “Grønlandskortet,” *Le Monde Diplomatique, Norwegian Edition*, 12 (2004), last accessed 17 August 2016, <http://www.lmd.no/2004/12/>. See also Erik Beukel, “The Greenland Issue – Sovereignty, Self-Determination and Dependence,” in *Phasing out the Colonial Status of Greenland, 1945-54*, ed. Erik Beukel et. al. (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2010), 59-60.

the high north.³³ In the summer of 1953 the local population of Inughuit received a message that they were required to move 150km north within days to make room for the expansion.³⁴ Two weeks later, the referendum came into effect and Greenland was no longer a colonial territory but a supposedly equal part of the Danish kingdom. The old colony, renamed Dundas, was re-appropriated for Danish and Greenlandic service workers, such as Arke's family, before their residences were integrated into the base in the 1980s and the settlement was again abandoned.

Thule has come to stand for Denmark's capitulations to the U.S. ever since an American B-52 bomber crashed into the sea ice off Greenland's northwest in 1968 with four hydrogen bombs onboard. The accident revealed that despite a ban on atomic weapons in Danish territory, Prime Minister H.C. Hansen had entered into agreements to allow such weapons to be stored in bunkers under Thule Air Base's long-range missile sites.³⁵ As an exception to national policy that only applied to the former colony, this incident underscored other forms of persistent legislative inequality in Greenland.³⁶ These are only two cases of coloniality extending into what official political discourse refers to (with unintended irony) as the "decolonial era."³⁷

As Gant notes, Thule is "an issue that won't go away."³⁸ Again this outpost has risen up in political debates. In September 2015, the service contract for the base was up for renewal.

³³ Lars Jensen, "Scandinavia: A Peripheral Center," *Kult* 6 (2009): 169.

³⁴ Aqqaluk Lyngé, *The Right to Return: Fifty Years of Struggle by Relocated Inughuit in Greenland* (Nuuk: Atuagkat, 2002), 17.

³⁵ See Jens Brøsted and Mads Fægteborg, *Thule. Fangerfolk og militæranlæg* (Copenhagen: Akademisk Forlag, 1985), 50-64.

³⁶ The most well-known being the so-called birthplace criterion that established different wages for Greenlanders and Danes working in Greenland, and also Greenland's entrance into the European Common Market along with Denmark despite 72% of Greenlanders voting no. Following the Home Rule legislation, Greenland withdrew from the European Economic Community in 1985, so far the only region ever to do so. See for example Aqqaluk Lyngé, "Det land ejes af folk, hvis vilje til livet er – vag!" [1970] in *Isuma. Synspunkt* (Nuuk: Atuagkat, 1997), 182-186.

³⁷ Jens Elo Rytter, "The Development of International Law Concerning Decolonisation and Self-Determination," in *Phasing out the Colonial Status of Greenland*, 106.

³⁸ Gant, "Fangere eller fangede?" 108.

Though Danish-Greenlandic conglomerate Greenland Contractors A/S had held it since 1971, in November of 2014 it was announced that the contract worth \$425 million would go to a shell company of American Exelis Services.³⁹ Greenlandic politicians condemned the decision as a failure of bilateral agreements stipulating that the contract must go to a Greenlandic or Danish company. Several closed-door meetings followed, to which the two MPs representing Greenland were not invited, and many have framed Danish officials' failure to consult with the Self Rule Government as another example of persistently asymmetrical power relations between Denmark and the former colony. Yet in the wake of the controversy Greenland's current Premier, Kim Kielsen representing the social democratic party Siumut, also hosted closed-door meetings that excluded members of minority parties. By bridging these diverse periods and political currents, Thule encapsulates historical dilemmas spanning the colonial, "decolonial" and home rule eras.

Whether Thule's insistent abandonments and returns, or the returns performed in this series of photographs, produce a dialectical image that disrupts chrononormative progress remains to be seen. As I will discuss in the remainder of this chapter, perhaps they do not offer historical consciousness, but instead articulate history as such a cycle of return and reiteration, populated by the related but distinct figures of specters, remains and shadows, as well as the embodiment of the photographer (and writer) who conjures them.

³⁹ For various media coverage following the case, see "Overblik: Sådan fik Exelis Services basekontrakten" *Sermitsiaq* 25. February 2015, last accessed 17 August 2016, <http://sermitsiaq.ag/overblik-fik-exelis-services-basekontrakten>.

1.2 “Looking Askance” at History

Though nowhere described in the annotations, the images or Arke’s own writing, the historical narrative of relocation presses itself into the scene precisely due to the images’ staging of emptiness and abandonment. To this effect the relocation reappears in a manner similar to certain discussions of the specter figure, the product of an unfinished mourning, a concept with roots in psychoanalytic theories of melancholia.⁴⁰ Contrasting the official history inscribed on the frame, this legacy remains unseen, though it structures the entire work, as the narrative counterpart to the extractive and implanting relationship to historical knowledge this work performs. The specter emerges as part of the past already within the present. Against attempts to know and name the past, the specter signals a part of the past that cannot be easily rendered into an object of analysis, nor does it engage with the historian as a reciprocating subject. The specter is that which, “no longer [belongs] to that which one thinks one knows by the name of knowledge.”⁴¹

To deal with haunting without exorcising or incorporating this persistent other becomes an ethical imperative, “to *do justice* or to *render justice* to the other as other,” to attend to otherness without consuming or disciplining it.⁴² This dimension of spectrality then allows for consideration of how power exercises initiated in the colonial era continue to impact political and historical discourse beyond this era’s dissolution. In contrast, as described in the introduction, certain voices in Greenlandic cultural discourse have taken to disavowing the colonial specter in an effort to affirm the agency of Greenlanders and combat stereotypes of victimhood that often follow discussions of the colonial. However, by declaring that this colonial past is not only fully

⁴⁰ Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York: Routledge, 1994), 6.

⁴¹ Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 5.

⁴² Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 32. Emphasis original.

past but irrelevant to the present, this historical discourse inadvertently returns to the colonial in order to negate it, a ritual return that itself reaffirms the colonial's claim on the present.

In contrast, Arke delved into the residue of the colonial era not in order to elevate a reified notion of cultural difference grounded in the past (a practice Pedersen and Thisted rightly critique), but to challenge the broader regimes of visibility/legibility and invisibility/silence that determine historical discourse. The specter that emerges within the photograph's claim on a distinct time as well as the text's claim on the historical past articulates the ambivalence of the historical project that the present-ist discourse preferred by Pedersen and Thisted, as well as the revisionist critique of Danish colonialism, often neglect. Rather than merely re-presenting a particular history lost to historiography, or worse, reproducing the "native" as lacking history, the specter calls into question all losses and absences that reside in the project of history.

If the specter emerges in spite of historical narratives, the *staging* that produces a ghostly effect could connect to what Jeffrey Batchen calls "looking askance." Batchen notes that documentary photographs depicting sites of trauma risk assuming the role of authoritative narrator, leaving viewers with the impression of receiving an unmediated history of past events.⁴³ Describing a method for photographing sites of historical trauma, he suggests stepping back from overdetermined images of violence by refusing to represent identifying signifiers that rely on a *doxa* of received knowledge and risk framing those legacies as fully past. "Looking askance" frames the historical material instead as an encounter in which the viewer actively participates.

⁴³ Geoffrey Batchen, "Looking Askance," In *Picturing Atrocity: Photography in Crisis*, ed. Geoffrey Batchen et al (London: Reaktion Books, 2012), 230.

Still, “looking askance” at Thule’s colonial history in these photographs runs the risk of reproducing conventions of colonial landscape that represent the “utopian fantasies” of empire.⁴⁴ Emptying the landscape of historical signifiers, seen within a continuum of landscape traditions, could potentially reproduce this imperial dream of the naturalization of colonial power within a ready-to-be-exploited *terra nullius*. But it is only possible to see the panorama photograph as an image of an eternal, empty landscape beyond history in light of the actual relocation. Likewise the annotations reveal that this is not a pure territory beyond history, but a site stratified with imperial claims that have not succeeded in burying the past. On one hand, Arke’s photographs hint at the limits of Batchen’s analysis by demonstrating that “looking askance” risks enacting the same operation of emptying that occurs in the production of colonial landscape. But in this case her use of this representational strategy strategically dramatizes the process of removing historical legacies, demonstrating the connection between colonial photography and colonial practice. Arke’s specific deployment of the strategy of “looking askance” discretely reenacts the historical displacement, without exorcising its ghostly return. As a historical method, this suggests a means for coming to know the past while remaining attuned to the past’s ambivalence.

As the inclusion of Arke’s former home in this series indicates, the biographical is just as wound up in this method as the geopolitical historiography evoked in the text, as Arke notes in another context: “I make the history of colonialism part of *my* history in the only way I know, namely by taking it personally.”⁴⁵ The colonial violence of dispossession has been evacuated from Thule’s landscape, and the trace of Arke’s personal history, her former home, has also

⁴⁴ Mitchell, 10.

⁴⁵ Pia Arke, *Stories from Scoresbysund: Photographs, Colonisation and Mapping*, second edition (Copenhagen: Pia Arke Selskabet and Kuratorisk Aktion, 2010), 13. Emphasis original.

begun to disintegrate. In a postcolonial twist, the building where Arke lived in the era of G60 politics prior to Greenlandic self-governance has become a ruin. As a point of reference not identifiable with any of Thule's master narratives, the remains of a deteriorating personal narrative start to speak with a historical voice that may not be their own, a sense heightened by the annotations around these photographs, for example:

se to the most relaxed entropy. Soundless, without a soundtrack or only with a soundtrack. If one hears voices, one may be sure that one is hearing voices, ethereal children's and adult voices from the past. Abandoned, not only by myself but by everyone, absolutely abandoned, expressing the essence of abandoned abandonment. And in all its immobility and all its stillness that⁴⁶

This annotation hints at the autobiographical ("children's and adult voices from the past"), while pointing to Dundas' multiple historical relocations – "everyone" has abandoned it. The annotator cannot seem to decide if the site is "without a soundtrack or only with a soundtrack," if the "voices" narration overdetermines the site or if this is a "soundless" illusion. This ambivalence seems unresolvable. It seems the personal, as a trace of the past that remains materially in the present, can articulate the themes of abandonment and return within the historical narrative itself. Though they evoke a ghostly effect, remains are not the same as ghosts. Derrida notes that the specter is foremost a revenant, a return of the seemingly departed.⁴⁷ Remains, in contrast, maintain residue liveness in presence, rather than absence. Like the method of "looking askance," remains present the spectral as an effect, in the same moment that they re-present the narrative of abandonment. Though these remains unambiguously persist in the present as signifiers for loss, by evoking the spectral they, like photography, speak beyond their death.

⁴⁶ Kuratorisk Aktion, 145.

⁴⁷ Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 5.

In their capacity to evoke the spectral, remains problematize the articulating structures of history, including those that attempt to make the ghost speak. Directing her attention to Derrida's use of *Hamlet* to illustrate the specter's capacity to see without being seen, Rebecca Schneider reminds that "the live body bearing the specter" also carries this capacity, realized when the audience collectively forgets the actor that transports the ghost across the stage.⁴⁸ Spectrality, then, can be staged, and this staging relies on the spectator completing the spectral effect.

Recorded material also participates in history's ritual returns. On the one hand, the citations along the frames perform their own claims on the photograph by articulating past acts of naming that, having been recorded as official history, exert pressure on the image. However, the location of the text on the margins of the photograph limits the weight of their claims, forcing the textual performance of history out of a position of unambiguous mastery. Historiography must then contend with the various historical claims made by the photograph, the depicted remains and their subsequent specters. The frame structures this re-articulation of official narrative, whereby Arke treats historical documents not entirely as authoritative sources, but as another form of remains, as the persisting traces of a past performance.

As the structure that bears these texts and reanimates them as remains, the frame could be compared to what Schneider calls "architectures of access," or "the physical aspect of books, bookcases, glass display cases, or even the request desk at an archive" that "place us in particular experiential relations to knowledge."⁴⁹ As Schneider observes, these architectures determine the conditions under which we receive knowledge, in turn impacting knowledge itself. The text has

⁴⁸ Rebecca Schneider, *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 110.

⁴⁹ Schneider, 104.

been ripped from an encyclopedic volume, rewritten onto an architecture that is per definition marginal. Receiving this history of proper names at the ends of a photograph limits the historical weight of the text while moving beyond a simplistic visual-textual binary. While official historical narrative claims to fully determine the site, reenacting the conquest scenario as “a paradigmatic system of visibility” that “also assures invisibility,”⁵⁰ the text-as-remains of history acts on the photograph as fragments of a larger, absent structure of discursive articulation. Inasmuch as the frame also delimits the proper field of the aesthetic object through the use of text that signals (historical) discourse, this series evokes Derrida’s reflections on the *parergon*, a discursive script that frames the production of artistic meaning while claiming to operate outside of that meaning.⁵¹ Yet while this script demarcates the photograph’s proper field, the text has been fragmented, scrawled roughly, and in places smudged off. In other words, the text-as-remains suggests that the authoritative “whole” of the historical corpus has started to disappear.

While these specific frames perform the text-as-remains, more generally frames perform a photograph’s singularity, its separation from the progressive present of its depicted site, and the myth of its aesthetic and temporal autonomy. In addition to calling into question any acts of framing that claim a historical truth by designating something else as extrinsic or past, Arke’s frames throw the identity of the artworks into question. Is it still possible to call these “photographs” when the “work” can no longer be so neatly divided into separate textual and visual acts? By shuffling between text and image, the live and the archival, and between remains and specters that fragment both past and present, these works reposition history as a search for

⁵⁰ Taylor, 54.

⁵¹ Jacques Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*, trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Ian McLeod (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 36.

legibility that never fully realizes itself. This raises the questions of what role the camera holds within this unstable, never fully developed performance of history, and how to locate the photographer in the dark chamber of historical development.

1.3 Arke in the Arkhé

While the photographs, by way of their medium, inherit privileged connotations of exposing a lost past, the annotations cast doubt on photography's capacity to faithfully represent by revealing elements of Thule's historical depth that exceed the photographs' present. If the text drawn from official history instills doubt because its presence suggests an absence within the photograph itself, this long historical narrative then positions the photograph's individual moment as its negative. Yet if, as Benjamin suggests, "the individual moment" can reveal "the crystal of the total event," then the allegedly-single moment of the photograph reverses official history's chrononormative order as announced in the text.⁵²

With this series Arke stages certain dilemmas concerning the ontology of photography. On one hand, Arke's textual manipulation suggests that the photograph lacks a capacity to narrate itself, requiring labels or annotations to define it. But a photograph is not merely a scene lacking a script – the sense of emptiness and abandonment coded into the photographs' compositions points to absences also within the textual narrative. Through Arke's compositions as well as her textual manipulations, she establishes a scenario of loss in which the photograph's individual moment and the long historical narrative both participate. Unlike Benjamin's

⁵² Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 461.

dialectical image, the text and image do not come together to form a constellation of understanding. Instead, they articulate the absence of historical understanding.

Additionally, Arke's photography often addresses how the photographer's embodiment underwrites the medium's claims to history and time, as the silent trace of autobiography in this series exemplifies (silent because neither the annotations, titles nor the images securely identify Thule as *Arke's* former home, though in fact it is). Looking at a photograph that "looks askance" then reanimates the photographer's "perspectival looking" that she defers onto the camera, a deferral that positions the photograph as a representation of the photographer's absent body.⁵³

Nowhere in the artist's oeuvre is this confluence of history, temporality and the shadow of embodiment more prominent than in her work with a classical camera obscura of her own design. Its measurements were based off of her own body's proportions, and it was large enough for the artist to stand or lie inside. Indeed, Arke would place herself inside the camera during the exposure time, which could be between fifteen minutes and several hours, and as a result it produced widely unstable images. She travelled with this camera to several sites in Denmark and to another former home-site at Nuugaarsuk, near Narsaq, South Greenland. In an interview Arke reflected on the relationship between self, site and image that unfolded within the camera:

I sat inside the camera-house and saw the landscape of my whole childhood stand on its head in there on all sides of the box. The fifteen minutes it took to expose the image and the developing process mean that there are many "flaws" in the final image, a type of structure where the twenty-five years that had passed since I lived there were in a way laid out in the image.⁵⁴

⁵³ Amelia Jones, "The "Eternal Return": Self-Portrait Photography as a Technology of Embodiment," *Signs* 27:4 (2002): 949.

⁵⁴ Synne Rifbjerg, "Det mørke kammer: Interview med Pia Arke," *Weekendavisen*, 29 April 1999.

Here Arke describes how the camera obscura presented to her the landscape of her childhood, and how the re-presented photograph exposed the sense of incompleteness underlying her own relation to a past home. Due to the volatile shifts in light during the long exposure time, the fixed images produced with this device lack the visual stability typical to still landscape photography. Because of these many “flaws” – areas of over- or underexposure, a hazy, blurred background resulting from shifting sky and weather conditions – the photograph can never achieve a secure identity. Like Arke’s own relation to her former home, the photograph remains haunted by absence and illegibility. In this sense, I suggest that the camera obscura underlies all of Arke’s projects that involve shadows and historical silences, understanding this apparatus, as Erik Gant has so pointedly written, as part of “the ‘Arke’ typical motif.”⁵⁵

A technology of shadows, the camera obscura dramatizes historical developments around the relationship between visibility and knowledge through the struggle between representation and the continuously transforming image generated in the dark chamber. As Jonathan Crary has analyzed in his genealogical study of vision technologies, in the eighteenth century this apparatus became the privileged metaphor for vision as a process of internalization and individuation. By separating a mobile viewer from the viewed, the camera reaffirmed an ascendant subject-effect characterized by the division of the senses and the separation of the autonomous knower from the known.⁵⁶ Significantly, the camera obscura reaches these effects by shrouding the body of the observer, which Crary claims necessarily “decorporealize[s] vision.”⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Erik Gant, “Nuugaarsuk: The ‘Arke’ typical Motif,” in *Tupilakosaurus*, 253.

⁵⁶ Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992) 60.

⁵⁷ Crary, 39.

The camera obscura carried this rational historiographic baggage, but in an unruly form, as the apparatus itself could not stop the image. It subsequently lost its status as a model for the rationalization of perception once more obedient vision technologies developed in the nineteenth century.⁵⁸ Like their medium, the camera's images could also be unruly and dangerous. As Jill Casid observes, literary accounts contemporary to Crary's sources warn of the device's potential to deceive, to produce overwhelming affective responses in the viewer or even reveal demonic images.⁵⁹ As a prototype for the deliberately deceptive magic lantern rather than its opposite, the camera obscura thus performed the contradictory operations of projecting the fortress ego of modernity and conjuring past fantasies the device was thought to repress.⁶⁰ Kaja Silverman further characterizes the camera obscura as an agency in its own right, drawing from antique and early modern writers who describe the device as a *receiver* of images passing through its aperture, rather than their producer, a role also extended to the camera's shrouded viewer.⁶¹ If the eighteenth century camera obscura produced an autonomous, individuated subject, these earlier accounts suggest the device also holds the potential to relocate the viewer as object to the camera's images.

Silverman situates the camera obscura as a precursor to photography not because of its relation to opticality – this is a false equivalence Crary also critiques – but because, like photography, it creates a scene where another agency “self-develop[s],” analogizing the world rather than reproducing it: her emphasis on the “continuous flow of mobile and evanescent

⁵⁸ Crary, 32.

⁵⁹ Jill Casid, *Scenes of Projection: Recasting the Enlightenment Subject* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 48.

⁶⁰ Casid, *Scenes of Projection*, 7.

⁶¹ Kaja Silverman, *The Miracle of Analogy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015), 15.

images” recasts the image and the viewer as “spatially as well as temporally co-present.”⁶² This is similar to Arke’s use of the device, where the continuously unfolding image requires the viewer to relinquish much of her control over the final photograph. Unlike most other “receivers,” Arke used the camera obscura’s own light to expose photosensitive film while she also stood within the camera itself. She thus “received” the camera’s self-presenting image while also deliberately exposing this image, necessarily resulting in “flawed” photographs. This does not simply reflect a loss of agency. I argue Arke’s camera obscura creates the conditions for seeking reciprocity between the artist’s agency and embodiment, the self-presenting image, and photography’s mediation of time and space.⁶³

No longer a stable site from which to observe the world, the camera obscura’s “now” requires that the viewer relate to the developing image in a similar way to Walter Benjamin’s angel of history, waiting intently for a fleeting disclosure to potentially take place.⁶⁴ In Arke’s case, however, the camera obscura’s unstable images disclosed not just a past, but the “now” that had developed in “the twenty-five years that had passed” – in other words, a historical relationship to the present, rather than the past.

If the photograph presents as well as represents the world, it seems appropriate to suggest that Arke’s camera obscura does the same for the artist’s body. The camera operated as a proxy both for vision and corporeal presence, a second body for the photographer. Arke herself emphasizes an affective affiliation with the camera not only as a site from which to observe the

⁶² Silverman, 14.

⁶³ Given the centrality of vision to camera obscura discourses, Silverman’s brilliant study understandably does not focus on the characteristics of embodiment and temporality within the dark chamber. They are, however, central to Arke’s anachronistic use of the apparatus, which leads me to offer some more general observations.

⁶⁴ Benjamin, “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” 257-8.

world, but as a part of herself. Arke offered the following words in a speech to “inaugurate” her camera obscura:

By having created the instrument myself, built it with my own hands, we have become attached to one another. By building the apparatus my own size, so I can be inside it, I can become one with it body and soul. In my choice of the camera obscura to take pictures lies the discovery of a sense of belonging both with the camera and with the places where I take the pictures. It is difficult to explain. But through that belongingness with the ‘apparatus,’ I can connect myself to the places I capture in a way that is more the places’ than mine.⁶⁵

Whereas Arke elsewhere describes the camera obscura’s images as having an affinity to her own sense of identity and historical consciousness, here she also describes a reciprocal relationship to the device itself. The artist’s body then enters the photograph not only through the specter of her perspective deferred onto the images – for the photographs taken with her camera obscura, the artist’s body structures the very conditions of mediation. The apparatus, the image and the body all participate in rendering the present historical through the encounters she describes.

Arke further foregrounded the body’s ability to disrupt divisions between visibility and invisibility by intervening in the camera’s exposure. In a series of three photographs taken in Helsingør, Denmark, the artist held up her arms from within the camera and partly cast her shadow over the film. An index of the body’s absence, the shadow is nevertheless directly connected to its presence, formed in the same moment that light renders the body visible – a dense body must be present and exposed to light in order to cast the shadow, the body’s virtual negative. The shadow reminds us of the body’s own capacity to index itself within the world, as shadows move together with their dense, fleshy bodies, contingent upon the body’s continued exposure in a developing “now.”

⁶⁵ Pia Arke, speech for the inauguration her camera obscura at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, Copenhagen, Tuesday, May 29, 11 A.M., 1990, in *Tupilakosaurus*, 215. Translated by Kuratorisk Aktion.

These shadows also form a direct connection to the more personal resonances of the camera's images. Within the camera obscura, the artist found herself in a condition of shadowy visibility-and-invisibility similar to the emerging image, her body shrouded in shadows while the camera-as-proxy for the body produced light. As Arke's writing suggests, the historical condition of the present emerges in the simultaneity of disclosure and reception of the image. By evoking simultaneous absence and presence *phenomenally*, the shadow mediates between affective and virtual perceptions by involving the body as a participant.

This small series of photographs with seemingly no historical, autobiographical or "Greenlandic" signifiers, that Arke never expanded on, could easily be ignored, considered a mere experiment, but I believe the theme of shadow helps trace some of the key concerns of her practice as well as the concept of history as performance. By confusing the orders of illumination and darkness, reveal and concealment, they trouble the regimes of legibility and visibility that govern chrononormative history. Unlike the specter, the non-metaphoric shadow – as a mode of representation that is also always in continual, "self-developing" presentation – requires the body's *simultaneous* visibility and invisibility. This leads me to believe that shadows occupy a slightly different place in Arke's performance of history compared to specters and remains.

While Derrida notes that the specter has some relation to phenomenality, this is not its primary field. Additionally, the specter eludes visibility *and* invisibility, referring to an absent body without representing it.⁶⁶ Shadows are unambiguously visible images representing an *also* visible and dense body, whose movements they mirror. They depict in virtual form an image of absence corresponding to a present, corporeal entity. This undoubtedly assigns shadows a limited

⁶⁶ Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 5.

place in discussions of history and temporality, but with particular resonance for the affective movements of bodies within these. The affective role of shadow images finds its core example in first century Roman writer Pliny the Elder, who describes how a Corinthian woman drew an outline of her departing lover's shadow.⁶⁷ The cast shadow, the foundation for representational practice, represents an erotic longing. Contra this lineage, in ethnographic contexts photography has accrued connotations of violent exposure that stands in for the production of truth by official regimes of representation, which, as Hito Steyerl observes, reproduce the capacity of power to define what is visible and to define making-visible as the exposure of truth.⁶⁸ Casting a shadow over an overexposed image could then be understood as a protective act of care.⁶⁹

Some art historians have framed shadows as the paradigmatic mimetic images that mark a fundamental difference between image and body.⁷⁰ But like the staging of spectrality, shadows require a body to animate them, live, and in turn shadows provide dimension and depth that color those bodies' own liveness. Arke's camera obscura reveals images that are phenomenal from the start, the result of modes of representation *and* presentation. In these photographs the body reveals itself as medium, image and receiver through simultaneous representation, presentation and mediation that I suggest characterize her general approach to photography and history.

Arke's camera obscura thus carries an archive of representations, from photography to painting, film and theater. The aperture receives these resonances and expands the exposed

⁶⁷ Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, Book XXXV, trans. H. Rackman (Cambridge, MA: Loeb Classical Library, 1952), 43.

⁶⁸ Hito Steyerl, "The Violence of Images: Documentarism and Documentality," in *Concerning War: A Critical Reader in Contemporary Art*, ed. Maria Hlavajova and Jill Winder (Utrecht: BAK, basis voor actuele kunst, 2010), 219.

⁶⁹ Mathias Danbolt offers one such example: "The Trouble with Straight Time: Disruptive Anachronisms in Pauline Boudry and Renate Lorenz's N.O. Body," in *Performing Archives/Archives of Performance*, ed. Gunhild Borggreen and Rune Gade (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanums Forlag, 2013), 461.

⁷⁰ Hans Belting, *An Anthropology of Images: Picture, Medium, Body*, trans. Thomas Dunlap (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2014), 131. As Belting notes, references to shadow as metaphor for artifice or the afterlife abound in antique and early modern writing. A more substantial genealogy of shadows would have to account for these.

image into a living environment, reconfiguring the external world as a transforming experience of light and shadow.⁷¹ The image simultaneously presents and represents itself in a present dense with histories and memories. Similarly, the shadow signals an absence that is not an afterimage or a specter, but a negative of the visual that forms at the same moment the image emerges. A device that occults just as much as it reveals, the camera obscura operates between visibility and invisibility, performance and object, and between live and arrested images, creating room for a history that always-already both reiterates itself and produces its images anew.

To draw out the role of notions of archive to a performance of history, I must turn to the *space* of the archive. In Derrida's etymological notes on the word "archive," he observes that the origins of the word announce its own authority to name origins: "*Arkhé*, we recall, names at once the *commencement* and the *commandment*."⁷² Another Greek word that develops from this root further characterizes this commencement of authority – "*arkheion*" refers to the residence of a ruler. The archive, as Derrida suggests, assumes its authority to name history through its status as the location of authority, the place where authority is gathered.⁷³ Each act of writing reiterates this authority by marshalling signs into meaningful configurations, writing as the "domiciliation" of meaning. The annotations that project traces of an absent official narrative would seem to provide an excellent example of writing as the location of an unseen observer "who therefore

⁷¹ This partly hints at what Jonathan Walley terms paracinema, describing 1970s film practices that emphasize the cinematic experience as effects of light and time, without essentializing these effects by seeing them exclusively as products of the cinematic projection apparatus. Jonathan Walley, "The Material of Film and the Idea of Cinema: Contrasting Practices in Sixties and Seventies Avant-Garde Film," *October* 103 (2003): 15-30.

⁷² Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 1. Emphasis original.

⁷³ Derrida, *Archive Fever*, 2-3.

makes the law when I am blind, blind by situation,” as Derrida writes elsewhere.⁷⁴ As this suggests, the archive’s authority enacts itself as another form of spectrality, for the unseen authority “leaves nothing of its own behind.”⁷⁵ The archive as a technology of memory thus depends on repression, the commencement of the archive as inseparable from its destruction.

In her analysis of Derrida’s writings, Diana Taylor has argued that the insistent return to textual models for analyzing history is “an act of writing that stages its own practice of erasure and foreclosure” by spiriting away the violent imposition of logocentric worldviews that prop up the archive’s unseen authority.⁷⁶ Arke’s writing likewise stages the forgetting of colonial violence by reiterating a legacy of colonial naming practices that extract meaning from the image in a proto-imperial dynamic. Yet the unsteady handwriting reminds that these are citations from official documents, and not only copies, but fragments. These extractions of official history are suddenly placed outside of the archive’s domicile in a semi-illegible, incomplete manner that understands them less as authoritative sources than as the remains of a performance of history.

While the frame conventionally marks the end of an image’s legibility, Arke contests this boundary by annotating the images from the margins. As text that reveals additional archives that have indexed this site, Arke’s writing signals how history relies on citationality and performance. With these annotations she introduces a long duration of history to the allegedly singular moments of the photographs. The annotations, which refute the sense of timelessness that often accompanies landscape images, write the photographs’ present into a durational history by signaling the colonial past that continues to implicate that present. The absences (of historical

⁷⁴ Jacques Derrida, “Spectrographies,” in Jacques Derrida and Bernard Stiegler, *Echographies of Television: Filmed Interviews*, trans. Jennifer Bajorek (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2002), 121.

⁷⁵ Derrida, *Archive Fever*, 11.

⁷⁶ Taylor, 25.

consciousness, historical signifiers, memory, inhabitants) within the images themselves do not only mark the limitations of history – they participate in forming another historical time. Rather than merely signifying loss, these absences point to the diverse, often fractured or incomplete ways the past returns to and remains in the present both through representation – in the return of seemingly past narratives of displacement – and presentation – in that the works present anew the process of displacement and return.

Arke's camera obscura introduced this "unstoppable development," to borrow Silverman's elegant phrasing, through which she encountered the world as both continuous projection and disclosure. As Gant aptly writes, Arke's camera obscura images are "unfinished and maybe unfinishable,"⁷⁷ a formulation that also summarizes a larger camera obscura model of time and space within which image, body, self and apparatus of history synthesize. Contrasting appeals to the purely indexical or the purely temporal, this model resonates with Mary Ann Doane's theorization of cinema as the indexing of temporality itself.⁷⁸ Rather than fully representing a continuous reality, as a mode of perceiving temporality cinema mobilizes a continuum of representations that illusionistically present themselves anew in real-time.

Arke's camera obscura photographs reconstitute an impression of time at the expense of representation. Though they are all single, still images, the formal "flaws" in the partly overexposed, shadowy images attest to the long duration of their exposure. In film, the distinct

⁷⁷ Gant, "Nuugaarsuk: The 'Arke'typical Motif," 254.

⁷⁸ As Doane describes, the film medium creates the perception of temporal progression as an effect of its simultaneous mediating and storage capacities. In the narrative time constructed by the cutting and arranging of photographic indexes, the medium presents an impression of the movements of temporality as such, informed through shifts between perception, index and assemblage. Notably, to describe the emergence of this cinematic mode of perceiving time Doane initially turns not to early film, but to the sequential photography of Étienne Jules-Marey and the photography criticism of Siegfried Kracauer. Mary Ann Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time: Modernity, Contingency, the Archive* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 29-32.

photographic indexes collide in the present to produce a *new* time-image of past and present, whereas in Arke's camera obscura photographs the distinct moments of their fifteen minute exposure layer atop one another and produce a thick, dense still image. Similarly, in the Dundas photographs, her annotations implicate the images' individual moments in the long duration of Thule's historical narrative. Through the "flaws" produced when the camera obscura's images presented themselves, or the absences within the Dundas photographs that the annotations emphasize, the photographs suggest the larger movements of history and of Arke's own historical relation to Greenland. This further reflects Walter Benjamin's approach to history as a process wherein the past re-forms itself in the present. Benjamin also invokes a cinematic model to describe this developing historical present:

The first stage in this undertaking [the perceptibility of history] will be to carry over the principle of montage into history. That is, to assemble large-scale constructions out of the smallest and most precisely cut components. Indeed, to discover in the analysis of the small individual moment the crystal of the total event. And therefore, to break with vulgar historical naturalism. To grasp the construction of history as such.⁷⁹

Encountering the arrangements of pasts that form, re-form and exist within the present then "leads the past to bring the present into a critical state."⁸⁰ Benjamin rejects historicism's attempts to re-present a full continuum of the past. Benjamin instead suggests that historians produce history by bringing together separate, historically contingent moments. Establishing new relations between present and past, the historian produces a historical consciousness that was impossible to grasp in the past's own time. As when Arke described witnessing, in the camera obscura's continuous development as well as in its "flawed" photographs, "the twenty-five years

⁷⁹ Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 461.

⁸⁰ Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 471.

that had passed” since she last lived at Nuugaarsuk, this historical consciousness synthesizes perception, presentation and representation into a time-image of history.

Though still, these are unstable images that represent a compound of many moments. The time of memory, and the exposure time that the body witnesses inside the camera, create the conditions for tapping into a historical time that is at once diachronic (resulting from progressive exposure) and synchronic (as all moments in the buildup coexist in the present). Slightly distinct from Benjamin’s approach, in Arke’s camera obscura photographs the “individual moments” that come together to form the image have been layered atop one another into a single long exposure, not cut and arranged but fused into a long developing present. The text and image in the Dundas photographs do not bring about a new historical understanding, but reiterate one another to reveal their co-participation in a performance of history. They reveal “the construction of history as such,” but realizing the process by which history occurs cannot always promise a critical state.

As the camera obscura images and the Dundas series exemplify, none of Arke’s photographs are stable. They demonstrate how photographs participate in a longer duration beyond their indexical singularity. In these images Arke produces a new temporality of historical time formed by the residual liveness of ghosts, remains and shadows. Like the shadow her photography reveals in the very same moment that it conceals. Like the writing along the frame her images both evacuate and contain historical meaning in a continuous performance.

As with Arke’s return to an “imaginary homeland,” no return assures knowledge of the past. With the annotations she turns official history into performance remains, as writing that signals its own incompleteness in the same moment that it renders other details legible. Remains problematize the distinction between live and archival, the specter transgresses past and present, and the shadow foregrounds all of these concerns in phenomenality and embodiment, reminding

of the persistent intertwining of representation with presentation. While the specter is the past returning to the present, and remains are the fragmented or abandoned past that never left the present, the shadow is the present's coeval double. The shadow is not an afterimage, but a "now" image that signals simultaneity through an image of absence.

In this light, it becomes uncertain if what is revealed is the result of a flash of dialectical recognition or the light of projection. This ambivalence is unresolvable in the concept of history Arke's works probe, and it is precisely that ambivalence that enlivens her exercises. This shadow history, always continuously unfolding while also returning to itself in representation, creates avenues for participation in images of the past that aspire to, if impossibly, reciprocity.

Chapter 2: A Walk in the Mountains: Jessie Kleemann and Wolf in the

Winter

The body of work that comes from the hand is no less than a piece of performance.

–Jessie Kleemann, Untitled catalogue essay in *Pathway – Polku*

2.1 Now and Again

A woman sways very low to the floor, back and forth as sounds of waves or wind or creaking icebergs fill the dark theater. A blue glow bleeds across the floor and onto the woman's enormous white anorak – her neck is hunched and her face is completely obscured. The light flickers and shifts, and her hands move tenderly towards her hood, as if all of her movements stem from her fingertips, which pull her hands and arms along in a slow drift. She hovers below a screen, the light of projection is her source of illumination.

The video above fades in and out of scenes from an icefield. A slow dissolve layers over this image a close-up shot of a hand writing, as if her writing falls over the icebergs, melting them. The hand assumes the same blue luminescence of the ice before it dissolves into a scene of rapid flowing water, which fades to a shot of a woman's eyes. She covers her face with soot, and an insert shot reveals a small fire. She molds her face with the ash, following the high arch of her eyebrows, and her eyelids part, as if her fingers have awakened her. Dissolve again into the ice.

All the while sound flows just as evanescently, from echoes of water, wind and fire into a synthesis of musical tones – an *ajaajjaa* song, a shakuhachi flute solo, a pulsing electronic tick.

In another sequence, a woman's voice reads poetry aloud:

Tarnivit iluneri qillarissut – din sjæls skinnende iskrystaller – isivit ullorissatut
qinngorneri – dine øjnes glitrende stjerner – iliuitsivit qernereri – dine handlingers

mørke – illarnivit qalipaatiginneri – din latters farverigdom – inuunerit naasussatut ippoq
– dit liv er som et blomsterfrø.⁸¹

[Your soul's shining ice crystals / your eyes' glittering stars / your actions' darkness /
your laughter's richness of color / your life is like a seed.]

As the video fades away and the center spotlight comes up, she rises. She pivots and twists, her arms outstretched as she continues to examine her hands, before gradually pulling down her coat to reveal a bouquet of long-stemmed roses heaped over her back. As she removes the coat we see she bears the flowers in the hood of a white *amaat*, a coat used to carry infant children. She tenderly caresses them, running her fingers through them as if they were a delicate fur. In a final gesture she hands the roses to the audience, one by one.

Jessie Kleemann performed this untitled work on 2 May, 2003 at Katuaq Culture Centre in Greenland's capital, Nuuk, the first in a series of solo performances that evening as well as the first in two weeks of performances. Jessie Kleemann had invited the pan-European performance collective Wolf in the Winter, with whom she had collaborated in the past, to travel to Greenland and perform a series of individual and collective actions.⁸² In addition to this evening's events, they performed collectively at Katuaq two days later. In the following week they travelled to Sisimiut where they again performed individually, using a schoolroom as their makeshift theater, before journeying to the abandoned island settlement of Assaqtuaq, where they performed as a group for a small assembly of locals from Sisimiut and nearby settlements.

⁸¹ The poem is printed in Jessie Kleemann, *Tallat. Digte. Poems* (Copenhagen: Fisker & Schou, 1997), 14 [Greenlandic], 48 [Danish]. This English translation from Danish is my own.

⁸² Wolf in the Winter was co-founded by Brian Catling and Anet van de Elzen in 2001. The other artists composing the collective are Denys Blacker, Kirsten Norrie, Ralf Wendt and Aaron Williamson. A number of "guest wolves" collaborate with them less frequently or only once, in this case Jessie Kleemann and Singaporean artist Jason Lim.

The only unifying factor of the group is that, in their individual practices, each artist typically performs alone.⁸³ Lone wolves gather rarely, as they describe in the prologue to the film that documents their performances in Greenland: “In medieval Europe, January and February were called the season of the Wolf. The cold would drive them from the sanctum of the forest into the townships to forage for food and shelter. We a group of solo performance artists have taken their name, coming together in different places to make a pact.”⁸⁴ Rather than acting out a collective agenda, their collective performances unfold as multiple responsive encounters, weaving in and out of cohesion and disjointment. Individuals bring their own motifs, interests or choreographies into play to engage with their environment and one another through multiple simultaneous scenes that converge and melt away, moving over a relational topography.

As the opening piece in *Wolf in the Winter*'s performance art series, the first of its kind in Greenland, Kleemann's lingering movements evoke certain questions of commencement, liveness and return. In her artist monograph *Qivittoq*, Kleemann provides this brief description of the performance's first minutes: “I dance right down on the floor like a cliff of ice. I flow.”⁸⁵ Moving as an ice cliff below a moving image of ice, her performance's duration unfolds under the mediated liveness of video, which almost turns her *amaat* into an extension of the screen. For these first minutes, the live body and the projected body of ice and sea relate as feedback.

Together they insistently demarcate the present in a manner that aligns with concerns guiding

⁸³ As the following sentences describe, their identity and methods slightly contrast with the happenings of the 1960s and '70s, which were often (though not always) loosely identified under a group vision or the dominant role of one individual. In attempting to perform collectively as autonomous individuals, their practice compares more with the similarly transnational performance collective Black Market International.

⁸⁴ Sarah Simbelt, *The Wolf in the Winter: Greenland Gathering*, 2004, video, 59 minutes. My descriptions of the performances discussed in this chapter are also drawn from this film.

⁸⁵ Kleemann, *Qivittoq*, 67.

much performance art and video practice since the 1960s and '70s, which often sought to eliminate the normative roles of a temporally flexible viewer and a fixed, eternal artwork.⁸⁶

Video technology itself radically temporalizes its images and challenges traditional historiographic models, by recording time in a storage device that must always re-create that time-image anew. As Ina Blom notes, “unlike the stable photochemical imprint of film and photography, videotape governs a flow of signals that are always live and that may be modified at any moment.”⁸⁷ While analog video represents recorded time, within the storage medium its images do not exist as images, but rather as a chain of electromagnetic signals that when read generate beams of light on a screen. This, coupled with the popular belief in television technology’s invention of live image transmission, furnishes video with a cultural identity synonymous with liveness, even when it does not deploy live televisual transmission.⁸⁸

Video Poem (2001), the video projected during Kleemann’s performance, is a prerecorded, single channel work with its own narrative duration not produced for this performance. Neither is it a primary component of the performance.⁸⁹ While through her use of video Kleemann adopts a strategic liveness related to video’s own temporalizing conditions, she also distinguishes the performance from early video art’s fascination with signaletic time. By the

⁸⁶ Anne M. Wagner, “Performance, Video, and the Rhetoric of Presence,” *October* 91 (2000): 69. While Wagner importantly observes that video and performance artists of this era used their media to actively *produce* the present by implicating the viewer in what she sees as these media’s solipsistic mirroring, her analysis verges on the derogatory. And as will be described in this chapter, Kleemann’s performances and videos are by no means exclusively or even primarily understood as mirror-media.

⁸⁷ Ina Blom, “The Autobiography of Video: Outline for a Revisionist Account of Early Video Art,” *Critical Inquiry* 39:2 (2013): 280.

⁸⁸ David Antin, “Video: The Distinctive Features of the Medium,” in *Video Culture. A Critical Investigation*, ed. John G. Hanhardt (New York: Visual Studies Workshop Press, 1986), 156-157.

⁸⁹ As Jessie Kleemann has described to me in multiple discussions, most often her use of sound and video in performances is practical, as a way to build a sense of occasion and focus for the first minutes, followed by silence. But this also signals how moving image and sound *produce* a sense of liveness over and *in addition to* the also live, performing body, which leaves me thinking that, however peripheral this suggestion is to the artist’s intentions, her use of video draws out certain dilemmas of temporality, citationality, difference and sameness.

2000s video art had become so institutionalized, increasingly divorced from medium-specific effects and further overlapping with film, that beliefs in the medium's "newness" seemed like yet another formalist myth. Today, the frame of "liveness" ascribed to video cannot be divorced from the ever-expanding economies of experience and attention governing art institutions.

From the start, liveness in this performance is staged. As one medium of liveness (video) layers itself over another (the body in performance), the folds and shadows of this performance's "now" suggest that its present is not only present. On one level, the video emphasizes the performance's "liveness," while also projecting another experience of liveness over and above the live performance, creating the effect of a thick, non-singular present. At the same time, video's liveness-effect comes attached to a stream of pre-recorded images. Likewise, through her use of props and choreographic movements drawn from Greenlandic cultural heritage, Kleemann draws on the past, while insisting that these cultural-historical references should be experienced as already within the present. In another context Kleemann notes that her involvement with live art as well as with text stems from an explicit desire to reject past-centric discourses on Greenlandic culture, a desire to move "away from the romantic," in the sense of an overly laudatory, sentimental and at times uncritical notion of cultural uniqueness. Instead, she "frame[s] it [her practice] in the present time, because it's as if it has gone once the text has been written and the actions stressed."⁹⁰ In contrast to nationalistic investments in objects drawn from

⁹⁰ Interview, Copenhagen, 1 December 2015. Kleemann was referring to her solo exhibition at Katuaq Culture Centre in February, 2015. While at first glance this statement seems to echo discussions in performance studies that elevate disappearance, it should instead be considered as a specific, politically-invested strategy in light of how nationalist as well as colonialist discourses on cultural heritage frame projects concerning cultural memory as salvage ethnography. This framing, which sees cultural expressions as part of the past, contrasts Kleemann's approach, which emphasizes how cultural memory unfolds and persists in the present, echoing instead Diana Taylor's theorizing of cultural memory as always "never for the first time, never for the last time." Taylor, 58.

cultural heritage, such as the *amaat* she wears in this performance, Kleemann insistently frames her use of these objects within the present, often by deliberately transforming their meaning.⁹¹

Kleemann evokes cultural memory as a spectrum of past performances that remain in the present, and that also transport other temporalities in and out of the present. I argue that through her fluid *presentational* movements that simultaneously *re-present* an object of cultural heritage, she signals the presence of multiple “nows” comingling in this present. She simultaneously engages multiple, qualitatively distinct modes of mediating the present – the live body in performance, the technological effects of video and a repertoire of cultural heritage that presents references to a cultural past as part of the present – each of which slips out of its primary field to impact the entire performance. If the shadow is the simultaneous double of the now, this performance sets many other simultaneous “nows” into motion: body and shadow, video and light bleed, sounds and their resonance, a historical present demarcated by performance and re-presented cultural memory. I argue that when Kleemann engages these many doubles simultaneously, she demonstrates how both past and present delink from a distinct chrononormative lodging by resonating into new forms.

2.2 The Repertoire’s Resonance

In spite of its choreographed affinity with this performance, *Video Poem* is clearly not a mirror to Kleemann’s body or self. The two dance together, marking both their affiliations and separation. Rather than reflecting the artist’s body, the video analogizes her movements and floods the body with a dim glow that resonates from the screen. The light that seamlessly illuminates the

⁹¹ For an analysis of the nationalistic use of cultural symbols in Greenland, see Birgit Kleist Pedersen, “Kulturel revitalisering – hvorfor?” in *Grønlandsk kultur- og samfundsforskning 2013-14*, vol 1 (Nuuk: Atuagkat, 2014), 51-68.

performance seems less an extension of the video's images than the diffuse effects of the medium, a spatial double that amplifies video's "liveness"-effect onto social surfaces.

As a medium video not only transmits images and times, but as Ina Blom has analyzed, it also produces an illuminating lamp-like effect, through which the liveness of electronic signals morph into a "televisual aura" that envelops a viewer's body.⁹² Blom's complex genealogy of post-1990 artworks involving light bulbs, projection and light grids centers on how conditions of liveness expand into space to, "express the current coupling of capitalist production and cognitive operations, a coupling that can be said to "extract" affective power," not least through the embodied effect instantiated by television.⁹³ The glow of the T.V., not to mention the ubiquitous video glow in contemporary gallery environments, folds a viewer into a relationship with the medium that obscures the production of liveness as a strategy for the management of subjectivity within rapid signal-driven attention economies. Blom's argument follows a critical understanding of the obscuring quality of this lamp-like glow, an omnipresent media effect today as institutions seek to define themselves in terms of contemporaneity.⁹⁴ By covering up T.V.'s signal transmissions in a flood of atmospheric radiance, these spatial effects emphasize the leakage of mediating conditions into the very spaces and structures of living.⁹⁵

⁹² Ina Blom, *On the Style Site: Art, Sociality, and Media Culture* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2007), 70.

⁹³ Blom, *On the Style Site*, 79.

⁹⁴ Catherine Soussloff offers further thoughts on "contemporaneity" in art institutional settings and the implicit dilemmas the current emphasis on "the contemporary" raises to the historiography of art history. Soussloff, 97-99.

⁹⁵ Pamela Lee offers a performance-oriented analysis of similar concerns in works by Carolee Schneemann, VALIE EXPORT and Joan Jonas that address the mediated consumption and destruction of bodies by emphasizing the publicness (not to mention liveness) of gender performativity juxtaposed against images of contemporary warfare. For these artists, the body performing in front of a video projection stands in for the desperation of "life" seized, consumed and mediated by technologies of the "live." Pamela M. Lee, "Bare Lives," in *Art and the Moving Image: A Critical Reader*, ed. Tanya Leighton and Charles Esche (London: Tate Publishing Co., 2008), 143.

As Kleemann layers her body under this cloak of liveness, then removes it as the lights rise, and uncovers new layers of reference, she both adopts and moves beyond the resonance of an obscuring televisual glow. After she lulls her audience into a distant spectator position through video's distractive quality, the lights come up, and she begins to dismantle that distance by reaching to the audience members and offering them roses, a gift that often signals desire and love. Her strategic use of video suggests awareness of the circumstances defined by cultural, sexual and racialized politics and stereotype that attempt to frame her performances as past-oriented. The "now" emphasized by video projection's mediating effects extends onto her very form as if to say, in case you had any doubts, she is not performing a solemn, devotional reenactment in an attempt to recover the past.

Which is not to say that the performance reverentially invests in the present. Although Kleemann emphatically rejects essentializing interpretations of Greenlandic cultural heritage, these references remain crucial to her performances' development. In addition to the *amaat*, there are tattoo lines drawn on her chin. Facial tattooing is a rite of passage for Inuit women that in West Greenland disappeared from practice in the eighteenth century.⁹⁶ Her *amaat* also adds a different geographic layer. The white fabric and dangling beads identify the costume as East Greenlandic in style, whereas Kleemann is from northwest Greenland. The roses then add a European courtship tradition to the play of signifiers, a reference so familiar as to be cliché, which, as Brian Catling notes, in the subarctic setting acquires newly exotic currency.⁹⁷

⁹⁶ This is not to say that tattooing is a fully past practice either. Though in 2003 it was still out-of-practice in Greenland, in recent years individuals such as Greenlandic tattoo artist Maya Jacobsen, Canadian-Inuk filmmaker Althea Arnaquq-Baril, and Iñupiaq artist Holly Nordlum have championed the revitalization of skin-stitch tattooing.

⁹⁷ Brian Catling, "Moving the Between," in *Qivittoq*, 81.

On her body's very surface these distinct practices mark their temporal and geographic difference simultaneous with an insistence on the present, a play of differentiation that, written onto one live body, also becomes a subversive play of sameness.⁹⁸ In this sense Kleemann's play with temporal, historical and geographic references all registered together, all at once, evokes a relationship to the past that queer theorist Elizabeth Freeman, in her analyses of performances concerning the history of feminist activism, calls "temporal drag." Temporal drag is not a means of overcoming the past, nor an attempt to revitalize the past or to make the past fully present. This concept plays with the "threat that the genuine *past-ness* of the past [...] sometimes makes to the political present" by interrupting the chrononormative logic often embedded in leftist politics as well as in the regulative sense of historicism, both discourses that frequently describe the fully-past past as something that holds no weight in the present's more "evolved" cultural and political struggles.⁹⁹ The reverse is often the case in cultural heritage discourses, which see the past as the present's primary point of identification, to the exclusion of other possibilities.¹⁰⁰ Both programs – historicism, as is Freeman's focus, and cultural heritage discourses – reify the past's difference from the present. Performances of temporal drag, rather than differentiating the present from the past, embrace the possibility of seeing the genuinely "past" past as already living within the present as part of the present, in what I interpret as a form of resonance.

⁹⁸ For a brilliant analysis of the varying roles of "difference" and "sameness" in theories of history, see Danbolt, "Touching History," 174-204.

⁹⁹ Freeman, 63.

¹⁰⁰ One such example is the (then) Home Rule Government's first cultural policy report, which proposes, "With its rules for the exploitation of nature and its resources, the hunting culture, as it is documented in the literature, should be revived for the youth," and further suggesting, "Art and aesthetics are culture's most important tools." This report understands art as a utilitarian entity, in service of a notion of cultural heritage limited to the traditions of the Greenlandic hunting culture, and so, entirely without a proper domain of its own. Grønlands Hjemmestyre, Direktoratet for Kultur, Uddannelse, Forskning og Kirke, *Rundt om kulturen, Grønland som kulturnation. Kulturredegørelse for Landstinget. Forår 2004*, ed. Henriette Rasmussen [Nuuk, Greenland], 2004, 6.

By assuming these distinct cultural and historical contingencies, “exteriorized as a mode of bodily adornment or even habitus” through temporal drag, Kleemann moves beyond unidirectional, past-looking historical recall to inscribe on the present markers of different times and places, themselves seen *as* the present.¹⁰¹ Yet rather than rejecting their past-ness altogether and *re*-introducing them to the present, as discourses on cultural heritage often insist, her performance frames these cultural references as part of the past *already* living within the present, but still *as* the past. In addition to her various props, I suggest the video glow also becomes part of her temporal drag: she wears these other contingencies beneath the video’s light bleed. As she clothes herself in the mediated liveness of the video’s resonant radiance, it becomes apparent that her performance is neither fully anachronistic nor fully present-ist. Under conditions of temporal drag, liveness becomes a home for transmissions that are not only reliant on the live.

Kleemann’s repertoire of movement further contributes to this temporally and historically fluid play of signifiers. In general, she engages a mixture of improvisational movements and distinct choreographies drawn from Greenlandic mask and drum dances. One scene in this performance particularly testifies to this. As she removes the roses and holds them like an infant, she crouches very low to the ground with her legs wide open, a movement emphasizing the genitals that is typical to men’s and women’s Greenlandic dance forms.¹⁰² The video further announces this affiliation to mask dance with scenes of a dancer moving over a landscape – the earlier scene of her covering her face with soot showed her drawing the mask on her face.

¹⁰¹ Freeman, 65.

¹⁰² See Michael Hauser, “Grønlandske trommesange,” *Tidsskriftet Grønland* 12 (1960): 449.

Kleemann's exaggerated attention directed at her outstretched fingers also recalls the story of Sassuma Arnaa, the mother of the sea in Inuit mythology.¹⁰³ As a child she was unloved, treated cruelly by her adoptive family. During a journey she fell from her family's boat and when she tried to hold onto the boat's side, her father cut off her fingers. She fell to the bottom of the sea and her fingers became the sea mammals, which she protects from human abuse and overhunting. Kleemann's ghostly powdered face and deadpan expression as she examines her hands might suggest this is Sassuma Arnaa dreaming of the time before her death. Her tattoo lines further complicate the possible movements between death and liveness, mythic time and "now." A woman typically received her first tattoos around the time of her first menstruation¹⁰⁴ – a time the mythic Sassuma Arnaa never lived to see, yet which is equally not-contemporary to the performer's present era. Finally, the performance blends a Greenlandic motherhood tradition with a European courtship ritual. Motherhood, mythic time and persistent cultural memory come together in this performance of continuous self-differentiation and identification, engaging temporal difference alongside gender difference, all also under simultaneity's glow of sameness.

Freeman emphasizes how performances concerning "the movements of collective political fantasy" as a cycle of disavowal and return in the history of feminist activism emphasize the role of "*temporal* transitivity" to theories of "*gender-transitive*" performativity.¹⁰⁵ Similarly,

¹⁰³ The following narrative is drawn from Måliâraq Vebæk, *Navaranaaq og andre. De grønlandske kvinders historie* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1990), 14-15. To be clear, this very specific interpretation of the performance is entirely my own, and while I think it a relevant reference point, it should primarily be seen as an exercise to draw out the connection between gender performativity and temporality in this performance, rather than a fully-determined decoding. In any case, this performance is not "about" Sassuma Arnaa, nor is it "about" motherhood. In other performances, Kleemann has explicitly referenced the Mother of the Sea, usually signaled through props, such as seaweed, or by performing at a beach. In contrast to these *thematically* grounded references, by making this connection I wish to emphasize how Kleemann's repertoire of *movements* could implicitly evoke this narrative.

¹⁰⁴ Kaalund, *Grønlands kunst*, 78.

¹⁰⁵ Freeman, 63. Emphasis original.

Kleemann re-stages diverse, historically contingent modes of performing gender difference in order to critically reposition cultural heritage. Kleemann's temporal drag thus involves writing multiple times onto the surface of the body through movement, diffuse gender signifiers and the light of projection which is simultaneously a past-referring recorded time, a live exchange of signals, and a spatial effect mediating an impression of liveness – all layered over the live body of the artist. All these modes of mediating the present – video, performance, cultural memory – dance together in choreography drawn from a repertoire that slips in and out of the present moment. Swaying under the light of projection, Kleemann's dance of simultaneous “nows” evokes choreography's own philosophical drift, moving both by compulsion and desire within the constant struggle between agency and command, vanishing and remaining.¹⁰⁶ Sutured onto the surface of the body or written into movement, like the repertoire these times return to the present as part of the present, all of them “never for the first time, never for the last time.”¹⁰⁷ Bringing many “nows” into communication with just as many pasts, a dense “now” emerges, one that, as Mathias Danbolt writes, “not only takes one great leap backward into a past but also sideways into a thick and fat present, not to mention forward into a messy future.”¹⁰⁸

Struggling to slip away from the expectations of ethnocentric audiences and art histories, Kleemann's fluid use of cultural symbols challenges a compulsive cultural reification that has come into play through nationalistic discourses in Greenland:

I have noted that Greenlandicness, or the new Inuitness, has become conspicuous [*markant*]. It has flipped around to become something almost religious. The structures of power shift toward the bodily, invade the cultural element – and that is why I believe that

¹⁰⁶ For further analysis of this tension, and ways in which non-dance media such as installation and photography “choreograph” viewer relations, see Jenn Joy, *The Choreographic* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2014).

¹⁰⁷ Taylor, 58.

¹⁰⁸ Danbolt, “Touching History,” 281 n50.

art must be something else, and more. Two things that I believe are often difficult to know to distinguish in Greenland.¹⁰⁹

Against a religious treatment of culture, Kleemann recomposes these symbols into a thick now that encounters them not as relics of the past, but as elements already within a mobile present that is itself a simultaneity of past, present and future. This emphasizes an understanding of culture, including the cultural past, as always actively in development.

Kleemann's movements very seldom determine her objects. Instead her movements often begin in response to objects or impulses she does *not* know. As she described in a public lecture in 2015, her desire to incorporate elements from the East Greenlandic costume early in her career came about because it was less familiar to her, she did not already know this costume on her body, since she grew up surrounded by West Greenlandic culture.¹¹⁰ By wearing an East Greenlandic costume for this particular performance, Kleemann adopts its distinct cultural resonance, which she then sets in contact with many other references. Not only a repertoire that recounts the past, this reminds us that performance can also become a method for developing new knowledge. Kleemann likewise demonstrates this by combining distinct references to the movements of mask dance as a source for choreography along with improvised presentational movements, as when she tenderly caresses the roses in her hood while crouched low to the ground. These choreographed and improvised elements mutually influence one another. Through this fusion of re-presentational and presentational gestures, Kleemann situates the body in performance as a conduit for the past and the present to intertwine through resonance.

¹⁰⁹ Personal communication with the author, 3 July 2015.

¹¹⁰ "Culture of Commodity, Commodity of Culture" panel discussion, The Anchorage Museum, Alaska, 28 August 2015.

As the other performances in *Wolf in the Winter*'s program underscored, such an impulse is not grounded in cultural specificity. In his solo performance that evening, "Ice Mitten," Aaron Williamson demonstrated the intertwinement of survival knowledge and immediate physical sensation. Williamson froze his hand into a block of ice, which he held aloft for eight minutes until he could no longer lift it. Williamson describes researching means of surviving hypothermia in preparation for this performance, all methods that derive from the body's own responses to the physical duress of extreme sensation.¹¹¹ Another performer, Kirsten Norrie, offered audience members the opportunity to light candles strung in a necklace around her neck. Some were too frightened to participate, others gasped as the flames came too close to her skin. Williamson forced the audience to witness an agonizing act of endurance, whereas Norrie confronted them with the possibility of inflicting pain in an act that aspires to reciprocally unite viewer (subject) and performer (object). Kleemann, then, lulled the audience into a passive position only to disrupt it with a gesture of connection, assuming the upper hand and reminding the audience that the artist presenting herself as object is also a subject. Together they helped the audience know performance art on *their* bodies through a spectrum of embodied engagement. The last performance of *Wolf in the Winter*'s program brought this concern to full force, also engaging landscape as yet another "now" layered onto the durational simultaneity of performance.

2.3 Sounding Landscape

The wolves have gathered for their last meeting in Assaqtuaq, a small abandoned settlement on an island roughly one hour by boat outside of Sisimiut, Greenland's second largest city.

¹¹¹ Aaron Williamson, "Ice Mitten," in *Performance/Video/Collaboration*, (London: Live Art Development Agency and KIOSK, 2008), 29.

Assaqtuaq is one of many small fishing towns whose inhabitants were forcibly relocated during the 1960s and '70s modernization era.¹¹² Most of the buildings remain, including the local Royal Greenland Trading (KGH) shop, distinctive because of the number painted on its roof to signal the small planes delivering wares to the tiny outpost in an enormous landscape of fjords. The Knud Rasmussen Folkehøjskole in Sisimiut has refurbished this and other buildings for a summer camp. People continue to come here to fish, pick berries, play music. Though it is mid-May some snow remains, as Assaqtuaq rests just above the Arctic Circle.

The artists spread widely over the terrain, each meeting the topography on their own terms. Anet van de Elzen presses her whole body against the ground, while behind her Jason Lim massages his bare chest and arms with white powder that scatters into the wind. Denys Blacker walks to and fro from the grassy hills to the shore, casting a black bag into the fjord as if to catch water. Aaron Williamson has bound his mouth with rope, and over his eyes he has tied two bread rolls. Being profoundly deaf, he ensconces himself in silence, leaving only his haptic sense to situate himself within the landscape's movements as the rumble of wind rolls over the absentness of sound like waves. Jessie Kleemann, again cloaked in her enormous anorak, withdraws herself fully from the others while also surrounded by them. She bends at a right angle with her back against the sun, staring at the ground with her arms fast at her sides.

Small, simultaneous sequences converge throughout the performance's duration. In one scene while the other artists still themselves and point in one direction, Kleemann turns her back to them. Kirsten Norrie is drawn to Williamson at one point, and begins frantically patting at the ground around his feet, while Lim and Brian Catling point at her. A look of exhaustion comes

¹¹² Many small settlements were closed in this era, but the most famous and representative case is certainly Qullissat. See Søren Peder Sørensen, *Qullissat – Byen der ikke vil dø* (Copenhagen: Frydenlund, 2013).

over her face and she pants heavily. Blacker silently moves among the audience, and like the specter, performs the role of an unseen visitor – at least one would think so by the distant gaze of the man beside her. The younger audience members, however, are not buying it.

Gradually, the artists assemble into a circular march, slowly coming closer, then clutching one another's shoulders and arms, and finally they stop, holding each other as if, at last, they have truly assembled. After the performance the artists and audience gather in the former KGH building to sing, share stories and eat freshly caught wolfish by the fire.

“When a performance is made together with others in a group,” Jessie Kleemann says, “by or against your will, you can find yourself in the middle of a number of actions, which in one way or another are connected.”¹¹³ The sense of finding oneself between the impulses to withdraw or become enmeshed in a group resonates strongly throughout Kleemann's work, not least in her use of the *qivittoq* motif. Historically, the word *qivittoq* describes a person who, due to shame or sadness, leaves their community to live alone in the mountains or the inland ice, a fate that in almost all cases is fatal.¹¹⁴ In Greenlandic oral narratives, *qivittut* take on supernatural capacities, usually returning to haunt their community as a warning against social exclusion, but they exist in constant movement between the spaces of society and exile. In a contemporary sociolinguistic context the word has been used as an insult to describe Greenlanders who have left Greenland. This contemporary use, in effect, brings about the alienation it claims to describe, by claiming that out-migrants have lost their connection to Greenlandic society. As Kleemann describes,

¹¹³ Personal communication with the author, 7 October 2015.

¹¹⁴ For an analysis of the *qivittoq* as a narrative figure in Greenlandic and Danish literature, see Kirsten Thisted, “Hvem går qivittoq? Kampen om et litterært symbol eller relationen Danmark-Grønland i postcolonial belysning,” *Tidsskrift voor Skandinavistiek* 25:2 (2004), especially page 136 where Thisted writes: “In the folk beliefs one believed that the *qivittoq* over some time would be visited by the extreme natural forces that reign in the mountains. In principle these are the same forces that shamans in their time went into the mountains in search of, and like them the *qivittut* become, for example, able to fly in the air.”

When a person who has moved away from his place of origin is called a *qivittoq*, it creates an alienation and an accepted expulsion from the community. [...] For the expelled person this can feel like being exiled, mentally. To go *qivittoq – qivilluni* – is a state that constantly changes with time and place. It is a mental landscape that involves both free will and compulsion, an attraction that, more than anything else, is human.¹¹⁵

Kleemann's description of the *qivittoq* state is strikingly choreographic, in the sense of choreography as a sequence of gestures within which the dancer's body moves both by desire and command. The landscape becomes synonymous with the *qivittoq*'s state, due equally to the *qivittoq*'s expulsion from the community and the lure of the mountains, but as Kleemann notes, to *qivilluni* at its core means to withdraw into the self.¹¹⁶ The *qivittoq* passes over the landscape, assuming its supernatural power and connotations of danger and extremity, while never being *of* the landscape. Although resonances between this revenant state and that of the specter are strong, an important distinction is that the community is not only plagued by, but actively produces the *qivittoq* state by excluding the other. While some of Kleemann's recent performances appear as explicit *qivittoq* exercises, involving props that signal social stigmatization by referencing stereotypes of Greenlanders in Denmark, her performance in Assaqaq seems to me to be an early emergence of this motif. Her face turned toward the landscape, away from the audience as well as from her collective of performance artists, she moves over and above space as if in a trance, surrounded and delimited by but never contacting her environment.

Yet by establishing tension between herself and the land, Kleemann engages the terrain as a participant that helps shape her *qivittoq* exercise. She initially establishes the relationship between herself and the environment as one of detachment, like the exclusion felt by *qivittut*, a tension which the performance resolves over its duration as the artists and the site gradually

¹¹⁵ Jessie Kleemann, "Qivittoq: A Phenomenon and a State," 11-12.

¹¹⁶ Moestrup, 69.

come into communion. The site reciprocally influences the performance, as demonstrated by the shifting wind that Williamson and Lim respond to and the lapping waves that Blacker investigates. The land becomes a stage for the performance, lending its natural tableaux and atmospherics, but it also provides a durational present to which the artists must continuously respond and seek to know. The artists build a relationship to the site as a give-and-take between their gestures and the environment's own durational transformation and atmospheric conditions. As they each respond to the environment, synching the performance's duration with the durational movements of the land, the artists engage the site as a co-participant.

Onto the site's unfinished present the artists introduce *another* unfolding present over the terrain, moving along its masses, dancing in relation to one another and to the massive geography, itself saturated with its own movements and histories. The projection of this other continuous, durational present of performance over land then elicits the ghosts of other relationships to this place at the same time that it stages the possibility of community – both in the performance itself and in the communion between audience and artists that occurs after it. Kleemann and Wolf in the Winter activate the terrain in a manner that, as Jill Casid argues in another context, “uncover[es] the ongoingly processual aspect of landscape's performance, [...] its being and changing in and over time without final outcome despite the illusion of “isness” and the effects of naturalization.”¹¹⁷ This performance establishes the site as a process that continues to evolve in response to new social movements unfolding across it, a continuous present as well as a developing present. In turn, their performance layers another temporal duration over this developing present. The dense, non-singular “now” produced during the performance then

¹¹⁷ Jill Casid, “Epilogue: Landscape In, Around and Under the Performative,” *Women & Performance* 21:1 (2011): 103.

facilitates the performance's intersubjective connections, allowing these encounters to resonate into new forms, as when the staging of communion in the performance evolves into a festive communion between artists, audience and the site itself.

As they begin to leave the island, Anet van de Elzen stands at the edge of the bedrock, cups her hands to her mouth and howls one long call into the mountains. Jessie Kleemann notes how traditionally in Greenland songs were created when humans travelled onto the land and perceived the silence within the mountains and fjords: "when you were out in nature and found yourself so small, and it was so silent, that it filled you with so much happiness, that you had to sing it out! Even then you could say there was a particular sound concept that people were aware of. The human being has felt a pressure [*et tryk*] that came from within, and which therefor had to be ex-pressed [*ud-trykkes*]."¹¹⁸ Similarly, through the figure of echo sound intertwines with the sonic environment that surrounds it. In this capacity, resonance evokes a more reciprocal understanding of sound and silence similar to observations offered by one of Wolf in the Winter's members, Aaron Williamson. He rejects the tendency to see sound as opposed to silence, noting that "sound is always conducted *inside* of silence, rather than against it," asserting the sound-silence relationship as a nucleus-cell dynamic rather than an oppositional dyad.¹¹⁹ In other words, silence is never a pure, natural state into which sound penetrates, but a condition that carries sound within it as a latent or dormant potentiality.

¹¹⁸ Iben Mondrup, "In the Middle of Nowhere, and then: SOUND! MONDRUP&KLEEMANN på HORIZONIC," *Iben Mondrup.DK*, 25 October, 2011, last accessed 17 August 2016, <http://ibenmondруп.dk/arkiv/?p=1677#more-1677>.

¹¹⁹ Aaron Williamson, "Audible WITHIN: Brian Catling's Performance Soundings," *Performance Research* 4:3 (1999): 54. Williamson's analysis is especially apt with regard to discourses in deaf studies and mainstream disability arts that reproduce phonocentric normativity by defining sound as agential and active, silence as penetrable and passive, as well as in these discourses' emphasis on *loss* of hearing rather than *gaining* deafness.

The echo that reverberates from this expression, as the continuing resonance of sound that forms within a particular sonic environment, may seem to evoke the point where the identity of sound collapses into an acoustic space. These potential reverberations already exist latently within these acoustics, and each new sound re-enlivens the sonic side to a place's phenomenality, a distinct present (the individual sound, or the performance) melding with the other continuous present of the space. Through this meeting of multiple presents, the seemingly-distinct present of the performance becomes a continuing moment, a "now" flowing away from the initial expression into future presents. Resonance then collapses the distinction between seemingly temporally distinct pasts, presents and futures. The echo emphasizes how simultaneity challenges the present-ist discourses that argue for a reified difference between the past and the now.

In the echo, in temporal drag, and in Kleemann's *qivittoq* exercise, an individual moment slowly overlaps with its environment, turns sound and movement back into the phenomena of the heard and felt. Within these multiple "nows," the present presents itself as multiple simultaneous representations, as when Kleemann begins to redress conditions of social exclusion by choreographing individual bodies merging into a collective body, or when she writes historically contingent memories onto her body in temporal drag. These encounters continuously unfold as responsive meetings across time, continuously dancing toward and away from one another.

Chapter 3: “A Meeting that Never Ends”: Jessie Kleemann’s *Homage to (Pia*

Arke’s) Soil for Scoresbysund

Imarsuaq nunatta avataaniittoq
maanga isersimavoq

The mighty waters that surround our country
have penetrated completely

Timiga, illora
Ikuallattoq
qaminngulu ersarissisiinnarpaa

My body, my house
burst out into flames
could not be extinguished
continued to flare up

Soorlu oqartutit taamani:
Puigussanngilakkit toqugaluarumaluunniit

Like you said that time:
Not even in death
will I forget you

Naapinneq uninngisaannartoq

A meeting that never ends

–Jessie Kleemann, *Tallat. Digte. Poems.*

3.1 History’s Underground

Shrouded in white tulle, a woman lies alongside a mound of used, dried coffee roughly the size and shape of a buried body. She caresses and kneads the soil, runs her hands along its sides as if it were something solid, like dense earth or flesh. Simple gestures of touch, connection, care.

Gradually she climbs onto the mound. After about five minutes she stands up, untangles herself from the tulle and begins to place wooden dowels into the burial mound, a simple back and forth from the piles of wood to the coffee, just walking. She begins to give the dowels to members of the audience, and they hold them pressed against the ground. She reaches out to a young girl, a lesbian couple, a woman staring stubbornly at her mobile phone. Her gestures are solid and grounded, her center of gravity lowers. She then takes a length of tulle and proceeds to wrap it around the audience, weaving through the crowd as if threading sinew through a delicate material. Some she completely covers in the white fabric.

The mood shifts. The woman takes small handfuls of the coffee-soil and places them next to those audience members still holding their wooden marks to the ground, but then she begins to turn inwards. Slowly she pulls two waist-straps of her dress up over her head, tying them across her forehead in a manner that suggests the facial binding of the East Greenlandic mask dance meant to keep the dancer's spirit from escaping. The waist of her dress pulled up, she is forced into a crouching posture, holding herself as she slowly moves out among the audience again. Lowering herself slowly down, she reaches out to a woman she had not yet engaged, and hugs her. She then quickly withdraws from the hall and returns some moments later, sits next to a local artist, and asks her, "Do you think it's over?"

Although Kleemann usually does not title her performances, this work was called *Homage to Soil for Scoresbysund*. With this title she directly referenced an installation by Pia Arke from 1998, *Soil for Scoresbysund*. Arke's installation consisted of used coffee grounds wrapped in filters and arranged in a 160 x 165 cm square on the floor. After its first instantiation, the installation has been reconstructed at least four times: three times for Kuratorisk Aktion's 2012 posthumous retrospective of her work, once thereafter for the separate exhibition "ARCTIC" at the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art in 2013, and possibly once more in Arke's lifetime.¹²⁰ And now, its history continues. If, as some scholars of performance studies have controversially argued, performance becomes itself in disappearance,¹²¹ Arke's work has returned insistently, making itself seen, heard and sensed again and again. Similarly, Kleemann's

¹²⁰ In their exhibition history for Arke, Kuratorisk Aktion lists *Soil for Scoresbysund* as one of the exhibited works in Arke's mid-career retrospective of 2003, but as of yet I have not seen original documentation confirming this. For now this part of the installation's history remains one of the enigmas of Arke's own historical record, which itself reminds us of the need to resist the impulse toward complete historicization. Kuratorisk Aktion, 364.

¹²¹ This is one of the arguments made by Peggy Phelan in *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (New York: Routledge, 1993). For more developed critiques of Phelan's analysis, see Taylor, 5 and 142-5; and Schneider, 91-99.

performances also never seem to disappear. The motifs from one performance seep into another, and for her audiences they continue to agitate or arouse, continue to develop meaning in both past lives and afterlives. Both Arke's and Kleemann's works demonstrate how performance's "liveness" uncontrollably spills out into new presents. In response, as Amelia Jones argues, art historians can shift the aim of historical writing from narrating over past artworks, to helping performance remain active and meaning-producing into the future by acknowledging the potential for performance's meaning to slip away from art historical analysis.¹²²

Kleemann began to realize the resonances between Pia Arke's practice and her own only after Arke's passing. Slowly and incompletely, the affinities between the two artists became apparent to her: as Kleemann has described, such realizations "can press themselves into being manifested in a different expression."¹²³ The first came when she translated Arke's seminal essay "Ethno-Aesthetics" from Danish to Greenlandic in connection with Kuratorisk Aktion's exhibition. This intellectual realization involved Kleemann developing an appreciation for Arke's critical writing on the connections between ethnocentric art history and aesthetics – both discourses based on exclusion and grounded in a search for truth that unravels when their false autonomy is challenged. Through translating "Ethno-Aesthetics" Kleemann came to appreciate that she shared certain concerns with Arke in spite of their quite different methods and media, but this realization is broad, primarily theoretical and less intimate than the one that followed.

¹²² Amelia Jones, "Unpredictable Temporalities: The Body and Performance in (Art) History," in *Performing Archives / Archives of Performance*, 56.

¹²³ Personal communication with the author, 7 October 2015.

The second realization came unexpectedly, after Kleemann performed a work provisionally titled *Colonial Grains* at Katuaq Culture Centre in Nuuk in February 2015.¹²⁴ This performance involved large amounts of flour, sugar, salt, rice and oats – all white grains, carrying the ethnocentric and aesthetic sign of unmixed purity, and all commodities that arrived in the arctic from diverse regions of the colonial-modern world system.¹²⁵ Only in the aftermath of this performance could Kleemann see the ghosts of Arke’s work, which had also on occasion blended colonial commodities with aesthetic and historical material. This second realization thus revealed an affinity between Kleemann’s and Arke’s *practices*, rather than merely signaling an overarching theoretical connection – while it also made Kleemann aware that her work, like Arke’s, involves anti-colonial critique. This affinity emerged not through study but practice, and her realization only followed after her body’s movements under performance had already presented these dormant connections between the two artists.

With *Colonial Grains* Kleemann understood that, “When I discovered that I wanted to make an homage to Pia Arke’s *Soil for Scoresbysund*, it had sat in my body for some time.”¹²⁶ This second realization then prompted Kleemann to explicitly reference Arke within her own work, resulting in the performance *Homage to Soil for Scoresbysund*. In contrast to *Colonial Grains*, where like the specter, a part of the past returned to the present against the agency of the present subject, in this performance Kleemann directly calls on the past and deliberately attempts

¹²⁴ For a description of this performance, see Katrine Finnich, “At se det performative i øjnene,” *I Do Art* 15 February 2015, last accessed 30 April 2016, <http://www.idoart.dk/at-se-det-performative-i-ojnene/>.

¹²⁵ For an analysis of uses of black and white in a Danish decolonial context, see Mathias Danbolt, “Striking Reverberations: Beating Back the Unfinished History of the Colonial Aesthetic with Jeannette Ehlers’s *Whip it Good*,” in *Otherwise: Imagining Queer Feminist Art Histories*, ed. Amelia Jones and Erin Silver (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016). It should be noted that Danbolt currently is developing a project concerning the status of *kolonivarer* (colonial commodities) in contemporary Denmark, studied through the lens of visual representation – a project that certainly could contribute to the thoughts surrounding this performance.

¹²⁶ Personal communication with the author, 7 October 2015.

to engage with a seemingly “lost” artwork. In this chapter, as with the previous two, I think with and through these performances in order to examine how history slips away from historicism, how performance can become a subversive historiographic exercise, and how these approaches can problematize certain discussions concerning performance in Greenland.

Yet it is not self-evident that this performance concerns history. It might initially appear primarily like a tribute to a colleague who worked simultaneous to Kleemann (and would be the same age as her if she were alive today). This performance does not deliberately make use of the institutions and technologies of history, such as the oral narratives that often inform Kleemann’s practice or the text and image archives that Arke often probed. However, I argue that in both Arke’s and Kleemann’s works there is a common method, a performance of history. This method approaches history through the durational aspect of temporality. Performance’s temporality stresses that time is a perceptible concept. Through rendering time perceptible temporality implicitly involves history by facilitating the continued resonance of seemingly “past” references and experiences, which become perceptible once again. Over the duration of these performances, both past and present meet as active participants, simultaneously presenting and representing themselves in responsive encounters. Kleemann’s *Homage to Soil for Scoresbysund* is not a *hyldest*: an homage in the exclusively laudatory sense. This homage operates in a reciprocal manner: it contributes to both artists’ projects, and rather than raising one above the other, it creates an entry point for the affinities between them to activate. Kleemann still allows herself to

move out from the installation, extending its meaning and opening room for new reflections on the same historical method initially present in the installation.¹²⁷

In addition to reflecting on Arke's legacy, the performance seems to draw out a different perception of *Soil for Scoresbysund* that takes shape through many returns and repetitions. As these returns unfold, the performance forms a collective experience among an audience that largely does not know Arke's work, and a pact with the several past artworks that come together in a new constellation in the present. Walter Benjamin has described such convergences of past and present as a similar configuration of consciousness: "It's not that what is past casts its light on what is present, or that what is present its light on what is past; rather, image is that wherein what has been comes together in a flash with the now to form a constellation."¹²⁸ This may seem an apt description for the belated recognition of Arke's influence in *Colonial Grains*, but what of the more deliberate gesture toward a past artwork in *Homage to Soil for Scoresbysund*?

While it could be said that in *Colonial Grains* the past and the present met in a constellation similar to Benjamin's formulation, in *Homage to Soil for Scoresbysund* Kleemann deliberately evokes a past artwork, encountered as already within the present. Even regarding *Colonial Grains*, the performance's action preceded Kleemann's awareness of its historical relevance – only after she performed this work did she see that the past *had* come together with the performance's present. The body's own movements were prescient of historical consciousness, which nevertheless emerged after the fact. The limitation of Benjamin's dialectical history, in this case, is that it hinges on a dramatic reveal, where the past momentarily

¹²⁷ In addition to my arguments about the performance's methods of presentation and representation, surely my decision to describe it as a performance of history also derives in part from my own anxieties as a historian, as well as my own experience of the event and its potential to facilitate new understanding of the historical present, the past artwork, and the intimate personal narrative the installation referenced.

¹²⁸ Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 462.

becomes intelligible and then potentially lost forever: “It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger.”¹²⁹ This schema frames the past as fully inaccessible to the historian except in one messianic meeting, and the historian’s role in producing the historical encounter seems limited to keeping watch and witnessing as the past presents itself.

The historian’s gestures, in Kleemann’s performance as well as in my analysis of it, become just as implicated in the historical return as the past itself. This desirous historicizing calls for an alternate method of affective engagement that Mathias Danbolt calls “touching history.” In this light history occurs as the historian “reaches out toward the past without taking hold of it,”¹³⁰ a dance between past and present where both alternately reach toward and step away from one another – not in a fleeting moment of recognition, a looming lack of reciprocity, or an attempt to take possession of the past, but a desire (however impossible) for communion. The historical encounter continues to unfold, continues to forestall throughout the performance and after it, while also offering new understandings of what came before.

While some elements of this performance may suggest an affinity with psychoanalytic theories of melancholia, it does not really portray the installation and the legacy of Pia Arke as lost.¹³¹ Kleemann’s performance emphasizes the object’s persistence. In this dynamic, the object informs the new artwork as if it were a subject. Kleemann directly calls on a past artwork, like Walter Benjamin’s melancholic historian, addressing the mound of coffee to emphasize how Arke’s legacy and the effects of the installation *remain* beyond the installation’s first

¹²⁹ Benjamin, “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” 255.

¹³⁰ Danbolt, “The Trouble with Straight Time,” 461.

¹³¹ This is not to reject the melancholic’s returning specter as an analytic form – as Maria Torok has argued, the ghost of the lost object interrupts the subject’s refusal to mourn through fantasies of consuming or negating loss. Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, “Mourning or Melancholia: Introjection versus Incorporation,” in *The Shell and the Kernel: Renewals of Psychoanalysis*, vol. 1, ed. and trans. Nicholas T. Rand (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 137

instantiation. Loss implies possession, an issue Kleemann addresses when she notes in another context, “The past is no longer ours.”¹³² Kleemann is thrown not into the past but another level of the dense present. The performance further problematizes a melancholic framing in that it is not certain which “past” is buried there.¹³³ Moreover, she is not burying a loss, but trying to dig something up. This performance instead reveals the “past” within the present – as in Kleemann’s use of objects of cultural heritage, the past is an active, continuing resonance. The evocation of Arke’s installation does not only serve as a catalyst to investigate and deal with the past. It also creates the generative incentive to reach back into the present, where the past already exists.¹³⁴

But perhaps by too avidly embracing this present we run the risk of valorizing the “now” as a privileged point of contact for an equally unstable past. Antonin Artaud, whom Kleemann has often named as a figure of theoretical inspiration, provides one example of fetishizing the present. While Artaud’s “Theater of Cruelty” claims the atemporal vitality of “life” as its point of origin, this theater also demands a second essence – that of the singular, fleeting moment, in that, “an expression does not have the same value twice.”¹³⁵ Although Artaud does not frame these definitions of life and the moment as temporal concepts, the one stands outside of human history while the other occurs in a monadic unit of un-repeatable time.¹³⁶

¹³² Ivalo Frank, “An Everyday Conversation with Jessie Kleemann,” in *Qivittoq*, 52.

¹³³ In *Specters of Marx* Derrida writes, “Nothing could be worse, for the work of mourning, than confusion or doubt: one has to know who is buried where – and it is necessary (to know – to make certain) that, in what remains of him, he remain there. Let him stay there and move no more!” Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 9.

¹³⁴ In some capacity this is similar to the erotic treatment of history that Elizabeth Freeman proposes, although Freeman’s examples all explicitly hinge on sexual themes: “Erotohistoriography does not write the lost object into the present so much as encounter it already in the present, by treating the present itself as a hybrid.” Freeman, 95.

¹³⁵ Antonin Artaud, *The Theater and Its Double*, trans. Mary Caroline Richards (New York: Grove Press, 1998), 75.

¹³⁶ This massively prefigures debates on repetition and disappearance in performance studies, which leads me to suspect that this appeal to origins and scorn of repetition begs the question Diana Taylor poses of “whose memories ‘disappear’” when supposedly fleeting performances are deemed outside of history. Taylor, 36.

Artaud's double time appears to construct performance as "an ethnographic now and never;" Erik Gant uses this phrasing to describe how ethnography creates the ideal of an always-more-distant, pure and timeless cultural origin.¹³⁷ Kleemann's theoretical approach may initially seem to reproduce such dilemmas of Artaudian theatre. In an interview she expresses, "'Nowness' is universal and fundamental to all daily acts."¹³⁸ However, earlier in the same interview Kleemann emphasizes the role such acts as "the repeated patterns of daily chores" played to her childhood, and which evolved to inform her performance practice, specifically the importance of repetition: "By thinking of repetitive patterns in choreographic terms, I actualise a place where the images of past duties not-done, can be done."¹³⁹ As she describes, "nowness" represents itself through repetition at the same time that it draws other temporalities together. This "now" then scatters across histories past and future, moving porously between representation and presentation.

Kleemann's *Homage* slips constantly between representation and presentation, as simultaneously a reference to a past artwork and a new artwork in its own right. I will attempt to meet the past dialogically in my analysis by reanimating the emergences of pasts and presents in these performances, to set them into new historical collisions again, now, for the first time, once more, over and over again.

¹³⁷ Erik Gant, "Den excentriske eskimo," *Tidsskriftet Grønland* 44:5 (1996): 171.

¹³⁸ Frank, 51.

¹³⁹ Frank, 38.

3.2 Pia Arke's Untimely Testimonies

In the summer of 1997, Pia Arke returned to her birthplace, Ittoqqortoormiit, for the first time in thirty-five years. And one morning that summer, she made a pot of coffee. When she threw the grounds in the garbage, her sister-in-law said, "You should throw the coffee out of the window; here in Ittoqqortoormiit we'd very much like to have some soil that flowers can grow in."¹⁴⁰

This is how Arke tells the story in *Stories from Scoresbysund*, a 2003 book that was the end result of eight years of research – "Scoresbysund" being the Danish name for Ittoqqortoormiit, which is roughly 900 kilometers north of any other town on the East. It was founded through a relocation project in 1925, where eighty East Greenlanders were brought to this unpopulated region to act as living flagpoles in Denmark's claim over Greenland's northeast coast. The first decade of the relocation was marked by an influenza epidemic and widespread hunger and cold. These and other factors led to what Arke observed as a breakdown of historical consciousness as well as Scoresbysund's actual historical record – almost no photographs of the town's early colonial era could be found in the town itself. Scoresbysund was at once enmeshed in Danish geopolitics, and invisibilized from Danish colonial discourse. The volume Arke compiled out of her research into this spectral history is perhaps her best-known work.¹⁴¹

While the coffee anecdote may appear marginal to *Stories from Scoresbysund*, Arke returned to it again and again throughout her career, most directly in *Soil for Scoresbysund*. The installation gestures beyond the autobiographical, as it can be made to reflect on another layer of

¹⁴⁰ Pia Arke, *Stories from Scoresbysund*, 21.

¹⁴¹ For two rather different interpretations of the text, see Carsten Juhl, "Om et råt og nænsomt udsyn – Om Pia Arkes æstetisk-antropologiske undersøgelser ved hjælp af tekst og fotografi," *Katalog* 20:3 (2008): 22-32; and Mette Sandbye, "Making Pictures Talk: The Re-Opening of a 'Dead City' through Vernacular Photography as a Catalyst for the Performance of Memories," in *Re-Investing Authenticity: Tourism, Place and Emotions*, ed. Britta Timm Knudsen and Anne Marit Waade (Bristol: Channel View Publications, 2010).

movement: the relocation that brought Scoresbysund into existence in the first place. Relying on a colonial product, the installation stages the creation of a new home-land out of artificial, imported “soil” waiting to be activated. At the same time that it reflects on Scoresbysund’s local history, it connects this to a global history of colonization by drawing the map with coffee, one of the most important colonial products from the vast empires of Europe, and which has intimate connections to English and French intellectual circles that fostered Enlightenment-era thought.¹⁴²

Coffee also holds a particular place in Greenland’s cultural milieu in the form of the *kaffemik*-culture, coffee drinking parties held to celebrate graduations, births, meetings with the new. The word *kaffemik* points to a certain duality of new-ness and tradition: “*kaffe*,” Danish for coffee, and “*-mik*,” a Greenlandic suffix denoting a festive gathering. With this coffee also evokes two sides of the production equation – the raw resource itself, and the moment its commodity value is realized under exchange. Cutting out the ghost of the middle step, the production of value through labor, this leaves a beginning and an end. The middle, the hidden labor of a different far-flung colony, has been spirited away. A home and an elsewhere, an origin and an end result that circle back to one another, re-performing the extractive and implanting operations of empire. With these and other circular thoughts Arke positions Scoresbysund as a central periphery for locating both intimate, personal histories and national- and global-scale colonialisms, or as she writes, “The private, the aesthetic and the geopolitical are to some extent intermingled here, somewhere in the middle of it all, *in the middle of nowhere*.”¹⁴³

This performative duality points to another dialectic Arke identified as “the ethno-aesthetic,” redefining this anthropological term to reveal the codependence of ethnographic and

¹⁴² See Markman Ellis, *The Coffee House: A Cultural History* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2004).

¹⁴³ Arke, *Stories from Scoresbysund*, 11. Emphasis original.

art historical discourses in Greenland.¹⁴⁴ While the aesthetic consideration of art as an autonomous object threatens the *interested*-ness of cultural discourses, the imposition of the ethnic on the aesthetic eliminates the possibility of disinterested-ness by addressing the politics of exclusion operative in aesthetics. The “ethnic” takes issue with the aesthetic not because it actually possesses a primitive alterity that threatens the aesthetic’s actual autonomy, but because it reveals how aesthetic discourses have constructed the “ethnic” as their other.

Kuratorisk Aktion aptly describes this installation as “a space where linear history cannot be written, but where temporary histories are negotiated and created.”¹⁴⁵ The installation occurs in a non-narrative “now and never,” but still it points back to a narrative moment outside of itself, while also pointing to many histories of extraction and travel. Within this fluid movement the anecdote holds particular significance. As a literary format that seems to step out of positivist, empirical historicism, it floats between fiction and reportage and between macro- and micro-histories, as Joel Fineman describes: “the anecdote determines the destiny of a specifically historiographic integration of event and context. The anecdote, let us provisionally remark, as the narration of a singular event, is the literary form or genre that uniquely refers to the real.”¹⁴⁶ In other words, because the anecdote permits itself to step away from self-consciously historicizing whole eras by announcing, *And now I will tell you a little story within the bigger story*, it claims to represent a genuine experience within which the larger structure of historical work can be grasped. For *Stories from Scoresbysund*, *Soil for Scoresbysund*, as well as *Homage to Soil for Scoresbysund*, the anecdote shrinks the historical event in order to open up a larger historicity. In

¹⁴⁴ Arke, *Etnoæstetik*, 10-11.

¹⁴⁵ Kuratorisk Aktion, *Tupilakosaurus*, 115.

¹⁴⁶ Joel Fineman, “The History of the Anecdote: Fiction and Fiction,” in *The New Historicism*, ed. Harold Aram Veesser (New York: Routledge, 1989), 56.

the moment that this subjective narration of a miniscule history comes to signify “the real” within a larger (also supposedly “real”) historical project, the anecdote reveals the performance of history as always-already a process of shrinking and magnifying, localizing and globalizing.

This performance of history reiterates itself once more in the installation, by shrinking the anecdote into a non-narrative, presented experience that re-presents many possible histories, which then become magnified, re-presented and presented anew in Kleemann’s performance. This transformation is always incomplete – the soil never arriving in Scoresbysund, just as Arke “[threw] the grounds out of the sitting-room window merely to see them disappear without a trace between the stones.”¹⁴⁷ Opposite this transformative approach to time and history, official art history frames Greenlandic art in terms of “concludedness and homogeneity,” as Erik Gant analyzes, insistently discussing “Eskimo art” even of the present as “things that are unearthed from the soil, sifted out from the manure and culturally fertile layers, found in graves and more recently collapsed subterranean houses.”¹⁴⁸ Arke’s installation, and her returns to history, only adds new layers, and Kleemann in her performance recovers nothing from within the coffee itself. Rather than recovering and reiterating a distinct past, Arke’s installation encounters many possible historical references – Scoresbysund’s history of relocation, the entrance of Greenland into a global colonial-modern economic world order, her own histories of separation and incomplete return. The installation gathers these all together within the present as parts of the present – the same emphasis on encounter underlying Kleemann’s performance.

¹⁴⁷ Arke, *Stories from Scoresbysund*, 21.

¹⁴⁸ Erik Gant, “Kunsten at være eskimo,” *Arbejdsrapport nr. 66*, Center for Kulturforskning, Århus Universitet, 1998, 8-9.

The nows of the installation and the performance have both disappeared, but their transformation and re-narration continue. As histories fall apart and reassemble, this historical method confronts us with the limits of historicism by focusing on how histories continue to circulate beyond their temporal-historical specificity and chrononormative lodging. Reportage transforms into fiction and the historical moment, that thing that promises an unmediated glimpse of the real, begins to touch other histories that seem otherwise foreign to it. As the installation continues to acquire new layers of sediment that point to even more distant histories, it buries the promise of cultivating a stable standpoint on fast land.

3.3 Jessie Kleemann's Third Place

How, then, to create an homage to an artist whose oeuvre seems to resist the concept of homage, and to an artwork that no longer exists? It is not entirely unproblematic that much of Pia Arke's critical reception has followed her death. It has, for example, become common to strategically and indiscriminately fold her practice into discourses of postcolonialism as if her relationship to this body of theory was at all uncomplicated – this despite her own writings indicating a certain productive ambivalence to the discourse, as well as an irreverent attitude toward disciplinary divides in general. In "Ethno-Aesthetics," she writes,

Western appropriation and marginalization of the alien is constantly at work. You may want to stress that postcolonialism is an intellectual invention combining postmodernism and anti-colonialism in a way that conceals the continuation of colonialism by other forms of suppression and exploitation of the Third World. However, this is not an insight that will in itself transcend the regime of Western intellectualism from which it has sprung."¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁹ Arke, *Etnoæstetik*, 30.

In this passage, Arke emphasizes the continuation of coloniality not only as discrete power relations, but as systems of thought and articulation embedded in the structures of modernity.

It is therefore surprising to me that commentators insistently refer to her practice as unambiguously postcolonial, particularly given the state of postcolonial studies in Greenland, driven by an emphasis on the “post”-ness of colonialism, as Kirsten Thisted exemplifies:

“Because postcolonialism still presupposes anti-colonialism’s image of colonialism, it also takes over its longing for anticolonial revolution. As a solution to the problems of the present, however, this model has played out its role, not least against the background of experiences from the many anticolonial revolutions that now lay behind us.”¹⁵⁰ While, like Arke, Thisted is critical of mainstream postcolonial critique, her formulation suggests that preoccupations with colonial legacies, past and present, are most often governed by willful historical blindness that fails to deal with concerns of the present. Opposing this view, and as my previous analysis has illustrated, Arke’s concern for the past always-already implicates the present.

Thisted’s formulation, which represents the dominant form of postcolonial thought in Greenland, reflects a tendency to define “colonialism” as a specific era that haunts the present, or as Robert Young writes, of the postcolonial as “the continuing projection of past conflicts into the experience of the present, the insistent persistence of the afterimages of historical memory that drive the desire to transform the present.”¹⁵¹ But as Young argues, this projection elides many “remains” of the colonial, such as the continued settler colonial conditions of the Americas, that do not fit as easily into narratives of closure. As Arke and her brother Erik Gant

¹⁵⁰ Kirsten Thisted, “Imperiets genfærd - Profeterne i Evighedsfjorden og den dansk-grønlandske historieskriving,” *Nordlit* 35 (2015): 112.

¹⁵¹ Robert J.C. Young, “Postcolonial Remains,” *New Literary History* 43 (2012): 21.

have theorized, the colonial is not only a past that haunts the present, but a force that is fully operative within discourses that claim to rediscover and conquer the “truth” of the postcolony over and over.¹⁵² In this light postcolonial critique threatens to resume the project of colonial mastery. I am reminded of Erik Gant’s critique of the institutionalization of postcolonial thought:

Thus, because postcolonialism must attempt to master the colonial text, because it follows after this text, follows it in its falling silent and resounding, in the forgetting and rediscovery of the colony, because it in other words follows, withers away and flares up in relation to a different pulse – it is therefore, I believe, that postcolonial thought in Denmark will soon seem needed, soon *perhaps not so much*, will soon gasp to catch up, soon lie down again.¹⁵³

This epistemological dilemma raises the question of how to do history without foreclosing on the past in exhaustive treatments that circle back to celebratory mastery.

The question then becomes how to deal with a past that remains in the present, temporality that is latent in history, and affects that exceed historical and discursive designations. Kleemann’s use of dowels evokes elements of mapmaking and implicitly draws up the tradition of “staking a claim” – claiming an area of land for mineral prospecting, an activity that has a long and problematic tradition in Alaska and the Yukon territory.¹⁵⁴ The “staking” in Kleemann’s performance, in part, may reflect the reiteration of claims made on place and on history, and perhaps also on Arke. But by extending to the audience these tools, Kleemann reshuffles and redistributes the power relations implicit in making a “claim” on the past. What unfolds is less an attempt to claim the past artwork than a desire to embody shared dilemmas

¹⁵² See Erik Gant, “Grønland som begivenhed,” in *Grønlandsk kultur- og samfundsforskning 98/99* (Nuuk: Atuagkat, 1999), 127.

¹⁵³ Erik Gant, “Om det gådefulde og diabolske i dansk grønlandspolitik,” *Tijdschrift voor Skandinavistiek* 30:2 (2009): 202. Emphasis original.

¹⁵⁴ For a discussion on the link between prospecting and cultural appropriation in Euroamerican capitalist desires: Candice Hopkins, “The Golden Potlatch: Study in Mimesis and Capitalist Desire,” *Fillip* 13 (2011), last accessed 17 August 2016, <http://fillip.ca/content/the-golden-potlatch-study-in-mimesis-and-capitalist-desire>.

between the two artists and thereby establish a more reciprocal relation to the history that unfolds in the present.

To catch a glimpse of the pasts and futures that slip in and out of our hybrid present, we need a slower time, or as Mathias Danbolt suggests, a concept of dormancy. The seemingly inactive dormant entity is not an absolute alterity to which we can never connect, nor is it fully past, but instead “only temporarily standing still and might be reanimated in ways that will give them a different life in times to come.”¹⁵⁵ Perhaps a reciprocal history is only possible when we allow part of the past to first go dormant in ourselves – like the dormant echoes of Arke that reactivated in *Colonial Grains* and then led to *Homage to Soil for Scoresbysund*.

As Kleemann wanders in and out of the audience, the slowness of these returns becomes heightened. As suggested in the previous chapter, Kleemann has often positioned her exercises in interactivity in relation to the concept of the *qivittoq*. The lone figure wandering among her audience confronts them with the reality that “many are needed to create an outcast.”¹⁵⁶ But in this case, interactivity turns into collectivity-building as all participants become loosely wound together. If Kleemann is performing a *qivittoq*, it is one crafting a new community to return to.

The new soil, which she distributed to the audience, emphasized that this collectivity concerns *being* in the world, a world that we share, as in the sharing that defines *kaffemik* parties. As she wound us together, I became aware of entering a collective experience, but never sensed compulsion. I cannot help but think that this is possible because so much of the performance dealt with walking. As Karen O’Rourke describes, walking brings our individual journeys in

¹⁵⁵ Mathias Danbolt, “Dormancy: Notes on Sleep, Criticality, and the Poetics of Suspension in and around Henriette Heise’s *Darkness Machines*,” in *Not Now! Now! Chronopolitics, Art & Research*, ed. Renate Lorenz (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2014), 159.

¹⁵⁶ Moestrup, 69.

dialogue with human history: “Walking blurs the borders between representing the world and designating oneself as a piece of it, between live art and object-based art.”¹⁵⁷ Walking generates “touches” across time and social scales, to again evoke Danbolt’s “touching history,” an autonomy that recognizes that we are always-already implicated in the lives and spaces of others.

At the end of “Ethno-Aesthetics” Arke appeals to a third place beyond postcolonial discourses, for those like her, neither, “the ethnographic object nor [...] the ethnographic subject.”¹⁵⁸ She writes further that, “there is a certain element of urgent necessity in our play with the pieces of different worlds.”¹⁵⁹ I interpret this third place as a site that attempts to navigate the ambiguity and instability in history – and not to stabilize it – a place of encounter like the space Kleemann opened in Anchorage that brought together a different relation to the past, while moving into its own present. Arke also noted that “we will have to create that place ourselves.”¹⁶⁰ For example, by making new soil, and giving it to a group of diverse subjects. As Kleemann disperses the coffee handful by handful, the “center” from which it derives vastly diminishes, creating a new fellowship with the audience as well as with the historical artwork.

Besides these actions, the sensory component of the performance engaged all of the museum’s visitors as the aroma of coffee spread over two floors. Two hours later, I still smelled of coffee. The scent draws me back to the element of *Soil for Scoresbysund* not captured in the photographs documenting it. Aroma is a surprisingly little-studied topic in performance studies, and existing studies tend to focus on the deliberate use of scent as a theatrical device, often used to evoke specific associations of ethnic or sexual otherness, or more generally to enhance a sense

¹⁵⁷ Karen O’Rourke, *Walking and Mapping: Artists as Cartographers* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2013), 13.

¹⁵⁸ Arke, *Etnoæstetik*, 31.

¹⁵⁹ Arke, *Etnoæstetik*, 31.

¹⁶⁰ Arke, *Etnoæstetik*, 31.

of theatrical realism.¹⁶¹ In this case, however, the aroma is incidental, simply an excess of the coffee that bears the many histories and metaphors already discussed.

Considering how much scent depends on liveness while it unexpectedly and uncontrollably evokes memories that exceed the live, aromas can help us think about how histories collectivize, individualize and create links between cultural memory in the always-deferred now. Regardless of their position within the atrium, all audience members and museum visitors with active olfactory receptors came under the influence of the scent. While I was setting up the coffee mound in the hours before the performance, many of them told me they smelled it before they entered the room. Though in this case it is partly a collective experience, olfaction triggers thoroughly individual, unpredictable or even arbitrary associations for individuals, responses developed over the course of their lives through their continuously evolving embodied memory. While scent refers to the object omitting it, it also lingers after that object has disappeared. The scent of coffee has no presence, but in its own formlessness it represents the excesses of the historical record, entering the memories of its audiences even though this element of the performance is entirely un-recordable. In this capacity scent unites the various temporal and historical contingencies engaged in Arke's installation and Kleemann's performance, of a liveness that shifts in and out of discrete narratives and general associations, presenting itself in a durational temporality while representing its continuously developing layers of history, drawing on the "hard" histories of political relocation and imperialism as well as the sensory and affective dimensions that underlie all encounters with the historical.

¹⁶¹ Sally Banes, "Olfactory Performances," *TDR: The Drama Review* 45:1 (2001): 74-5.

Conclusion

It is 10 September, 2015, World Suicide Prevention Day. In Greenland's capital city Nuuk, chilly and overcast, a young woman stands in the middle of the city center wearing only underwear and a blindfold over her eyes. She holds her arms outstretched while strangers draw hearts on her skin with markers. In front of her is a simple piece of cardboard on which she has written:

From 1 January 2015 to 1 September 27 people in Greenland have committed suicide and 47 have attempted. In 2007 I joined the statistic of the attempts. I was helped – there is help to receive – it's just a matter of saying it loudly and clearly! Today I feel lucky; I got help. I'm happy that I have family and friends who listened when I was in a bad period. If you want to join in breaking taboos around suicide draw a ; and/or <3 on my body.¹⁶²

Karen Berthelsen had no experience with activism, performance art or theater before this day when she remembered her past struggle and felt compelled to use her body as a medium to express an urgent need for awareness, compassion and collective action. While this form of street activism is common to European and Euroamerican cities, it is difficult to overemphasize this action's significance in the local context. An article in the newspaper *Sermitsiaq* describing it was shared over 2,300 times – Greenland's total population is only fifty-six thousand. This action demonstrates a conviction many performance artists, art historians and theorists have long held: that witnessing vulnerable bodies should unite us all. As Berthelsen herself notes, these actions should resonate beyond the duration of their initial performance and remain active in new forms. She writes in her still active blog: "I write this blog in order to not make my event silent."¹⁶³

¹⁶² Emphasis original. See Mads Dollerup-Scheibel, "Se billeder: Ung kvinde bryder tabuet om selvmord," *Sermitsiaq* 11 September 2015, last accessed 17 August 2016, <http://sermitsiaq.ag/se-billeder-ung-kvinde-bryder-tabuet-selvmord>. The link contains images of Berthelsen's action.

¹⁶³ Karen Berthelsen, "Blog-nut tikilluarit – Velkommen til min blog," *Paquminanngilaq – ikke et tabu* 23 October 2015, last accessed 17 August 2016, <http://karenberthelsen.dk/pinngortinnera-bliver-til/>.

What this performance, like Arke's and Kleemann's, asks us to do is to practice forms of respectful belonging together, while being open to the many unexpected touches that come into our present. For Arke, this often meant turning toward the fractured, occasionally illegible past in order to express how the articulating structures of history not only facilitate but actively shape knowledge. For Kleemann, this frequently involves turning toward the present and encountering the elements of the past that exist within the present as part of the present. Upon comparing her practice with Arke's, it also becomes apparent that the historical and autobiographical narratives Arke addressed coexist with the present as remains. For both Arke and Kleemann, the past both returns to the present and remains in the present, as simultaneously past *and* present. Their performances of history have less to do with a "flash" of recognition than a slow and dense process of encounter. Not a haunting, but "a meeting that never ends."

For Kleemann, her own body and repertoire of movement actively participate in this process of forming historical knowledge. With this in mind, it becomes apparent that Arke's camera obscura also invoked the body as a research model, as a means of coming to know the world. Like in the camera obscura, during Kleemann's first performance with Wolf in the Winter her body coexists with a light that projects behind her images of an outside world. For both, the light of projection, when paired with the body's own perception of temporality, analogizes both past and present. In Kleemann's case, however, she takes her audience with her into the darkness. Once they have been seduced into an observer-role, safe in their distance from the observed body and image, the lights rise, and she reaches out, as if to catch them unaware. Compared with Arke's camera obscura model of time and space, this performance reveals that performances of history can also establish continuity between subject and object, like Arke's shadow images that allowed her to practice photography simultaneously as subject and object,

presence and absence. Arke's and Kleemann's approaches thus suggest that history is always embedded in choreographic processes of production as well as reception.

I am reminded of art historian Nivi Christensen's reflection on debates surrounding the possibility of building a national gallery for Greenland where she writes, "I believe that in Greenland we need a museum that questions stereotypes, and which can operate as a debate forum for Greenlandic identity, not a museum that holds Greenland fixed in the two positions of being either historically anchored or culturally destroyed."¹⁶⁴ Something similar could be said of Greenland's broader art history. Kleemann's and Arke's performances suggest such a historical method that is always-already in a process of re-formation. I argue that the work of history occurs as a constant practice of both presentation and re-presentation, where both the past and the present play active roles in forming historical knowledge, and which occurs in tandem with the constant production and reproduction of the present. Which leaves me asking: "Do you think it's over?"

¹⁶⁴ Nivi Katrine Christensen, "Grønlands Nationalgalleri for Kunst: En kritisk gennemgang af relevante problemstillinger" (Speciale i Kunsthistorie ved Københavns Universitet, 2013), 58. Christensen has also published a critique of collecting practices, where she evaluates that no art institution in Denmark or Greenland currently fulfills the mandate of representing the full diversity of Greenlandic artists. See Nivi Christensen, "Grønlands billedkunst – de ukomplette samlinger," *Tidsskriftet Grønland* 63:1 (2015): 4-5. In her current position as director of the Nuuk Art Museum, one of only two museums in Greenland dedicated to art, both of which are former private collections, Christensen has herself begun to address this disparity, particularly by expanding the museum's public events and performance program.

Figures

*All images are listed but not reproduced.

Figure 1. Pia Arke, *Landkending I-III* [Landfall I-III], 1993, annotations added 2003. Three framed b/w photographs. Collection of Søren Arke Pedersen. 43.1 x 52 cm, 56.1 x 47.2 cm, 44.1 x 28 cm including frames.

Figure 2. Pia Arke, *Untitled (Thule Air Base)*, 1992-93, annotations added 2003. One framed b/w photograph. Collection of Søren Arke Pedersen. 46.5 x 56.5 cm including frame.

Figure 3. Pia Arke, *Imaginary Homelands* alias *Ultima Thule* alias *Dundas "Det gamle Thule"* [Dundas "The Old Thule"], 1992, annotations added 2003. Four framed b/w photographs. Collection of Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk, Denmark. 46 x 44 cm, 55.4 x 43.4 cm, 46 x 56.5 cm, 44 x 47 cm including frames.

Figure 4. Pia Arke, *Nuugaarsuk* alias *Hulkamerafotografi* alias *Pointen* [Nuugaarsuk alias Pinhole Camera Photograph alias The Point], 1990. B/w photograph. Collection of Museet for Fotokunst, Odense, Denmark. 49.5 x 59.5 cm.

Figure 5. Pia Arke, *Kronborg-serien* alias *Kronborg-suiten* [The Kronborg Series alias The Kronborg Suite], 1996. Three b/w photographs. Collection of Søren Arke Pedersen. Each 49.8 x 59.5 cm.

Figure 6. Documentation of an untitled performance by Jessie Kleemann at Katuaq Culture Centre, 2 May, 2003. Video still from Sarah Simbelt, *The Wolf in the Winter: Greenland Gathering*, 2004.

Figure 7. Video still from Jessie Kleemann, *Video Poem*, 2001.

Figure 8. Documentation of an untitled performance by Jessie Kleemann at Katuaq Culture Centre, 2 May, 2003. Video still from Sarah Simbelt, *The Wolf in the Winter: Greenland Gathering*, 2004.

Figure 9. Documentation of Aaron Williamson's performance "Ice Mitten" at Katuaq Culture Centre, 2 May, 2003. Video still from Sarah Simbelt, *The Wolf in the Winter: Greenland Gathering*, 2004.

Figure 10. Documentation of an untitled performance by Kirsten Norrie at Katuaq Culture Centre, 2 May, 2003. Video still from Sarah Simbelt, *The Wolf in the Winter: Greenland Gathering*, 2004.

Figure 11. Documentation of Wolf in the Winter's collective performance at Assaqtuaq, 2003. Video still from Sarah Simbelt, *The Wolf in the Winter: Greenland Gathering*, 2004.

Figure 12. Documentation of Wolf in the Winter's collective performance at Assaqtuaq, 2003. Video still from Sarah Simbelt, *The Wolf in the Winter: Greenland Gathering*, 2004.

Figure 13. Documentation of Wolf in the Winter's collective performance at Assaqutaq, 2003. Video still from Sarah Simbelt, *The Wolf in the Winter: Greenland Gathering*, 2004.

Figure 14. Documentation of Jessie Kleemann's performance *Homage to Soil for Scoresbysund* at the Anchorage Museum, 2015. Photograph by David Winfield Norman.

Figure 15. Documentation of Jessie Kleemann's performance *Homage to Soil for Scoresbysund* at the Anchorage Museum, 2015. Photograph by David Winfield Norman.

Figure 16. Documentation of Jessie Kleemann's performance *Homage to Soil for Scoresbysund* at the Anchorage Museum, 2015. Photograph by David Winfield Norman.

Figure 17. Documentation of Jessie Kleemann's performance *Homage to Soil for Scoresbysund* at the Anchorage Museum, 2015. Photograph by David Winfield Norman.

Figure 18. Pia Arke, *Jord til Scoresbysund* [Soil for Scoresbysund], 1996. Used coffee grounds wrapped in filters and tied with string arranged in a 160 x 165 cm. square. Installation view of the exhibition “Piteraqaq: En fælles udstilling af Pia Arke og Eva Merz,” Overgaden, Copenhagen, Denmark. Photograph by Peter Schandorf.

Figure 19. Documentation of Karen Berthelsen's action in front of Brugsen at Nuuk city centre, 10 September, 2015. Photograph by Leiff Josefsen.

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