

DAYDREAMS

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ABSTRACT

This paper lays out the thinking process and decisions taken in an artistic methodology and an emerging thesis project. Here, imagination, reflection and projection are interpreted both as methods in looking and as inner spaces; they are ways to see and ways to be, and the main topic of this research. States of mind and of vision are explored through observation and introspection. Walking, transit and travel are ways employed to allow a slowness in looking and an opportunity to daydream. These experiences in space and time are recorded through methods of writing, photography and videography. I build installations in which this translation from moment to media is displayed to create an immersion for the viewer to be in. In the multimedia installations, the gallery becomes a space in which to reflect and project: it too allows a slowness in looking, thinking and noticing.

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I am walking down a path that's a little flooded from yesterday's rain. There are many rocks on this path that my feet are avoiding without really thinking about it. Steps following each other, carrying my head around, carrying my gaze across. Some walks are automatic and some mornings are numbing. It smells of the ocean and there is salt on my skin, in my hair, in my eyebrows.

The secret is that, wherever you are, sometimes, you are somewhere else. Daydreaming, remembering, projecting. You're here and far away, you're here but you're not. You carry your intimacy in your hand, in your head. You pass someone in the corridor who's probably somewhere else as well, a secret place we can't find in space.

Where are you when you're not here?

Where are you when your eyes become blurry and people turn to shadows?

Where are you when you don't hear me, when you say "Mm?... Sorry, what was that?"

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I am floating. Under my eyelids, life is orange, yellow, kaleidoscopic. Life is more or less warm depending on the branches passing over me, depending on the branches under which I pass. I try not to look behind me, not to look at where the current is taking me, never too far, but how can I be sure? It is both easy and difficult to let the water take me. I have nothing to do, floating is something that gets done without our control. Maybe it is this loss of control that makes it so difficult.

LOOKING FOR

This thesis is written in questions and maybes, in hopes and perhaps. I thought that I didn't have the certainty to state things as truths, especially since I work around ideas of daydreaming¹, of being lost in one's thoughts. I believe now that it is more a desire to encourage nuance rather than a lack of confidence. How can I be certain when I work with intangibility and the ungraspable? I have decided not to write in a determined manner, for this is the most fruitful way for me to navigate those ideas; not looking straight ahead at the horizon, but floating². The main question I ask is how can I represent what I cannot fully grasp? Perhaps to represent is not the right verb here: it should be more subtle, a suggestion. This process allows appreciating the daily, the wander, and the uncertain. Since the light never hits my bedroom wall in the same way, since everything varies according to the everchanging ever so slight movements of wind and light, I am trying to give space and time to the liminal, the overlooked, the slow.

I have always photographed and filmed places in a way so that they become unrecognizable. It was important that the viewer didn't know where the image came from, perhaps I wasn't exactly sure of where I was myself. The physical space I was in was not relevant to me, but the mental space was. The feelings and memories associated were.

I can no longer disregard the space I am in as I did in my past work. I want to acknowledge that I am now living, working and dreaming on the unceded territories of the Coast Salish people that include the ancestral and traditional territories of the Squamish, Musqueam and Tsleil-Waututh nations. Imagination, the space I want to focus on, is still triggered by vision and by the multisensorial: all of which I draw from the land. As I am only starting to learn about my position as a settler on this land, learning to move through it, to watch and to listen, I do so with respect, gratitude and care.

¹ Daydreaming, or SITUTs (stimulus-independent and task-unrelated thoughts), entails engaging in spontaneous thoughts unrelated to one's current context (Singer and Schonbar). Mind-wandering is defined as daydreaming while performing another task (Smallwood and Schooler). They are both common forms of imagination, though I will be focusing more on daydreaming since I am purposely trying to trigger this state of mind.

² I consider floating as both an extension of daydreaming and a tool to trigger it. I mean an extension but also a metaphor, it is this idea of going from one thought to the other with no set direction. I mean a tool because I noticed that everytime I am floating, whatever the body of water elevating mine, I find myself daydreaming — what else is there to do?

I come from France, a country whose wealth is a direct benefit from its terrible colonial history (which I barely learnt about in school). It is also where I grew up, where most of my family is and the only place in the world where I do not have an accent. There is a bit of home in my work, of longing in my words and of bitterness in my longing. French literary and artistic influences feed my work, not because I look for them, but because of a subjective sensibility to their aesthetic. They are the books I studied at school and the movies projected in the small “art et essai” cinema in the village next to mine: it is what I know. I learned a lot from home, and do so every time I go back, but the awareness of space³, of where I’m standing, is something I am just learning to grasp here and now.

I often talked about my work in terms of space. The space our body takes in a room and in the landscape, the space we occupy and the space we’re from. Space as unknown, but also familiar, and sometimes distance. Space as something we move in, as somewhere we go to, as something we miss or long for (place). It is more and more about time. The time we take to look at things, the times we don’t and the things we still see. The time to take the photograph, and the time to look at it. And perhaps these various ways of looking are different intersections of space and time. Now, in my installations, I aim to make room for these intersections, to make the imaginary a space of its own.

Looking, projecting, reflecting, are words that refer to the visual and to space, to light really, but that also refer to a thinking process, or one of feeling: to an introspective state of being. This is what I am thinking about, these things we see without seeing, because they’re really just a canvas for our thoughts, for our daydreams. As Malcolm de Chazal describes:

Le regard de l’homme flotte et dérive, glisse et patine, pèse et passe, en éternel papillon. Le regard des bêtes seul fait mouche à tout instant. Car l’animal voit pour voir, et l’homme voit pour voir et... penser — ce qui fait dériver et flotter son regard.

The human gaze floats and drifts, slides and skates, weighs and passes, as an eternal butterfly. Only the animal’s gaze reaches its goal anytime. Because the animal sees to see, and the human sees to see... and think — which makes his gaze drift and float. (56)

³ When I write about the awareness of space, I mean the awareness of my position on this land, and the history of genocide and violence that means that I, a white european woman, am standing here today.

This image of our gaze floating according to our thoughts is both intriguing and poetic. I look for and notice those instances, as well as the inverse phenomenon in which our gaze triggers our thoughts.

I have been trying to understand how these moments happen, what are the factors that enable them, what are the spaces, gestures and visuals that allow for our mind to wander? In this thesis, looking is meant in many ways. It is an observation, being alert to my surroundings and how they make me feel, looking not only with the eyes but with my whole body. It is looking as in searching, as an introspection, looking with my eyes closed. It is seeing or perceiving, embracing all that comes in front of my eyes, in front of what my body frames, all that I haven't necessarily been looking for. Some people call it melancholy, others nostalgia, but I believe that it is a state of being lost in one's thoughts; a blur of the eye and no notion of the time of day, without necessarily being melancholic or nostalgic – perhaps the right word would be pensive.

Some creative writing is included in this paper and some of those pieces are parts of artworks too. I don't work in the same way for all projects and do not have a recipe on how to create. What I know is that it always starts with writing; sometimes the text will be the central part of an artwork and sometimes it will only be the starting point. It is the first step of creating for it is how I first record an experience. In my work, writing, photography, and videography are mediums used to record a moment. Walking, travelling and transit are means to find and trigger those moments. Projection, sound and immersive installations are methods adopted to translate those moments in the gallery.

We can see them dance along the road. We are coming back from a hike, a day at the beach, a weekend at our grandparents. It never occurs when we are going on an adventure, always on the way back. We are sitting in the back seat of the car, watching the landscape as it goes by. As we go by. And then, it comes to us suddenly, that we are not watching it anymore. We haven't really been watching it. It was given to us, and we used it as a visual support to our thoughts, without consent, without noticing. This thinking is not a present one, an actual one. It is and has a mystery of passivity to it. Dreamlike unactivity, blurry eyes.

We are projecting our thoughts on the unravelling landscape, until we get totally hypnotised by the actions happening in the foreground: the gracious dance of the electric cables. They go from pole to pole, as if they were taking steps, taking a break in their suspension, in their arabesque. And sometimes one of them goes away, out of our window frame, and we see that we are, without asking ourselves to do so, moving our head, readjusting our position. We are trying to follow with our eyes this fugitive dancer. Passively.

In a choreography, the dancers are moving and the audience is static. Here, the dancers are still, anchored in the ground, their feet are buried, rooted. It is our movement that gives us the illusion of theirs.

LOOKING THROUGH

These experiences, these daydreams, usually happen in a transient mode, either walking through space, being transported in a car, a bus, a train, or in transitory spaces where we find ourselves waiting for something or someone, such as a waiting room, a ferry boat etc. In these moments of displacement from space to space we are ourselves in a moving place, a vessel for transportation, a vessel for contemplation and for projection. The very easy and efficient use of transportation changed the way we looked at the landscape since we suddenly were travelling through it (Strauss 385). Through this compression of time and space, I am interested in what we catch, what we perceive of these landscapes we only glimpse at for a second and they're gone the next, of this unravelling we witness and maybe, if we're very alert, look at. Last year, I created different video installations for a body of work called *Still Frame – Moving Train* (2019).



fig. 1 - one of the video installations in *Still Frame - Moving Train* (2019). Optoma micro projector, plinth, wooden box, V-Flat.

They are all composed of photographic and videographic imagery, and of text in the form of subtitles. Some of the projectors are moving, or imply a potential movement: one is built on a rocking wooden stand, another one is mounted on a swing⁴ and is hanging from the ceiling, some are projected at different angles. They all originate from a train ride in the Amtrak Cascades going north to Vancouver from Seattle, WA. They explore the phenomenon of being still in a moving train, the illusion of a moving landscape and the paradox between speed and boredom. One of the videos is a loop pairing photographs, still videos and text. It touches on this telescoping of space and time, of fleeting thoughts in an unravelling landscape. At the beginning of the video, the subtitles say:

I ate an apple I didn't want so I wouldn't have to declare it.
We're going fast, all the windows of the houses carry what they see.
Shades of orange reflecting my left on my right.
At the train station, I get glimpses of lives I don't lead.
Three minutes of an afternoon light that isn't mine.
Fading eye contact and I left forever,
for the town north of your Wednesday night.

The philosopher Jacques Derrida wrote about Marcel Proust's use of time and space in his work *À la recherche du temps perdu*. At many instances in the different volumes, Proust describes landscapes seen through moving cars, something perceived, someone, and the confusion that comes with that in terms of distance and perception. It is like if the realms of space and time were compressed to create an image, unreachable but close, blurry from the movement, perceived, remembered, but never framed, or still, or fully grasped. This video (fig. 1) was projected on V-Flats⁵ in the gallery space. As a result of its flexible nature, I could decide on the degree of the angle I wanted for the corner of this wall. The image was projected mostly on one of the two planes of the wall, with a small portion of the imagery prolonging on the other plane. With the wide angle of the corner, the image was distorted on the second plane: it felt like the image was fleeting

⁴ A swing was always a place for contemplation as a kid, for boredom as a teenager, perhaps for nostalgia as an adult (am I an adult yet) and I believe that our movements often imply our states of mind.

⁵ transportable walls that you can fold in two.

away, melting, disappearing. We were not sure of where the image was ending. The nature of the medium involves a necessary distortion since in any projection an image is thrown to another plane and another scale. I find the distortive potential of projection to be very exciting; the immateriality of the medium and the fact that it will keep projecting its rays of light, stubbornly, infinitely, until it reaches a plane to rest on. This distortion associated to the one of time in the content of the video – how everything feels slow though the train goes fast – accentuates this idea of the train as a space-time vessel. Darriulat discusses Proust's strange phenomenon of writing that is comparable to illusions of perspective that allow the far to be near or those reminiscings that allow the past to be present and says that "the simultaneity of space and time, that convokes in a same present the near and the far, the past and the actual, is even more sensible when speed increases". (Darriulat online).

LOOKING IN

The images in *Still Frame – Moving Train* (2019) were often of a landscape unravelling through the window of a train, and sometimes some other photographs were interrupting the movement. The prose in the subtitles was mentioning this passivity we find ourselves in, when we're not certain of what we're looking at, if we're really seeing it, if we're making it up. This state of mind is one of slowness – the train might be going fast, but we are not. We are sitting, waiting, and have all the duration of the ride to be lost in our thoughts. The speed of the mean of transportation we're in doesn't counter our slowness in looking. Proust's writing also touches on this passivity, on these in-between states, like when he writes, at the beginning of *Du côté de chez Swann*, about this moment when we wake up and can't immediately recall where we are. Stan Douglas uses this passage in his piece *Overture*, in which a 1901 footage of a train entering a tunnel is projected, with a voice over reading the extract from Proust's first novel of the series. This installation pairs image and voice and brings the viewer into a dream, someone else's but that can somehow still reach their own, for it is about a state of being. Douglas's imagery is archival and takes the point of view of the train. The viewer is looking straight ahead at the tracks, at the tunnel coming and is not placed as a passenger on this train as they are in my installation, though we still find this meditation on looking: that is when the viewer is both

looking at the scenic unravelling landscape and looking at themselves, their thoughts, in a introspective⁶ manner.

I am interested in these two different spheres that coexist in a moment like this, the exterior stimulation of what we see and the interior one, within ourselves. They are the space in between, the space of the imaginary. Imagination comes from the latin verb *imaginari*, “to picture oneself”, and entails an introspective or self-reflexive nature of the space or action; it becomes a private sphere. In the *Chicago School of Media Art Theory*, Katharine Perdue interprets imagination as a medium and as a process. It is described as a “world where thought and images are nested in the mind to form a mental concept of what is not actually present to the senses” when the word is referred to as a medium. When it is meant as a process, imagination is “a form of mediation between what is considered ‘externalized’ reality and ‘internalized’ man” (Perdue online). This mediation between the externalized and the internalized is what I try to point at; this space between outside and inside, of a window, of my mind, of the vessel. All of this resides in the space in between, in the space of the imaginary, also perhaps in the space between text and image.



fig. 2 - Stan Douglas, *Overture*, (1986). Single-channel 16mm film projection, 6 min (loop), black and white, sound. Dimensions vary with installation. © Stan Douglas Image used with permission of David Zwirner gallery, New York.

⁶ Darriulat evokes this experience when he says that we first project ourselves in exteriority through sensation, before converting to interiority through memory (Darriulat online).

LOOKING PAST

It is also significant to consider what is outside of the frame, just like from a moving car you know that what you glimpse at continues without you, you are only passing through it. In *The Virtual Window*, media theorist Anne Friedberg writes about the frame (window or screen) as being the way in which and through which we see and understand the world, she says that “how the world is framed may be as important as what is contained within that frame” (Friedberg 1). There is what you see, but there is also all the rest, the unseen, sometimes we guess it, feel its presence, and sometimes we are completely unaware of it. We are looking at something and watch it disappear, or maybe we don’t really watch it but notice at some point that it has disappeared. My photography is distant from the subject, because of how foreign it seems, how unreachable, but my writing is more intimate, it comes from within. While the photograph shows the space, the text evokes my presence in this space, my sensorial experience. When I write about the sensorial elements of the environment I mean how it felt to be there; it can be the weather, the mood, what is in my mind at this moment. Lots of these can be suggested in the photograph itself, such as the rain or an impression of boredom, but for some of these aspects words are needed. They are elements outside of the frame, either behind or simply floating around, and they are all very much part of the experience. By pairing images with text in this manner, I am trying to grasp all the elements that compose a moment that is often mundane but that was lived, felt, and most importantly, noticed. In another of the videos of this untitled installation, I touch on how a mundane moment can bring you to another one, in the passage:

I am sitting on my bag, it is sitting in the dust.

The bus is late and my knee is red, red from the weight of my other leg.

That morning, weight had color and boredom had a smell.

It smelled like the rubber of this car’s tires over there and suddenly,

it smelled like the wet sidewalk in front of my childhood house.

Sometimes it smells of summer, and sometimes of an other one.

The text acts as an inner voice, where one thought brings you to another, one place to another. I write about it all being outside of the frame as in what I am experiencing there, in this instance, with all the sensorial

affect it implies, still takes me somewhere else. This somewhere else relates to time more to space for it takes me to a memory, or to a possible future, and every other space or landscape this specific one brings me to is, in the fact that it has been lived, related to a moment. The French filmmaker Agnès Varda said once that if we cut people open we would find a landscape⁷, and this image of a landscape as a portrait stuck with me. Varda was a filmmaker associated with the Nouvelle Vague, a movement I admire and draw inspiration from. I am fascinated with how the Nouvelle Vague directors depicted place and feelings, their use of the voice over, their long shots with not much action happening, the dominance of the daily and the quiet lives the “heroes” lead. It allows for a relatable experience through the personal, an observation of the everyday places, habits, people, and an emphasis on words through dialogues or the voice over; all of which are methods I use in my practice as well.



fig. 3 - Installation shot — *La balançoire*, wood swing, micro projector (2019). Optoma micro projector, wood swing, rope.

⁷ Agnès Varda said that her own inner landscape would be a beach, in her movie *Les plages d'Agnès* (2008).

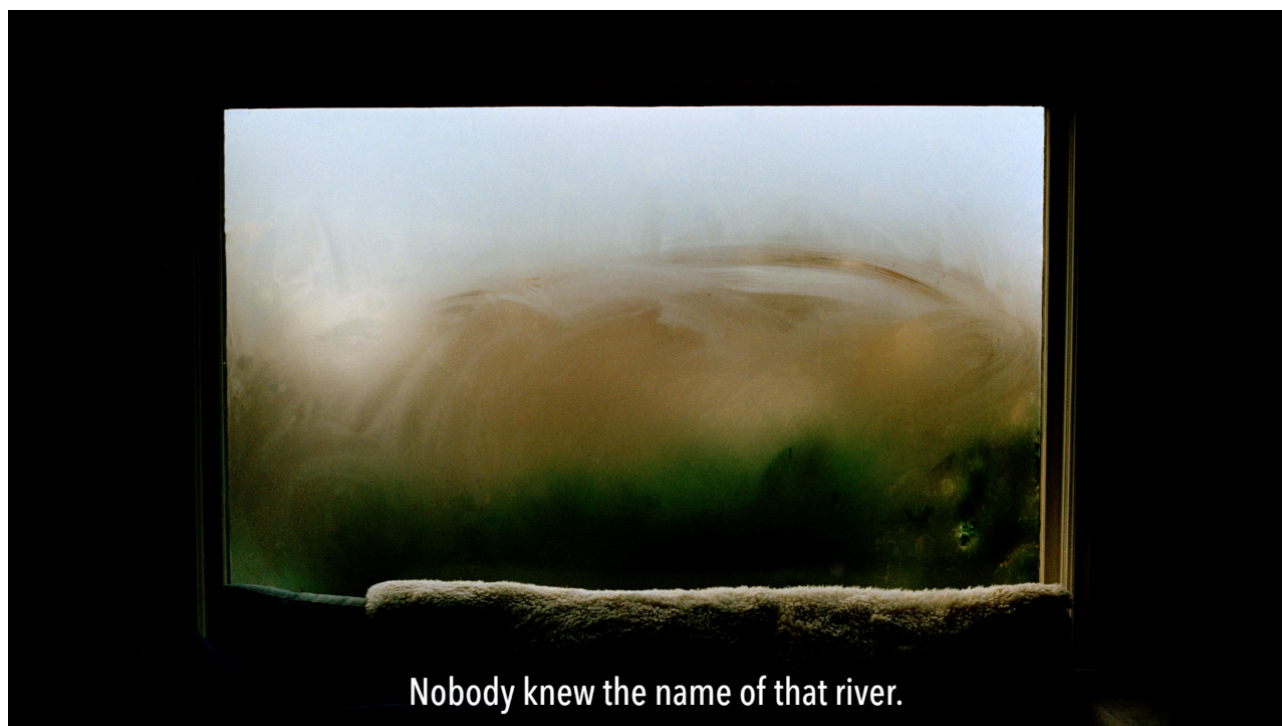


fig. 4 & 5 - film stills from *Still Frame – Moving Train* (2019)

When my mother was pregnant with her first child, someone told her that having a peaceful image in mind would help her during delivery. My brother was born in a hospital room, but really he was born somewhere in her childhood, in her grandparents' garden, not too far from Italy. He was born during one of those Sunday naps, hearing her family's voices in the distance as they were clearing the outside table where they just had lunch. My brother was born somewhere between memory and rêverie, when some go for a rest and others go make coffee.

I was born over her eyelids. In her mind, she was laying on the ground, watching the sky through the moving branches. When one cheek is cold of shade and the other one is burning up. I was born like a stencil of warmth over her body, like a tree over her nap.

LOOKING BACK

This is how the last work I created started, with a story my mother had told me years ago. I don't know how much of it is true, how much is what I pictured when she told me, how much of the story my memory, and imagination, have distorted. For *When my Mother was Pregnant* (2019), I was interested in working with story telling and interpretation, how images are told and how stories are visualized. It works the same way as when we read a novel and try to make out in our heads the space in which the narrative takes place. I have never been to this garden she talks about, but have a specific image in mind. I don't know what tree she was thinking about, was it somewhere familiar or a distant memory of hers, yet still, in my head, and in the work I created, it is a tree with oval green leaves on a very sunny day. I don't know how much her memory changed the place she had in mind, was it much more saturated when she was picturing it years later, is it a static mental image as if she only remembers it through a photograph, is it a smell more than an image, is it about our relationship? Pregnant also means something that is "filled with meaning or importance that has not yet been expressed or understood" (Cambridge online), and in this instance, the recollection is itself pregnant with possibility, full of expectation and potentiality.

In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Michel de Certeau writes about the distortion of space and time in writing, and maps it out in different examples. I am interested in his concept of the "occasion" which, just like the kairos or the opportune moment, maybe like the photographic punctum (Barthes), is when the most memory is concentrated in the least amount of time, or lowest volume. He says "extension means duration, and concentration means an instant. By means of this substitution of time for space, the correspondence of the unending series of experiences with the punctual moment of their recapitulation could be regarded as the theoretical model of the occasion" (de Certeau 126). The way I understand this and apply it to my work is the result of long observations: once I have noticed a recurring experience, I look out for other instances of this moment, and seek a way to describe or record it that best expresses its specificity. It is about distilling a series of similar events to their essence, to the feeling finally understood. De Certeau also talks more specifically about the role of memory and how it distorts, like projection and perspective, space. He says that the world of memory is a means of transforming space if it happens at the right time, the opportune moment and that "all these variants could very well be no more than the shadows – enlarged into symbolic and

narrative projections – thrown by the journalistic practice that consists in seizing the opportunity and making memory the means of transforming spaces” (de Certeau 130). This work is not completely about the memory of a place, not for me anyways though it was for her, as much as it is about a projection on things told. I like to think about the space between text and image – here between her storytelling and my imagination – as a space in which we get to interpret, to transform, to enlarge. When we bring a source of light close to an object, we can see large shadows on the walls around, bigger and more distorted than the object itself. This distortion in the shadows is similar to the one in stories, the further away we are from the source, the more distorted it gets. The more space, and time, there is in between. Of course this is an image created based on clues from description, but the question here is how much of this visual information is given to us and how much is guessed or constructed based on our own memories, our visual familiarities. It is this subjectivity that lies in the space in between. In my installation, I expand on de Certeau’s theory about memory being a means of transforming spaces, to visualize memory as a space itself, one that is always changing.



fig. 6 – Installation shot of *When my Mother was Pregnant* (2019). Short-throw projector, projection screen, pillows, V-Flats.

The installation was set up in the two graduate galleries and one of the moving walls between the two galleries was semi open, leaving a small corridor for people to go from one space to the other. In the first room they

enter, everything is dark except for a lightbox that leads the passage to the bigger gallery. On this lightbox is written the text above, the one that introduced the piece. In this same gallery, there are also speakers that we can not see and that project mixed sounds. We can hear some chatter in French, some cutlery clattering, a bit of wind, some crickets and some birds. The sound is on two different channels, the speaker the closest to the bigger gallery contained the birds chirping, wind and cricket noises whereas the one further, though louder, was playing the voices, some steps on gravel and the cutlery noises. I add sound to complete the immersion: if the viewer were to close their eyes, they would still be somewhere else. Cultural theorist Erin Manning said that “[...] vision and sound fields the environment, opening it to the relational multiplicity of movement, sensation, and space-time co-mingling” (Manning 49). This cohabitation of sound and vision in an installation is what creates a successful immersion in space, and just like the pairing of photography and text, the key to their success is in the balance: one cannot overpower or illustrate the other.

As the viewer enters the second space, the sound feels a little more distant, but they can still hear it. There are pillows of different shapes on the floor and a projector is fixed at the corner meeting the wall and the ceiling, and projects from above on a veil like canvas. The screen is attached by its corners and extended in a non rectangular shape, one side is attached directly to one of the walls whereas the other corners are attached with invisible thread to the ceiling and walls: it feels like it is floating. The imagery is moving, though the framing is still, and represents branches of a tree seen from underneath.

LOOKING AROUND

Often in my work, and particularly with *When my Mother was Pregnant* (2019), I try to think about space in different ways. About memory as a space, as images, and our imagination as a multitude of spaces. In this case, my mother was using memory as a distraction, as a way to go somewhere else than where she was then. I often think about daydreaming or thoughts as another place we're in. I wonder then about my need to recreate this space, mental or distant, in the gallery: why do I want people to be immersed in it if it is an experience they can create for themselves or find somewhere else? I was aiming to create immersion in multi sensorial environments in which people forget for a second perhaps that they are in a gallery space, immersion as in being somewhere with no contact whatsoever with our space of origin. But I realized after a

while that this immersion was not what I was looking for, and that my installations were not conveying it. I was creating mediated installations, in which the apparatus is visible, there is no illusion, or if there is one at first, it doesn't last long. The viewer is aware of where the image comes from, they can see the projector, they can hear it. This initial illusion is broken easily, when we find cues of the gallery space that come to disrupt⁸ our rêverie: a light switch, an outlet, the ceiling etc. This disruption is interesting, just like a voice takes us out of our daydream and brings us back to reality, or like when Stan Douglas's *Overture* piece brings us back to our own reality, awake again, everytime the train enters the tunnel and the image disappears. To answer my question regarding the need to reenact the moment, or feeling, or image, it is because these states of passive looking often happen without us noticing. We get lost in our thoughts, and often when we get lost, it is not something planned, or conscious: we realize only once we're lost that we are and perhaps have been for a little while. The moment we get out of this state, as we would wake up from a dream, we forget it instantly. I do not want these experiences to be fully immersive because I believe that if they were, the viewers would let the environment, the narrative perhaps, take them, and would not be reflecting on the space. By making my methods and media visible, I point at what I want the viewer to see; that is the reflections, the shadows, all that is overlooked in the outside world. By not opting for an immersive space, I put the emphasis on what we do not usually notice, to make sure that those elements are noticed here. By creating these installations, I hope to give space and time to these liminal instants, the fugitive ones, the thoughts we can't grasp. The space⁹ of the imaginary¹⁰ seems to be the last space that can still be our own. It is a way to answer this question I set for myself: How can a multimedia installation become a means of transportation to take the viewer to another space, mental or distant?

I often look at the work of Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller for they create immersive installations, with sound, video, and with narrative related to space, to time, to dreams. The installation *Storm Room* (2009)

⁸ by disrupting conventional spatial codes, the viewer becomes active and empowered through noticing and acknowledging where the illusion lies. (Mondloch 61)

⁹ Katharine Perdue refers to imagination as a space in the passage : "In Aristotle, the imagination bridges the gap between 'images' and 'ideas,' implying that rational thought takes place in the form of images, and are stored and combined in the imagination. Thus, imagination is implied as an actual space or medium in the individual's mind, and in this space it has a power to combine images and ideas to do the work of reason." (Perdue online).

¹⁰ In his book *Modernity at Large : Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, anthropologist Arjun Appadurai writes about imagination as the only place in late modernism where an intervention or change is possible.

gives an impression of being in a room that is the only shelter from a storm outside; this illusion is created through the use of sound, water, lights and fans. My interest in it lies in the fact that it is recreating something that exists, it is an illusion of a phenomena we could find outside, and I often question the purpose of this sort of recreation in my own work. Since Cardiff and Miller are reenacting something we can experience outside, is the point of this piece to focus on how we feel in this instance? Does the poetic and visceral aspect of the artwork present in its multisensoriality encourage a feeling over a thought? The geographer Yi-Fu Tuan once wrote that:

Experience is compounded of feeling and thought. Human feeling is not a succession of discrete sensations; rather memory and anticipation are able to wield sensory impacts into a shifting stream of experience so that we may speak of a life of feeling as we do of a life of thought. It is a common tendency to regard feeling and thought as opposed, the one registering subjective states, the other reporting on objective reality. In fact, they lie near the two ends of an experiential continuum, and both are ways of knowing. (3)

This notion of feeling as a way of knowing resonates with me for most of my works start with a feeling, an impression rather than a thought-through concept. Then comes the writing, then an image, or a potential installation comes to mind, a manner in which to host and collect those feelings.

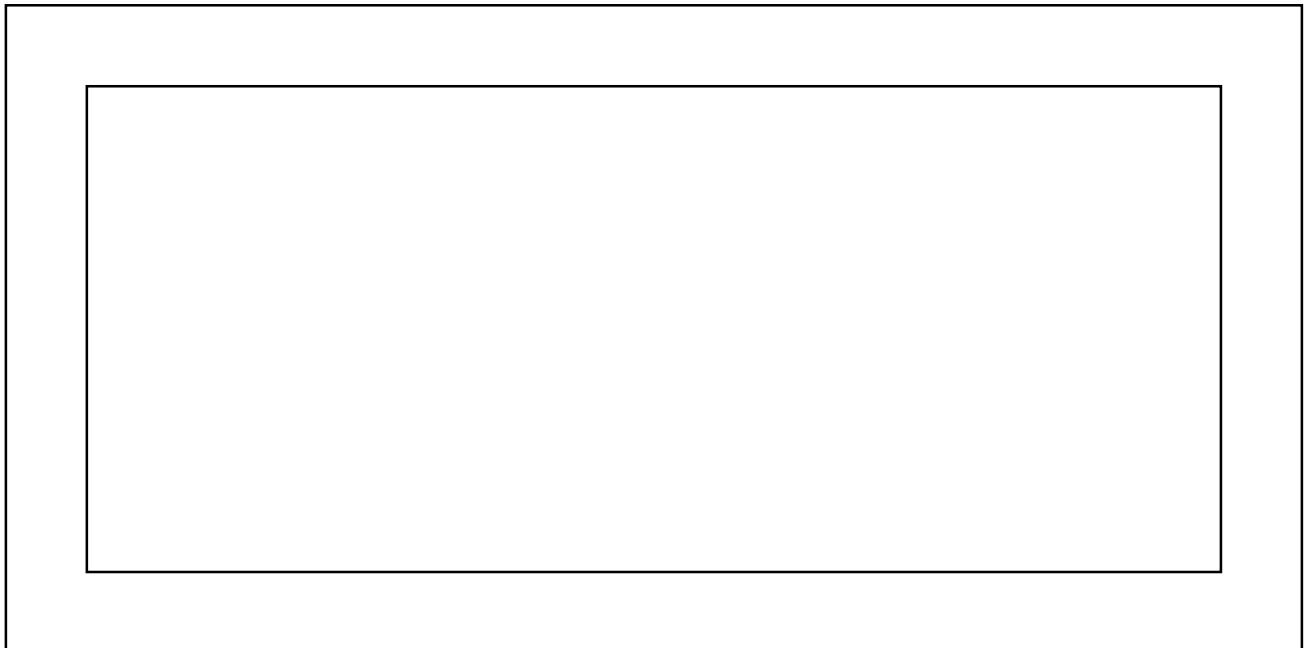


fig.7 - Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller, *Storm Room* (2009). Mixed media installation, 10 min, dimensions variable.
(did not get the copyright for the image).

I am also caught by some of Cardiff and Miller's smaller **works** and their use of sound and text (voice) to bring an image to mind, to host a narrative. In their work *Dreams – Telephone Series* (2008-10), the viewer picks up a telephone in the gallery and hears Janet Cardiff's voice recounting a dream. It continues their "interest in the telephone as a mechanism for story-telling while furthering their exploration of the narrative potential of dreams", and even if I am not introducing the telephone device in my work, I use voice¹¹ to tell stories related to a dream, a landscape, an experience, which brings us back to this idea of how images can be told and not always shown.

LOOKING AT

This winter, I discovered the work of Paz Encina, a Paraguayan filmmaker who explores ideas of memory. At the Fondation Cartier, I saw her work *Aromas que trae el viento*, and was surprised by how much I carried it with me for the following days. I entered this large room where the only light available came from the projection screen along one wall of the gallery. There were two projectors fixed to the ceiling that were directed towards these screens. The images were moving and still, overlaying each other sometimes. There was a voice over those images, the artist was talking to us (to me) in Spanish, remembering moments, objects and places from her childhood. I was wondering how this person's experience was getting me to be so introspective about my own childhood, so different from hers, lived so far away from hers. I realized after a while that through this subjective remembrance, in between sentences of this poetic narration, she addressed me, the viewer, directly. She talked about the chairs from her childhood at some point, then said "Have you ever sat on a chair with a young child falling asleep on your lap?". The way in which she managed to intertwine those different tones was impressive, the way she talked about a landscape she remembers then asked us if we've ever felt lonely, if we remember our first word or our first caress. As I was watching the images she presented to us, I was seeing others, some from my home, from my childhood.

Sometimes the image would cover the whole length of the screen, being sourced from both projectors, sometimes only one image would be projected on one side, sometimes two images were paired. There were

¹¹ In my quest to find different ways to pair image and text, I have often used my voice as a carrier of text. I record myself then project the sound in speakers in the space. I am not talking about any of these works in this thesis.

large pillows on the floor for the viewers to sit on, and of this immersive experience I will retain two things: the vast reaching potential of storytelling, and how asking questions can be a good way to trigger imagination or a walk through the viewer's memories. When Encina asked "Have you ever been on a boat down a river?" or "Have you ever walked the streets of a foreign city?" images came to mind, images as moments, as memories, as a space to be in for this little while.



fig. 8 - Paz Encina, *Aromas que trae el viento* (2019). Super 8 film, 21 min.

This space of imagination is what I aim to cultivate in the installations I create. I am not writing about my mother's story to tell the viewer about my mother but to let them sit under this tree. To let them sit and watch, to let them sit and wander. In *When my Mother was Pregnant* (2019), the pillows are an invitation for the viewer to come and sit, to stay for as long as they wish to. Those pillows become part of the installation¹² and the viewer here is asked to take everything into account, not only what is presented on the screen. In *SCREENS : Viewing Media Installation Art*, contemporary art historian Kate Mondloch examines the spatial dynamics of spectatorship in screen-reliant installations. She studies spectatorship based on the setting and

¹² In installation art, like in theater, the viewer is asked to be immersed in the experience that surrounds them, immersed in the sensorial and in the narrative, while still being aware of their identity as a viewer in this space. (Fried 45)

experience of viewing and often compares these installations to narrative cinema for they both present moving images but possess a very different kind of viewer. Effectively, media installation is more related to space while narrative cinema asks the viewer to disregard actual space and time, to live within the frame of the work for its duration, and the apparatus is disregarded as well. In media installations, and in the one I created, the media object (the projector in this case) becomes “a conceptual and literal point of emphasis that the viewer moves around” (Mondloch 64). In *When my Mother was Pregnant*, the projector is situated where the sun is in the image, and their sources of light become one. When we are sitting, or laying on the pillows, it feels like being under this makeshift tree. With the darkness of the space and the semi transparency of the screen, some light reflects on the walls and on the bodies of the persons in the gallery. The projection is also set at an angle so that part of the imagery is projecting on the wall before it reaches the screen, distorting the image and giving an impression of infinity.



fig. 9 – Installation shot of *When my Mother was Pregnant* (2019). Short-throw projector, projection screen, pillows, V-Flats.

With the movement in the imagery and the power of the projector bulb, sometimes the “sun” is behind a leaf giving warmer tones to the room, sometimes it is hidden behind a branch, sometimes it is coming straight at us, brightening our bodies. I was aiming at working with different spaces, the space between the viewer and

the screen, the space of the projection, and the mental space. With the spatial implications of media installation and with the fact that the work casts light and shadows on the viewer's body, they become, just through their presence, very much part of the artwork. Mondloch refers to this as the "here and now" when she says:

[...] certain media installations generate a forceful, critical effect that hinges precisely on this tension between illusionist/virtual and material/actual spaces. In a curious amalgamations of gallery-based spatial experimentation and political aesthetics, this model proposes that viewers be both "here" (embodied subjects in the material exhibition space) and "there" (observers looking onto screen spaces) in the here and now. (62)

This notion that the viewer is both an embodied subject in the space and an observer of this space is always in my mind when I am creating an installation. I am aware that they will need to be able to distinguish the imagery on the screen, and that their shadows will probably be cast on the floor as a result of this encounter. I try to anticipate where the viewer will be placed and to leave space for their shadows, for them to be able to discover it. The work doesn't look the same when there is no viewer, and though it is not interactive, the subtle encounter of the body and the projected image is poetic. They are both in each other's space, or sharing a same space. Viewership is an important component of my work and is now included in the making process. The conception of an installation only starts when I know what space will be used for it, in what way people will move through it. And once I have figured out my concept and imagery, when I am testing the projection in space, I try to get bodies in it, not only my own, so I can see how they interact with the work. In this way, I am sculpting the light and the installation in space and time, and am not set on any particular arrangement until I have tested the hosting space.

We can hear them run across the the ceilings. We are almost asleep, or maybe we are. The sound is there but we don't really pay attention to it at first. It is, oddly, regular and irregular at the same time. Maybe it sounds regular because of how familiar it is, because of how we are used to it just as we are used to this room; we've heard it so many times. Maybe it sounds irregular because its frequency is. It is like a musical leitmotiv with undetermined length to the pauses between each occurrence. It is like the heartbeat of someone who doubts. This sound evokes a movement and for a reason that we can't explain to ourselves, we open our eyes to follow its trajectory. Rays of light in the dark. Rays of someone passing by. As soon as we try to imitate their movement with our gaze, to follow it from beginning to end, we lose all of its magic. Why would we want to fix a flying star? We see with these flashes or according to them, more than we actually see them. We find ourselves thinking about the people driving these cars and, even though we don't know who they are, we know about their speed, about their direction, we know that they were here a second ago. And this is more than they'll ever know about us. They're not aware that we've been watching their light, that we've been the silent witnesses of their turnings and goings. How confusing it is to think that we see them without actually seeing them. To see is to have at a distance, and we're too tired to figure out the distance between them and us, between their car and our bed. We didn't even see their shadow. All that we've seen are their ghosts, their lights projecting on our walls and ceilings. It is as if, for them to appear, for us to be able to see their specter, everything else has to disappear. Everything else has to vanish in the discretion and the obscurity of the night. We've heard them go back home, their way mapped itself in our room for a second or so, we've fallen asleep.

THE OVERLOOKED

Since the late 1980s, a Slow Movement has been developed that is applicable to every field of research. It has particularly been developed through Slow Food, Slow Cities, Slow Travel or Slow Media. It is a way to counter the capitalist notion that fast is the right way to do things – it is about doing them at the right pace. Efficiency is defined as an accomplishment done with the least waste of time and effort, and has made us believe that speed is the key to this accomplishment. We live in a world that has pushed this idea of speed to an obsession, that imposes a rhythm quite absurd. Slow Living is about decelerating or taking a step back in order to be aware of the sensorial, the connected, the local. It is not necessarily about doing everything at an unhurried pace, but about finding the rhythm adapted to the action we're trying to accomplish. Slow Movement is often compared to that of rest and self care. Slowness and rest are political, they are a radical way of changing one's life and an attempt to counter late capitalism, but they are also a privilege. Not everybody can afford to slow down or to rest, and as beneficial as it would be to everyone, allowing ourselves to do so, or even to consider it, is a privileged position to be in.

Slowness has become a method of observation I have developed over time. I have always walked slow, which allowed me to look at what is around me, but lately I have been practicing a slowness in looking. I mean that I have been purposely standing or sitting somewhere, immobile, so I could watch the slowness of what is around. When you're moving through space, the environment feels static, and when you're staying still, you realize that everything is slightly moving, living, breathing. I have been working with still frame videography to capture these moments. The image feels like a photograph, it's only by staying long enough with the image that the viewer can start to notice the slight movements of the leaves, or waves, or hair. This still frame videography is known as the cinema of stasis, or static cinema, and challenge the notion that cinema is defined by movement. Motionless pictures are still cinema, which makes us wonder about what makes a film a film, if not movement, then it is duration. Film and Media scholar Justin Remes develops on this challenge of cinema as being necessarily a moving image when he says:

Static films offer radical challenges to conventional conceptions of cinema, since they are ostensibly motion pictures without motion. In most films an impression of movement is provided either by the motion of the camera or the motion of elements within the *mise-en-scène* – usually both. In contrast, static films generally feature no camera movement and little or no movement within the frame.

Instead, these films foreground stasis and consequently blur the lines between traditional visual arts and motion pictures. (3)

Static cinema, the not-so-moving pictures, allow for a different kind of spectatorship, one “for meditation, for immersion in an image, for sober reflections on the nature of movement and stasis, time and space, cinema and art” (Remes 22). Through these installations I create, this is what I hope the viewers may catch on.

I like to catch these movements in the form of shadows, for the contrast accentuates the motion and there is no distracting background. Also, it refers to the intangibility of projection: wind and light create this moving image, there is nothing to touch or grasp, yet we can see it. Once I started to look for these occurrences, I could not stop seeing them: they are everywhere. They’re on the façades of the houses we pass by and the tar of the streets we walk on, they’re on the sheets of my friend’s bed and in the palm of my hand. I wonder now if this close examination into the seemingly insignificant and ephemeral could be more than an exercise within poetics, that is to also be responding, consciously or not, to a total capitalization of life.



fig. 10 — Installation shot of *A Room for Projection and Reflection* (2020). Multimedia installation, video projection, 20 min, looping. Acrylic mirrors, pillow, wood structure.

I have been collecting those shadows and presented them in an installation called *A Room for Projection and Reflection* (2020). I noticed that everything is multiplied through plays of light: If we take the example of the tree, we'll see that when it's sunny, this tree is multiplied through its shadows that are projected onto the houses around it, onto the streets, onto our bodies. When it's cloudy, this tree will be multiplied through reflections in the windows of the houses around us, the windows of the cars we pass by or that pass by us. When it's rainy, the tree will be multiplied through reflections in the puddles of water, or on the ground that is reflective through its wetness. All over, all around these projections and reflections expand, distort and abstract. Yet all of these visuals, present everywhere, are intangible. They often go unnoticed.



fig. 11 — Installation shot of *A Window to Hold Shadows* (2020). Multimedia Installation, video projection, 2 min, looping.

Windows are meant to transmit light, to allow a certain transparency, yet in those moments, they become screens to hold those reflections. With this image in mind, I started playing some more with surfaces onto which to project. In *A Window to Hold Shadows* (2020), I projected a video looping seamlessly onto a window. The imagery is of a reflection of the shadow of my hand onto a body of water. In this way, the window becomes a screen, but it also becomes a liminal space: its frontier between the gallery space and the outside is occupied by this projection of a reflection. The water itself becomes a screen, and this image is very intangible: we cannot see the hand but its shadow reflected onto a body of water that still has some transparency, projected onto a window that also still has some transparency. This is an installation as a façade, you walk in front of it as you would a house that carries what it sees.



fig 12 – video still from *A Window to Hold Shadows* (2020). 2 min, looping.

In *A Room for Projection and Reflection* (2020), I went into a more sculptural exploration of these phenomena – I wanted to bend light, to have some control over it, decide of its direction, of where it would be received, where it would sit. I used acrylic mirrors in order to play with the light emanating from the projector. This 20 minutes video is a collage of different black and white videos of shadows and of movements. While I was editing these videos together, I let some of them appear a few times, in order to give an impression of a failed loop, and to remove any beginning or end to the piece¹³. The interaction between the projection and the mirror created some distorted reflections onto the walls around the gallery, onto the large pillow where the viewer would sit, and expanded the image beyond its frame. Sometimes the imagery was totally abstracted in those reflections, more textural, sometimes elements of the image would remain, such as leaves or waves moving onto the gallery space. This method reinforces the mediation mentioned earlier: by means of making the apparatus visible, I break the illusion of immersion and bring the viewer's attention onto the otherwise overlooked.

¹³ Deleuze suggests that movement can be achieved in film not just through the movement of the camera or of what happens within the frame, but also through the montage, that is the editing of images together, the rhythm and narrative created through their juxtaposition.

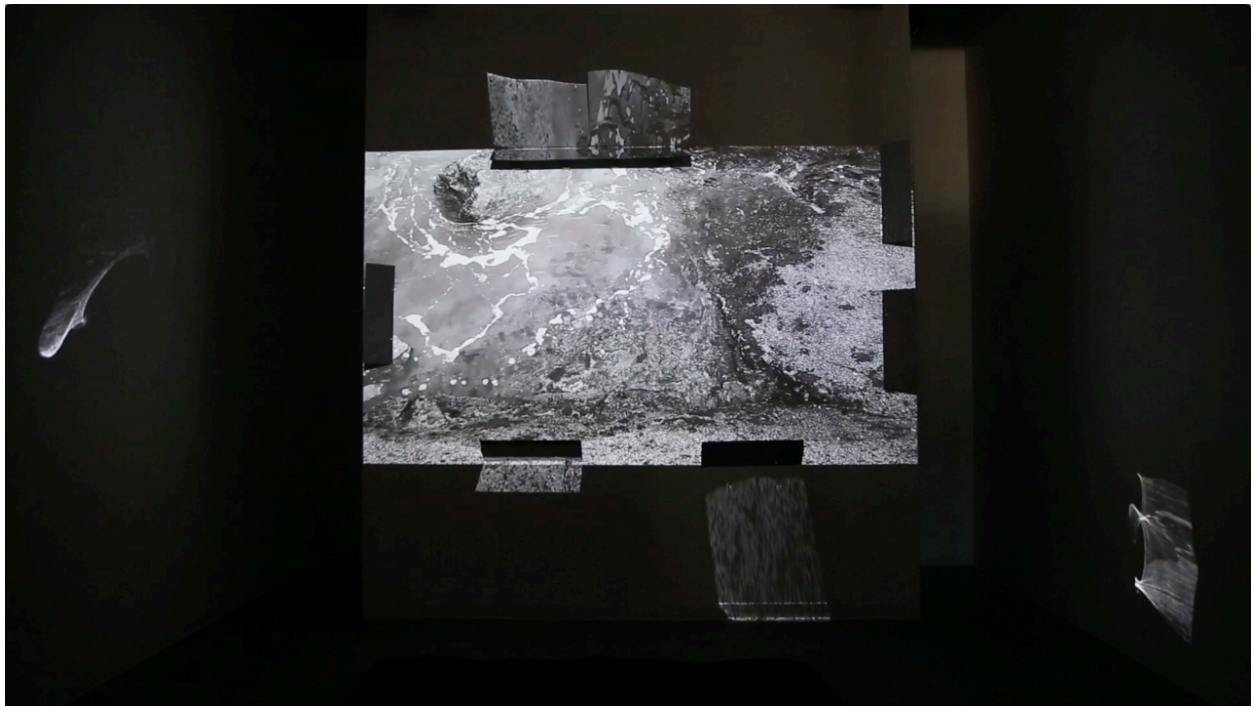


Fig. 13 and 14 - Installation shots of *A Room for Projection and Reflection* (2020). Multimedia installation, video projection, 20 min, looping. Acrylic mirrors, pillow, wood structure.

LOOKING FORWARD

The other day, I asked my students what introspection meant to them, and the poetic answers conveyed images of a drive in the woods, a cigarette break, the hill from their hometown they spent countless hours sitting on – a rest as an image, a memory as a state of mind.

There is something generative, and slightly frustrating, in the fact that a research like this one never ends. A question asked brings us to five more, and the answers are never definitive but rather a series of explorations ricocheting from our initial elan. A thought brings an image and an image brings another thought, and we find ourselves expanding the field as we are trying to narrow it down. I do not complain, for this is where the fun lies: in the multitude of possibilities that arise from a question, or a mistake, or a misunderstanding. There is an overwhelming in the discovery: so many artists to look at and words to reflect on, though there is hope in the sentence found, the precious one that validates everything we've been wondering about and never clearly articulated. There it is, hidden in a préface to an obscure book or on a label on the wall of the gallery hosting the opening we didn't feel like going to. It is what we look for, it is also what comes to us.

My practice sits within the expanded field of photography. I associate the medium with others, and all those other elements still contribute to my research of the image. Right now, I want to focus on creative writing. This writing practice still resonates very much with the image, for what I am writing concerns what is outside of the photographic frame, and I believe that poetry is images brought to us through words. They complete the image, they emphasize the experience.

A few weeks ago, I was walking out of Emily Carr with a friend, and we stopped to look at the mountains. They are always changing, sometimes hidden, sometimes dramatic. My friend was telling me that everytime she tries to photograph them, they never look as they do in real space, that the image doesn't translate what she sees in the here and now. I stood there for a little while, trying to figure out why. I started noticing that it was getting cold, that the wind was blowing on my uncovered ankles, that my ears were hurting, that my hair was coming in my face, and that my eyes were crying. These are all elements that wouldn't be in the image. They could be an image in themselves, but wouldn't frame the mountains in the same way I see them. By writing, I can talk about the breeze on my ankles as another way to see the mountains.

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