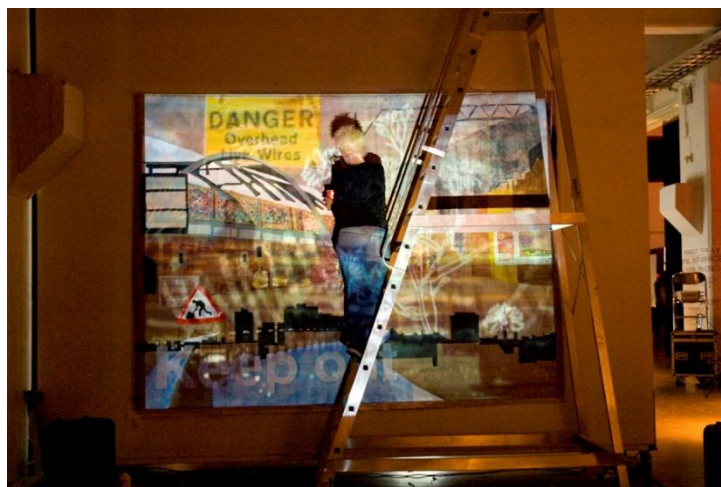


## Reflection

Anne-Elizabeth Orton

My involvement in this event spanned approximately 46 hours, though of course, that does not include the many weeks of preparing images, video and sound in which there were considerably more hours spent. Taking rest periods into account I spent about 36 hours actively working on the installation; this includes drawing, reflection and gathering feedback.

The main physical developments present in this piece are the habitation of a much larger space to previous installations and a new approach to interaction between still images and video.



## Scale

The increased scale of the work made an interesting change to my relationship with both it and the space, that is to say, my own scale in relation to the work was more highly in contrast and made a closer parallel to the space as occupied by the installation and the space of a city. As I moved and worked in the space I was far less equal to it, almost dwarfed by the wall and the distance between the projector and the surface. As a result, the need to employ a ladder to access approximately 50% of the work added a more encompassing, exaggerated interaction with space with my whole body moving not just along the X axis but also along the Y. (using the Cartesian model to discuss the space, the light exists within X, Y and Z axis with the paper and the projection as it falls on the surface occupies really only the X and Y)

The other factor that increasing the size of the paper changed is the relation to the piece in time as to cover a larger area simply takes more time. Other technical issues were raised as there was a greater tendency for the sheet to buckle and sag under its own weight at this size and as the force applied to the tape was increased there was more room for slight movement of the paper during the process. Though these did not significantly impact upon the work I would certainly consider more carefully how the paper was hung if working at this scale again.

## Video

Processing of video has, for the first time in this piece, involved direct interaction between still and moving image. In this case, the constructions of the vector graphics from video stills were then blended as transparencies over the video in the Adobe Premiere editing software. This overlapping of images to me represented palimpsest within the environment as actions, events and meanings are erased and rewritten. Others identified different qualities related to this feature which are parallel to the idea including notions of memory and ghostliness, described by one viewer as “like the remnants of a day.”

An additional consideration when working with the video and still image in this way is that the combination of elements feels much less incidental and some confusion is removed. When a moving image is projected over an entirely different still image, questions are raised relating to the relationship between these images and the meaning which is drawn from this. In this case however the relationship is focused on subject as the images necessarily agree with one another, it instead becomes about the contrast between the still and the moving, the established and the transitory, the place and the space (after De Certeau) where the place is fixed in function and location but the space is in flux and events take place within it. Visually this is seen as a still image ‘coming to life’ and taking on characteristics of space while retaining an equal sense of place.



## Dialogue between Digital and Traditional Media

I have always been aware within the context of these pieces that the process of combining digital and traditional media and the point at which the digital information finds physicality is central to the identity of the work. To evolve these I employed the use of more advanced software to create the film sequences. One outcome of this was an incompatibility between the low resolution video I had captured and the professional quality encoding of the final edit. Something I was initially unhappy with as it seemed to compromise quality, I later identified that this emphasised an extension to the dialogue between physical and digital, that is, I capture physical events digitally which are also processed digitally with the parameters dictated by my input device and physicalised once again but with the trace of the digital, in this case a horizontal ghosting or pixilation. The marks I then make in the physical are dictated by the process of encoding. Though I am using digital processes as tools, they are also playing their part in the conversation and I am forced to respond physically to their characteristics. A lesser example of this is that the nature of digital projection places a very fine grid over the image (the physicality of the way the projection is created). Invisible unless you are very close to the surface, this grid gave me a structure for drawing lines where the image was blurred, keeping me moving the line in the right direction and lending guidance from the digital in realising the physical.



One exploration of space I have been looking at developing is the incorporation of artefacts within the work. I became aware while working on day 2 that I was already in some respects doing this with the use of newspaper. I have found collage with coloured paper a successful way of interacting with projected vectors due to the commonality in certain formal elements such as texture, shape and layering. I have previously used newspaper as a collaged

element to contrast with this accuracy and to introduce an alternative texture to certain areas. I have always used free local papers for this as they are easy to come by. Working with this material (and it's interesting that this occurred when I was out of the country and the locality of the publication was removed from context) I realised that the abundance and free nature of these papers makes them very much a physical part of the environment, all be it a transitory one. This is especially embodied in the way they are so freely discarded by people who would not normally litter, seeing them instead as an item of public property, to be left for the next user. To be constructing the work directly from this material seems to be almost working directly with the fabric of the city, using this freely shared item of both physical and intellectual public property to represent the static environment in which it is designed to exist in a transitory fashion.

## Research into Purpose and Meaning

When planning this work I was keen to ensure that it was fully utilised as a research opportunity and spent some time considering and preparing the best way to achieve this before the event. I devised two systems of soliciting and recording the ideas of myself and audience members; feedback sheets for others to complete which focused largely on individuals' relationships with cities (with some scope for general feedback on my work) and an evaluative questionnaire for myself. This consisted of eight questions repeated on a new sheet and duplicated for each day plus one for the day preceding and a consolidating page for general reflection at the end. This was an attempt to map the evolution of my ideas and to record them freshly and honestly each day without my thoughts being influenced by the answers of the previous day. I found this method of inquiry very useful and would both recommend it and use it again myself. I was surprised to find that I didn't find it at all a chore to complete each day and it became a routine by which I punctuated the practice with reflection, especially at points in the process when I was not sure what to do next. The first question on the sheets (though I did not always answer them in order) was one I had identified as the main uncertainty around the work, quite simply "why am I doing this?" That is of course a highly loaded question with a complex network of potential answers and even further questions but one that on answering would at least identify the area around which those questions and answers might circulate. That answer emerged slowly over the 46 hours of the event but was quite clear by the final day. That is that for me in my current position the work is an attempt to distil a sense, meaning or truth out of the myriad of conflicting sensory, affective and intellectual inputs that are encountered regularly in the city. It may even be considered an attempt to question the human need to defend oneself against an overwhelming environment by becoming blasé (after Kracauer). In so doing it notes that in a busy, urban setting we edit out that which is not immediately important to us to avoid overstimulation and attempts to refocus attention on those things that might in that process be commonly overlooked. One human characteristic by which we attempt to understand events or concepts which are on too large a scale for us to contain an holistic understanding (such as the overwhelming nature of the urban environment as discussed) is to categorise to impose order and thereby derive understanding. The representation of urban spaces (and places) is by its very nature an attempt to illustrate, define, categorise and explain them. That the processes I am engaging with to construct this event of sorting and analysing reflects characteristics of the environment it aims to order (especially around the concept of

place/space, the transitory and random within the static and structured) lends an exploratory quality to the work which moves it beyond a simple act of representation, definition or categorisation. In so doing it becomes a more rigorous act of inquiry, an interrogation of the city and begins to question the accepted formats by which we represent and categorise. The outcome then reflects the criticism of the validity of categorisation as discussed by Georges Perec and is implicitly illustrative of the identified short fallings of this method by which we attempt to understand and control.

## Feedback

Alongside self evaluative research I was considerate of the thoughts of others and sought opinion through written questioning and informal verbal discussion. Though written feedback is useful in retaining the data, I felt the verbal feedback was more insightful. This is almost certainly due to the fixed phrasing of the written questions in comparison to the more organic nature of conversation which allows for dialogue and clarification. I was also aware of potential language barriers, though most Europeans have strong English it was not an inconsiderable issue to successful communication.

The written feedback aimed to summarise positive and negative aspects of city living and the responses can be clearly generalised into the following statement;

Positive aspects of city life include social conveniences such as living close to others and to the facilities in which we commonly interact (pubs, bars etc). Close locality of utilities, workplaces and transport is also beneficial. In contrast, we tend to criticise certain results of the social and industrial intensity and the tendency to indulge in excess in both consumption and response. For example, it was identified that city living generates heightened negative emotional responses such as stress and anger and that these are somehow amplified by certain positive aspects such as the physical effects of over indulgence in a social setting. Feelings of stress also become amplified as in modern living we respond to our success in generating timesaving processes, not by relaxing or enjoying the time gained, but by attempting to achieve or gain still more. This is discussed by Rebecca Solnit in *Wanderlust - a History of Walking*.

The verbal feedback was possibly the most useful in establishing ways in which the work might move forward and one key theme which arose was the suggestion of including interactive elements that might involve audience members. I also had the opportunity to discuss my own ideas of emphasising or increasing the three dimensionality of the work. A largely positive response to these suggestions confirmed this would be a valid route of development as successfully executed this would go further towards the representation of city spaces.

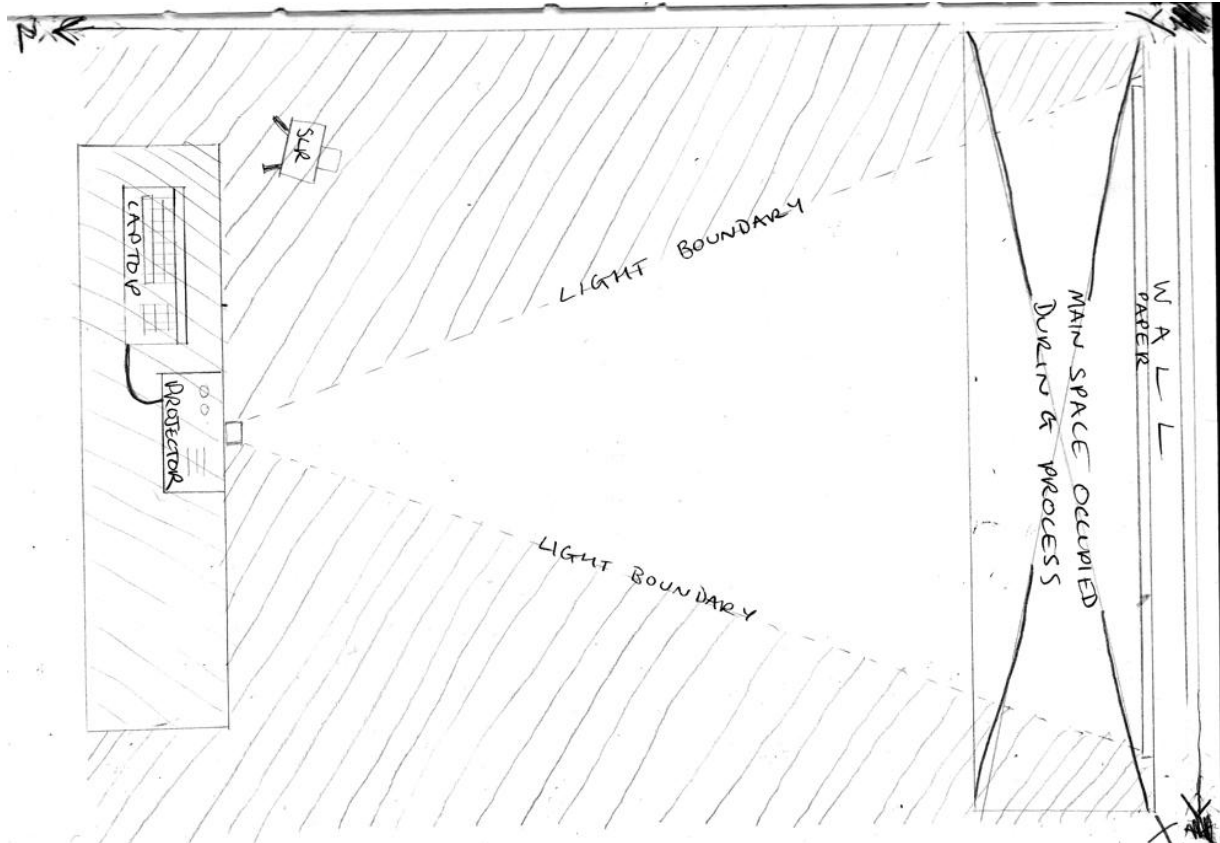
## Development and Further Contextual Research

There are two main avenues I must necessarily explore in developing the work; those of concept and of process. That the work has been identified as utilising a form of

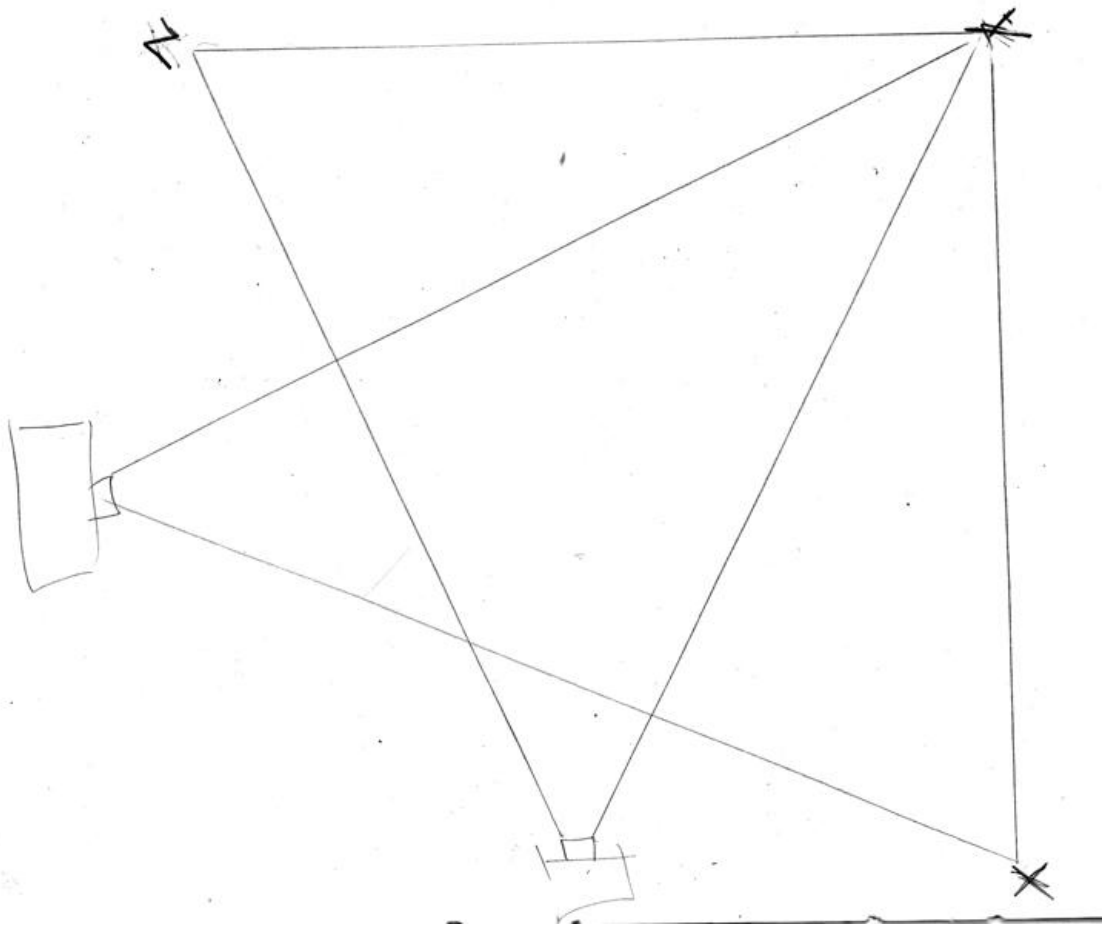
categorisation in an attempt to draw order leads me to look deeper into the work of Georges Perec, especially sections of the work *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces*. That it seeks to do this in response to exposure to urban overstimulation and the resulting defence mechanism of becoming blasé has raised relevance in the writings of Kracauer. Rebecca Solnit's *Wanderlust* (as mentioned) discusses the physical act of walking and will lend an alternative view of physical interaction with the environment as well as a more modern context. This reading cannot, due to time constraints, take place during an intense period of preliminary research but will rather take the form of a supporting rod, a long thin activity that runs along supporting the practice over a course of time. This may of course evolve as certain works become more or less relevant or even direct me to alternative sources, but it is certainly a solid starting point.

The process itself has several potential areas into which it might develop. Firstly, in the gathering of sources I am planning to access higher quality digital video equipment. Though the degradation in quality has an interesting impact on the dialogue between the digital and the physical, it will still be present in a less obstructive form. It will also be far more appropriate for documenting what is necessarily a transient event as what I have gathered so far is not sufficient.

When physically making, I plan to focus on developing three dimensionality, firstly by investigating the possibility of using two projectors/computers. This seems a much more responsive use of space than the setup I have been using (see diagrams) and is more purposeful than working within the limited potential that the conventions of the technology dictate.



Current configuration



Proposed configuration

This use of multiple projections might also develop into exploring the use of document viewers to project images of small scale three dimensional objects.

Other approaches include using 3D modelling techniques to create digital objects which can be rotated and projected or projection on to 3D objects as well as into spaces. These objects may be artefacts in the space which can be interacted with or themselves drawn onto, either way becoming physical interventions in the space that would normally be only occupied by light.

Developments in process include the acquisition of laser cutting and rapid prototyping skills which may be employed in order to manufacture the 3D elements as discussed.

The future aims of this work will in addition to those already explored, include the questioning of the nature of representation and the challenging of the accepted forms by which we achieve this.