

Rachel M. Strickland spontaneouscinema.com

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- My research and art have focused on cinematic dimensions of the sense of place, the animate and ephemeral dimensions of architectural space, and new paradigms for narrative construction in digital media.

I work as an independent filmmaker, documentary videographer, interaction designer/inventor, and media artist. I makes films to understand architecture. My practice has evolved through continuing experiments in polylinear construction and multimedia database designs for supporting cinematic approaches to navigation, query, and retrieval, with an eye toward emerging delivery formats. In parallel with research and production, I have theorized my work for peer-reviewed journals, and tested practices with students.

Professional Practice

- Current: Independent videographer and interactive media designer.
Clients have included Sun Microsystems, Santa Clara, CA; the Australian Centre for the Moving Image in Melbourne; ECCO Design, New York; UNESCO World Heritage Centre, Paris; Dubberly Design Office, San Francisco; Hosfelt Gallery, San Francisco; Virtual Beauty, New York.
- International Researcher, Kyoto Institute of Technology, 2005-2006.
Media architecture exploration with multistream video, experimenting with a cinematic language of place— captured in multiple perspectives and revealed to a viewpoint that is propelled by feet.
- Member of the research staff, video anthropologist, and coordinator of experimental cinema projects, Interval Research Corporation, Palo Alto, CA, 1993-2000.
Conceived, proposed, and led research in the field of interactive video, as well as video content representation for digital annotation and retrieval. Responsibilities included creative direction; management of a multi-disciplinary team of interaction designers, videographers, visual designers, and software engineers; as well as fiscal planning, contract negotiations, project presentations and reviews. Established in-house video facility, and supervised architectural design of production studio, display and editing suites.
- Media designer, New York and San Francisco, 1992-93, consulting to clients such as Paramount Communications (now Viacom) and Telepresence, Inc.
Undertook videography and creative direction for experimental new media prototypes in CD-rom and virtual reality.
- Research videographer, Apple Computer Vivarium Project, Los Angeles, CA, 1986-91.
Directed, recorded, and edited video documentation for Alan Kay's experiment at the Los Angeles Open School, chronicling events in the lives of school children and their teachers over the five year duration of the project. Established and maintained project video facility. Designed and produced prototypes for interactive video titles, in collaboration with project educators, artists, researchers, and the Apple Multimedia Lab.
- Independent video producer and architectural designer, 1983-86. Corporate clients included Atari Research Labs, Sunnyvale, CA; John Portman and Associates, Architects, Atlanta, GA; and Citicorp Savings Bank.

Teaching

- Adjunct Professor, Graduate Program in Design, California College of the Arts, San Francisco, CA, 2009-2013.
"Spontaneous Cinema for Design Research" is a video production course that engages grad students in field observation and invites them to experiment with the language of cinematic construction in a process of design research, and to exercise sensory-motor and narrative systems of intelligence simultaneously.

- Research Affiliate and Video Instructor for Marc Davis's Multimedia Information Systems class, School of Information Management and Systems, University of California Berkeley, 2002-05.
- Video Instructor, Southern California Institute of Architecture, Santa Monica, CA, 1986-88.
- Visiting Lecturer, Film Production, University of California Santa Cruz, 1982.
- Assistant Professor of Film, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, MA, 1977-81.
Developed and taught undergraduate and graduate courses in documentary theory and production of both film and video, with Richard Leacock and Edward Pincus.

Education

- Master of Architecture, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge MA, 1976.
- Bachelor of Science in architecture and filmmaking, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1972.

Grants and Awards

- Program for Media Artists (of Rockefeller and Ford Foundations): New Media Fellowship for research and production of EMPTINESS CAN HOLD THINGS, 2005.
- Ars Electronica, ID Magazine, and Industrie Forum Hanover: awards for PORTABLE EFFECTS, 1998.
- Exploratorium, San Francisco, CA: Artist in Residence, 1995-97.
- Ars Electronica: interactive art award for PLACEHOLDER, 1994.
- National Endowment for the Arts: production grant for PORTABLE EFFECTS, 1993.
- Banff Centre for the Arts, Virtual Environments Project, Banff, Alberta, Canada: Artist in Residence, 1993.
- Cambridge Women's Travel Club: research fellowship to Japan studying vernacular architectural space, 1984.
- International Competition for Films on Japan, gold prize for REBUILDING AN OLD JAPANESE HOUSE, 1981.
- Maine Council for the Humanities and Public Policy: production grant for JUST BLUE, 1979.
- Bemis Grant: for filmmaking correlating cinematic space and assemblage to the structure of inhabited three dimensional places, 1975.

Film/Video Projects, Research and Exhibitions

- **Autotree**, 2015-present, with Jim Campbell and Sean McGowen. Solar-powered, weatherproof, autonomously operable audio-video recording system uses small sensor-activated camera-microphone units controlled by a single-board computer to transmit video to a remote server.
- **Folia**, 2015, multi-channel splitscreen video. 24 minutes.
Calculating how short-duration cinema might set about to examine the experience of a tree that plays out in year-long cycles, this 24-minute video experimented with polylinear construction and polytemporal scaling of sound and image that were recorded during one 24-hour slice of street life in the span of a city block. 8K video (7680x4320) with 5.1 mix has been downsized to HD (1920x1080) with stereo audio for previewing on Vimeo.
- **6x6 Emptiness Can Hold Things**, 2006-2012, multi-channel video/soundscape.
Relinquishing narrative purposes and deviating from the synoptic, causal, chronological logic of plot-based linear montage, polylinear video affords a structure that is more akin to architecture than storytelling for capturing and articulating a kind of experience that belongs to many different dimensions. Recorded in Kyoto at intervals and thresholds of an urban landscape, "6x6" improvises on techniques of polylinear perspective that have long been practiced in Japanese painting and landscape design, in order to explore formal and experiential principles inherent in the definitions of place. Merging architectural space with cinematic construction, the objective is to invent a cinematic language of place, captured in multiple perspectives and arranged with reference to a viewpoint that is propelled by feet.

- **Walk-in Theater** for iOS, 2012-2018, with Eric Gould Bear and Jim McKee.
Departing from one-way, linear cinema played on a single rectangular screen, this virtual cinema app supports peripatetic perspective, engaging visitors' proprioceptors and spatial memory to orient themselves among multiple video streams in a 3D sound field. Originally developed to showcase **Emptiness Can Hold Things**, **Walk-in Theater** has also provided a rapid prototyping tool for other artists, including Deborah Hay and Ai Weiwei, to configure multiple video planes and localized sound sources in different exhibition spaces.
- **Matomatic**, 2010-present, multi-channel video, is the working title for an experimental project that extends the polylinear syntax of "6x6" to an examination of bodily movement, constructed for interactive viewing on a split-screen display. From an environment external to the body of a human beholder in the case of "6x6", our attention in **Matomatic** turns outside-in to observe the dynamic body itself, probing dimensions of a space that is articulated by the performer's gestures, breath, and gaze.
- **Fishing at West Cliff** or **Semiotics is For Cinema as Ornithology is For the Birds**, 2012, multi-channel video. 19 minutes. Moviemaker.
Field notes of a cinematographer, Santa Cruz, CA. The gaze of the seabird biologist, seldom allowed to mingle with subjects of his investigation, is trained on something that develops at a great distance or otherwise out of reach. What are the search images that organize his attention? Human vision, surrounded by the scene, is optimized for tracking motion. A camera is a framing device that samples fragments of this vista, thereby missing most of the action. Imagine a movie composed as a Japanese picture scroll, unrolling west to east. The relationship among events along the way may be of topographical or chronological order (sometimes both).
- **Palladio Potatoes Piano Piano: Building a Villa in 29 Scenes**, completed 2008. DV. 72 minutes. Moviemaker.
In 2005 San Francisco real estate magnate Angelo Sangiacomo commissioned Strickland to make a movie that would chronicle final stages in the building of his new house in Pebble Beach, CA. Amidst the spectacle of the construction site, the videographer sought to portray a design project of operatic proportions that involved a sometimes dissonant cast of characters and took more than 6 years to unfold. The owner hoped that this record might lend future visibility to a structure's bones and soul that otherwise vanish from sight by the time building is completed.
- **Fuera de Marco (Out of Frame)**, 2004. DV. 22 minutes. Moviemaker.
Chronicle of an installation in which Uruguayan artist Marco Maggi employed 400 reams of white copy paper to carpet a concrete floor. Shuffled, scattered, stratified, slipped, toppled, and shifted in a "tectonic" terrain with geological faults and urban plans, 200,000 empty pages awaiting inscription travel in all directions to survey what is absent, and quiet the space like snowfall. Strickland's camera explores Maggi's landscape myopically, from macroscopic to microscopic perspectives, tracing the surgical precision of the artist's hand and contemplating his intrepid enterprise through the fragile experience of paper.
- **Work Movies 1: The Everyday Lives of Java Developers, 2002**, and **Work Movies 2: The Everyday Lives of System Administrators**, 2003, two 60-minute compilations for DVD, Research Videographer.
Who are those characters that fashion the bits of our existence and maintain our networks? What resources, inspirations, and artifacts do they employ, in what states of mind, with what concentration and how many parallel processes over what periods of time? A series of video portraits commissioned by Sun Microsystems.
- **Allons-y Alonzo: Souvenirs of a Landscape**, 2001. DV. 27 minutes. Moviemaker.
In 1998 a 260-kilometer stretch of the Loire River—and its adjoining parklands, vineyards, châteaux, churches, abbeys and prehistoric sites—from Sully-sur-Loire to Chalonnes, was nominated by the government of France as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Focusing on dynamic and ephemeral dimensions of the place, Strickland adopted the shorthand of "microcinema" to produce a collection of sketches of this cultural landscape that would lend animate perspective to the Loire Valley World Heritage web site. Adding the glimpses together in a 27 minute movie, "Allons-y Alonzo" reflects a filmmaker's quest to glean the senses of a place and to register its *genius loci*. The web site with Strickland's video was produced as a design prototype for UNESCO World Heritage Centre.

- **Portable Effects: A Survey of Nomadic Design Practice**, 1988-2000. A growing collection of video portraits and an interactive museum installation at the Exploratorium. Videographer, designer, director.
 Once upon a time during a summer sojourn in Kyoto Strickland encountered the expressions of a culture that's enormously sophisticated in the ways of folding, stacking, rolling, nesting, carrying, miniaturizing, and transforming things. Pursuing that inspiration in the country to which I returned, "Portable Effects" is a video anthropology project that investigates people's design of the miniature environments we carry with us—in pockets, backpacks, briefcases, and handbags. Between setting forth in the morning and returning home at night, every person lives nomadically for a portion of each day. You can't take everything with you—neither in your backpack nor in your head. Identifying essentials, and figuring out how to contain, arrange and keep track of them as you go, are instances of design thinking. "Portable Effects" was supported by Apple Computer, the National Endowment for the Arts, Interval Research Corporation, and the San Francisco Exploratorium.
- **Placeholder**, 1993. Co-director and videographer.
 An experimental virtual reality project that explored potentials for narrative action on the part of players in a simulated landscape. The work incorporated elements of local mythology and actual locations in the Canadian Rockies. Three-dimensional videographic scene elements, spatialized sounds and voices, and simple character animation were employed to construct places in a virtual environment that could be visited concurrently by two physically remote participants wearing head-mounted displays. Produced at the Banff Centre for the Arts in collaboration with Brenda Laurel.
- **Finding Your Voice**, 1992. Moviemaker and co-director with Brenda Laurel, for Paramount Communications.
 A prototype interactive video system for oral language instruction, focusing on skills, techniques and practice of storytelling as a performing art.
- **Backyard Transformations**, 1988-91. Interactive video and Macintosh computer. Co-director, cinematographer, and editor, with Jill Wright and Benjamin Bergery.
 This exploration in combinatorial media and the morphology of narrative integrates motion picture, sound, and text elements in a story construction environment for children. The project was initially developed at Alan Kay's Apple Computer Vivarium Lab from 1988 to 1991. Introduced through a series of games that elicit spontaneous, improvisational creation, a collection of fanciful characters, unexpected events, and imaginary viewpoints, fabricated in the storyteller's own backyard, are shuffled and revealed like a deck of Tarot cards. 174 movie intervals furnish scenes and threads from which children construct and narrate original stories.
- **Recess: Incidents in the Playground**, Los Angeles Open School, 1987. Videodisc. Research Videographer.
 An intimate observation, recorded daily from September to June, of ritual, improvisation, and territorial dynamics in children's games.
- **Rebuilding an Old Japanese House**, 1981. 16mm film, 58 minutes. Director, co-filmmaker with Richard Leacock.
 Five Japanese craftsmen came to reassemble a Kyoto silkweaver's 150 year old townhouse which had been packed in crates and shipped to Boston Children's Museum. A first-hand observation of traditional tools and construction techniques, including three Shinto house building ceremonies, this documentary aired on PBS and won Gold Prize in UniJapan Association's International Competition for Films on Japan.
- **Just Blue**, 1979. 16mm film, 58 minutes. Co-filmmaker with Glorianna Davenport.
 A rakers' journal of the blueberry harvest in Washington County, Maine. This film won a production grant from Maine Council for the Humanities and aired on PBS.
- **Murals Without Walls: The Rediscovered Aviation Murals of Arshile Gorky**, 1978. 16mm film, 28 minutes. Co-filmmaker with Richard Leacock.
 A behind-the-scenes documentary for the Newark Museum's exhibit, chronicling the restoration of two WPA murals that were painted in 1936 by the prominent abstract expressionist. All ten of Gorky's aviation murals had long disappeared by 1972 when these two were found in the old Newark Airport building, inadvertently preserved under 14 coats of housepaint.

- **Finger Film**, 1976. Video originated on Super8 film. Moviemaker.
A taxonomy of manipulation, gesture, and touch in conjunction with M.I.T. Architecture Machine Group's research project with touch-sensitive computer displays.
- **Kalopaskha (Good Easter)**, 1975. Super8 film, 26 minutes. Co-filmmaker with Elaine Negroponte.
A documentary chronicling the observance and celebration of Holy Week on a small Greek island.
- **Grace Going Awkwardly**, 1974. Super8 film, 18 minutes. Moviemaker.
Portable anthropology in Rome's Campo di Fiori concerning people's installing, displacing, transforming, and carting away the objects that define such adaptive architectural places as street markets and parking lots.
Complement to a photo survey directed by Minor White.

Selected Publications

"Walk-in Theater: Interaction Design for a Miniature Experience with Peripatetic Cinema," with Eric Bear Gould and Jim McKee (2014). *Leonardo*, pending print publication Volume 51 Number 5, October 2018.
https://doi.org/10.1162/LEON_a_01333

"The Social Lives of Urban Trees" in *Of More-Than-Human Spaces*. Panel proceedings, ed. Nida Rehman. Carnegie Mellon University School of Architecture, 2017.

"How to Walk Without Watching Your Step: Spontaneous Cinema as Design Practice." *Design Research - Methods and Perspectives*, ed. Brenda Laurel. MIT Press, 2003: 118-128.

"Communicating Culture and Exploring Landscape: An Experiment in Digital Heritage in the Loire Valley," with Alonzo Addison and Nicolò Ceccarelli. *Proceedings of 7- International Conference on Virtual Systems and Multimedia* (IEEE), October 25 – 27 2001: 3-12.

"Portable Effects: A Survey of Nomadic Design Practice." *O Monografías*, Colexio de Arquitectos de Galicia, Barcelona. Volume 1 Issue 0, Spring 2001: 82-117.

"Placeholder: Landscape and Narrative in Virtual Environments," with Brenda Laurel and Rob Tow. *ACM Computer Graphics*, Volume 28 Issue 2, May 1994: 118-126.

"Film/Video & Space: 5 Exercises in Place Recording." *Wide Angle – A Quarterly Journal of Film History, Theory, Criticism & Practice*, Volume 15 Number 4, December 1993: 42-48.

"Interface and Narrative Arts: Contributions from Narrative, Drama, and Film" with Brenda Laurel, Joseph Bates, and Abbe Don. *Proceedings of the ACM CHI 91 Human Factors in Computing Systems Conference*, New Orleans, Louisiana, April 28 – May 2, 1991: 381-383.

"A Form-of-Inhabiting Movie: Some Geography About Its Physical Features." MArch Thesis, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1974.