

# 2018 Vol 18 Issue No. 2 – What Can Moving Images Do? An Ecological Thinking of the Moving Image

> EDITORIAL

Issue 32 called for provocations into the human-nature relation through the questioning power of the moving image. In particular, the editors looked for contributions that focused on the function of the moving image as a material artefact or visual object within an ecological milieu or image-world, where the human relation to nature is rendered open-to-question. Thinking about the moving image extends to many formats, including panoramas, dioramas, video art installations, online digital displays, scientific data schematisation and other visual apparatuses, as well as narrative and non-narrative film and cinematic projection. We encouraged ecological approaches to the moving image, broadly comprising “film, video, broadcast television, moving computer-generated imagery, and, in short, any mass-produced moving image technologically within our reach now and in times to come” (Carroll xxi).

This issue considers “ecological webs” as image-worlds or *umwelten* and engages critically with the modes of non-human signification enacted within moving image media. Theoretical advances in ecocinema, “eco-cinecriticism” and “green film criticism” (Ivakhiv 1) over the last twenty years highlight that “the cinematic experience is inescapably embedded in ecological webs” (Rust and Monani 2). The question of what moving images do ecologically calls to attention related questions of aesthetics, poetics, politics, ethics, mediation and representation of the *nature* of nature and the non-human. Towards these aims, the editors welcomed submissions from any of the disciplines that concern themselves, in one way or another, with the moving image, including film and cinema studies, new media and video, film-philosophy, literary studies, environmental humanities and associated disciplines.

## Works Cited

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Issue editors: Warwick Mules and John Charles Ryan

*Anna Boswell*

### Anamorphic Ecology, or the Return of the Possum

> Abstract

This article examines how Alison Maclean's short black and white film *Kitchen Sink* (1989) works to move the ground of public understanding about the large-scale makeovers of ecology, people and place on which a settler colonial society is founded. Reading Maclean's film in light of the New Zealand government's recently-unveiled world-first Predator Free 2050 campaign, the article attends to the intertwined genealogies and topographies shared by invasive animals and invasive settlers. In so doing, it develops an expanded conception of anamorphosis, taking this term to refer to distorted projections which require viewers to reconstitute – from an oblique perspective – the images they encounter. Through its concentrated slippages, the article argues, Maclean's film anticipates not only the full-scale obliteration called forth by Predator Free 2050, but alternative responses to place which acknowledge prior and ongoing Indigenous presences. Indeed, *Kitchen Sink* itself emerges in this view as an anamorphic or "hallucinatory" element in the settler colonial image-scape.

*Keywords*

Anamorphosis, eco-horror, image ecology, possum, settler colonialism

*Therese Davis and Belinda Smaill*

### Rethinking Documentary and the Environment: A Multi-Scalar Approach to Time

> Abstract

This essay investigates the analytical potential of time in relation to the nonfiction moving image. Time is important because it drives understandings of environmental change (perceptions of past, present and future), and it is tied to the fundamental expectation of documentary – that it will speak to the reality of historical events (recent or distant). In seeking an approach to the moving image that might better harness the ecological work of documentary across different contexts, we propose a theory of the *multi-scalar* that is explicitly concerned with time and duration and has the capacity to function as a critical tool that might reveal the uneven realisation of scale across cultures and film modes. We

explore how established knowledge in political ecology might dovetail with the expression of time in documentary (including the representation of history). We pose two examples. The first explores the natural history documentary, in particular, the time lapse representation of plant life and how it might offer alternative nonhuman temporalities. The second study explores an episode of an Australian television series, *First Footprints* (2013), which presents a history of Indigenous occupation of the continent, ranging across a 50,000 year time span, offering a way to consider colonial conceptualisations of time.

*Keywords*

Documentary, ecologies, environment, history, scale, time

*Warwick Mules*

*An Ecocritical Revaluation of the Cinematic Time-Image: Tarkovsky's Solaris*

> Abstract

This article undertakes an ecocritical revaluation of the cinematic time-image through a consideration of Andrei Tarkovsky's concept of time-pressure developed in his book *Sculpting in Time*. Responding to Adrian Ivakhov's proposal for a film theory capable of redeeming the perceptual continuum of the human and the other-than-human threatened by ecological catastrophe, the article proposes a revaluation of the material reality of the film-world of Tarkovsky's film *Solaris* insofar as it makes real connections with nature as a complex whole, through the dissipating potentials of entropy. Drawing on Tarkovsky's ideas and filmic practice, I define time-pressure as an image of time traversing its own becoming, forming a naturalistic time-image in a becoming-whole that includes an image of the whole opening to the Beyond: the absolute otherness beyond the frame. In contrast to Gilles Deleuze's a-synthetic time-image (*Cinema 1, Cinema 2*), which remains cut off from real connections, Tarkovsky's naturalistic time-image is able to account for real connections as a revaluation of cinematic perception shifting from anthropo-cinematic to ecocinematic seeing.

*Keywords*

Connectivity, death drive, Deleuze, ecocinema, film-worlds, the inhuman, negentropy, suture, Tarkovsky, time-image

*Anat Messing-Marcus*

*(Non-)Moving Images: Nikolaus Geyrhalter's Homo Sapiens as a Cinema of Natural History*

> Abstract

This article outlines the ontology of ruins presented in *Homo Sapiens*, a 2016 film by the Austrian director Nikolaus Geyrhalter, through the lens of “natural history,” an aesthetic and philosophico-historical category developed by Walter Benjamin and Theodor W. Adorno. In glossing natural history’s concomitant concepts such as “mood,” “aura” and “creaturely life,” the significance of the cinematic medium for the question regarding the *nature* of the relation between “first” and “second” nature and between the human and the non-human – unfolds. In the second move of the article, the film’s auditory dimension of perception through which “creaturely life” is sensed will be put into constellation with Kafka’s “The Burrow.” The claim is that *Homo Sapiens*’s particular form of expression, in line with the spatio-temporal dimension of the reality it seeks to capture, demarcates a threshold whereby the realm of the aesthetic and the realms of ethics and politics are mutually imbricated. This point takes its lead from Giorgio Agamben’s meditations – following Benjamin’s “angel of history” – on what he termed the “angel of photography.”

#### *Keywords*

Cinema, mood, natural history, ruins

#### *Wood Roberdeau*

#### Scalar Aesthetics of Ecocinema: *The Wall* and *The Survivalist*

#### > Abstract

This article concentrates on two twenty-first century examples of popular “ecocinema” in order to ask what moving images accomplish when they take on the scale effects of the Anthropocene at the level of the domestic microcosm. Both Julian Pölsler’s *The Wall* (2012) and Stephen Fingleton’s *The Survivalist* (2015) provide ample territory through which to explore questions of cohabitation and encounter, human and non-human animality, as well as the threatening but liberating qualities associated with communicating disaster, sustainability and responsibility for “end times.” Significantly, spatial and temporal delimitation is a theme common to both films and so a theoretical framework is established using examples of twentieth-century continental philosophy associated with the concept of “dwelling.” Heidegger’s investment in rootedness and belonging is read in conjunction with Levinas’s ethics of relationality and otherness; Derrida’s study of hostility embedded in hospitality and the spatial category of the “threshold” are of equal importance to my analysis. Not to be ignored is the eco-feminist stance that each film demands in surprisingly similar ways. Accordingly, the more recent work of Haraway and others is paramount.

#### *Keywords*

Aesthetics, cohabitations, eco-deconstruction, eco-feminism, eco-psychology, film studies

*Lisa FitzGerald*

## Black Gold: Digitally-Simulated Environments and the Material Aesthetics of Oil

> Abstract

Sensory embeddedness (with an emphasis on environmental interdependency) has played an important part in ecological art practice. In the emergence of process- or systems-based art, and its indebtedness to early cybernetics, there is a focus on the interplay between artwork and spectator and the world or *umwelt* that emerges from their co-existence. This article will examine how this emphasis on embeddedness has translated into digital and new media aesthetics using John Gerrard's digital simulation, *Western Flag (Spindletop, Texas) 2017*, as an example. I argue that this genre of ecological digital art can be situated as a bodily practice within the wider framework of an environmental narrative. Moreover, there is an integral performativity in new media artworks that can contribute to a deeper understanding of the anthropogenically-driven environmental crisis.

*Keywords*

Digital and new media art, eco-digital art, ecological art and activism, petrocultures

*Sasha Litvintseva*

## Geological Filmmaking: Seeing Geology Through Film and Film Through Geology

> Abstract

In this article, I consider the aesthetic dimension of cinema in conversation with the material dimension of the geology that subtends it, in order to propose the concept and the practice of "geological filmmaking" as a strategy for tackling the perceptual challenges posed by the ecological crisis and the Anthropocene. Geological filmmaking emerges from the understanding that the form and content of any film, and thus the perceptual and durational experience it engenders, are rooted in geological materiality. Geology concerns itself with matter as much as process, dealing with mountains and molecules as much as with sedimentation and erosion and, thus, with time itself. In this way we can already think of geology as a film in slow motion, and of land formations as films of their own making: what they are in the current moment also includes the trace of their making. Expanding the material side of this metaphor we can triangulate geology as being constituted simultaneously by land formations as they are in the current moment, the mineralogical materials that they are formed of, and the ongoing processes that have formed them and are forming them. A film can itself be triangulated as constituted by all the images and sounds that it consists of, its material form of storage (be it analogue or digital), and the temporal experience it engenders when watched. Both geology and film

are thus contained in the contingency of form, materiality and temporality. With geological filmmaking, the imperative becomes to think all three aspects of geology through all three aspects of film. This imperative shapes the structure of this article, which progresses by an analysis of two of my practice-research film projects: one on sinkholes and one on asbestos.

*Keywords*

Anthropocene, asbestos, film, geology, materiality, practice research, sinkholes, temporality

*Anna Madeleine Raupach*

[Re-animating Climate Change: Abstract Temporalities in Augmented Reality](#)

> Abstract

This article explores how animation and augmented reality (AR) can create compression and re-distribution of moving image to convey the temporal scales at play in climate change. Animation inherently fosters experimentation with the expression and understanding of time. AR combines the temporal quality of animation with the physical environment, creating a hybrid space of moving image, technology and physical objects that operate on different time scales. This presents an opportunity to engage imaginatively with aspects of climate change that science communication research has identified as problematic to comprehend, such as the immense timescale on which it occurs. My practice-based research explores techniques, including limited animation, AR image targets and layering of two-dimensional moving image in physical space, to demonstrate how these ideas can be implemented both in a gallery and in the natural environment.

*Keywords*

Animation, augmented reality (AR), climate change, temporality

