

Article

# A Geography of the Screen: Mapmaking as Bridge between Film and Curatorial Production Processes

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**Abstract:** Both mapping and artist documentary filmmaking offer us subjective translations of reality and strategies to relate to and represent space, sharing analogous methods of production that allow for a useful application of the spatial language of mapmaking to filmmaking. Immersing the film process within the language of mapmaking can then act as a bridge into the spatial practices of the gallery environment, curatorial practice, and exhibition design. This process is defined here as “film-mapping” and is investigated through the development of the work *For the Record* by Phaniel Antwi and Rhea Storr commissioned by the *transmediale* festival in Berlin (2021), for which the author of the present paper is the film curator. A process for film-mapping is laid out according to three stages: (1) Compose the Territory, (2) Define the Legend, and (3) Set the Modality. Understanding the production of *For the Record* through this mapping terminology enriches the spatial understanding of the work, providing a translation device between filmmaking and curatorial practice and mediating between the disciplines by providing a shared language.

**Keywords:** curating artists’ documentary film; deep mapping; digital arts; exhibition design; exhibition studies



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## 1. Research Intent

This research is one component of three ongoing investigations into how the spatial language of mapping can act as a bridge or translation device between the disciplines of filmmaking and curatorial practice. It is developed from and anchored within a canon of artist documentary film that engages with themes of landscape and sense of place—one in which the film work itself is the result of the landscape within which it was made (Lefebvre 2007). The ambition of this research is to create an approach: (1) for curators working with artist filmmakers whose work is anchored in concepts of place or space, (2) for filmmakers to consider how spatial themes explored within their work might be translated into the exhibition space (a reciprocal process that also considers how the space and locational context of a gallery may help shape the production of a work), and (3) for exhibition architects working in collaboration with either one or both of the former.

## 2. Introduction

*For the Record* is a call-and-response exchange between London-based filmmaker and researcher Rhea Storr and Vancouver-based writer and artist Phaniel Antwi that resonates from opposing ends of the gallery space (Figure 1). Navigating through 150 individual photographs, the two makers reinterpret each other’s practice and sense of place, advancing a form of diasporic archive told through the bonds of Black kinship. Commissioned in 2021 as part of my role as a film curator at *transmediale* festival in Berlin, this artist documentary film helped provide a framework around which to develop the process of “film-mapping”. *For the Record* emerges from a place of refusal; a powerful rejection of the “fiction of empires and self-creation”, the work positions itself “elsewhere to create new centres, foci and spaces” (Antwi and Storr 2021). Mapping is deeply entwined with these ongoing colonial histories, a discipline that continues to be employed to help control spaces and their people.

As a colonial tool, mapping is never representative but is instead productive of power relations (Mason-Deese 2020). Bending, hacking, or subverting the tool of mapping can, however, speak to the refusal manifested within *For the Record*, offering a method to initiate an alternate dialogue with a space. The philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari draw a distinction between a map and a tracing, arguing that while a tracing replicates power structures that already exist, reinforcing singular ways of looking at the world, mapping can provide a process capable of revealing alternate understandings of space and power. By encouraging us to “make a map, not a tracing”, Deleuze and Guattari reanimate mapping as a discipline capable of opening up the new centres and foci *For the Record* points us towards.



**Figure 1.** Phanel Antwi and Rhea Storr, *For the Record* (2021), *transmediale* Studio. Photo © Ben Evans James.

The development of film-mapping draws from the production process of *For the Record* to arrive at three interconnected terms linked to mapmaking: *territory*, *legend*, and *modality*.

1. The *territory* of a map can be understood as the relationship between a defined geographical area and its representation. In filmmaking, the concept allows us to consider the relationships that exist between the filmmaker(s), the subject(s), and place(s).
2. The *legend* of a map is its key. In filmmaking, the *legend* can be understood as a set of codes that navigate the spectator into and through the work.
3. The *modality* of a map determines how its data is visualised. In filmmaking, it considers how diverse film production technologies and processes mediate how the territory of a map is aestheticised and the resulting effect on our understanding of its subject.

These methods are developed from and anchored within a canon of artist documentary film that engages with themes of landscape and sense of place.<sup>1</sup>

### 3. Rhea Storr and Phanel Antwi

In the summer of 2020, the closing film work in an online series at the London project space *South Kiosk*, where I am a co-founder and curator, was *Henry* (Storr 2017) by Rhea Storr, a work that interrogates the anonymous image (of her grandfather) as an inquiry into reanimated images that have passed through the body and onto the screen. Storr’s practice explores the representation of Black and mixed-race cultures. Carnival as a site of refusal and subversion is an ongoing theme in her work, surfacing in Storr’s film works *Here is the Imagination of the Black Radical* (Storr 2020a), *Bragging Rights* (Storr 2019), and *A Protest, A Celebration, A Mixed Message* (Storr 2018). In the last of these, Storr addresses the performative role projected upon Black bodies by onlookers at Leeds Carnival; standing against the backdrop of a pastoral scene at the film’s dénouement, the filmmaker’s motionless body, in full carnival dress, refuses and defies the expectations of animation placed upon them by the spectator.

Around this time, I also met Phanel Antwi, Associate Professor of English at the University of British Columbia and Canada Research Chair in Black Arts and Epistemologies. Antwi works with text, dance, and film, intervening in artistic, academic, and public spaces to explore concerns of race, intimacy, and struggle. After our initial conversation, Antwi invited me to watch a working edit of the film he co-directed with artist Lesley Loksi Chan,

*Sort Of* (2020, development title). Taking the form of an Afro-Asian Futurist work, *Sort Of* features two primary protagonists who land on Earth from a far-off place and time. In the version of the film I viewed, the narrative unfolds through a succession of vignettes in which the protagonists familiarise themselves with their unfamiliar new environment through a series of conversations with prominent Black and Asian scholars, artists, and thinkers.<sup>2</sup> Located between these dialogically driven vignettes, the pair embark on a range of performances that entangle their bodies with the material of their environment in Ontario, Canada. Through gestures and movements expressed in their stillness, Antwi offers a performance of refusal against the “tendency to read performance and Blackness only in terms of hyperness” (Antwi in Antwi et al. 2021) and of Black bodies represented through a singular mode of broadcast.

Through clear points of connection between their practices, an introduction between Antwi and Storr quickly developed into a discussion around the potential of the artists to produce a collaborative work for *transmediale* as part of the festival’s 2021 programming. The analysis below spans the following eight months as the work was imagined, produced, and installed in our respective roles: Antwi and Storr as artists and myself as curator.

The resulting work, *For the Record* was presented at *transmediale* in the festival’s new studio space in Berlin between April and June 2021. The work, which unfolds over 48 min, exists somewhere between a film, a performance, and a conversation, which led Antwi to quip, “when we finished the work, we weren’t quite sure what we’d done. We were joking saying ‘I guess it’s a film because it’s got images, it’s got audio, and it’s got dialogue’” (Antwi in Antwi et al. 2021). The images Antwi mentions take the form of black and white still photographs taken in the artist’s respective hometowns of Vancouver and London. The dialogue brings together scripted and non-scripted conversations between Antwi and Storr that ebb and flow between the prosaic and poetic. *For the Record* draws from Black scholarship, poetry, and music, including the writing of Christina Sharpe, Dionne Brand, Sylvia Winton, Stuart Hall, Robin Kelley, Édouard Glissant, and Toni Morrison, and the music and dub poetry of Jean “Binta” Breeze, Linton Kwesi Johnson, and Lillian Allen. While analysis of *For the Record* steps into areas of Black arts and epistemologies, the subject of this text is the application of mapping to curatorial practices, and it therefore only draws on these subjects when relevant to its core focus.

#### 4. Compose the Territory

The *territory* of a map can be understood as the relationship between a defined geographical area and its representation. Transposed onto filmmaking, the territory speaks to relationships that exist between the filmmaker(s), their subject(s), and place(s). There are three stages in this process: *Framing the Territory* by examining the role of image technologies in surveying; *(re)Framing the Territory* by exploring the role of editing technologies in forming the filmmakers’ narrative of the territory; and *(re)Locating the Territory* by analysing the conflicts and opportunities that arise when the rendering of a territory through an artwork is relocated to an alternate location as an exhibition.

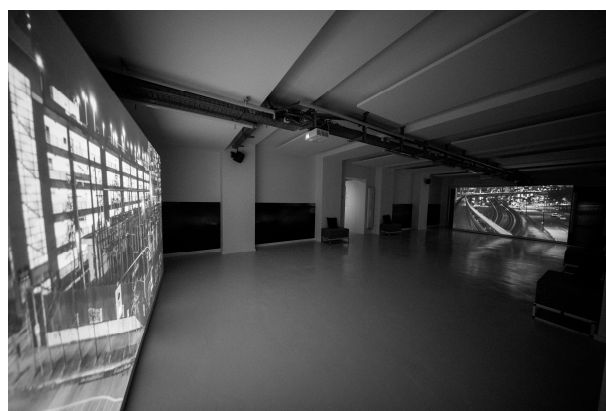
##### 4.1. Framing the Territory

“Far away is close at hand in images of elsewhere”

—Graffiti, author unknown, Paddington Station, London, 1970s

Located in London and Vancouver, respectively, Storr and Antwi are based in cities undergoing persistent waves of property speculation, development, and gentrification. Equipping these processes, the architectural site survey adopts ever-new technological photographic processes to produce aerial images that distance the built environment of the city from the people who inhabit it (Brackenburg 2022). Drone photography, lidar scans, and satellite imagery capture the expansive, macroscopic view of the city, rendering its materiality through hyper-real images that leave its localised micro-histories buried below, out of sight, and pixelated at the street level. Through fidelity to measurement, these technologies attempt to dematerialise the human body that “constantly contaminates

the possibility of objectivity and precision, ultimately meaning that the ideal democracy from the perspective of metrology is totally devoid of humans" (Litvintseva et al. 2022). In *For the Record*, Antwi and Storr take up this tension between the human and the metric, investigating their subject at the street level using portable cameras that challenge the totalising image perspectives of the site survey: photos produced alongside and in solidarity with local Black communities in their respective cities. The resulting images divulge a space seen from within, a landscape "anchored in human life, not something to look at but to live in" (Lefebvre 2007) These informal photos display the energy and immediacy of the snapshot, capturing "the movement and chaos of modern urban life in visual form" (Fineman 2004) by embracing a photographic style that is sometimes grainy, incorrectly exposed, erratically framed, and with elements out of focus. With the snapshot, Antwi and Storr create an aesthetic form for the territory that brings to the surface a particular set of relationships between the built environment and its inhabitants (Figure 2).



**Figure 2.** Phanael Antwi and Rhea Storr, *For the Record* (2021), *transmediale* Studio. Photo: Ben Evans James.

In London, Storr took photos using a handheld 35 mm film camera; the images capture the dark winter nights punctured by the intense light emitted from streetlights, tube signs, or passing buses. Using a high-speed film (Ilford Delta 3200), the contrast gives a texture and grain to the image that feels like London. These are images in which we cannot always make out what is happening in the shadows of public spaces where people navigate with purpose through the cold winter night. By comparison, Antwi took his images using a contemporary mirrorless digital camera. Aware of the potential aesthetic discrepancy between the output of the cameras, Antwi adopted what he called an "analogue" way of working. Ruling out the use of post-production software such as Photoshop, the artist talks about an embodied process of working while taking photos, a Merleau-Pontian presence of the body as he contorts to locate the composition and frame the territory.<sup>3</sup> Antwi's images reveal a Vancouver I have grown to know, having partially relocated here, one where glass buildings are razed to the ground to build ever higher glass buildings and developer speculation runs rife. When Antwi talks of Vancouver as a loud city, he speaks of his camera in terms of a microphone picking up light. By this definition, Vancouver is a deafening city, its glass and steel leaving few places for tranquillity to take hold.

Taking photos at night was an unfamiliar act for both the artists, the darkness distancing Antwi and Storr, causing them to sense their neighbourhoods in new ways while attuning their focus. These are images that are psychogeographic, pacing out the borders of a territory through a Situationist-like photographic *dérive*<sup>4</sup>. Unburdened by Roland Barthes' concept of punctum,<sup>5</sup> the snapshots feel of the everyday, of unremarkable spaces that belie the rich strata of Black histories hidden within. The territory gains form through the frame of the lens: a 16:9 aspect ratio of the world whose language stretches back as far as eighteenth-century landscape painters such as Gainsborough and Turner (Lefebvre 2007). In this photographic landscape, the artists never reveal their own bodies, with the

camera separating the experience of the body behind it from those photographed. Storr's works have, in the past, used the camera's field of view to question the visibility of Black bodies in public space; in the production of *For the Record*, Antwi talks about the camera almost as a prop that legitimised the visibility of his own body in public space at night.

Revealing traces of Black history within their home cities, Antwi and Storr map more than the territories' physical attributes. Capturing snatched fragments of life, their images uncover "the various hidden forces that underlie the workings of a given place" (Corner 2011, p. 90). In this sense, it is less a practice of data collection and more one of "relational reasoning" (Corner 2011, p. 89). Demarcating the territory using this method resists processes of erasure by foregrounding markers of Black presence(s) that may not always be immediately visible, "so the archive becomes both official and unofficial, it becomes the space, the space holds the memory" (Antwi in Antwi et al. 2021). Antwi refers here to a territory that is socially produced and owned. The geographer Henri Lefebvre (1991) similarly argued that space is a social product formed at the intersection of the built environment, the associated discourses, and the lived experience of those who interact within the space. The territory then is defined by a set of relationships between that community and the material reality of the city, a practised place of Black histories that may have "been purposefully hidden or narrated in a way which is not easy to access anymore" (Antwi in Antwi et al. 2021). For Antwi, building community relationships with those who can speak of local Black histories can reactivate the site by "keeping track of what the city is trying to get rid of" (Antwi in Antwi et al. 2021).

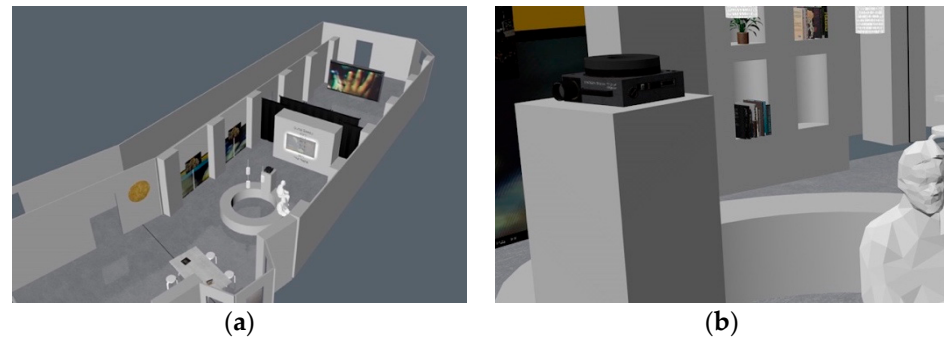
However, where the camera surveys, foregrounding Black histories that need to be told, it can also surveil. As Susan Sontag has reminded us, "cameras define reality in the two ways essential to the workings of an advanced industrial society: as a spectacle (for the masses) and as an object of surveillance (for rulers)" (Sontag 1977, p. 225). *For the Record* resists both these outcomes but, in doing so, must grapple with the question: "how do you move through (neighbourhoods) in a way which is not going to replicate the thing which you are making work against?" (Storr in Antwi et al. 2021). This raises matters of relationships and ethics: is the work extractive, or is it made in collaboration with the community it looks to highlight? Or perhaps more pertinent to mapping, what of a territory should be revealed and what should remain hidden? Antwi and Storr's snapshots materialise a territory of multi-scaled relationships between the artists, their cities, and the communities that reside (and resided) within them amid gentrification's erasure of histories and displacing of peoples.

#### 4.2. Framing the Territory: *For the Record* Design Analysis Part 1

In response to the artists' use of the analogue 35 mm snapshot to frame a territory and its language, the first exhibition plan included a 35 mm slide projector as the primary technology for sharing images (Figure 3a,b). The slide projector came into widespread use in the 1950s as a home entertainment device around which communities could gather. Its use here was intended to invoke both the informality of the snapshot and conviviality, as well as the bringing together of discrete communities through particular shared experiences of the city.

Temporally, the suggestion of a slide projector in the design implies a rhythm to how the work unfolds, one where photographs would proceed at a consistent and uniform speed as they are shuttled through the gate of the projector, the distinct mechanised sound alluding to the firing of a camera shutter. In this first plan, the images and audio would have drifted in and out of sync, their meanings fluctuating depending on the context of display within the conversation. This automated montage was intended to shape an understanding of the territory, a forever-changing, kaleidoscopic representation where each photograph "fragments space, breaks down the setting of the action, and thereby expands it" (Lefebvre 2007). At this early stage of production, the work was considered more dialogical than visual. "We like the idea of single images being an occasional presence in the room," Storr noted at the time (Storr 2020b). These design ideas convey an idea

of the work as a piece of audio-cinematography or “expanded audio discussion” (Antwi 2020), with just a single projection shown against a free-standing wall providing a kind of metronome for the conversation.



**Figure 3.** (a,b) The use of 35 mm slide projector in the space. CAD Drawing: Ben Evans James.

Spatially, the suggestion of a slide projector created size constraints for the size of the image in the space (Figure 3a). This size was considered primarily in relation to the low lumen count of the beam it emitted and the ambient light of the space. While the attempt to mirror the technology of Storr and Antwi’s 35 mm snapshot with a 35 mm projector may have created a kind of fidelity to the analogue medium or processes, this would have been at the expense of the form of the images themselves. The framing of the territory carefully mapped by Antwi and Storr at the human scale would have been diminished in size, disrupting the parity between the artists’ own bodies, the subjects, and the spectators.

These first stage designs allowed Antwi, Storr, and I to identify the need to re-mediate the image from an analogue projection to a digital projection. Through this, we might then provide a closer rendering of the form of the territory as defined by the artists’ images. The spectator’s eye could then be pressed up against the viewfinder, replicating the territory at a 1:1 scale and the specific view of Antwi and Storr when the shutter was pressed.

This ignited a discursive process in which the 3D renderings of space through CAD designs and the 2D renderings of time through the film edit ebbed and flowed between one another as the work developed. It is important to clarify that defining this as a discursive process is, in this case, not the same as defining it as a collaboration. The design work I undertook was always in response to and led by the themes developed in the work by Antwi and Storr.

#### 4.3. (Re)Framing the Territory: The Role of Image-Making Technologies in Forming the Territory

The previous section, *Framing the Territory*, has outlined the decisions taken by Antwi and Storr to give form to the territory and foreground certain relationships. This section, *(re)framing the Territory*, progresses by examining how the selection of certain images and the order in which they appear (an image or film edit) sets up new relations in which alternate readings of the territory can take place. Deleuze and Guattari show us that when defining a territory, we should not present a mirror image of a space but rather a productive translation of it. Drawing a distinction between a map and a tracing, they argue that a tracing replicates power structures that already exist, reinforcing singular ways of looking at the world, while in contrast, mapping sets forth an exploration where alternate meanings can emerge; “what distinguishes the map from the tracing is that it is entirely orientated towards an experimentation in contact with the real” (Deleuze and Guattari 1980, p. 72). Mapping is “not simply the indiscriminate listing and inventorying conditions as in a tracing” (Corner 2011, p. 95) but a strategic process that can reveal relational structures: an artificial construction based on the subjective experiences of what the mapmaker “sees” (or what they choose to see) that mediates between reality and representation.

In *For the Record*, the territory traced through the lens is mapped through the selection of images that involve at once the administrative categorisation of images and specula-

tive, creative decontextualising of each photograph from the physical film strip or digital memory card. Once detached, photos can be studied, manipulated, and networked with other associations constructed; relationships can be attended to. Akin to sculpting down a block of marble, this process removes excess material to find film form, bringing to mind the popular maxim that documentary films are made in the edit. Bringing photos together disrupts the individual image's operation by introducing temporality and the suggestion of narrative. While the editing of photographic or filmic images might be considered an intimate process (here, we can think of the film editor immersed behind a screen in the darkened editing suite), there is always a silent collaborator wrestling for control of the images and the narrative—the spectator. Within the mode of operation of the work, the filmmaker must consider the agency they wish to grant to the spectator in editing the images within the gallery space and, subsequently, how the physical staging of the space might enable that agency. The question becomes, through exhibition design and staging, is the spectator tracing the territory as defined by the filmmaker, or are they being given the tools to construct their own?

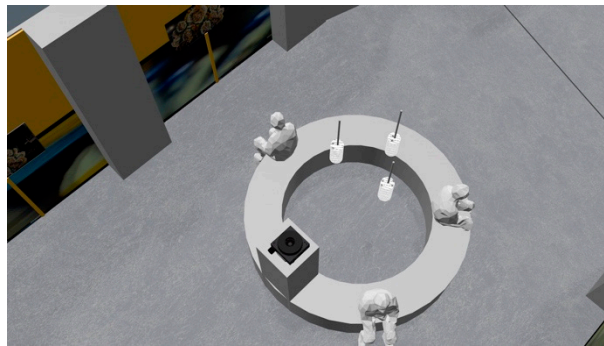
In *For the Record*, Antwi and Storr navigate outwards from their own photographs using the unmarked territory between images as a productive site of inquiry: at one end, Storr's grain-pocked images of London, and at the other, Antwi's digital renderings of Vancouver. The territory between is blank, a non-space or terra incognita. While the decision to shoot at night reduces the distance between the aesthetics of Antwi and Storr, it also acts as a filter that reveals the differences between the artists' respective urban settings. Observing city dwellers walking, phenomenologist Franz Xaver Baier remarked on how it was not possible to see how each individual organised space: "we do not see what is disclosed and closed off to them, what has meaning and what does not" (Baier 2020, p. 95). Through images, Antwi and Storr explore and reveal each other's interior world, or what Baier would call *situational space*, the "state of space which mediates a given, universal reality with our own specific circumstances" (Baier 2020, p. 89). Using an edit of images as a context to a conversation and a negotiation, the artists analyse each other's sense of place as a method to assemble their diasporic archive, "built out of a desire, not always to belong but to work through belonging" (Antwi in Antwi et al. 2021). The territory between the images becomes the scaffolding that holds the diasporic archive, a collaborative, responsive, and pliable space that refuses the physicality of the museum archive and the objectification of the truths it claims to represent.

Through the artists' exchange, the organisational logic (the *legend*) of the archive unfolds. It is then the spectator's task to decode this logic to navigate between the shared photographic images and draw out their own map. By asking the spectator to draw threads, the work places the spectator in the lacuna between the images, the space of productive inquiry from where the work was imagined. Like treading water, the spectator must labour, constantly repositioning themselves among the images and dialogue between Antwi and Storr. The exhibition design sought to provide navigational devices to define the borders of the territory to the spectator, finding material and spatial strategies that could mirror the physical distance between the artists, between London and Vancouver, and the celluloid film and projected digital images that represented them.

#### 4.4. (Re)Framing the Territory: For the Record Design Analysis Part 2

Analysis in *re(Framing) the Territory* has explored how the editing process sets out certain relationships as individual photographs are placed in association with the image(s) before and the image(s) after. Deconstructing this editing process identifies the organisational logic applied to the work by the artists allowing us to question how and where the spectator might be let into the work and what role they might have in helping realise its themes. Is the spectator tracing the territory as defined by Antwi and Storr, or are they being given the agency in the exhibition space to draw out their own map? We return here to the initial floor plans; the centre of the space showed seating in the round with three speakers hung above: one for Antwi's voice, one for Storr's, and one for the underlying

sound design (Figure 4). Separating these tracks within the space begins to consider a sense of spatialisation of the territory, representing the distinct locations of production of the artists in London and Vancouver. The spectator was asked to position their body towards a certain directional speaker, a design decision that sets out to enable the spectator to create their own “maps” of the territory (bringing us back to Deleuze and Guattari, who tell us to “make a map not a tracing” (Deleuze and Guattari 1980, p. 13) in order to set forth an exploration where alternate meanings can emerge). These early experiments open parts of the work up to the spectator while closing other parts off, exploring modes of spectatorship and questioning the rules of engagement for the visitor and the access the artists wanted to ascribe to the work. With the visitor encouraged to position themselves under different speakers, this floorplan ruptured the traditional cinematic mode of presentation and its sense of spectator immersion. Sound and image would have come together in different formations as spectators would have been empowered to rework the content of the film over and over into new orientations, with agency handed from the artists to the audience.



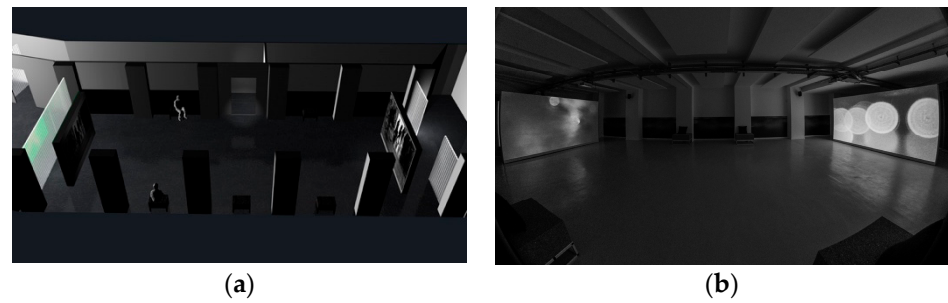
**Figure 4.** Speakers operating in the round. CAD Drawing: Ben Evans James.

Reflecting back on these drawings, it is clear that the transfer of agency sat uneasily with the intimate conditions within which the work was made. As *For the Record*'s themes unfold through the artists' interpersonal relations, placing these in the background to empower the spectator would have changed not only the operation of the work but destroyed the very scaffolding upon which their diasporic archive is constructed. The subsequent design concept handed control back to the artists through the use of a call-and-response mechanism. An explicit gesture of control, the use of call-and-response disavowed a tradition of “documentary or ethnographic film (that) is typically organized to shore up the control of the spectator rather than to emphasize the hand of the director” (Gronland in Rivers 2016, p. 58). It also offered a mode of operation for the work that Antwi highlighted as “a method of exchange that Black folks have mobilised as an aesthetic form of work” (Antwi in Antwi et al. 2021).

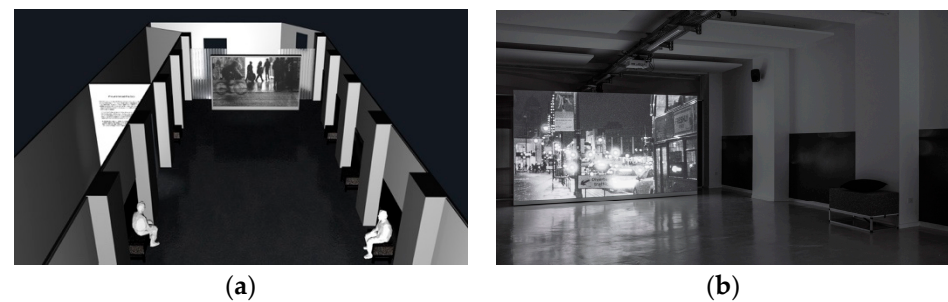
Within the design, the call-and-response mechanism is realised and spatialised through two screens and two speakers mounted at opposing ends of the gallery, facing one another (Figure 5a,b). The distance between the screens represents a marker of the remote geographies within which the work was produced, as Antwi's voice and image dwell at one end, and Storr's dwell at the other.

The political geographer Jay Appleton posits that landscape art traditionally frames the territory as a place of refuge and, in doing so, relates a discrete community's survival to a particular aesthetic form, the 16:9 image (Appleton 1996). The photographs that make up *For the Record* maintain a link to this form, projected onto a screen that maintains this landscape format. Like the solid frame around a watercolour painting, the edges of the projection screen in the gallery hold the territory within its bounds (Figure 6a,b). There were no curatorial gestures to expand the territory outside this frame and into the architecture of the exhibition space in the manner of objects or artefacts that relate to the territory, for example. For the spectator, the result is a feeling of distance from the territory, of being on its exterior looking in rather than being immersed within.





**Figure 5.** (a) Call-and-response mechanism realised through opposing projections. CAD Drawing: Ben Evans James. (b) Phanael Antwi and Rhea Storr, *For the Record* (2021), *transmediale* Studio. Photo © Ben Evans James.



**Figure 6.** (a) Landscape view of the territory. CAD Drawing: Ben Evans James. (b) Photo © Luca Girardini.

#### 4.5. (Re)Locating the Territory

To recap, *Framing the Territory* showed how Antwi and Storr gave form to the territory and foregrounded certain relationships through snapshots, while *(re)framing the Territory* examined how the edit—namely the selection of certain images and the order in which they appear—set up new relationships in which specific readings of the territory could take place subject to the spectator’s labour. This third and final section looks at the role of the spectator in realising the work by analysing how the territory constructed by the artists relates to that of the location of the exhibition space, which is, in this case, the *transmediale* studio space in Berlin.

In *For the Record*, the territory was defined by Black histories in London and Vancouver, but its articulation at *transmediale* necessitated a consideration of “a triangulation of Black histories” (Antwi in Antwi et al. 2021) between not only these cities but also Berlin, where the exhibition took place. The intent of *For the Record* was not to project itself onto the Black German experience but rather to activate the site, “I would hope that in each space that it enters, that the work sits in, the traces of the Black histories in those neighbourhoods become more clear, and folks can actually hear those spaces more. So, yes, as much as I would want folks to know about the spaces we have archived, I’m more interested in triggering possibilities, or the awakening possibilities of our work” (Antwi in Antwi et al. 2021).

In this respect, the materialisation of the archive not in filmic form, as, let us say, a single cinematic screening, but crucially in exhibition form, provided an object around which people can gather. *For the Record* then activated the exhibition space as an infrastructure that could materialise the archive by making it real for a period of time in an actual place (Midal 2019)—an archive resituated to Berlin where it opened out to an Afro-German experience and interpretation. This orientated the map, its territory opening out to new directions and bearings, to influence and be influenced by other locations and their particular Black histories.

Reflecting on the postcolonial use of “haunting”, Storr describes a work that “rather than being overcome by what’s happened historically” operated as a “ghost for future

encounters" (Storr in Antwi et al. 2021), an archival object that moulds to the situation it needs to be in at that time or a work that can be a "witness to the present, provides information on the past and can mediate with a future" (Wiens 2019, p. 126). This opens up the possibility that the orientation of the map may change based on who, when, how, and where the work is presented. Such site specificity exposes the work to conventions and discourse particular to the location, or in the words of scenographer Sigrid Merx, it defines the "space as host, content as ghost" (Merx 2020, p. 155) (Figure 7). In this role, the gallery exceeds the function as a container of art to provide a social function, an "arena of exchange" (Bourriaud 2009, p. 17). The artwork is viewed as a relational object in which each element must be considered in terms of the benefit or harm it may cause to all those entangled (Bourriaud 2009). In the case of *For the Record*, this is a "responsibility to the other that makes life possible for you" (Antwi in Antwi et al. 2021). Rather than aligning the organisation and staging of aural, visual, and material elements towards a singular message through the display of an artefact that carries only the artist's intention, the gallery can activate a plurality of relationships. The exhibition space becomes not merely a backdrop but takes an active role in inviting spectators to situate themselves within the work and in relation to their lived experience (Wiens 2019). Treating the design and staging of the space as one that can kindle intersubjectivity rather than as a direct communication has the capacity to generate "understanding through the sensual, emotional and aesthetic responses of the viewer" (Wiens 2019, p. 11).



**Figure 7.** "Space as host, content as ghost" (Merx, p. 155). The *transmediale* Studio at Silent Green, Berlin. Photo © Luca Girardini.

The relationships that *For the Record* foregrounds exist both in time and in space. In space, *For the Record* establishes its territory through images that reveal not only a landscape but a set of relationships. It is these relationships that the spectator can translate into their own lived reality. Placing the spectator in the middle of the images orientates the spectator towards this active process of translation. If the exhibition were to take place in a different city (say, Storr's London or Antwi's Vancouver), the orientation of the spectator might need to be revisited to reflect a changed situational context.

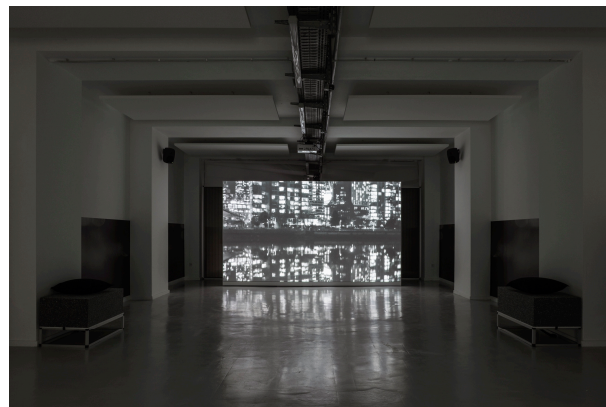
In time, *For the Record* represents the mapping of a territory at a particular point, establishing the territory as a physical space that gives rise to a certain set of relationships. It follows that at some point in the future, the work will represent something that will exist in a different form. As the physical fabric of the territory changes, traces of old relations may remain while new ones stratify. At this point, *For the Record* becomes an archive of a place that may look to a different mode of presentation to generate a different mode of reception that speaks to future contemporary conditions. We can further elucidate this idea through Walter Benjamin's idea of the image's historical materialism (Benjamin 2010). Through Benjamin's construct, we can understand the emulsion or pixels of the image as holding traces of history. These traces can be understood only through the link between the photograph's moment of production in the past and its moment of consumption in

the present (Parpa 2018). Temporalities collapse as the past, present, and future cannot be isolated (Cadava as cited in Parpa 2018, p. 76). Through staging, the exhibition environment presents an opportunity to suggest alternate correlations between these temporalities.

#### 4.6. (Re)Locating the Territory: For the Record Design Analysis Part 3

In *(re)Locating the Territory*, analysis has considered how the staging of space and exhibition design of *For the Record* was tied to specific spatial and temporal conditions. This recognises the artwork as a relational object, with its realisation at the *transmediale* studio space site specific not only to the gallery but to Berlin at a particular point in time. In highlighting the artwork's relational capabilities, this analysis has considered how the activation of a filmic archive in a physical form might provide an object around which people can gather, triggering the possibilities of the work influencing, or being influenced, by a location and its particular histories.

The desire to manifest the archive found form in the exhibition environment through scale. In place of two light floating screens, two wooden structures were employed that held significant presence, a physicality that embodies the artists in the space (Figure 8). As highlighted previously, no curatorial gestures between the screens attempted to place London or Vancouver in discourse with Berlin. The screens sat adjunct to their host city, projecting elsewhere that relied on the spectators to translate the images into their own lived realities in Berlin.



**Figure 8.** Phanael Antwi and Rhea Storr, *For the Record* (2021), *transmediale* Studio. Photo © Luca Girardini.

## 5. Defining the Legend

*For the Record* is an archive activated by the spatial and temporal conditions within which it is realised, and in this regard, it opens itself out to the spectator to not only sit alongside the work but to “move together” (Antwi in Antwi et al. 2021) with the artists. This invitation transports the work away from existing in the gallery as an immutable depiction of the artists' vision towards a work that the spectator has an active role in realising. This collaboration is defined by the dynamic flow that relates the making of an image to its reception. In this flow, energy is transmitted from what is filmed, through the camera and through the person who holds it, to the potentially infinite number of spectators who will appropriate the image in their own ways (Galibert-Laîné 2022). The legend, which runs alongside a map, sets the rules of engagement for this interpretation. It is an anchor point that helps determine the labour required from the spectator to “read” the map and understand the organisational logic behind it.

### 5.1. Opacity

As a spectator, it is not always easy to find a way into *For the Record*; there are times when there is a feeling of eavesdropping on a personal conversation. When probed on this, Antwi points to moments of intersubjectivity between himself and Storr: “if intimacy is

anything it is the sparsest gesture that is being communicated between some two people that know each other, and then you access that, it could feel like you're eavesdropping" (Storr in Antwi et al. 2021). The spectator is distanced from the work, which, following Jacques Rancière's thinking, helps generate the conditions for a subjective reading: "distance is not an evil to be abolished but the normal condition of any communication . . . . (The spectator's emancipation) begins when we challenge the opposition between viewing and acting, . . . when we understand that viewing is also an action that confirms or transforms this distribution of positions" (Rancière 2007). Antwi speaks of this through the lens of refusal, a resistance to explain certain ideas to the spectator: "The poet in me can sometimes be an ungenerous writer. And by that, I mean I want to keep doors open for folks to find an answer on their own, as opposed to constantly having the doors opened for them" (Antwi in Antwi et al. 2021). In *For the Record*, to think through the work is to engage with the organisational logic behind its composition. "I put codes into the works and through relations, you get access, you get the keys to encode it. Once you have the relationship, you get the key, you get the password to decode something" (Antwi in Antwi et al. 2021). In this sense, the "key" or legend is the mediator in the relationship between the filmmaker, the spectator, and the territory; it defines how transparent or opaque the themes of the work are to the viewer.

This refusal of transparency and realism and the embracing of opacity and artifice is identified by film theorists, including Erika Balsom (2017), Stella Bruzzi (2006), and Martin Lefebvre (2007) as a (not always to be celebrated) characteristic of modern artist documentary filmmaking. To contemplate the relationship between the territory mapped out in the images of *For the Record*, and the spoken narrative between Antwi and Storr, requires labour from the viewer. The viewer is asked to untangle the interpersonal relations that exist between the artists through a myriad of abovementioned references to Black scholarship, poetry, and music related to the role of opacity in the work. Thinking particularly of Glissant's *Poetics of Relation* (Glissant 1990), Storr reflects on her initial aspiration for transparency in the work and the problem this caused: "perhaps opacity is already present anyway, regardless of how transparent you think that you're being, and so to deny that you're denying other people access is kind of a disservice to them, because there will always be people who don't have access to what you're saying" (Storr in Antwi et al. 2021). Opacity, then, is a residue of the filmmaking process, a condition that radiates out from the filmmakers' subjectivity. To try to remove it from the work is to try to collapse the distance between subjectivity and objectivity, a Sisyphean task. Being opaque might then allow the work to operate in different ways depending on the spectator's knowledge. Opacity is an artistic manoeuvre or device that prevents the work from stalling on matters of representation. "I think with a lot of works, which think about Blackness, they stumble on this initial question of who is it for, and who is it representing. And I think it's good to not be kind of tied down by that question. Because sometimes it obscures what you really want to talk about" (Storr in Antwi et al. 2021).

In Walter Benjamin's 1921 essay "The Task of the Translator", the theorist defines the translation of one language into another as an art form (Benjamin 2002). Benjamin proposes that to produce close renderings of an original, a translator must adapt the translating language to "match" the original. This adaptation means abandoning a word-for-word translation in favour of one that understands the frames of representation of the receiving language. Following Benjamin's theory, an accurate filmic translation should never strive for transparency, a condition of documentary objectivity, but rather, it should ask whether the film is a valid translation; "more than asking what's credible or authentic, we should think about what interests a documentary serves" (Lamas 2016, p. 153). Benjamin's theory of translation implies that the pursuit of transparency, a "word-for-word" translation of the real into a cinematic language, even if hypothetically achievable, would render it an inaccurate translation. By foregrounding the author's voice or subjectivity in the translation process, Benjamin's theory generates the potential for multiple realities and experiences to be acknowledged. Opacity then does not obfuscate truths but can rather provide a device

for the authors to “get at the things that we want to get at and not stating it as the fact . . . but leaving room open for those many different voices” (Storr in Antwi et al. 2021). The “many different voices” Storr refers to are those represented by spectators who are given the means to translate the work into their own realities. Progressing Benjamin’s argument forward, we should not expect that the filmic object will remain unchanged as it is spatialised within the exhibition environment, as the flat plane of the video file adopts architectural form. This misrepresentation will occur not least due to one medium attempting to represent another, creating “asymmetries between two . . . the totality of the latter properties are not magically produced by the former” (Ponech 1999, p. 34).

In *The Emancipated Spectator*, Rancière draws attention to the unseen labour of the sedentary spectator by defining their potential as “active interpreters, who render their own translation, who appropriate the story for themselves, and who ultimately make their own story out of it” (Rancière 2007). With projections placed at either end, the *transmediale* exhibition space, with its narrow form, presents the spectator with particular sightlines. Sitting on the benches placed against the wall, the spectator can comfortably view one screen while seeing the other only out of the corner of the eye. In this orientation, the spectator is forced to edit the images they see by the direction they look to produce meaning and labour as collaborators with the artists. Placing the spectator between two screens that cannot easily be read simultaneously challenges the photographic frame as a container for the artist’s vision. Rather than viewing a singular image and working back to the artist’s intention (Ingold 2000), the spectator is placed in an active role, producing meaning and labouring as a collaborator with the artists. Moving your eyes and the orientation of your ears heightens the feeling of eavesdropping on the conversation, a key operator of the work as explored in our earlier analysis around opacity. Furthermore, the requirement placed on the viewer to partially edit together the work means *For the Record* cannot be wholly experienced in one viewing, says Storr: “you can’t see all of the images, some of the text is quite dense. I think it would be hard to really watch it one time through and get everything. So how long as a spectator would you have to spend with this work to really understand the kind of space and the mechanics and every little thing about it, I’m not sure that you could, and that’s part of the work that it can’t really be grasped or handled or re-contained in its totality” (Storr in Antwi et al. 2021). In my own experience, each time I have viewed the work, I piece together a different sequence of images in my mind, finding new associations and narratives between the over 150 individual photographs that make up the film. In this respect, the work continues to show a lineage back to the very first exhibition plan that proposed a single 35 mm projector and a set of directional speakers; these design interventions are aimed at engaging visitors in active forms of spectatorship.

In Sergei Eisenstein’s 1945 essay, *Neravnodushnaja priroda* (Nonindifferent Nature) the filmmaker defines landscape as “the most flexible in conveying moods, emotional states and spiritual experiences” (Eisenstein 1987, p. 217). Drawing on Romanticism, Eisenstein compares the use of landscape in film to music in its ability to conduct the emotions of the spectator (Finicchiario as cited in Lefebvre 2007). Eisenstein’s thinking highlights territory as an element that does more than simply provide a film’s setting. Starting from this point, Lefebvre shows us that affect in landscape cinema (images of the territory) is founded in the mode of spectatorship in which the viewer is placed (Lefebvre 2007). In *narrative mode*, the territory acts as a setting for events to unfold as the viewer is guided through the film in a linear fashion. In *spectacular mode*, the viewer drops out of narrative mode in order to reflect on the wider film spectacle and its themes. In *For the Record*, the interplay between sound and image plays between the tension of these modes. Images move between providing a setting for the conversation and existing as detached from the narrative, providing a broader context to the landscape or territory. It is in these moments when Lefebvre identifies the territory as a space that can exist beyond a narrative or aesthetic function and towards conveying identity and belonging (Lefebvre 2007).

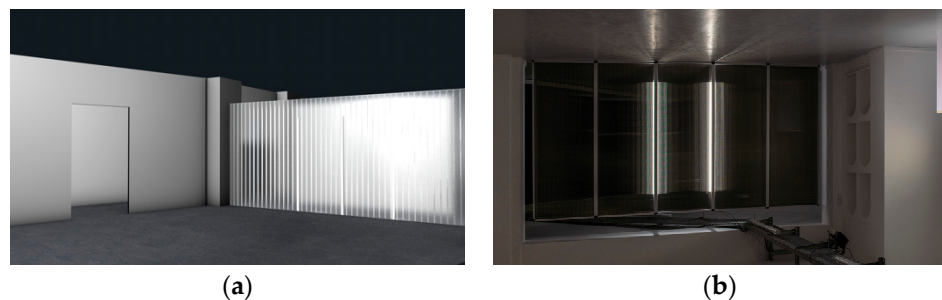
Gaps in the conversation between Antwi and Storr are marked by silence or rhythmical sound design that revert the viewer to a “spectacular” mode of viewing. Puncturing these

temps mort, new threads of conversation between Antwi and Storr commence through a short, sharp, sample, “shhh”, pulling the spectator back into narrative mode. The staging of the visual and aural components in the space draws attention to these modes. Scenographic gestures, including image size and the spectator’s orientation to screens and speakers, and even the choice of seating (leaning back or sitting forward), present strategies for highlighting the body schema and pointing the visitor to the interior or exterior of a filmic reality.

## 5.2. Design

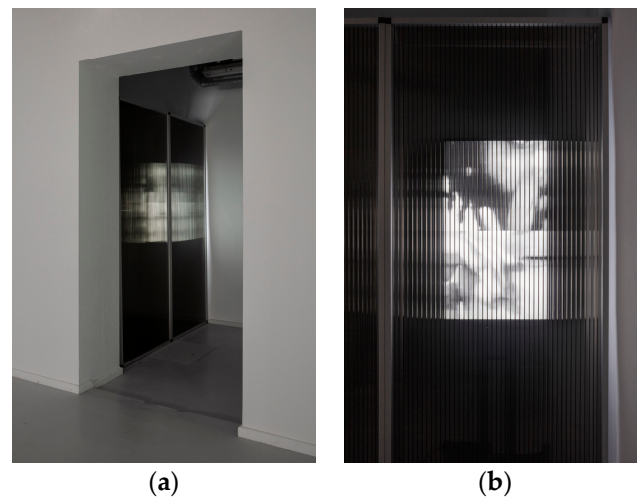
The legend brings to the surface the mode of operation of the work. It offers us a translation device between the filmmaker, the territory, and the spectator. As part of this process, it asks us to consider the role of opacity within this translation process, specifically how transparent the themes of the work are and how opacity is being used productively to engage the spectator to interpret those themes. These interconnected themes of opacity and labour find form within the exhibition through design interventions considered in the following 3D drawings. Focusing on the labour of the spectator within the exhibition space, these drawings question how curatorial decisions can foreground the viewer’s perception of the work through the relationship of the body to the visual and aural qualities of the work.

Through the use of polycarbonate screens, visitors are prevented from entering the exhibition space except through a narrow passageway that is a buffer between the work and the gallery reception area (Figure 9a,b). This passageway was designed as a threshold space, an architectural strategy that “leads the occupant to question their surroundings, thus leading to heightened awareness of the space as a transformative threshold between distinct spaces” (Zimmerman 2008). The aim is to distance the visitor from the outside world they just left and to sensitise them to the film world they are about to enter. By asking for a certain mode of attention from the visitor, the threshold space helps set up the idea of opacity within the work and of a labour of spectatorship.



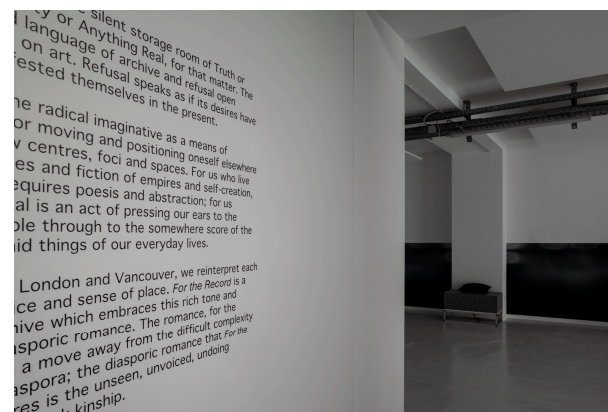
**Figure 9.** (a) Polycarbonate screen and passageway. CAD Drawing: Anonymous. (b) Photo © Luca Girardini.

At the opening end of the threshold space, a stacked image of Antwi and Storr was placed on a TV screen behind a smoked polycarbonate screen. As the visitor walked by, the still image slowly rippled like a lenticular poster, only coming into focus as they reached an angle perpendicular to it. This concealment of the image spoke to the intersubjectivity of the conversation, the position of the spectator between Antwi and Storr, and the labour required to decipher it (Figure 10a,b). The image treatment can also be understood as a response to refusal and a resistance against the performative gaze placed on the Black body within public spaces, a theme explored through the previous work of both artists. In this respect, the kinesis of the image formed by the lenticular qualities of the polycarbonate and the movement of the spectator’s body plays with what Antwi terms “the echoes of life that rest in the still image” (Antwi in Antwi et al. 2021).



**Figure 10.** (a,b) Polycarbonate Screen. At its origin, the threshold space contains a vertically orientated flatscreen TV whose image is obfuscated by a polycarbonate screen. Photos © Luca Girardini.

At the end of the passageway, a vinyl wall text lit by a single spotlight faced the viewer. Presented as a vinyl on a gallery wall, the text took on the customary form of a curatorial text, instilling it with a kind of “factual” authority (the kind you might expect to see at an archival/collection-based show at a museum) (Figure 11). The text itself reflects the organisational logic (the legend) of the work, employing opacity as a device to open and close the themes of the work depending on the knowledge the viewer brings. Taking on a poetic form, the text signposted the work as a refusal against the Western hegemonic views that the archive represents; the text begins: “Our archive is not the silent storage room of Truth or History or Reality or Anything Real” (Antwi and Storr 2021).



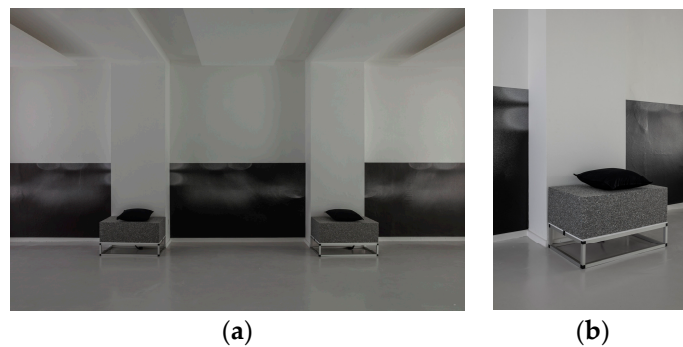
**Figure 11.** End of threshold space opening into exhibition space. Photo © Luca Girardini.

The threshold space opened out onto the centre of the gallery space (Figure 12). From a staging perspective, the designed circulation route prevented the visitor from entering the work from either end and privileging one voice over another. Rather, the spectator entered the space through a narrow opening, placing them between the artist’s voices. Stepping into this liminal space played into the idea of the spectator eavesdropping, finding themselves interloping in a conversation in a manner akin to a crossed line on the phone or an unstable radio frequency. Further speaking to this idea, black and white vinyl was placed as a horizon line linking the two screens. This horizon line, originally thought of in geographic terms as a latitudinal line, became a space of disturbance, interference, and static—a space of Black noise.<sup>6</sup> The vinyl itself was made by blowing up a single black and white 35 mm image, with the grain and light leaks providing the requisite visual/sonic texture. This aesthetic was further carried into the seating that used blocks of mottled high-density foam

resembling the static of a signal-less CRT TV (Figure 13a,b). Acting as prompts to the spectator about how the work operates and the labour required, these design interventions locate the spectator as a receiver, picking up a signal that must be translated and brought down into their own reality.

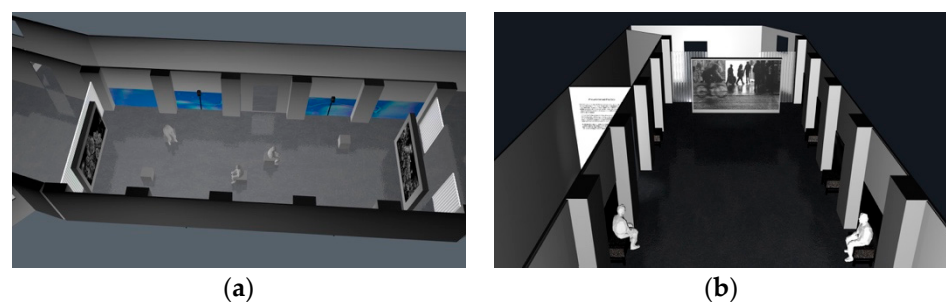


**Figure 12.** Opening into exhibition space. Photo © Luca Girardini.



**Figure 13.** (a) Black noise of exhibition vinyl. (b) Seating. Photos by Luca Girardini.

In initial floorplans, the seating was designed as a series of high-density foam blocks that the spectator could position themselves within the space, allowing them to prioritise a particular line of sight or alignment with audio (Figure 14a). In later drawings, fixed seating was positioned against the wall (Figure 14b). This placed the spectator in a position where all images were visible depending on the way they turned, editing images together with the artists and expanding on Antwi and Storr's dialogue in a multiplicity of ways.



**Figure 14.** (a) Original seating design with movable foam blocks. CAD Drawing: Ben Evans James. (b) Fixed seating placed against wall. CAD Drawing: Ben Evans James.

### 5.3. Summary

In *For the Record*, Antwi and Storr adopt opacity as a strategy that refuses transparency. As part of this, an expectation of labour is placed on the viewer, with access to the farthest



reaches of the conversation only possible when employing the literary, musical, and theoretical references that underpin the work (even then, access to some parts remain inaccessible, bound as they are to the strong bonds and interpersonal relationships that exist between the artists). As this analysis has worked through the strategies of opacity adopted by Antwi and Storr, it has asked what happens as we spatialise these concerns and how this effects the expectations of labour placed on the spectator. *For the Record* offers a translation of a reality enabled through the organisational logic applied by the artists to an archive of images they have created. The exhibition creates a further translation, transforming the filmic object itself and offering different possibilities in the way the work conducts its themes and the role or signals it puts out for the spectator to engage with them. As we summarise this section, these interconnected themes of opacity and labour have found form within the exhibition space through a range of design interventions demonstrated in the accompanying CAD drawing evaluations.

In summary, to *Define the Legend* of a work is to think through the opacity of its themes and the labour required from the viewer to read and interpret those themes. As we spatialise a film work by bringing it into the exhibition space, attending to the legend can highlight how the opacity of a work can change (or be changed) and how this asks for different forms of labour from the spectator. This is not a static process, but one that shifts and evolves as a work shifts between different exhibition environments and locations.

This analysis and definition of *Define the Legend* marks the second of three processes that outline applications of the spatial language of mapmaking to filmmaking—a process that immerses the film process within the language of mapmaking to enable a bridge into the spatial practices of the gallery environment, into curatorial practice, and into exhibition design. It is a process this paper defines with the term film-mapping.

## 6. Set the Modality

To set the modality of a map is to determine how its data is visualised. Applied to filmmaking, *Set the Modality* considers how an array of film production technologies and processes mediate how the territory of a map is aestheticised, and the resulting effect on our understanding of its subject. The modality allows us to consider how these aesthetic qualities can be translated and manipulated within the physical space of the exhibition.

### 6.1. Defining the Modality

In his concept of *Lived Space*, phenomenologist and architect Franz Xaver Baier draws on the work of Martin Heidegger and Jean-Paul Sartre to argue that space comes into being through human experience and motivation (Baier 2020). For example, our understanding of the beach as a space might be defined by our motivation to swim (Baier 2020). Similarly, our initial understanding of the beach as an open expanse might be shattered if we were to step on a shell and cut our foot. At this juncture, the expanse of the beach collapses and “our world dissolves” (Baier 2020, p. 88). Space, then, is neither entirely objective nor subjective, allowing us to hypothesise that there is no universal spacetime but only a *Lived Space* that is forever changing based on our experiences.

Baier goes on to argue that while the concept of *Lived Space* allows us to see space as “a human existential” (Baier 2020, p. 86), we should not consider space as something exclusively brought into being by people but also by tangible and intangible materials; “today, we can begin with the assumption that everything participates in the reality of spaces” (Baier 2020, p. 86). The reality of space might, therefore, include material elements such as light, sound, colours, or smells. In reference to the theatre, scenographer Joslin McKinney references philosopher Gernot Böhme’s theory of the “ecstasy of the thing” (McKinney in Wiens 2019, p. 59), where the characteristics of a “thing” creates an atmosphere that is not understood solely through the physical attributes of the object itself (e.g., the light, sound, colour, and smell in an exhibition). Within the artistic sphere, we could look to any number of practitioners who use everyday, inexpensive materials in excess to construct an atmosphere. A recent example includes Nina Canell’s 2022 install at Berlinische Galerie,

where visitors were asked to walk across seven tonnes of marine molluscs, emitting a distinct sound as shells were crushed underfoot; the ambition was to draw attention to the use of molluscs in creating construction materials (Cannell 2022). We can also think of artists working with less tangible materials such as light and extensively referenced examples such as Olafur Eliasson's *Weather Project* at Tate Modern in 2003 (Eliasson 2003), or even Andy Warhol, who famously wore perfume during performance works to create a presence in space beyond the physical borders of his body. In all these examples, there is a temporal as well as spatial condition to the atmospheres created; none are static over time. This fits Böhme's definition of atmospheres as "a mood hanging in the air" (Böhme and Thibaud 2016, p. 2) that may be best explained using common expressions that describe intangible feelings such as a "serious atmosphere" or perhaps a "tense atmosphere". These atmospheres can be produced "with the aid of entirely physical, technical means" (Böhme and Thibaud 2016, p. 183)—with materials and through the technologies used to deploy them. Böhme argues that by harnessing the external effect of materials, a space can be filled "with tensions and suggestions of movement" (Böhme and Thibaud 2016, p. 19). In *For the Record*, his theory can help draw focus towards the qualities of the image and how these are materialised in the exhibition space to create a particular atmosphere via a method for translating the 2D plane of the film strip back into 3D space to bring forth specific "feelings" and understandings of the territory, processes that re-territorialise a space.

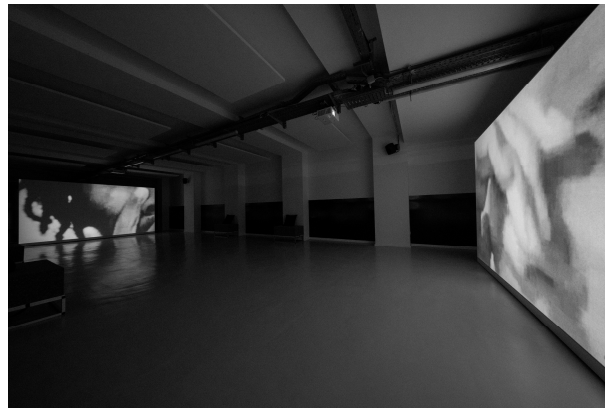
## 6.2. Deploying the Modality

*For the Record* called for a range of production technologies, some of which are unremarkable in the making of a film and some that are perhaps less commonplace. Most conventionally, the film employs lens-based technologies through the cameras used by Antwi and Storr. As covered in some detail earlier in this essay around our conversation on the "territory", the decision to use photographic cameras and the form of the snapshot has conceptual and aesthetic consequences on the modality of the work. This section moves beyond the scope of these lens-based technologies to consider in greater detail the other technologies that shape the map's modality; this includes the use of the conferencing platform Zoom and the technology of the human body itself.

### 6.2.1. The Zoom Image

As the pandemic took hold, the video platform Zoom transitioned in use from noun to verb. "To Zoom" became a way of speaking with colleagues, friends, and family while being socially distanced. To exist in these spaces, we had to learn new ways of being and of performing. Mediated through technology, our bodies were dislocated, in each other's presence but not present (Antwi et al. 2021). Separated by over 7500 km, Antwi and Storr were not close to one another, but there was a closeness, an intimacy provided by their Zoom conversations that kindled the "bonds of Black kinship" (Antwi in Antwi et al. 2021) that underpin the work. Over a period of three months, the artists held weekly conversations on Zoom to create an archive from which they could draw; in Antwi's words, "recording a series of conversations that we are having among ourselves, you can call this research; . . . it is the archive of these meetings that we plan to draw from for *For the Record*" (Antwi 2020). In the making of *For the Record*, Antwi and Storr embraced the visual language that stemmed from a technology platform and mode of working we were almost all experiencing but that spoke intimately to their own encounters. "I think the condition of the now forced something out of us, it asked us to use technologies in ways that we are not used to doing," noted Antwi in the summer of 2021 (Antwi in Antwi et al. 2021). Taking screenshots and screen recordings as they spoke, Storr later rephotographed the images from her computer screen with the same 35 mm snapshot camera she had used to take images of London. Occasionally, the artist would let the Zoom recording play as she depressed the shutter, leaving faces blurred or suspended in movement, creating an almost double exposure effect. Cropping the images, switching them to black and white, and re-compositing them back together in Photoshop both removed elements of the digital,

such as the poor colour rendition, while emphasising the digital in others, such as the heavy pixelation that occurs when blowing up low-resolution images. These post-production processes revealed the technological mediation of the body in producing the work and of the technology of Zoom in creating its form. The images are both instantly familiar to anyone who has worked through the pandemic and also, through their editing, distance the spectator from the familiar. Cut into the final edit of *For the Record*, these fragments of photos never reveal the artists' full features but instead focus on a hand gesture or eye movement (Figure 15). Only on approaching the end of the film do we see the artists' full faces, laughing with each other in a final moment of levity as Antwi tells capitalism "to go fuck itself" (Antwi and Storr 2021), the giant pixels that make up the images strewn across the screen like the debris of the broken system itself.



**Figure 15.** Manipulated Zoom screengrabs from *For the Record* shown in situ, *transmediale* 2021. Photo: Ben Evans James.

With the artists facing their laptops, the gaze of the camera turns onto Antwi and Storr as snatched screenshots show the pair conversing from their homes. These domestic images show the safety of a world captured "in here" in contrast to their 35 mm snapshots of Vancouver and London that map the instability of the world "out there". The decision to use still images of their bodies is a refusal by Antwi and Storr to perform in ways the artists see as habitually equated with Blackness, to adopt the kind of "explosive energy" that jazz, blues, or hip hop might act as a signpost for (Storr in Antwi et al. 2021). This "over-determined or over characterised" (Antwi in Antwi et al. 2021) feature of what Blackness might be is countered by ideas of stillness in *For the Record*. The use of Zoom gave form to this stillness, capturing the artists' bodies suspended at the point of production, providing the opportunity for these images to be renewed when enfolded into the work within the gallery. "It was interesting that those gestures might transform into something else beyond what they could be on the screen in that moment" (Storr in Antwi et al. 2021). This job of transformation continued within the gallery, where the treatment of the images could amplify their themes.

As it is particularly relevant to *For the Record* and its use of photos, we can return to Böhme and his hypothesis of the properties of light in creating atmosphere. The philosopher defines space as a material "not created by the distances between things", an axonometric understanding of the world, but one that is defined only by light; "as things become visible in light, they also appear to us in space" (Böhme and Thibaud 2016, p. 200). Böhme offers us a way to think about the relationship between light and space, a dynamic that can influence the presentation of the image in the gallery environment. *For the Record* deploys a range of still images bound within a film format. These are not photographic prints but images rendered through light, whether from the beam of a projector or the pixels of a television. To consider the qualities of this light (size, brightness, colour, and orientation) is to interrogate lightness and, therefore, the definition of the gallery space and its atmosphere. Furthermore, it follows that by exploiting the use of light within the

images of *For the Record*, such as by focusing on the oversized weight of pixels and their movement, we can disturb the volumetric space of the screen and the spectator's spatial understanding of the exhibition environment.

Böhme's theory can attune us to the possibilities that arise as the image is staged, re-mediating it from the digital field (video file) into the material or physical field (beamed) such that it might create an atmosphere that further attunes the spectator to the work. In *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Production*, Walter Benjamin suggests that the spectator "breathes" in the aura of an artwork (Benjamin 2008, p. 23). Breathing as a verb here allows us to consider the artwork as an experience that is absorbed through the body (Böhme and Thibaud 2016, p. 15). It also places the idea of an atmosphere as something that sits between the artwork object and the spectator as something that is emitted by a work but only brought into being through the experiencing subject or spectator. It is precisely in this being in between that the value of understanding and manipulating atmosphere comes because it allows us to "link together what has traditionally been separated as the aesthetics of production and of reception" (Böhme and Thibaud 2016, p. 183).

### 6.2.2. The Zoom Sound

The default audio options in Zoom compress audio into a narrow range of frequencies, stripping the voice of range. Initially embraced by Antwi and Storr as an aesthetic that would communicate the physical distance between them, the poor quality of the audio later led them to abandon this approach for external recorders. Antwi used a variety of recording devices in a range of environments, creating tonal shifts in his voice across the work, transitions embraced by the artist as scratchy and messy, giving form to the audio shaped by ideas of interference and disturbance. Through the accompanying sound design in the work, Storr worked with layers of short samples and loops of radio interference, metallic tones and space sounds that further highlight the physical distance between the artists while also speaking to the audio aesthetics of Afrofuturism.

Sound, through its resonance and echo, is in constant dialogue with space. Sound requires space to materialise, and in turn, sound highlights the architectural qualities of space. This is reflected in the types of language we use to describe sounds, adjectives that describe a material experience of different tones, such as textural, grinding, sharp, or broken. These descriptors provide an understanding of sound that moves beyond the temporal towards the material or spatial—an understanding that Böhme argues allows us to also bring sound into the "aesthetics of atmosphere" (Böhme and Thibaud 2016, p. 185). Considering sound in this way locates space between the sound and the body, a translation device that affects the embodied experience: "music shapes the feeling of the listener in space, it intervenes directly in his or her bodily economy" (Böhme and Thibaud 2016, p. 186). In *For the Record*, the spatial structure of the sound design was invoked in the exhibition through the positioning of speakers, with Antwi's voice emanating from one end and Storr's from the other, conveying the remoteness crucial in making the work. Linking the two voices, sounds of interference and space sounds permeated through the atmosphere of the gallery. For the spectator, the sound design and its interpretation in space created the sensation of being caught between Antwi and Storr within the static of a shifting analogue radio dial. The set-up further draws attention to the call and response mechanism that defines the work, asking the spectator to edit the conversation between our protagonists. Around thirty minutes into *For the Record*, Antwi and Storr embark on an exchange with one another in which they talk about their bodies as living, breathing archives (Antwi and Storr 2021).

Our bodies are constantly archiving. Our hearts, (Storr)  
 Our hearts, (Antwi)  
 Our guts, *Our guts*,  
 Our feet, *Our feet*,  
 Our skin, *Our skin*,  
 Our tongues, *Our tongues*,

Our mouths, *Our mouths*,  
 Our anus, *Our anus*,  
 Our unitary tracts, *Our unitary tracts*,  
 Our bloodstream, *Our bloodstream*,  
 In our bodies everything is constantly archiving.  
*Let's find out what we can about each other based on this thing we carry with us all the time.*

Speaking about the passage, Antwi reveals how their long Zoom sessions would often be interrupted by noises emanating from the body, including noises of bellies rumbling or dry coughs—noises he noted represent technologies that are also producing and giving form to the work, the kinaesthetic noises and rhythms of the body archive (Antwi in [Antwi et al. 2021](#)). In the exhibition space, the spectator is asked to consume the work in a way that, in part, mirrors the artists' production—a position of stillness from which the spectator has to engage in an internal, bodily labour to untangle the meanings within the work and apply them to their own reality.

### 6.3. Set the Modality

The Zoom image, frozen and further manipulated by Storr, revealed a material form that tied to the conceptual underpinning of the work—images enlarged to the point that faces were cropped to reveal only hairlines, eyes, or mouths; images that, for the artists, refuse dominant modes of broadcasting of Black bodies, from states of animation towards images of suspended animation, embracing “the echoes of life that rest in the still image” (Antwi in [Antwi et al. 2021](#)). In the following CAD drawings, artifice that arises through the use of Zoom as a production platform is employed to invoke these themes.

*For the Record* utilises black and white imagery throughout its 48-min run time. Edited as a diptych, there are points in the film where just one image was shown on a single screen, when both screens showed an image, and when neither screen had an image and was left black. The gallery was lit by the ambient light of the images, which helped choreograph the spectator's gaze (Figure 16). The impact of the space as screens switched from darkness to bright white amplified the qualities of the image, creating “a meeting between material and a sensation” (O'Sullivan 2006, p. 56). This meeting foregrounded the relationship of the body in the photos for the spectator, recalling the phenomenological potential of the film experience as defined by Maurice Merleau-Ponty: “[t]he movies are well suited to make manifest the union of mind and body, mind and world, and the expression of one in the other” (Merleau-Ponty 2019, p. 111).



**Figure 16.** Projection as light source in the space, *transmediale* 2021. Photo © Ben Evans James.

The use of an artificial light source (projection) to present the work links the presentation of its images back to a “capitalist, technical civilization” in which nothing “is seen simply as it would appear of its own accord” (Böhme and Thibaud 2016, p. 203). In *For the Record*, the final rallying cry of Antwi for capitalism “to go fuck itself” (Antwi in

Antwi et al. 2021) might best be served by accentuating the commodification of the image itself, by embracing and amplifying its artificiality and its aestheticization in the gallery space (Figure 17). This reflects physicist Karen Barad's hypothesis that matter has discursive properties and the ability to convey meaning without the use of language (Barad 2007). Perhaps we can even argue that matter itself can go on to convey themes even beyond those originally intended by the filmmakers.



Figure 17. Grain. Photo © Luca Girardini.

Echo-reducing panels were suspended from the ceiling and calibrated to reduce resonance but not to completely nullify it to heighten the sense of distance between Antwi and Storr in the making of the work. Atmospheres are personal, subjective experiences for which we find a common language. In *For the Record*, the conversation between Antwi and Storr takes place in an atmosphere of kinship and intimacy. The exhibition space can either look to mirror this atmosphere or contrast it (though the decision is not necessarily a binary one as atmospheres are dynamic and can change over time). In Berlin, the spectator was physically placed at the exterior of the conversation, listening in.

#### 6.4. Summary

To *Set the Modality* of a map is to determine how the map's data is visualised; it is to determine its form. Applied to filmmaking, to *Set the Modality* is to consider how diverse film production technologies and processes mediate how the territory of a map is aestheticised and the resulting effect on our understanding of the map's subject. Carrying this knowledge forward, the modality allows us to consider how these aesthetic qualities can be translated and manipulated within the physical space of the exhibition environment.

## 7. Conclusions

This investigation into how the spatial language of mapping can act as a bridge between the disciplines of filmmaking and curatorial practice puts forward the term *film-mapping* as a process with three stages:

### 1. Compose the Territory

This stage explores the relationship between a defined geographical area and its representation on a map. Applied to filmmaking, the process foregrounds relationships that exist between the filmmaker(s), their subject(s), and place(s).

### 2. Define the Legend

The legend represents the key to a map. When applied to filmmaking, this can be understood as a set of signals and codes that navigates a spectator through the work.

### 3. Set the Modality

The modality determines how the data of a map are visualised. Applied to filmmaking, it considers how diverse film production technologies and processes mediate how the territory is aestheticised and the resulting effect on our understanding of the map's subject.

*For the Record* by the artists Phaniel Antwi and Rhea Storr serves as a case study to develop a language around these three processes.

The first of these three stages, *Compose the Territory*, was itself broken down into three concurrent processes. The first of these, *Framing the Territory*, examined how particular filmmaking approaches engender certain relationships between the filmmaker and the territory. The second, *(re)Framing the Territory*, explored how the editing process scaffolds these relationships into particular narratives of the territory. The third, *(re)Locating the Territory*, looked to the conflicts and opportunities that surface when the rendering of a territory through a film is relocated to an alternate location such as an exhibition. The combined processes described in *Compose the Territory* reveal relationships at multiple scales: between the filmmakers themselves, between the filmmakers and the communities they have documented, and between the filmmakers and the spectator. By asking us to consider how the representation of a territory has been formed within a work, *Compose the Territory* provides a method to think through the specific relationships this representation attends to and how those relationships might change as we relocate the work into the gallery space.

The second stage of analysis, *Define the Legend*, was used to think through the opacity of a work's themes and the labour required from the viewer to read and interpret those themes. As we spatialise a film work by bringing it into the exhibition space, attending to the legend was shown to highlight how the opacity of a work can change (or be changed) and how this can be used to ask for or require different forms of labour from the spectator.

The final stage of analysis, *Set the Modality*, examined how a map's data is visualised; it examined its form. Applied to filmmaking, *Set the Modality* considered how diverse film production technologies and processes mediate how the territory of a map is aestheticised and the resulting effect on our understanding of the map's subject. Carrying this knowledge forward, the modality allowed us to consider how these aesthetic qualities could be translated and manipulated within the physical space of the exhibition environment.

Applying the lenses provided by the interconnected processes of *Compose the Territory*, *Define the Legend*, and *Set the Modality* created a spatial understanding of the work carried forward into the exhibition environment—a process demonstrated throughout this paper through accompanying CAD drawings and design analysis. Together, these processes can be understood as creating a translation device or bridge that sits between the production processes of filmmaking and the production processes of curatorial practice, mediating between the disciplines by providing a shared spatial language. While analysis within this paper is intertwined with the development of *For the Record*, the three-step model developed out of the research offers a replicable method for other artist documentary films that have a concern with place—more specifically, and turning back to the geographer Henri Lefebvre, with films that attend to a space formed at the intersection of the built environment, the discourses attached to it, and the lived experience of those who interact within the space (Lefebvre 1991).

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Martin Lefebvre describes the relationship between landscape and artist documentary film as one in which landscape determines film form, “in the domain of art, landscape is not so much the result of a work; rather, it is the work itself which is the result of the landscape” (Lefebvre 2007).
- <sup>2</sup> This speculative approach is adopted to kindle conversations that foreground Black and Asian voices in subjects where those voices have been historically crowded out in the West, in this case, circling subjects of intimacy, touch, and love.
- <sup>3</sup> Referencing here Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s understanding of a “body-in-the-world” in which the presence of our physical body within a space alters our perception of it. As a body-in-the-world, we do not view the world from a detached objective position, but rather we live through our body, which in turn helps shape our experience of space (Jean Nouvel in Cairns 2013).
- <sup>4</sup> The *dérive* can be understood as an embodied practice of ‘drifting’ across an urban environment in an unplanned or unstructured manner. Outlined by Guy Debord in 1956 and later taken up by the Situationist International (1957–72), it is a tool associated with psychogeography. Also defined by Debord, psychogeography explores interpersonal relations with place through affect and the resulting actions of the individual.
- <sup>5</sup> Punctum draws the viewer into the image and its themes by sparking their subjectivity, the quality of a photograph that Barthes described as “pricking” or “bruising” him (Barthes 1981).
- <sup>6</sup> A reference to the common expression for electrical signal interference as ‘white noise’.

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