

Fluid Cinema - Alternative Experimental Moving Images

: Paramnesia I

Heejoo Gwen Kim

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THESIS EXHIBITION

Paramnesia I

UIC South Gallery, Art + Design Hall

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THESIS COMMITTEE

Sabrina Raaf

Drew Browning

Dana Plepys

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Figure 1. A pregnant woman figure

Abstract

Artists perceive that technology is evolving rapidly in such a short period of time. Artistic experiments have predominantly been transferred through the expanded medium in interlaced approaches. On a personal level, visually and conceptually, most of my work is rooted in virtual and unwearable, yet emotionally functional garments and veiled memories. Paramnesia I is an experimental moving image installation. Deciphering the meaning of “paramnesia” in terms of psychiatry: the definition is a distortion of memory in which fact and fantasy are confused. I reflect and depict the poignant derivation of a pregnant female figure with her garment, furniture, and natural force based on my experience and indistinguishable recollections.



Figure2. Prototype image

Introduction

"Animation's ability to instantly dissolve the representational into the abstract, to leap associatively with ease, and to render simultaneously a flood of images, perceptions, and perspectives, makes it an unparalleled form of cinema"

-- Tom McSorely, Take One, 1997



Figure 3. Paramnesia I still image

More than ever before, many different types of recent media art evoke sensations that are normally experienced separately. I have experimented with virtually transformative fabrics and objects to complete sensitive functional wear and an environment for ambivalence about obstetrics, pre-delivery aggravation, and sentiment. My subconscious engrams have been redefined in such images.

They are combined with themes of predicament, dilemma, vulnerability, blessing, feasibility and longing. Abstract maternity clothing and reformed body symbolize expectation and trepidation of uncertainty: the core of pre-birth sentimental concern and expectation. In spite of her uneasy gesture, the figure of a woman delivers an altered inspiration. Similarly, restricted movements look somewhat uncomfortable or irritating, preparing and waiting for a new being.



Figure 4. Paramnesia I still image

Paramnesia I

Images unlock hidden memories.



Figure 5. Paramnesia I sketch

This is not about memories from my childhood or my past. Rather, these are enigmatic images lingering within me from unknown territory.

Concept

Paramnesia is a psychiatric term that stands for a distortion of memory in which facts and fantasies are confused. It is also called 'déjà vu' in French, which literally means "already seen." It is the experience of having a feeling, described as an overpowering sense of familiarity with something that should not be familiar at all. Since déjà vu occurs in people with and without medical conditions, there is much speculation as to how and why this phenomenon occurs. Several psychoanalysts explain it as a simple false vision or wish execution, while some psychiatrists attribute it to a mismatching in the brain causing one to mistake the present for the past. Many parapsychologists believe it is related to past-life experiences. Apparently, more research needs to be done.

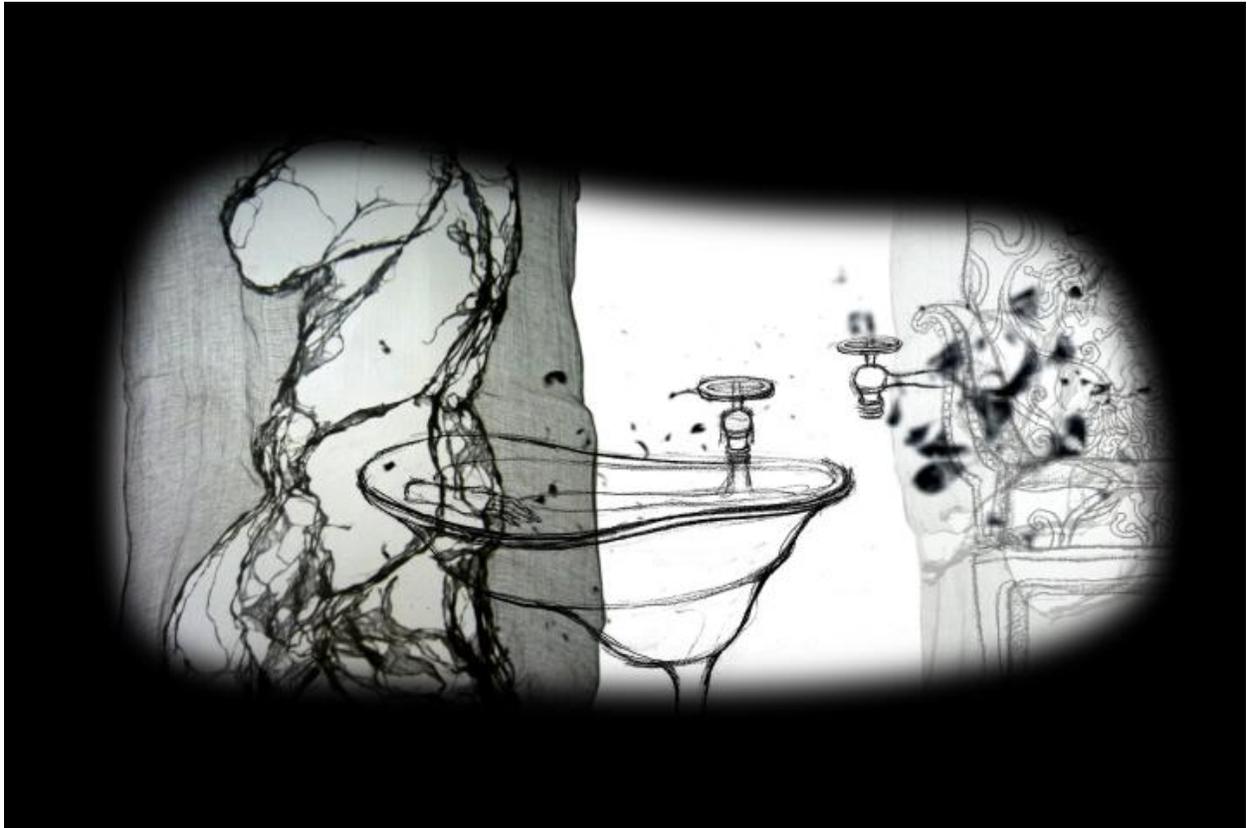


Figure 6. paramnesia I still image

Moving images

Emerging new technologies collaborate with film and animation. The technologies offer direct access to hybridization with other traditional art forms. For example, Kathy Rose's animation and dance performances, Anita Thacher's sculpture and film installations, and Suzan Pitt's animation decor for opera help focus public attention on animation as art, rather than animation as entertainment or a sales device. Films by relative newcomers include Robert Ascher's, "Cycle," a frame-by-frame abstract hand-painting on film, with a vocal rendering of an Australian Aborigine myth, and Flip Johnson's, "The Roar from Within," a personal, psychological horror film, painted on paper in dark watercolors. "Music Room" by Steven Subotnick, adopts geometric computer-generated abstractions.

These films, which are quite short, and run from two to twenty-three minutes long, integrate literature, psychology, nature, anthropology, and, of course, painting, sculpture, installation, performance, and graphic arts. Each film represents the unique vision, technique and creativity of a single artist, in concept and form, and in style and substance. Yet, there is no unique category in film or art.

In a medium as liberal and flexible as the drawn film, the field of experiment is unlimited. It is through keeping alive this sense of experiment that animation can avoid some of the stereotyped repetitions of established forms of design and commercial films. Although it is obvious that a considerable degree of experiment is always possible in the course of common commercial production, it is the fluid cinema that allows these more free forms and work realms via new technological discovery.

On the cutting edge, Norman McLaren, who has become over a period of years the best known originator of abstract or near-abstract animation, claims that his approach to each new film is experimental. He wants to explore new technical inventions of sound and image which will expand his

own particular field of work still further. The nature of his films, therefore, grows out of their own individual techniques.

In the meantime, most forms of animation serve particular ends of advertising and propaganda, story-telling and entertainment. Experimental films gradually evolve as a unique medium. The discoveries made of the experimentalists are expansive and invaluable. They reveal, both in their success and failures, what the medium is capable or incapable of accomplishing. Its final artistic achievement cannot be judged in advance of its actual realization. Visual flow and continuity and the dynamic relationship of sound and vision emerge when the full work has been completed.

In fact, an experimenter, such as, Len Lye concentrates for a period on detached animation aspects. His work is a phenomenon in the use of color and sound, or the relation of optics to the drawn film. It gives an invaluable examination of his colleagues. He demonstrates initial forms of animation which can be developed more fully by others. Additionally, Norman McLaren uses the work of Len Lye as the starting point for his own more advanced and prolonged experiments.

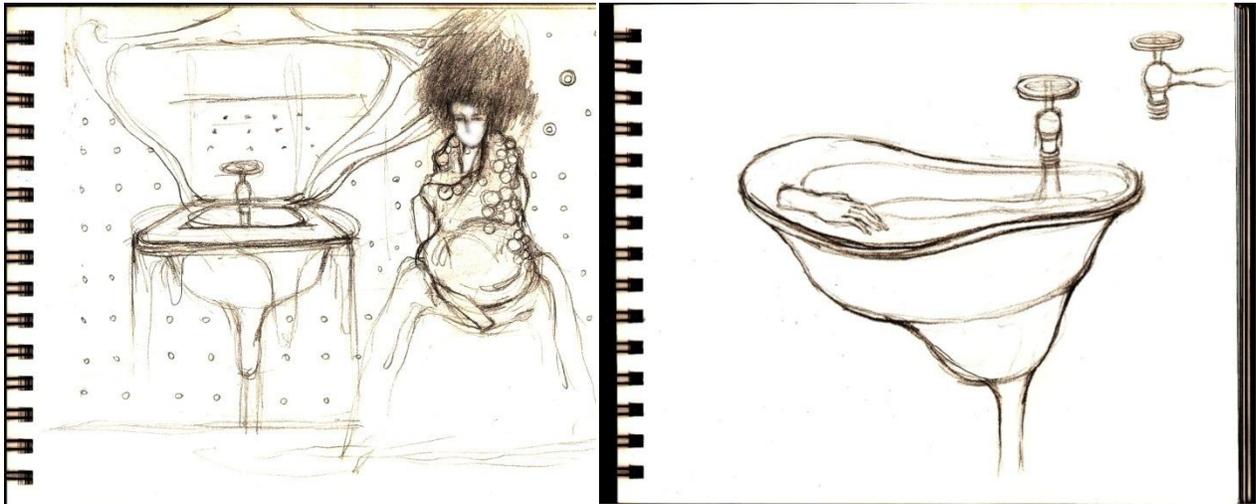


Figure 7. Paramnesia I sketch

Subconscious memories

Excerpt from personal journal

There was nothing to either worry about, or suffer from in my childhood. I was a fortunate child within a protective cocooned environment. If there were anything unusual about my early age, my mom had concerns about the fact that I rarely cried. At times, she thought I might be autistic. Later on, she began worrying that I was not very feminine. Such a tomboy was not acceptable in my family; especially with my mother's traditional stubborn father. I used to hear from my mom and grandfather, "A girl cannot behave like that....." Sometimes, I was questioning why....but, most of the time I ignored what they were saying about me. In those days (I was born in 1971), there were many restrictions for girls but not for boys in Korean culture. For this reason, I was not allowed to ride a bike and I wanted to so badly. Fortunately, I had a nanny who always rescued me from these kinds of situations. At that time, in Seoul, Korea, there was a place I could rent a bike for 10 cents per hour. Without telling my mom and grandfather, she was willing to pay for me. I still remember the velocity of fresh air blowing across my cheeks.

My parents have a severe affection towards classical music. My sister and I used to listen to classical music, go to classical concerts and operas quite often. There were no other choices of music, except classical. If I did not remember the title of the music or composer's name, my dad looked at me dubiously. Before I was born, my mom had planned on having three children to make a trio ensemble. In the process, she found an elementary school with an orchestra. Since I was a tall one, she chose a cello for me. She persuaded me to join in the orchestra and explained in detail how nice it would be as a cellist. One day, I sneaked a peek at the orchestra room and the students looked miserable. I did not even begin learning the chosen instruments. My sister had played piano for ten years and quit. My brother died before he was born. Therefore, my mom could not organize a trio of her own children. Poor mom..... I knew my parents did not like that I chose painting over the cello, but I did not care. They stopped talking about it.

June, 3rd, 1999, 12:04 AM: my son's birth began to transform my life. Previously, I complained that there were no hardships or sufferings in my life. My wish came true. It was severe postpartum

hemorrhaging. It occurs in between 1 - 10% of all pregnancies in the U.S. I was one of the 10%. That night, I felt blood pouring continuously out from body. I felt pain. I do not recall how much it hurt, but I remember; I was commenting about the pain to a nurse who was checking my condition. She gave me three different painkillers. The first two did not work. The pain kept increasing. When she brought the third medicine, she explained to me that this pill would make me fall asleep. I barely swallowed the pill with water. I felt it traveling from my mouth, throat, and stomach. A little later, everything around me was getting slower and blurry. I felt my heavy eyelids were closed. In the darkness, I saw the color black, and pieces of images falling down on me.

Later, I found out that one of my blood vessels had erupted. I did not know exactly what the doctors did, but they had removed two buckets full of blood clots from my body. I lost consciousness several times. They checked my red blood cell count; I had to have two blood transfusions. I resisted both. The doctor said, "You cannot leave this room unless you have them. Since this hospital was founded in 1777, you are the patient with the lowest red blood cell count ever." I saw the thin vinyl tube connected to my arm from the dark red bags. I felt dizzy, uncomfortable, and contaminated. I felt vomited.

I often speak about memory loss with my friends, family, and professionals. Most people say it was a natural aging process. I wish it were. Some explain that it could be because of the severe hemorrhaging, posttraumatic amnesia, epidural and/or spinal anesthetics. Unlike me, most of my friends who are of the same age accept their memory loss pretty well. They even make jokes about it. Am I the only one who is hypersensitive about this? Abstractly, I observe myself in the third person; having gained fifty pounds of baby weight, dark hair transforming to white, and functioning in a physically altered state. As I get older (my son is now 10), the left side of my body becomes increasingly unsteady and lost memories have become commonplace. Hemorrhaging is a constant companion when I exert myself. I see fragments of my life.....some images are vivid.....others strange and confused. It is like a glitch in my brain. Some sections of my memory are wiped out, some unconscious memoires become vivid. Sometimes I think....do I really forget things....or do I unintentionally block memories.....unconsciously....and if so why?

A glitch clouds my present-day memory and reanimates my subconscious in a series of startlingly vivid eidetic images: old garments, chairs, gravity, air and water. The images of old garments are mostly related to huge dresses worn by noble Korean and European women from long ago. Fabric layered heavily with deep luxurious flowing colors; patterns and textures are floating in the air. At times, the thick murky air suspends them with no gravity or below the bottomless water. Motions are getting slower and smoother due to the pressure of air and/or water. Other images consist of a sofa and an arm chair which relate to texture and color of these garments. The overall shape and design of the furniture is antique and worn, but still reserving qualities of opulence. These images linger within me. They are as

much a part of me as the blood that runs through my veins. I experience them as cinematic motion and still images. I still cannot connect them to anything I know. Could it be scenes from my past-life.....or a false surreal vision? The unconscious exists as unexplainable images, but what is fact and what is fiction? What is authentic and what is borrowed? What rises to the surface and what remains submerged? The answer is ambivalent.

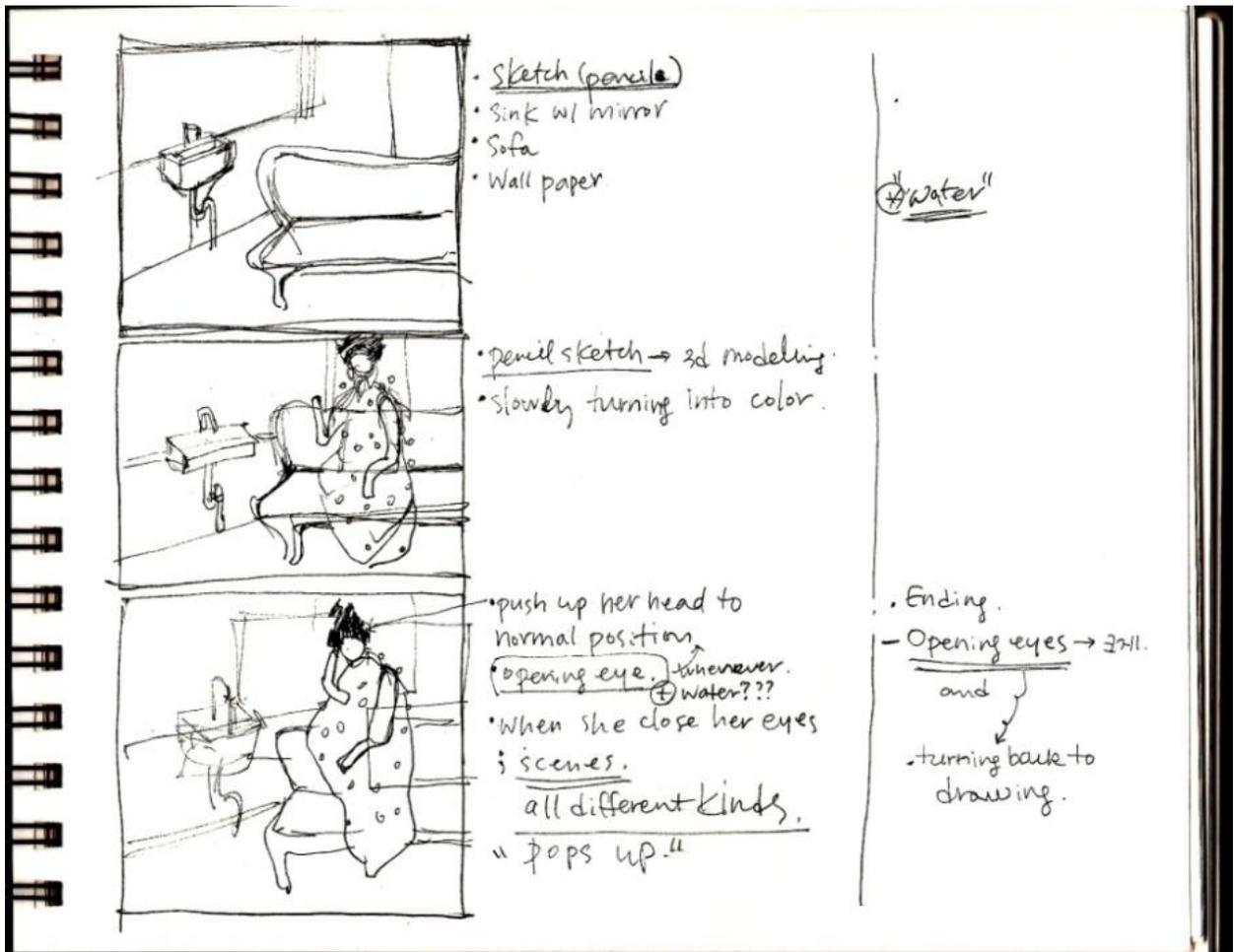


Figure 8. Paramnesia I story board

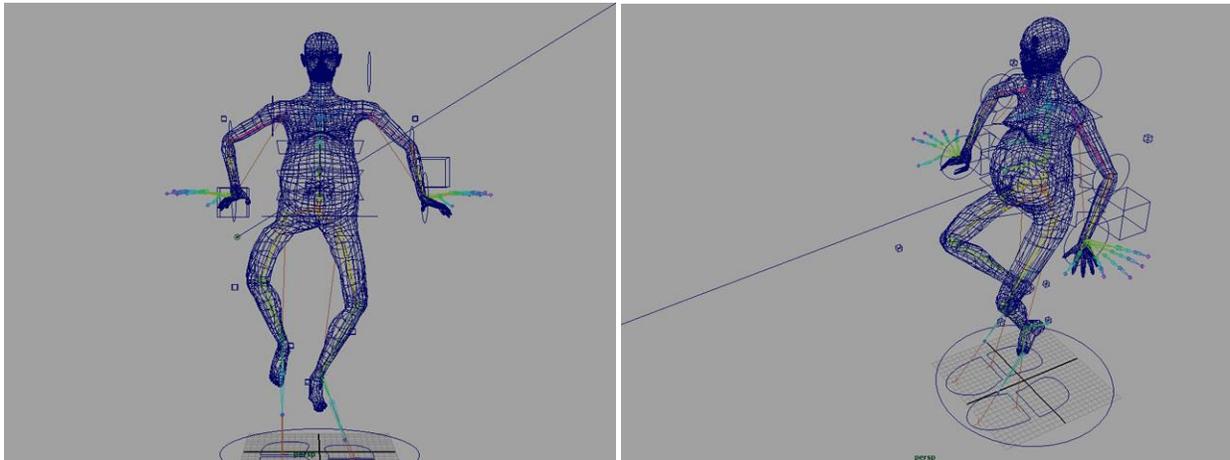


Figure 9. A woman figure, maya wire frame

The computerized body of a woman constructed in three dimensional software(Maya), and wrapped with drawn or scanned textures. The ways that digital artists and traditional painters approached the works are inevitably different; however, they are of equal significance in manner of practice. The process of creating those digital images involves nostalgia for traditional painting and sculpture. As I manipulate reflections, lighting and shadows, I recall portraits and still lives in oil painting and charcoal drawing. Virtual figures, garments, and environments incorporate elements of drawing, painting, and sculpting meticulously. The simulated reality is completed within the intricate digital world.

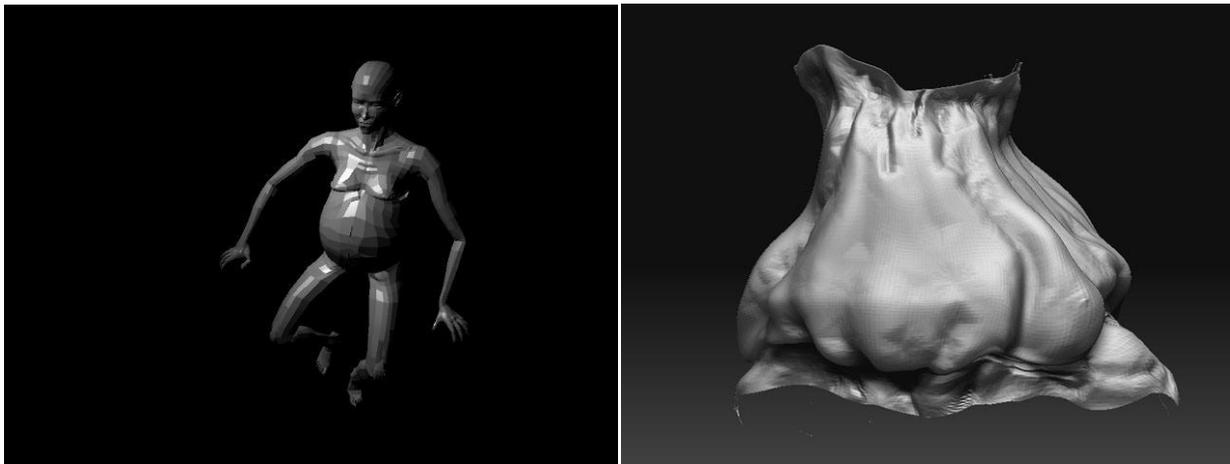


Figure 10. Paramnesia I, maya modeling

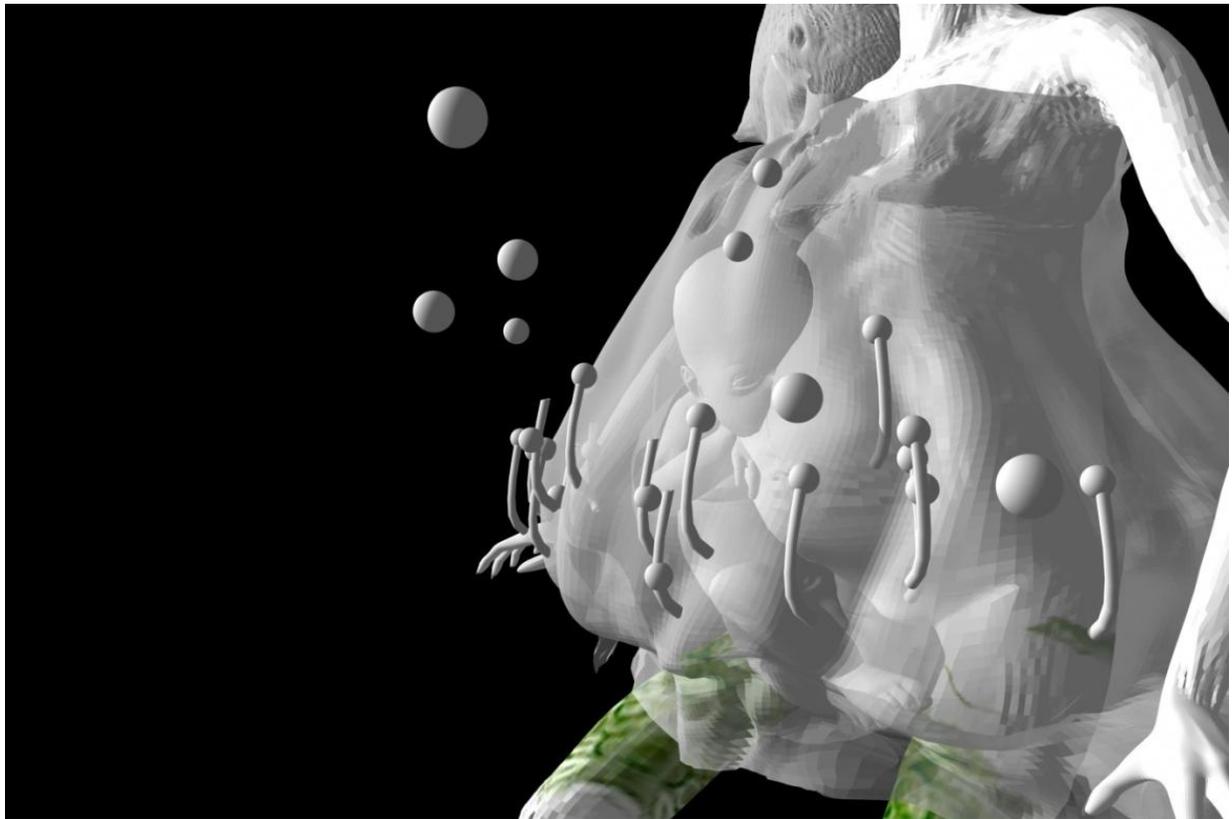
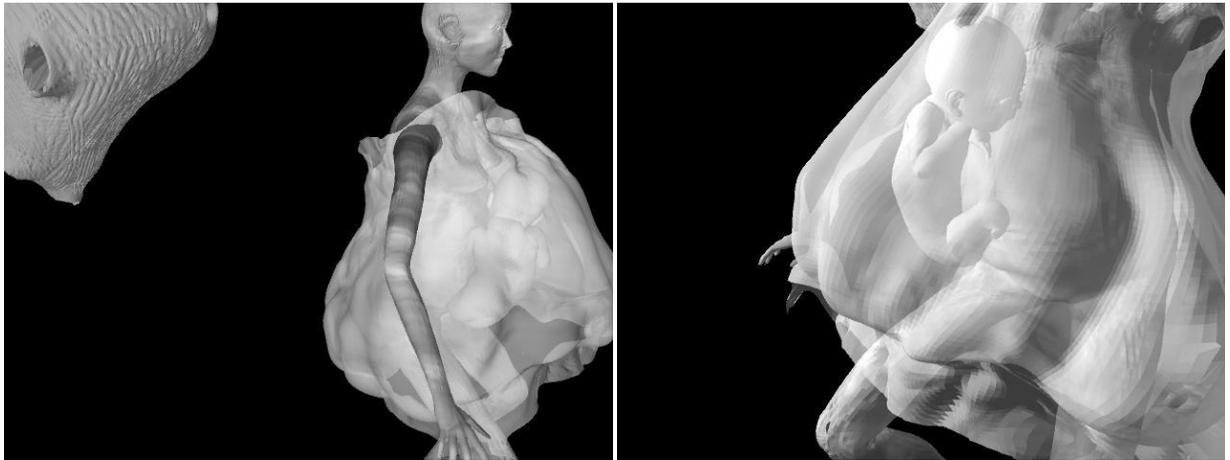


Figure 11. Paramnesia I, maya modeling

The images of paramnesia are a collection of the envisioning maternity wear with floating bodies, in which I expand upon, based on my subconscious and eidetic images. Captivating woman's body is depicted with physical manipulation dressed in garments from reality and unrealistic fashion from my hidden memories. The character is posed in virtual nature or interiors, appealing with serenity of movements, yet simultaneously possessing an awareness of their unsure situation. Their inner strength is seemingly in contrast with fragility of their appearance. My figures, garments, objects and surroundings represent another realm of emotion. This environment is layered in meaning, ambiguity and supported virtual domains.



Figure 12. Paramnesia, maya textured modeling

Fabric screen by Yoonshin Park



Figure 13. Finding space, gauze

Being a stranger in a strange land can be a frightening, but also magical experience. The encounter for me has been an awakening of my sense of space. It has obliged me to question space and its implications in defining my identity. Where is my space? Is there a space in-between, where I can be in two places at the same time? Can space alter my sense of self?

Being in a new environment has heightened my awareness of the most banal tasks, such as folding laundry or buying a newspaper –tasks that I would have performed perfunctorily before in familiar places. This heightened perception of trivial chores forces me to question the sense of space I feel in-between and to investigate further my connection with space in the more important events in my life. This space in-the-middle is where I began to contemplate my own awareness and where all the particles of time converge to reveal wholeness.

Changing my space and my situation definitely has given me the opportunity to reflect on my life, not only as a foreigner but also as the person I was before. I asked many questions of myself, but never received clear answers. As I attempted to peel away the sheer layers of questions, I realized I had returned to the same space where I began. Unable to grasp the wholeness I am searching for makes me see myself in a different perspective. This sense of being outside myself and finding myself in-between spaces has been the new subject matter in my recent works.

I have seen many layers of hazy memories unfolding and uncovering mixed emotions of astonishment, pain, and joy while I am attempting to embrace my newly gained identity. Most of the layers of this discovery are from my past, which are closely related to space. These peaceful, contemplative and emotional discoveries have given me a clearer view of the effect of space on my personality.

Sound by Chistopher Gilmore

In designing the sonic environment, I strive to capture the auditory feel of distorted and confused memory. As paramnesia is defined as "a disorder of the memory or the faculty of recognition in which dreams may be confused with reality," I strive to create a sonic world that is somewhat distant, hazy and slightly out of touch. I chose sounds that are at their core abstract and un-defined. My goal is to heighten the dreamlike qualities of the imagery.

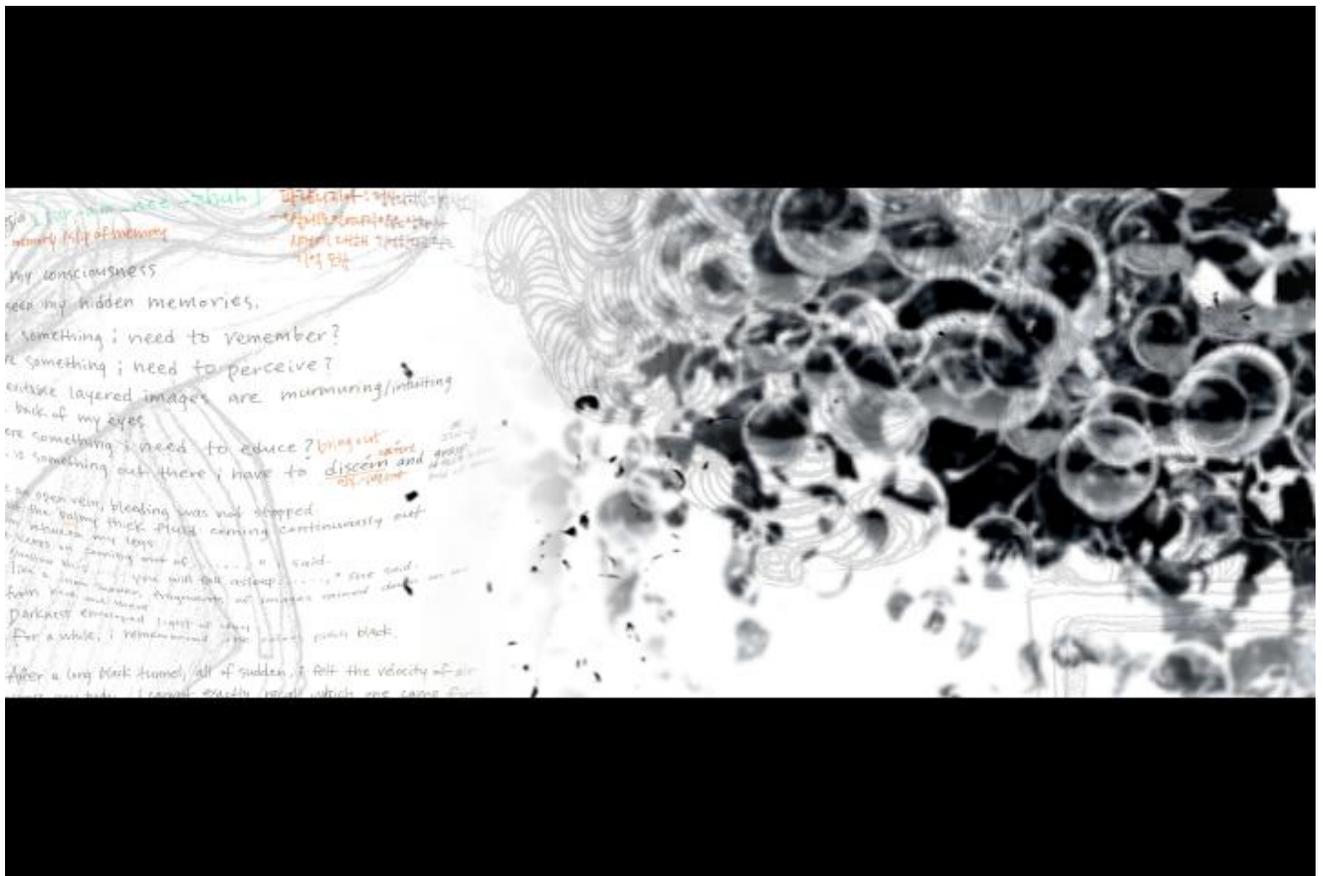


Figure 14. Paramnesia I still image

Exhibition

Paramnesia I premiered on April 6, 2010 and continued through April 10, 2010 in the South Gallery section of the Great Space; this space is located on the 5th floor of the Art + Design building, University of Illinois at Chicago, 400 S. Peoria Street in Chicago. The Installation of body works combines

with three body-shaped gauze fabrics, sound, and video projection of animation. Despite my tendency to deny and avoid the physical environment for screening, I always have inquisitiveness about surfaces of video projection.

The paper artist, Yoonshin Park, and I started to discuss different types of materials based on her works; she has been working with pulp, paper, fabric and books. Furthermore, we have shared and dealt with reciprocal cultural backgrounds, interests, reminiscences and artist concepts. At the beginning of this collaboration, we decided to work with her pulp female body series. The Initial idea was that my animation be projected on her gestured female bodies which are made out of pulp. Through a couple of prototypes, I began to realize the perplexity of

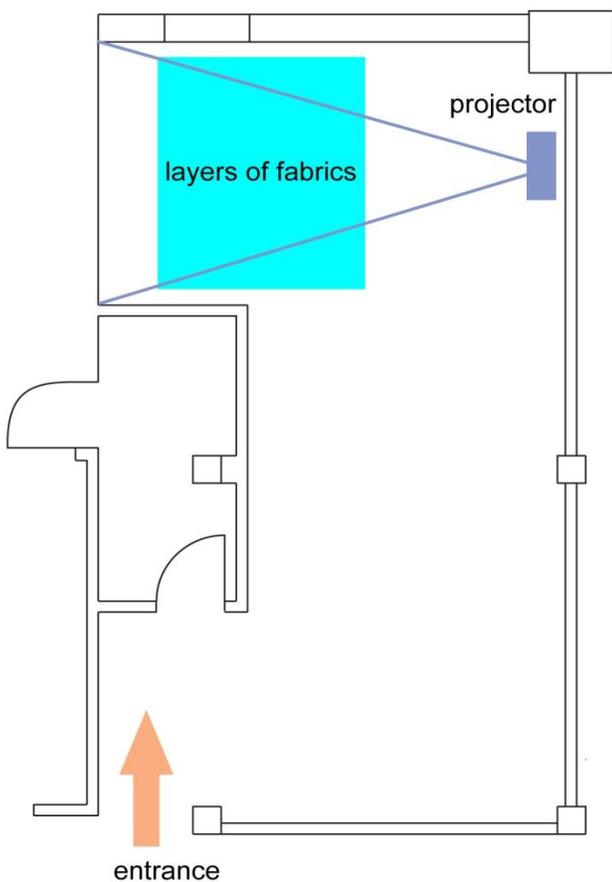


Figure 15. The great space, south gallery

communication between two works - paper and animation. In order to have a successful collaboration, each distinctive medium must correspond and articulate. Her pulped surfaces contain enticing textures with white color. With projection, these subtle qualities of skin were diminished. Thus, we moved to her

other work, "Finding Space." In this work of hers, light and shadow are being imperative elements. Since video projection is considered as the source of light, projection on the surfaces of fabrics would be interrelated. Projected animation creates detailed fabric textures of shadows and body figures, and lies on the surfaces of the gauze as well. The shadows are part of the moving images, and the moving images are the texture of the fabric. The projection on different depth expands the screening dimensions. It extends the layered multi sensory experiences.

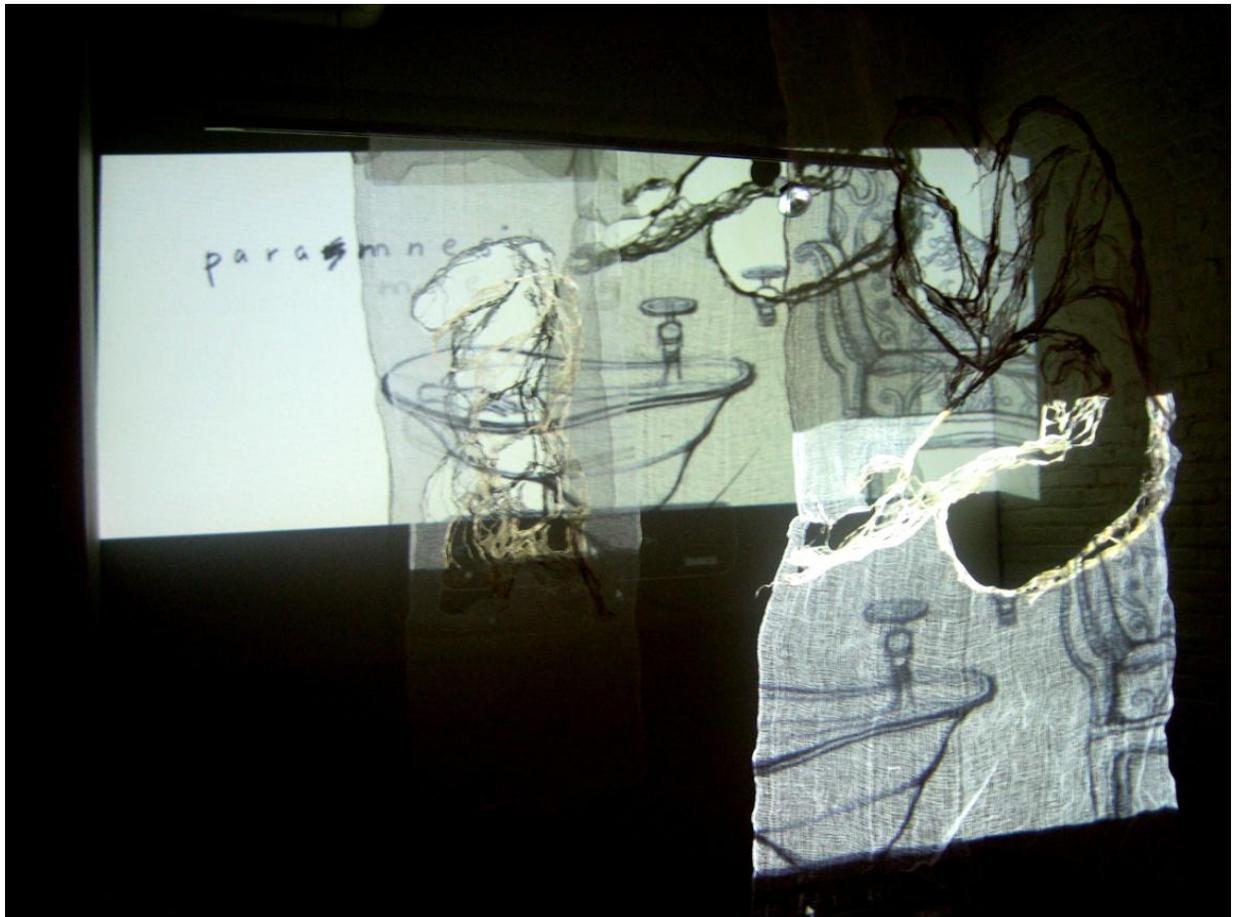


Figure 12. Paramnesia I installation

Reflections

Dealing with a physical space is always an esoteric and frustrating matter for me. In fact, this show was my first three dimensional installation with more than one person in collaboration. The first impression, the moment I stepped into this gallery space, was overwhelming and perplexing. Even though I have been longing for a non theatrical environment, non virtual space has been the cause of discomfort. Thus, this new experience was definitely challenging, but simultaneously, oddly enough enchanting and engaging. In general, working with more than one collaborator is not an easy process. However, fortunately, my collaborators' talent, work ethic, maturity, passion, patience and reliability alleviated the process. I appreciate the fact that we maintain respect for deviation and empathy. In our hectic schedules, we tried many prototypes and underwent trials and corrections. Due to time limits, we had to stop refining; otherwise, it would keep continuing.

If more time and space were permitted, I would speculate that deeper dimensions of installation and various angles of projections would be created. From this experience, I would like to experiment more with the physical and virtual environment. The visual engagement between shadow from fabric and moving images from a projector expands our ordinary sensory experience.



Figure 17. Paramnesia I show opening

Conclusions

In order to comprehend the aesthetics of art, the level of contemplation between audience and art work has been developed by the emergence of multi sensory functions. Recent developments in hypermedia, multimedia and expanded cinema has challenged the traditional perspective of art. This brings us many other possibilities of our various perceptions. There are differences between 'sensation' and 'perception.' Sensation is what stimulates our sensory organs; perception is what is experienced mainly as consequence. This phenomenon alters how our sensations are perceived.

My practice begins from my desire to defeat temporal and spatial restrictions. I explore alternative materials and spaces to amplify senses. In the unreal territory, which only exists in the digital realm, I construct spaces, sew fabrics, and configure shapes. This alterable domain liberates me from various physical restrictions and perspectives: I can manipulate air, gravity, wind, light, materials and any rational constrains.

I am fascinated by non-tactile interface and objects. Another one of my interests is placing virtual spaces and objects in relation to physical space and object that is being displayed. The 3-D virtual spaces constructed within physical 3-D surfaces reflect on how I perceive meanings of sensory stimulation physically as well as psychologically. Projecting intangible 3-D moving images transforms 2-D surfaces. It creates euphoric dimension of senses.

The purpose of new technology is to broaden our realm of sensation to experience reality more fully. This is a crucial point in the stage of developmental technology and its impact on our culture. In the psychological approach, understanding new media art and expanded cinema corresponds to analyzing hybrid experiences in human interaction. In terms of creativity, specifically, cross wired sensory experience stimulates aspects of the human sub consciousness. In the emerging media arts, time based, four dimensional interactions are increasing and becoming an inspiration. Based on new empowered media, this interplay will become more sophisticated, intricate, and immersive. Artists externalize their visions and thoughts through composing motion in unique points of view. Animated virtual painting, physical objects, and sound offer the viewer an opportunity to be enveloped in the moment of experience, unlike traditional paintings. Ambivalent senses may be obtained as well.



Figure 13. Paramnesia I installation

www.heejoogwenkim.com

<http://paramnesia09.tumblr.com>

Key words

Paramnesia, memory, moving images, experimental animation, motion graphics, new media arts, avant-garde art films, fluid screen, embodied experiences, paper art

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