Gorchakov's Wish

by Kreider + O'Leary

<u>Project Details</u>

Practice:	Kreider + O'Leary
Designers:	Kristen Kreider and James O'Leary
	O'Leary and Kreider are partners in the collaborative practice Kreider + O'Leary.This project has joint and equal authorship of all project elements, including texts, academic papers, image construction, visuals, performances, and documentation.
Title:	Gorchakov's Wish
Output type:	Performance
Lead venue:	Kursaal, San Sebastián, Spain (Sep 2011)
Other venues:	The Centre for Creative Collaboration, London (Apr 2011); Triangle Space, Chelsea College of Art and Design, London (Apr 2009); Stephen Lawrence Gallery, University of Greenwich, London (Jan 2009)
Funding:	Irish Arts Council Architecture Bursary Award £5,000; CCW (Camberwell, Chelsea and Wimbledon Colleges of Art) University of the Arts Research Fund £3,000
Budget:	£8,000

Statement about the Research Content and Process

Description

Gorchakov's Wish **engages with the penultimate scene of Andrei Tarkovsky's film *Nostalghia* (1983). Tarkovsky's syntax of the slow extended tracking shot induces a contemplative state from which to observe the movement of a figure through an atmospheric Italian landscape, over a prolonged time. Using the above site as a case study, the aim of the project is to explore how we experience place and how we can communicate this experience to others in a meaningful way through moving image and performance practice.**

Questions

1. **How can we communicate a meaningful experience of 'lost' place through performative methods of documentation?**

2. **How can site-specific performance documentation construct a calibrated relationship between movement, place and image that relates to and expands upon Andrei Tarkovsky's theory and practice of the film-image?**

3. **How can complex film-images inform a contemporary art and architecture practice, leading to the generation of an original artefact?**

Methods

Taking this nine-minute four-second scene from Tarkovsky's film as a site, its material and symbolic qualities are transformed into architectural performance through various forms of production: performance, installation and video production. The project develops a method extracted from–and combining–architecture, film and poetry. Its objective is twofold: to extend the language of performance and documentation by enacting each through interdisciplinary practice, and to expand upon a theory and practice of the 'film-image,' as initially suggested by Andrei Tarkovsky.

Dissemination

The work has been developed and presented in differing formats through performances, exhibitions, talks, papers and a residency over a three-year period between 2008 and 2011, culminating in a screening of the 20-minute HD video work *Gorchakov's Wish* at the 'On the Image' conference, San Sebastián Film Festival, San Sebastián, Spain.

1 *(previous page)*
Bagno Vignoni, Italy, showing the Santa Caterina Pool in the foreground, where scenes in *Nostalghia* are set

Introduction

Gorchakov's Wish engages with the work of acclaimed Russian filmmaker Andrei Tarkovsky, specifically, the penultimate scene from his film *Nostalghia*   **2** (1983).
In this scene a single extended take and tracking shot follows the protagonist, the poet Gorchakov, as he enacts a ritualistic performance carrying a lit candle across the drained expanse of the Santa Caterina Pool – a natural thermal spring in the Tuscan hillside village of Bagno Vignoni. [fig.1]

The resulting film-image is infused with an atmospheric combination of hot steam and morning sunlight. Meanwhile, Tarkovsky's syntax of the slow extended tracking shot induces a contemplative state from which to observe, over a prolonged time, the pool and protagonist and the place. [fig. 2]
The aim of this research project is to explore how we experience place (using the above site as a case study), and how we can communicate this experience to others in a meaningful way.

Aims and Objectives

The aim of this work is to explore the communication of the material qualities of place through interdisciplinary performance and documentary practice. In an increasingly digitised culture, questions about how we relate to these qualities of place are raised, and how we can communicate unique experiences to others in a meaningful way, through both old and new media. Such questions and issues are raised by Tarkovksy's cinema, and particularly the film *Nostalghia* (1983), with its yearning for an experience of a 'lost' time and place at the level both of the filmic narrative and of the cinematic apparatus itself. [fig. 4]

4

2
**Three stills showing
Gorchakov carrying
a candle across the
empty Santa Caterina
Pool, Bagno Vignoni,
Italy**

3
**Sketch of sequence
storyboard for
*Gorchakov's Wish***

4
**Opening titles of
Gorchakov's Wish,
showing the steaming
Santa Caterina Pool**

5
Annotated matrix of elements for *Gorchakov's Wish*

Questions

1. How can we communicate a meaningful experience of 'lost' place through performative methods of documentation?

2. How can site-specific performance documentation construct a calibrated relationship between movement, place and image that relates to and expands upon Tarkovsky's theory and practice of the film-image?

3. How can complex film-images inform a contemporary art and architecture practice, leading to the generation of an original artefact?

Context

Recent debates and discussions around site and site-specificity in visual arts practice can be found in: Miwon Kwon, *One Place After Another: Site Specific Art and Locational Identity* (2004); Nick Kaye, *Site Specific Art: Performance, Place, Documentation* (2004); and Jane Rendell, *Art and Architecture: A Place Between* (2007). For Kwon, site is a discursive construct, while Kaye suggests site-specificity is a performative practice and Rendell concludes that this practice of place can be 'a critical spatial practice'.

Recent research in performance, notation and documentation includes: Matthew Reason, *Documentation, Disappearance and the Representation of Live Performance* (2006); Rachel Duerden and Neil Fisher, *Dancing Off the Page: Integrating Performance, Choreography Analysis and Notation/Documentation* (2008); and Roselee Goldberg, *Performa: New Visual Art Performance* (2007). These works suggest interesting pathways to lead architectural discourse toward related cross-disciplinary practices, enabling new ways of approaching architectural representation and documentation.

A symposium exploring the influence of Tarkovsky on contemporary art practice held at the Tate Modern in 2008 included scholars and artist practitioners engaging with Tarkovsky's work which exposed the research potential in the work beyond the confines of film studies.

Additionally, recent publications on Tarkovsky's cinematic practice include: Nathan Dunne, *Tarkovsky* (2008); Robert Bird, *Andrei Tarkovsky: Elements of Cinema* (2008); and Gunnlaugur A. Jónsson and Thorkell Á. Óttarsson, *Through the Mirror: Reflections on the Films of Andrei Tarkovsky* (2006). These works seek to highlight the relevance of Tarkovski's output beyond a filmic context. Focusing on Tarkovsky's theorisation of the film-image and its relation to place, our project contributes to this scholarship.

Methods

The project was carried out in four phases:

Site study

Visiting the three different publicly accessible sites in Italy, locations of the three final sequences from *Tarkovsky's Nostalghia:*

a. Rome (Campidoglio on Capitaline Hill)
b. Bagno Vignoni (Santa Catarina Pool)
c. San Galgano (Cistercian Abbey Ruin)

These visits allow us to engage in architectural, photographic and filmic surveys and to gather other contextual and historical information for use in generating three site-specific performances.

Site performance

Generating three site-specific performances, one at each of the above locations, involving:

a. Employing architectural representational techniques of time-based drawing, spatial projection and mapping to choreograph and score a performance specifically related to the spatial and material qualities of each given place or site. [fig. 3]
b. Integrating cinematographic techniques of framing, editing and point-of-view into the recording of each context-specific performance so that the resulting documentation constructed a carefully calibrated relationship between movement, place and image. [fig. 5 & 7]

By combining architectural strategies and cinematographic techniques in the development of each site-specific performance we extend the language of performance, notation and documentation, enacting these through interdisciplinary practice and thereby expanding upon a theory and practice of the film-image through its relation to place and performance. [fig. 6]

6

6
Still from *Alba Lunedi*.
A performance sited
in the Santa Caterina
Pool in Bagno Vignoni,
Italy, 2008. 8mm film
transferred to DV
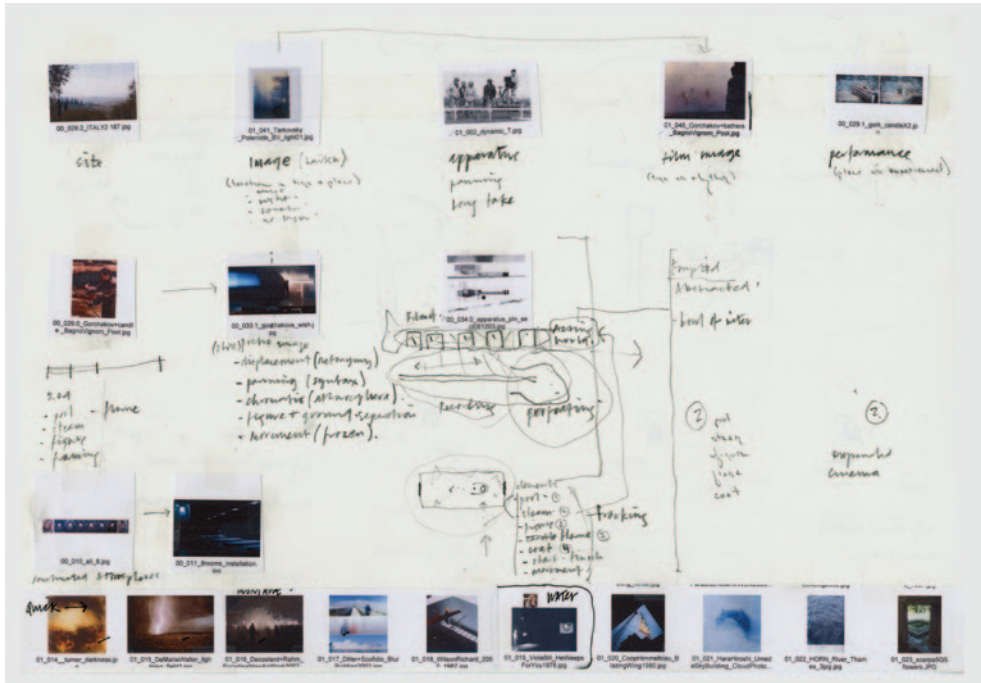
7
**Annotated scene
sequencing drawing
for *Gorchakov's
Wish***

Displaced performance

Developing a further performative iteration, dislocated from site, involving:

a. Incorporating the documentation of our three site-specific performances into a single live performance;
b. Using poetic strategies of metaphor and metonymy to generate movement and gesture as well as word, image and object relations in the live action sequence;
c. Integrating the very act of documenting the live performance into the choreography of the live action sequences. [fig. 8–10]

By integrating the documentation of the three site-specific performances into a poetics of live performance, we communicate an experience of place to the audience through imagination, affect and cognition. In addition, through the act of recording this live event into a sequence of staged actions, the conventional distinction between performance and its documentation is collapsed.

Performance for video:
Gorchakov's Wish

The video *Gorchakov's Wish* is a split-screen video piece comprised of three parts, each section reflecting our engagement with the final three scenes of *Nostalghia*, respectively. The first part, *Parhessia*, contains one piece of footage shot on location in Rome at Campidoglio on Capitoline Hill, where we carry a sign translating one line of text from Domenico's speech in both English and Italian. [fig. 11]

The second part, *Allegory*, similarly contains footage shot on location at the original site of Tarkovsky's film, Bagno Vignoni, and the footage is taken from our performance there entitled *Alba Lunedì*. [fig. 13]

This footage is paired with our studio re-construction of the scene using a long take and tracking shot. Beneath the coupling of these two moving images we have also included, scattered along the bottom of the screen space, clips taken from our multiple site visits to Bagno Vignoni as visual footnotes to the actions being performed. Finally, *Elegy* contains footage shot on location at San Galgano, the ruined church that appears at the end of *Nostalghia.* [fig. 12, 14 & 15]

This is also paired with our filmic re-construction of this scene. The 20-minute work was presented in San Sebastián at the 'Image' Conference, which formed part of the 2011 San Sebastián Film Festival. [fig. 16–18]

8–10
Still from *Fall:
An Allegory.
Performance at the
Triangle Space,
Chelsea College
of Art and Design,
London, 2009

11–12 *(overleaf)*
Production stills
from *Gorchakov's*
Wish – Part 1:
***Parhessia* and**
Part 3: Elegy

Performance at the
Centre for Creative
Collaboration,
London, 2011

12
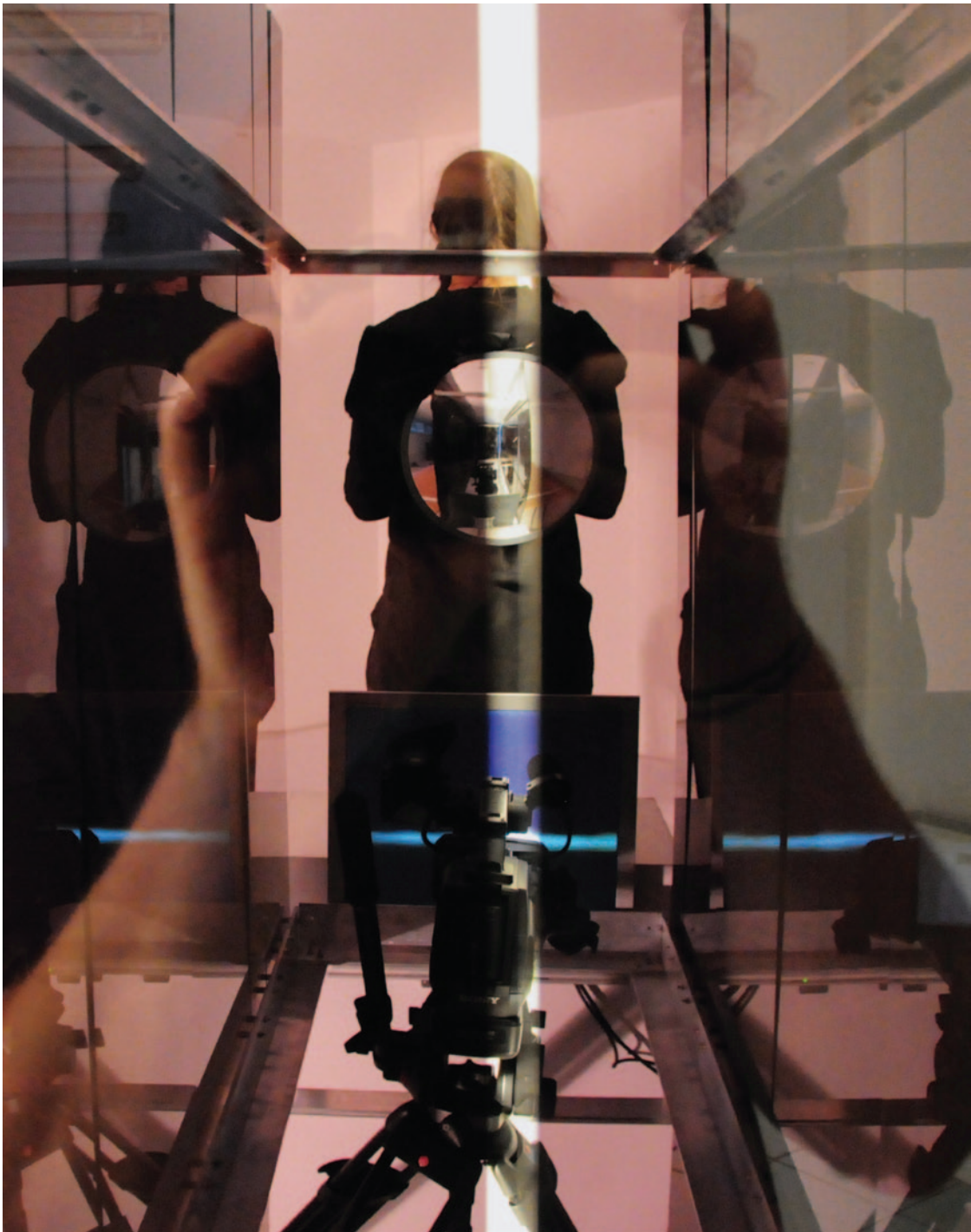
13 *(previous page)*
Production still from
Gorchakov's
Wish—Part 2: Allegory.
Performance at the
Centre for Creative
Collaboration,
London, 2011

14
Initial sketch design
for spatial props for
Gorchakov's
Wish—Part 3: Elegy

displaced figure.
displaced.

R E C O R D I N G

syntagmatic axis

- syntax
- sequence
- lineation
- metonymy

16

17

18

16–18
HD DV video still
from *Gorchakov's*
Wish – Part 2: Allegory.
Performance at the
Centre for Creative
Collaboration,
London
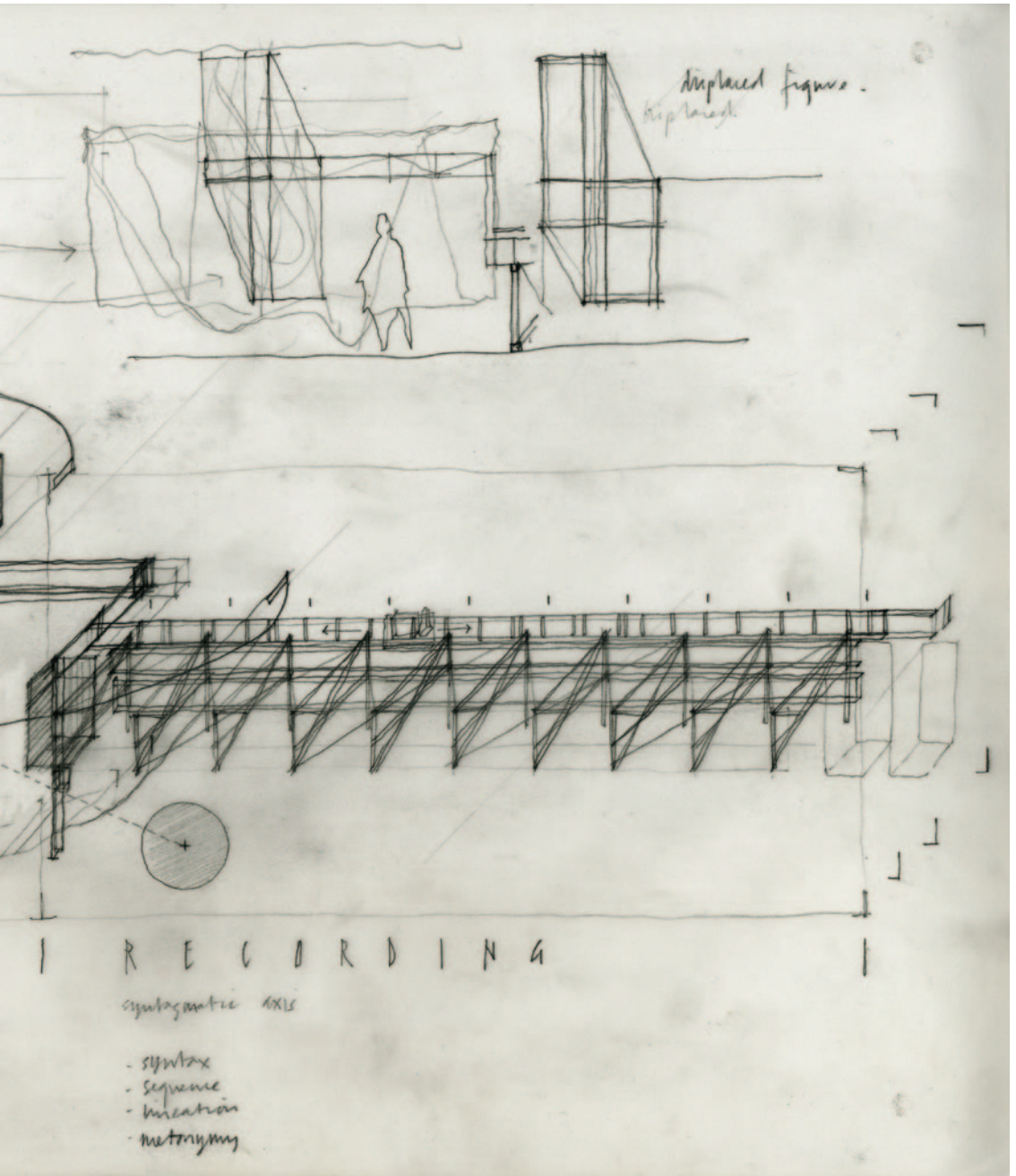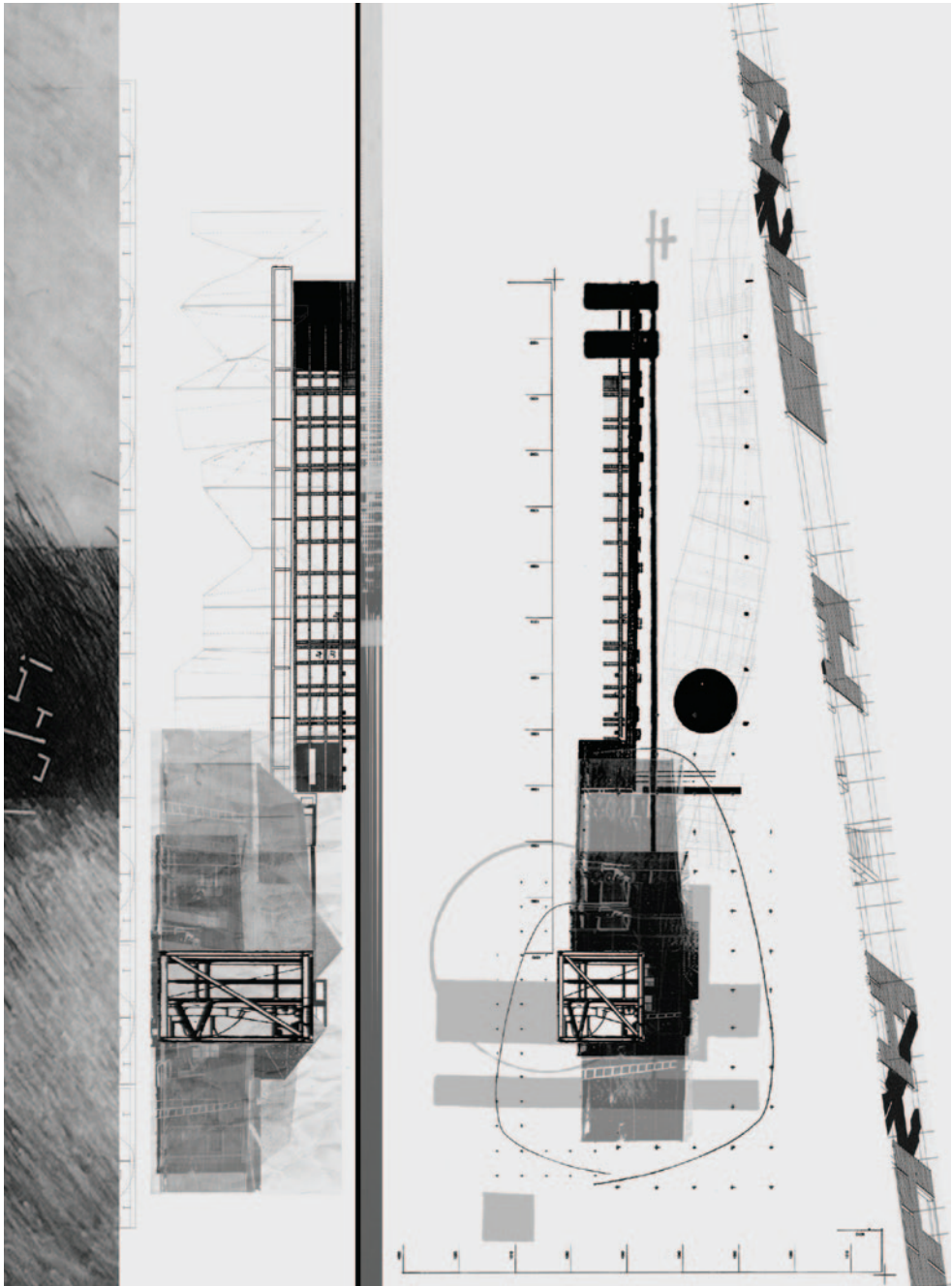
15
Plan and elevation
for design for spatial
props for
Gorchakov's
Wish – Part 3: Elegy

19a
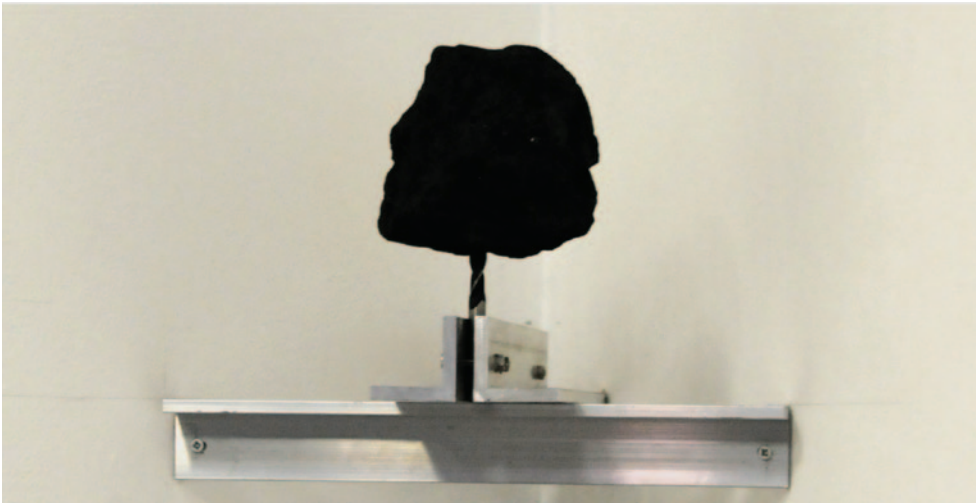
19b

**19
Comparative
elements of the
work: a video still
from Bagno Vignoni,
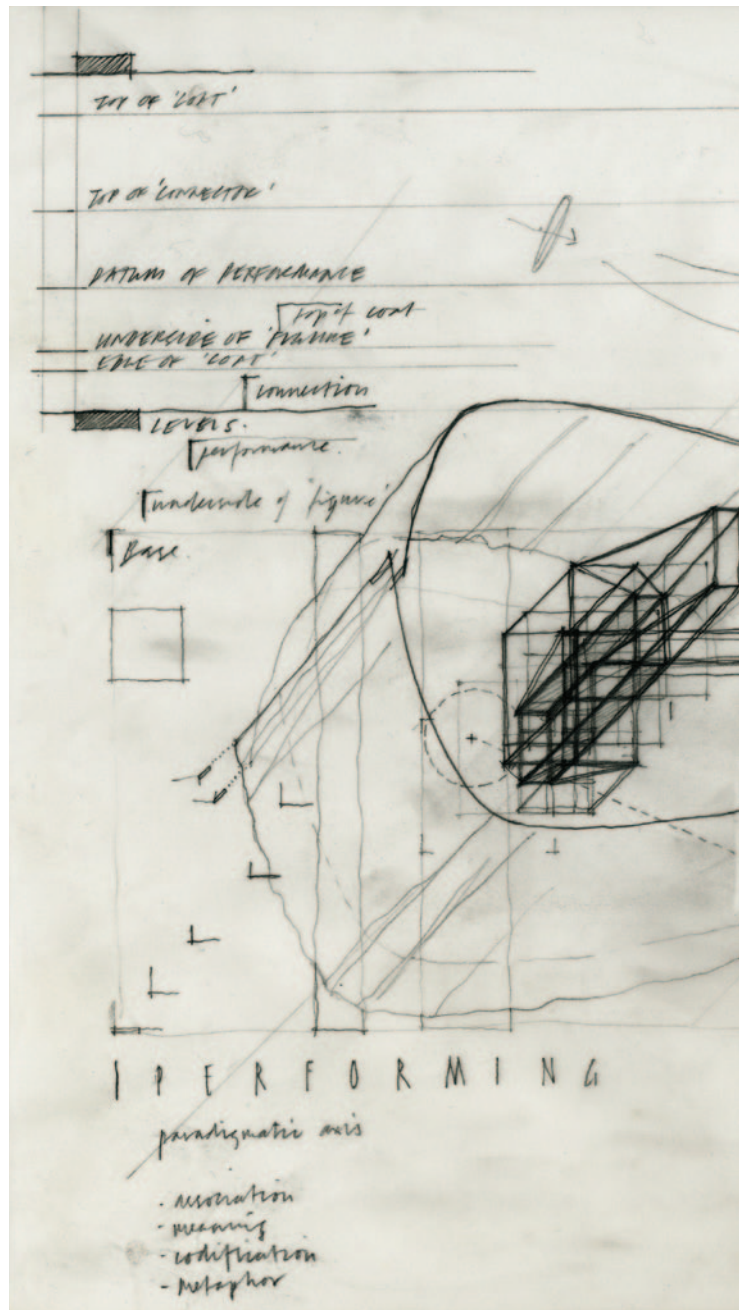Italy, and a prop
from the set of
*Gorchakov's Wish –
Part 2: Allegory.*
Performance at the
Centre for Creative
Collaboration,
London**

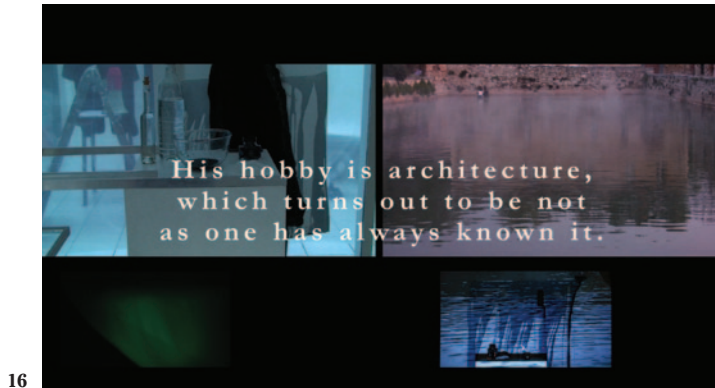# **Dissemination**

The work has been developed and presented in differing formats through performances, exhibitions, talks, papers and a residency over a three-year period between 2008 and 2011.

Video

Gorchakov's Wish. Presented at *On the Image*, the San Sebastián Film Festival, San Sebastián, Spain (Sep 2011).

Residency

The Centre for Creative Collaboration, London (Apr 2011). [fig. 19a & 19b]

Performances and exhibitions

Gorchakov's Wish, performance for video, Centre for Creative Collaboration, London
      (Apr 2011).
Allegory of the Five Elements, live performance, Bartlett School of Architecture, UCL
      (Jun 2010).
Immolation Triptych, drawing performance, Drawing Field, University of the Arts,
      London (Sep 2009).
Kino Haiku, installation, Triangle Space, Chelsea College of Art and Design, London
      (Apr 2009),
Alba Lunedí, exhibition of performance documentation, Stephen Lawrence Gallery,
      University of Greenwich, London (Jan 2009).
Fall (An Allegory) I, performance for film, Triangle Space, Chelsea College of Art and
      Design, London (Apr 2008).
Fall (An Allegory) II, live performance, the Betsey Trotwood, London (Oct 2008).
*Alba Lunedí,* site-specific performance, Bagno Vignoni, Italy (Nov 2008).

Publication

'Nostaltopia', artists' pages in *Stimulus? – Respond* [special issue on *Binary*] (Fall 2010):
107–117. http://issuu.com/stimulusrespond/docs/binary

Conference papers and invited talks

'Reflections on a New Nostalgia: Exploring Andrei Tarkovsky's Film Image and its
    Expansion through Contemporary Art'. Presented at *On the Image*, the San
    Sebastián Film Festival, San Sebastián, Spain (Sep 2011).
'Time, Place and Empathy: Material Poetics and the Film Image'. Presented at Sexuate
    Subjects: Politics, Poetics, Ethics, the Bartlett School of Architecture, UCL
    (Dec 2010).
'Displaced Occupations: Revisiting the Atmospheric Space of Tarkovsky's Nostalghia'.
    Presented at the Society for Cinema and Media Studies International Conference,
    Los Angeles, CA, USA (Mar 2010).
'Site and Generative Process in Gorchakov's Wish'. Presented in the Theorising
    Practices/Practicing Theories lecture series, the Bartlett School of Architecture,
    UCL (Feb 2010).
'Constructing Atmospheres: A Phenomenology of the Film Image and Its Relation to
    Place'. Presented at the Architecture and Phenomenology 2nd International
    Conference, Kyoto Seika University, Kyoto, Japan (Jun 2009). Published as part
    of conference proceedings.
'Constructing Atmosphere: Andrei Tarkovsky's Film Image'. Presented at the
    Greenwich Forum, University of Greenwich, London (Jan 2009).

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20
Sketch of sequence
storyboard for
Gorchakov's Wish
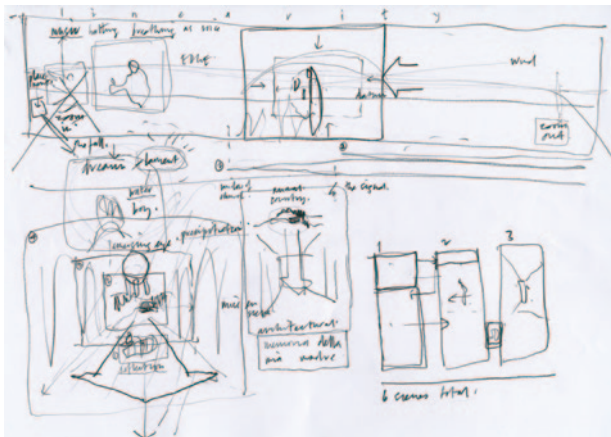
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Rachel Duerden and Neil Fisher (2008). *Dancing Off the Page: Integrating Performance, Choreography Analysis and Notation/Documentation,* Alton, Hampshire: Dance Books Ltd.

Nathan Dunne (2008). *Tarkovsky,* London: Black Dog Publishing.

Roselee Goldberg (2007). *Performa: New Visual Art Performance,* New York: Distributed Art Publishers.

Gunnlaugur A. Jónsson and Thorkell Á. Óttarsson (2006). *Through the Mirror: Reflections on the Films of Andrei Tarkovsky,* Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Press.

Nick Kaye (2004). *Site Specific Art: Performance, Place, Documentation,* Oxford: Routledge.

 Miwon Kwon (2004). *One Place After Another: Site Specific Art and Locational Identity,* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Matthew Reason (2006). *Documentation, Disappearance and the Representation of Live Performance,* London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Jane Rendell (2007). *Art and Architecture: A Place Between,* London: I.B. Tauris.

Andrei Tarkovsky (1986). *Sculpting in Time,* trans. Kitty Hunter-Blair, Austin: University of Texas Press.

Bloom
by Alisa Andrasek
and José Sanchez

House of Flags
by AY Architects

*Montpelier Community
Nursery*
by AY Architects

Design for London
by Peter Bishop

2EmmaToc / Writtle Calling
by Matthew Butcher
and Melissa Appleton

River Douglas Bridge
by DKFS Architects

Open Cinema
by Colin Fournier
and Marysia Lewandowska

The ActiveHouse
by Stephen Gage

Déjà vu
by Penelope Haralambidou

Urban Collage
by Christine Hawley

Hakka Cultural Park
by Christine Hawley,
Abigail Ashton, Andrew
Porter and Moyang Yang

*House Refurbishment
in Carmena*
by Izaskun Chinchilla
Architects

*Refurbishment of
Garcimuñoz Castle*
by Izaskun Chinchilla
Architects

Gorchakov's Wish
by Kreider + O'Leary

Video Shakkei
by Kreider + O'Leary

Megaframe
by Dirk Krolikowski
(Rogers Stirk Harbour
+ Partners)

*Seasons Through the
Looking Glass*
by CJ Lim

Agropolis
by mam

Alga(e)zebo
by mam

Chong Qing Nan Lu Towers
by mam

ProtoRobotic FOAMing
by mam, Grymsdyke Farm
and REX|LAB

*Banyoles Old Town
Refurbishment*
by Miàs Architects

*Torre Baró Apartment
Building*
by Miàs Architects

Alzheimer's Respite Centre
by Níall McLaughlin
Architects

Bishop Edward King Chapel
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Architects

*Block N15 Façade,
Olympic Village*
by Níall McLaughlin
Architects

*Regeneration of
Birzeit Historic Centre*
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Team

PerFORM
by Protoarchitecture Lab

55/02
by sixteen*(makers)

*Envirographic and
Techno Natures*
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Lunar Wood
by Smout Allen

Universal Tea Machine
by Smout Allen

*British Exploratory
Land Archive*
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101 Spinning Wardrobe
by Storp Weber Architects

Blind Spot House
by Storp Weber Architects

*Green Belt Movement
Teaching and Learning
Pavilion*
by Patrick Weber

Modulating Light and Views
by Patrick Weber

The Bartlett
School of
Architecture

UCL