

Shifting Ecologies of Photochemical Film in the Digital Era Conference

'400 Feet in Forgotten Time': Digital Chance Encounters with Super8

Abstract

The internet portal eBay is a global, virtual marketplace for any material object conceivable. However, this virtual/material duality also resonates with my experience of eBay as a contingent and invisible networked film archive. As part of my AHRC-funded practice research in film, I acquired more than 60 reels of Super8 found footage on the site – in a largely blind, random process – including home movies and obscure commercially-released dramas and cartoons from the period between 1960s and 1990s. As the material arrived in post, I filmed it using a digital camera, and slowly began isolating short segments (new shots), whenever a moment of film could be pulled out of its ordinary, coherent context, on the basis of what Shklovsky (1997) refers to as 'defamiliarisation'. When I had obtained enough of such moments to fill one 400ft Super8 reel, I physically edited the film, for the maximum effect of defamiliarisation. Music was later composed by Isabel Benito-Gutierrez to respond to and amplify the (latent) fragments of feeling in the images, while bringing non-narrative unity to the piece.

The resulting film, entitled *400 Feet in Forgotten Time*, emerges from this practitioner encounter with the contingent, invisible film archive – crossing repeatedly the boundary between physical and virtual, between photochemical and digital: first the physical film stock had been developed and/or printed, and the virtual images gradually forgotten under the dust of the physical medium. I discovered the films on eBay, virtually, and made all editing decisions based on a non-linear digital representation, but eventually spliced the film together physically. The resulting digital scan exposes the marks of the physical age, and bears the scars of the destructive splicing process. The project presents a set of aesthetic and ontological questions grounded in film theory and philosophy (including particular writings of Bergson, Doane, Deleuze and Marks), which I will explain, while discussing the creative and technical process, and showing excerpts from the film.

Link for the film *400 Feet in Forgotten Time*: <https://vimeo.com/517185569/c08d5456db>

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Pavel Prokopic is a filmmaker and researcher, currently working as a lecturer in Film Production at the University of Salford. Pavel completed an AHRC-funded practice research project entitled *Affective Cinema*, which won him a PhD and the Award in Creative Media Research. As an independent filmmaker, Pavel has written and directed several dramas and experimental projects, and worked as a freelance cinematographer in London. He also worked as a content director/producer on an IoT research project *The Living Room of the Future* with BBC R&D and the British Council. His work has been widely published, exhibited and presented, including *FACT* in Liverpool, Grosvenor Gallery in Manchester and Victoria & Albert Museum in London. He holds a Master's degree in Film Aesthetics from Magdalen College, University of Oxford. For more information, please visit pavelprokopic.com