

ARTEFACT

FILMIC MEMORIALS: A LONG-TERM STUDY OF PLACE AND DOMESTIC CINEMA

Shaun Wilson, RMIT University



Video still, 1975, 2003, SD, sound, duration: 60 mins.

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STATEMENT

The *Filmic Memorials* (2005 - 2025) was a twenty year, long-term practice-based study that produced twenty long-form slow films addressing place in vintage home movies. Over the span of the investigation, I reconfigured a dossier of family standard 8 home movies from my grandfather Tony Barbone filmed between 1954-1986 across Western Europe, England, the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, the United States of America, and Australia, and Super 8 home movies filmed by my father between 1976-1988 throughout Victoria, Australia. Each of the slow films referenced particular aspects of place from their source footage by way of a topographical analysis of home movies.

The project included a consideration for home movies to be considered domestic cinema, prescribed by values orientated as formalism instead of genre. The classification of the phrase 'home movies', for example, falls into a genre of film designated to a secondary type of moving image, that is, a lesser cinema aligned to amateur film making. Moreover, from this research, I argue that such a premise misunderstands the phenomenological aspects that home movies bring to experiencing the moving image. As home movie scholarship across the field (Hirsch 1997, Baschiera & De Rose 2020) tends to focus on memory (Verano 2024), family (Obradors 2022), and nostalgia (Niemeyer 2014), this project argues that home movies also function as topographical artefacts. Furthermore, by terming home movies 'domestic cinema', it connects a deeper, immersive understanding of these types of films through place, aligned with more serious areas of investigation - identity, memorialisation, being, and time. To do so positions home movies away from an ontological reading, namely nostalgia and sentimentality, to instead ground a formalism of sorts for the moving images to engage with across a broad range of implications beyond merely what sentiments they evoke.

This research departs from more conventional narrative (Zimmermann & Ishizuka 2007) and psychological screen readings (Richter 2015) about home movies. Instead, it proposes that the intersubjectivity of places (Malpas 1999) in domestic cinema plays a significant and inextricably important role in the way we interact with and come to terms with places when experienced through private films. Rather than treat these artefacts as artworks based on nostalgic records of family life (Buckland 2021), the research positions the body of work as cinematic landscapes embodied from spatial and cultural meanings through screen affect, framing strategies, and site/time-specific imagery (Germany 1950s, Pacific 1960s, Australia 1970s and 1980s) relative to topographic experiences of place in film. This reframing of domestic cinema as a mode of topographical knowledge challenges dominant memory-based readings of film (Albano 2017) and contributes to a growing field of scholarship that values spatial mapping in screen studies (Hallam & Roberts). Furthermore, by embedding the research in creative practice, the project advances new methodologies for engaging with filmic memory as a place-orientated mechanism, offering a contribution not only to screen theory, but also to the aesthetics of place-making in moving image art.

While domestic cinema has much to be said about its social impact and legacy, this investigation seeks to encounter place to recognise an intersubjectivity between film as an aesthetic artefact and the audiences who witness these moving images. Herein exists a sense of place measured to familiar places, remembered places, unfamiliar places, and unknown places. Time, then, plays a determinate role in shaping how such types of localities liaise. For example, films captured in the present will impact the known and the immediate, which is different to, say, re-experiencing the same films well into the future, long after those who filmed or appeared in them have aged or passed away. Time in this regard changes how screen places of domestic cinema are experienced and re-experienced inexplicably as a topographical perspective. A key argument from this investigation defines what we map into

domestic cinema, which determines how we experience and are subsequently affected by screen places.

The significance of the study is attested to four indicators. First, there is no known practice-based slow film study of equivalence that focuses on place and domestic cinema. Second, there is no known slow cinema study, which has produced 20 hours of published moving image works about place and domestic cinema. Third, the project discovered a new way to consider place in film through a topographical screen methodology. Forth, the films were screened in peer review at major public galleries and public screens, including the Australian Centre for the Moving Image, Digital Facade at Federation Square Melbourne, the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, the Museum of Contemporary Art Fenosa Union, the Perth Institute of Contemporary Art, Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art Mallorca, Museum Centre of Contemporary Art Vitoria, National Museum Centre of Art Reina Sofia Madrid, Da2 Museum Salamanca, and at the Presidential Government of the Canary Islands Tenerife.

Place, (2005) SD, sound, 60 mins
Wonderlandic, (2005) SD, sound, 60 mins
Communion, (2005) SD, sound, 60 mins
Harvest, (2005) SD, sound, 60 mins
Geelong, (2005) SD, sound, 60 mins
Kindergarten, (2005) SD, sound, 60 mins
The Bridge, (2005) SD, sound, 60 mins
1975, (2006) SD, sound, 60 mins
Air Base, (2016), HD, sound, 60 mins
The River, (2008) HD, sound, 60 mins
Jungle, (2009) HD, sound, 60 mins
The Field, (2011) HD, sound, 60 mins

Journey, (2014) HD, sound, 60 mins
German Village, (2016) HD, sound, 60 mins
Picnic, (2017) HD, sound, 60 mins
Ballarat, (2019), HD, sound, 60 mins
The Beach, (2021), HD, sound, 60 mins
Town, (2022) HD, sound, 60 mins
Through My Father's Eyes, (2024) HD, sound, 60 mins
The Sea, (2025) HD, sound, 60 mins

PEER REVIEW 1

The *Filmic Memorials* project is an ambitious, durational practice-led investigation into the aesthetics of place in vintage home movies. Its proposition to reclassify home movies as *domestic cinema*, framed through a topographical and phenomenological lens, is an important intervention in discourses of memory, affect, and screen space.

Watching all the twenty films in the series was by no means an easy task. They are tedious and long, but, nevertheless, a worthy experience I have yet to find of equal weight. I have

watched other long form slow cinema works before, *Satanango*, *The Turin Horse*, *The Cremaster Cycle*. All of these are tedious and sometimes excruciating to watch, due to the extreme duration and entrapment of having to view as if imprisoned. But for *Filmic Memorials*, this took extreme duration to a new level. Watching what I consider a 20 hour film segmented into parts and viewed across two weeks, surprisingly, allowed me to take in the scope of the project with more clarity than watching them all at once. I found this to be a clever choice, as I was literally forced to watch with interruptions, which allowed relief and clarity. For that reason, I appreciate twenty one hour films over making three or four hour films with no forced break. To that, I feel that all the films, while interrogating place, are also, dare I say, more effective in what they force an audience to do - the extreme duration of 20 films prompts, for me, not an examination in place, but rather, an examination in duration stamina.

I would have liked to see more dialogue about stamina in the works, or at least mention of it, as films are not just about formalism of what's in the frame. There are people who have to watch these films, and their experience matters. Moreover, the experience of watching 20 slow films for an hour each made me care little about place. I focused on why I had to watch slowly moving home movie footage that, whilst pretty and sonically foreboding, didn't interest me at all once the extreme effort needed to watch them kicked in. Perhaps I am being too harsh in this matter, but it must be acknowledged that tedium and boredom surpass all other emotive reactions or intellectual pursuits about aesthetics. This was not a negative feedback in the slightest. But something to be aware of that I'm sure audiences will cater for.

Secondly, while the project's scope is impressive, its outcomes are framed more in terms of scale (20 films, 20 hours) than critical impact. The significance section lists prestigious venues, but does not articulate how peer recognition or critical reception affirms the research contribution beyond exhibition. The methodological claim of a "new way" to consider place in film is not adequately demonstrated or contextualised within existing theoretical or cinematic frameworks.

Finally, the statement could benefit from a more critical reflection on the limitations of the project. The absence of engagement with diverse perspectives—be they cultural, theoretical, or audience-based—renders the work insular despite its global visual archive. In summary, while *Filmic Memorials* is an ambitious and potentially important project, this statement does not yet meet the standard of critical self-reflection or disciplinary engagement expected of a mature research articulation.

PEER REVIEW 2

The statement outlining *Filmic Memorials* (2005–2025) presents a durational practice-based research project that reconfigures family home movies into a suite of twenty slow cinema works addressing the theme of place. The project's intention is to reposition home movies from a genre associated with amateurism and nostalgia to a form of "domestic cinema"

framed by formalism and phenomenological enquiry. The use of a “topographical analysis” as a methodological device for engaging with screen space is of interest to me, as a reading of the films suggests a spatial grounding of moving images that intersects, among other themes, affect, memory, and temporality. The emphasis on intersubjectivity between the viewer and film, alongside the assertion that time alters perceptual and affective encounters with place, demonstrates a unique account of home movies, which are more commonly attested to character-based emotions being sentimentality and nostalgia. The longitudinal scope of the project, both in terms of its twenty-year timeframe and the volume of work produced (twenty films), further indicates a sustained and substantial contribution to the field that draws impact on how we might think about screen places beyond the characters who ‘star’ in home movies.

However, I would suggest the statement would benefit from greater critical depth in articulating its research contribution. Key terms such as “topographical analysis,” “formalism,” and “domestic cinema” are used recurrently, but remain under-theorised within the statement, lacking sufficient engagement with relevant academic literature in film studies or spatial theory. Although the claim to originality is repeated, it is not critically situated against existing research on home movies, amateur cinema, or screen place, which weakens the scholarly framing of the project. The discussion of significance relies heavily on lists of screening venues, without reflecting on the impact, reception, or peer engagement with the work. The absence of limitations or reflexive critique further reduces the robustness of the statement as a research artefact. While the artistic outputs themselves appear substantial and the premise is original, the statement in its current form reads more as an extended project synopsis than a critically grounded articulation of a research methodology and contribution.

RESPONSE STATEMENT

In responding to the observations made by the first reviewer, I note that the main critical contention reveals their tedium of experience in watching the 20 films over a sustained period. While I note this was a difficult task for the reviewer, as it would be for anyone else and myself included, these comments were more subjective about the experience of watching the films to review this article, and not necessarily critical dialogue about the films (or the project). Moreover, I found the reviewer's appraisal highly speculative, active in primarily describing the discomfort of spectatorship that, given the nature of slow cinema, was a given from the outset. It would have been more helpful if the viewer's experience was in turn transformed into a critical appraisal of the films, rather than about themselves as a ‘watcher’ of the films per se. For example, if I wrote a film review, I would make an effort to discuss the film independent of my experience watching the movie. As the reviewer's commentary unfolded, it appeared more an editorial complaining about durational films than a critical discussion about and within the films itself.

However, in the context of the second reviewer's comments about the need to find more contextual and analytical grounding in the statement, it was indeed more helpful. I have responded by adding an additional paragraph in this article addressing the four key points, mentioning clarity around the key terms of domestic cinema and topographical graphical analysis, deeper analytical rigour, and closer attention to defining critical engagement. These are now reflected in the amended statement, and I trust the second reviewer will find these changes adequate in addressing their concerns.

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