Charles Stankievech
Aletheia's Veil

2-channel HD video installation with objects.
Dazibao, Montreal

The show of the future is an empty theatre.
Yves Klein, 1959.

The luminous rectangle of the cinema screen became an archetype in the imagination of the 20th century. Connected as much to avant-garde painting as to cinema, the white rectangle functioned as the infinite space where anything and everything was possible: the ground zero for utopia. Starting with Malevich, the white rectangle continually resurfaced through-out the 20th century reaching a certain endgame in the work of painter Yves Klein's *Void* series. Transferring mediums the white rectangle makes an important but little known appearance in the work of Nam June Paik's Fluxus film *Zen for Film* (1962-64) while exiting the epoch with the photographs of Hiroshi Sugimoto's *Theater* series (1976-2001), which indeed does show, as Klein predicted, empty theatres radiating with the pure white light of time exposed.

In 1913, and five years before Malevich painted *White on White*, the *Imperial* theatre opened in downtown Montreal—a city which boasts the first architecture built exclusively for cinema (the *Ouimetoscope*). Originally a combination vaudeville-film venue like most spectacles at the time, the *Imperial* has undergone several ownerships and nearly as many architectural modifications. In 1995, Hiroshi Sugimoto held open his shutter to capture the entire light from Claude Lelouch's *Les Miserables* illuminating the restored architecture of the *Cinema Imperial*. For *Aletheia's Veil* I have reverse-engineered Sugimoto's frozen process, returning to the form of the motion picture. *Aletheia's Veil* was shot in the interior of the *Cinema Imperial*, however instead of re-projecting *Les Miserables*, I have projected clear 35mm film leader onto the cinema screen making a historical connection between Paik and Sugimoto. With a slow zoom into the empty screen of the *Imperial* (reminiscent of the zoom in Michael Snow's *Wavelength* (1967)), the cinema's interior is pushed out of the frame leaving only a white field of light.

In the gallery, the footage is formally separated into a 2-channel video installation. The two videos are projected from opposite sides of the room onto the same translucent silk screen suspended in the middle of the gallery between the projectors. One projector is responsible for the cinema screen in the Imperial that has been extracted from the centre of the frame and the other projector is responsible for the architecture of the Imperial leaving a lack in the middle of the frame for the *Imperial* screen. Synched at the frame level, together the two projectors create a composite image of the film playing within the theatre. At the full extension of the zoom, the representation of the Imperial's architecture vanishes, leaving only a luminescent white silk curtain hanging in an empty gallery. We move from representation of a-place (the u-topia of the cinema) to the pure materiality of white light, silk and the body present in the current architecture of the white cubed gallery. Eventually, the camera zooms out of the screen and back into the interior of the *Imperial*. Echoing the 35mm film loop which was twisted into a möbius strip, the video takes 30mins to loop as a palindrome (spatially + temporally),

The soundtrack to the installation runs a parallel history. At the beginning of the 20th century, Emile Berliner (inventor of the flat record) founded a record + gramophone factory in the St. Henri neighbourhood of Montréal. The soundtrack to *Atheleia's Veil* finds its source in a 1915 shellac record, entitled "They didn't believe me," manufactured in the Montreal factory. By playing the final groove of the 78 record at an amplified level, a wash of white noise creates a dense material to be sonically sculptured. Using the iterative process established by Alvin Lucier's *I am sitting in a room* (1969), the white noise of the record's surface is sculpted by my current studio space which resides in the same dilapidated Berliner factory (now called the RCA building). The result is a sonic imprint formed by the turn of the century architecture and materialized in resonant tones recalling smoothed bell chimes. As a narrative, the white noise of the Berliner record coincides with the wide-angle shot of the interior of the *Cinema Imperial*, and together the image and sound evolve towards a more abstracted and material presence: pure light and pure tones.

Conceptually, *Aletheia's Veil* continues the cinematic investigations first explored in *Zeno's Phantasies* (2005). While *Zeno's Phantasies* rendered the fundamental temporal phantasy of the spectator—the illusion of motion constructed over time via a series of still images—*Aletheia's Veil* renders the fundamental spatial phantasy of cinema: the frame. Formally and politically, the frame includes the space of the film gate, the screen, and the space between these two spaces—the architecture.

For *Dazibao* the exhibition includes a near empty gallery space with only the silk curtain suspended in the middle of the room (projectors, computer and speakers embedded in the ceiling infrastructure). With neither an exact ending nor beginning (only the extremities of a pendulum), the video runs in a 30-minute loop, cycling through planes of representation, abstraction and materiality. Objects accompanying the installation include the original 1915 shellac record used to make the soundtrack and the 35mm möbius film loop projected in the *Cinema Imperial* during the production of the work.

On the evening of the vernissage, a live concert entitled *À la recherche du temps perdu* inaugurates the exhibition. An original composition, the sound is entirely composed from the last 'silent' grooves of a variety records.

Aletheia's Veil (after Sugimoto)   Production Still   2007
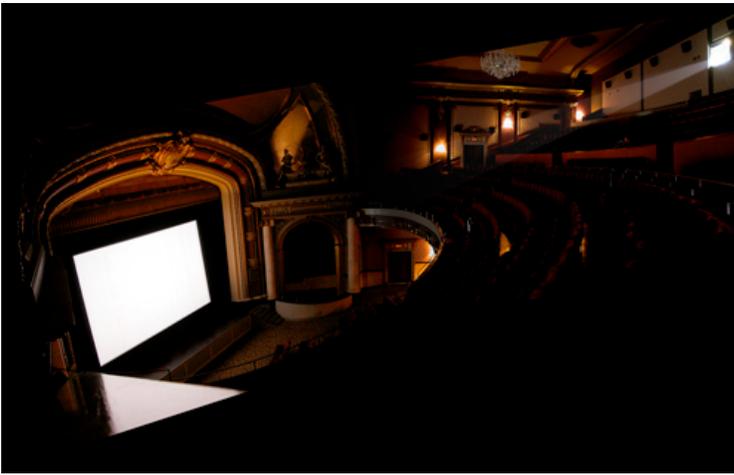
Aletheia's Veil   Production Still 2007

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