



Clio Padovani

Berlin Project / temporal relations





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Foreword by Sue Prichard

Padovani's work demonstrates an extraordinary ability to transcend time. We first met two, perhaps three years ago. Then, as now, she talked passionately about her need to find a new way in which to interpret our collective past. She described her desire to discover a new dimension, a new way of thinking about textiles, one which would connect the individual with the collective, the personal with the universal. She referred constantly to time, of suspending time through the process of making; of regaining time through the use of the medium. Padovani's use of language was and is both emotive and challenging; she seeks to shatter our perceptions about how to describe and present our textile heritage. Yet, her quest for a new way of looking, a new way

of describing is not without structure. Padovani chooses her medium with care, keen to exploit its ability to weave her narrative, constructing events and experiences with infinite care and attention to detail. She creates poetic interpretations, using technology as a tool, not to drive the creative process, but to act as the interface between us, her public, and our textile heritage. Padovani is the first to acknowledge that her work is not 'easy', nor should it be – attempting to re-establish the continuity between ourselves and our collective textile culture is not for the faint hearted. It takes an intellectual and indeed, emotional leap of faith to open up to the cultural references embedded in Padovani's work. No longer do we have time to spend 'making', yet the same skill, the sense of the hand, is employed in a very different way – the keyboard has overtaken the loom, the bobbin, the needle. Uniquely, Padovani has taken this contradiction and created something ethereal – both suspending and regaining time, acknowledging the loss of the moment, whilst celebrating its memory. Padovani asks us to acknowledge that unbroken thread, the one that binds us to our past and connects us to our communities. We may need to dig deep within ourselves but through Padovani's work, we will rediscover it, and consequently our lives may be a little richer.

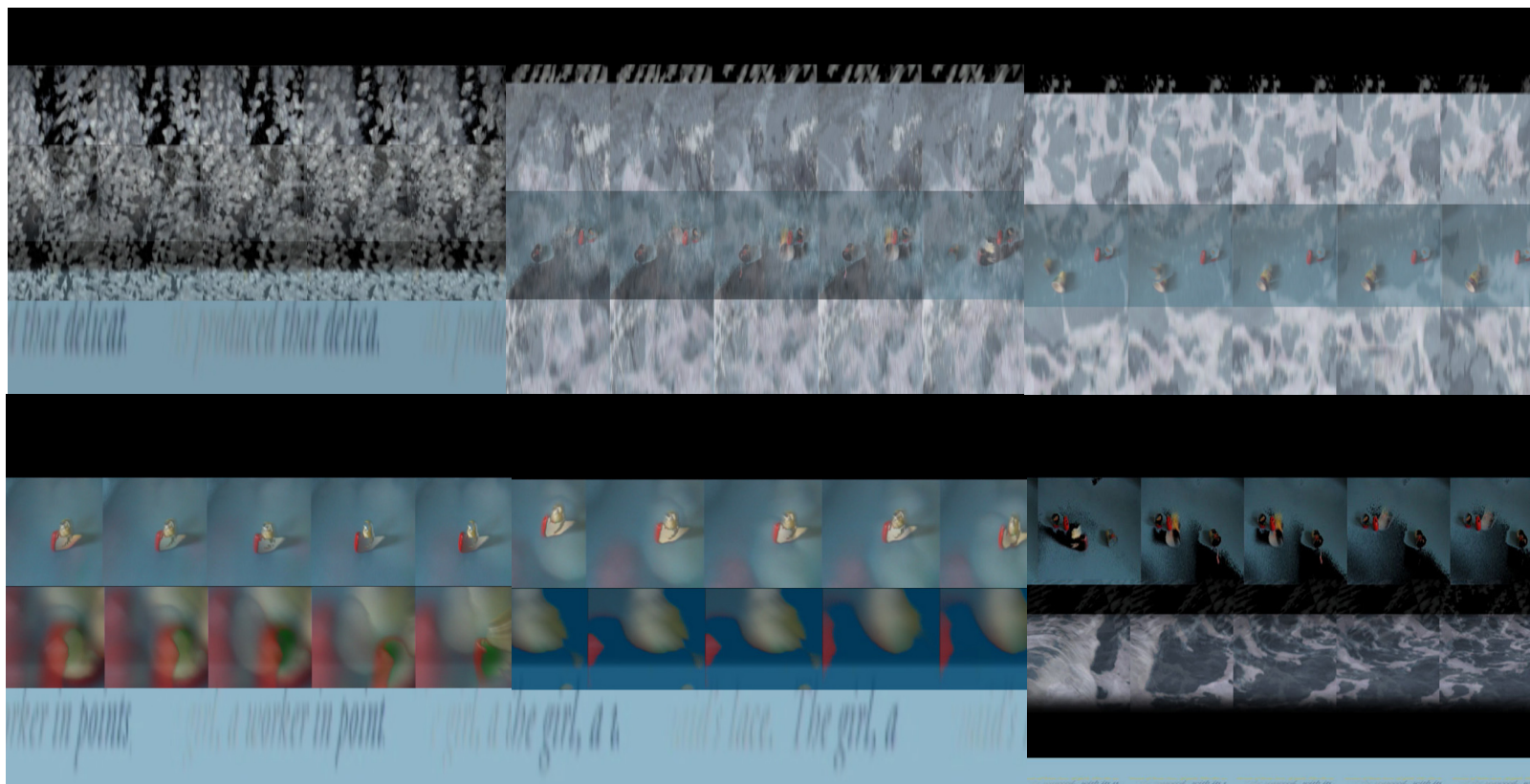


Mermaid's lace:



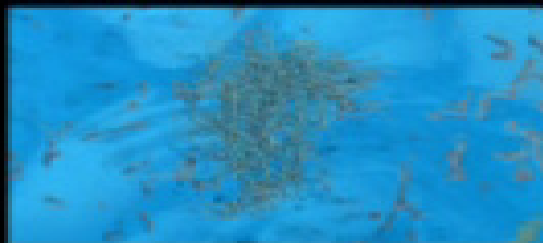
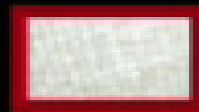
“A sailor youth, bound for the Southern Seas, brought home to his betrothed a bunch of that pretty coralline known to the unlearned as the mermaid ‘s lace. The girl, a worker in points, struck by the graceful nature of the seaweed, with its small white knots united, as it were, by a “bride”, imitated it with her needle, and after several unsuccessful trials produced that delicate guipure which before long became the taste of all of Europe.”

Palliser, F, A history of Lace, London, 1869, p43



Mermaid's Lace
DVD, 3 min loop
2006
Collection of the artist





*Utopia (figure/ground)**Tapestry, 30 x 20 cm**2007**Collection of the artist*

Stacks

Clio Padovani in conversation with Jessica Hemmings July 23, 2007

JH: You trained at the Royal College of Art in the Tapestry Department. Do you see your current digital practice as a type of weaving?

CP: I do. None of the moving image work would exist without my knowledge of tapestry. The moving image editing process is very much the same as weaving because you import a little bit of film and put it on a timeline. That timeline can expand, contract and contain many ways of you affecting it.

JH: Does video provide a more open-ended sense of time than weaving? In other words, is weaving too contained for the conceptual ideas about time and memory, which your recent work explores?

CP: I feel incredibly free when I am constructing with video, in a way that I don't feel when I am weaving. If each thread or block of thread could be as detailed, as lifelike, as seductive as what the video contains, then there would not be a necessity for moving images.

JH: Why do you continue to exhibit the video work alongside textile pieces?

CP: Because I feel that for many people there is an enormous struggle to see the relationship between textiles and this work. Also I think at this moment in time the work has never been shown as it should be seen, which is projected onto a cinema screen size.

JH: Ideally, you envision these pieces as projections that are greater than life size?

CP: Yes. Enormous. In essence what they are talking about as pieces are large events.

JH: Mermaid's Lace is one of your earliest digital works to explore a collage format.

CP: Yes. I wanted to make a weaving piece from bottom to top. I wanted to make strings of images: a thread and within the thread the unfolding of a life, an episode, an event. In Louise Bourgeois' work people often describe the thread on the spool as the 'stuff' that is yet to become, to be made into something in order for it to live. Achieving a comparable quality in moving images proved technically impossible, but there is the illusion, in this work, that the images are moving along and being rewound. The work is about the making of lace and the myths of lace. There is an Italian myth that suggests lace comes from the foam of the sea. The text at the bottom talks of a young man bringing a coral to his fiancé and she being so taken with it that she started making some point work and that is how the lace developed. The two little Russian dolls dancing are a story of union. But lace is to do with gaps, the loss and the emptiness that makes everything else work. So here the dolls are being knocked apart and then the sea and the coral lace appear. The idea is that from something to do with love something else happens that is not to do with love.



JH: Stack 1 (No Time) is quite different in composition, more like a digital collage of the human figure.

CP: It is a fragmented body – with a heart that occasionally beats. For me the Stack pieces are innovative because they have a formal coherence and they recall the body, fragmentation and the narrative of the thread. They don't represent these things in horizontal linearity, like Mermaid's Lace, but I imagine them as being drawn towards us from the depth of the screen, each image replacing itself 'through' time. Stack 1(No Time) starts with a reel of 'stuff'. There is the image of a rock from a painting by Giotto. It is a painted rock, a representation of rock, but it is also an immutable thing. Then there is an image of a hand and images that carry on towards the disembodiment and fragmented-ness where all the stories fall apart. But there is a sense that time is contained. The meaning for me of this piece is that time is suspended between historical time and personal time: emotional time.

JH: And the time of making?

CP: Yes, and the time of making. These images are solid images and talk about materiality and corporeality whereas Stack 2 is made with images that talk about illusion. Stack 1: (No Time) is about unity. The hand is the hand of a child playing.

JH: There is something tactile about your use of video, a medium that can't really ever be tactile.

CP: It is all about evoking the remembered tactility that belongs in the body, that belongs in the heart, that belongs in the mind. So it is about retriggering the experiences that have been embedded.

JH: Do you see that as within the individual, or much larger than that, within culture? Is tactile knowledge so instinctive that it does not have to come from personal experience?

CP: Yes it is cultural. That is why I am working with more overt art historical references, bringing in the images of the frescos and painted rocks because artists have long been interested in representing material matter, tactility.

JH: Two very different metaphors, lace and tapestry, seem to be operating within your work.

CP: Yes. I am now more and more interested in making them work together.

JH: Lace is in some ways about a lack of connection and fragility and emptiness as well as wholeness.

CP: Lace is something that is basically predicated on the existence of the hole, because without the hole it would not happen. Lace decorates around nothing. In tapestry everything is structurally united. Tapestry can't exist with a gap. Nothing in its building allows for gaps.

JH: Stack 1 and Stack 2 explore, in different ways, the fragmentation of time and memory: moments when time and memory come together as well as moments when they fall apart. Is that in your mind something that is ultimately positive? Do they need to return to wholeness?





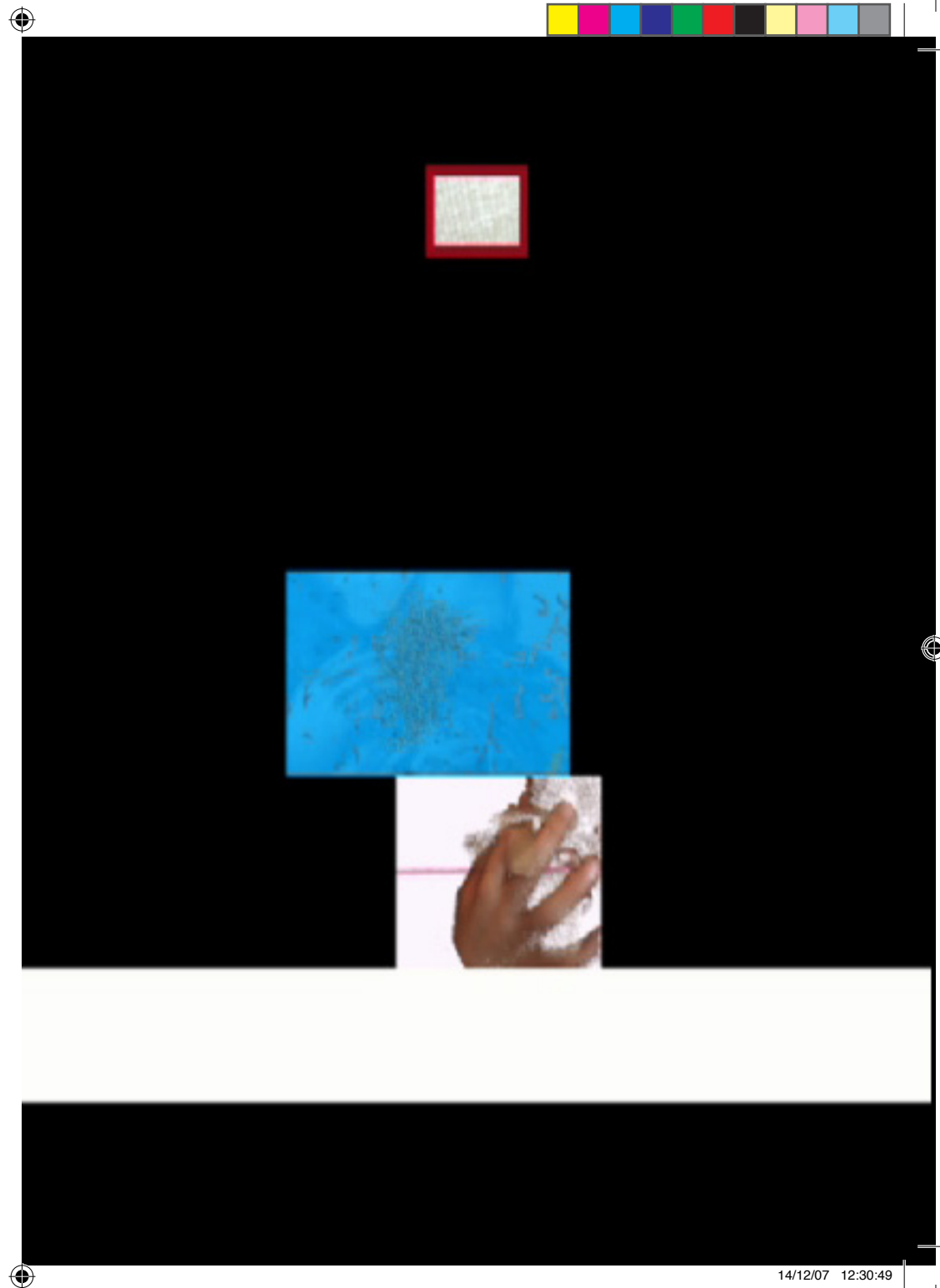
[13] **BERLIN PROJECT / TEMPORAL RELATIONS** Stacks

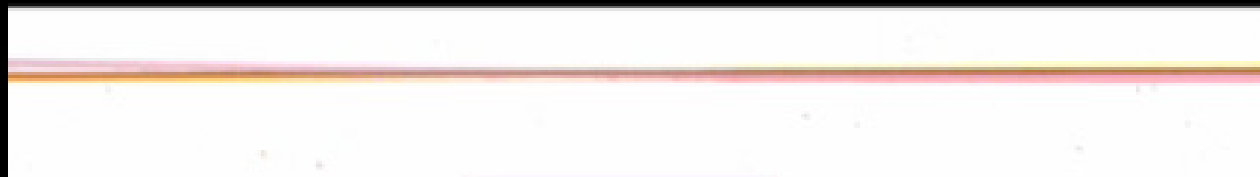
CP: They both finally start rebuilding so that in the end they are one thing, although their characteristics of colour, the type of image that is being shown, the scale, and the materiality are different. It is the commonality of things that are being brought back together. Having said that, Stack 2 is much more to do with uncertainty and loss and not being able to find a stable ground from which to proceed from a continuous unwinding.

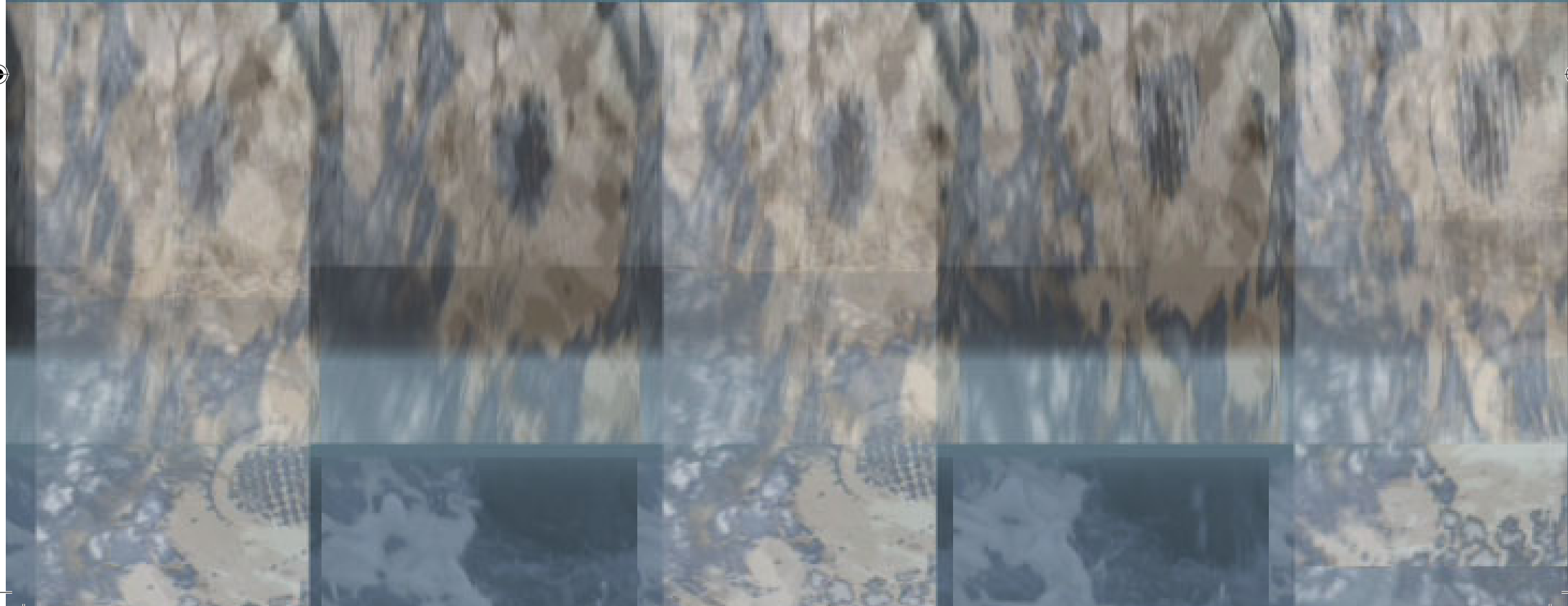
JH: There is a enormous difference between the two, a shift from the universal and cultural to the intimate and specific. Are you referring to the unwinding of historical time?

CP: Yes the unwinding of historical time, and lives, but not just one life. It is about evidencing the accumulation of lives: Giotto's life, the weavers' life, the painted life, my life.... In the end I am trying to develop a timeline between an intimate, personal narrative and a collective cultural narrative. I think I can do this through knowledge of textiles, drawing on material experiences that have echoes for many people. They may appear and disappear in our consciousness, but essentially I see them as an unbroken thread.

Stack 1 (no time)
DVD, 5 min loop
2006
Collection of the artist



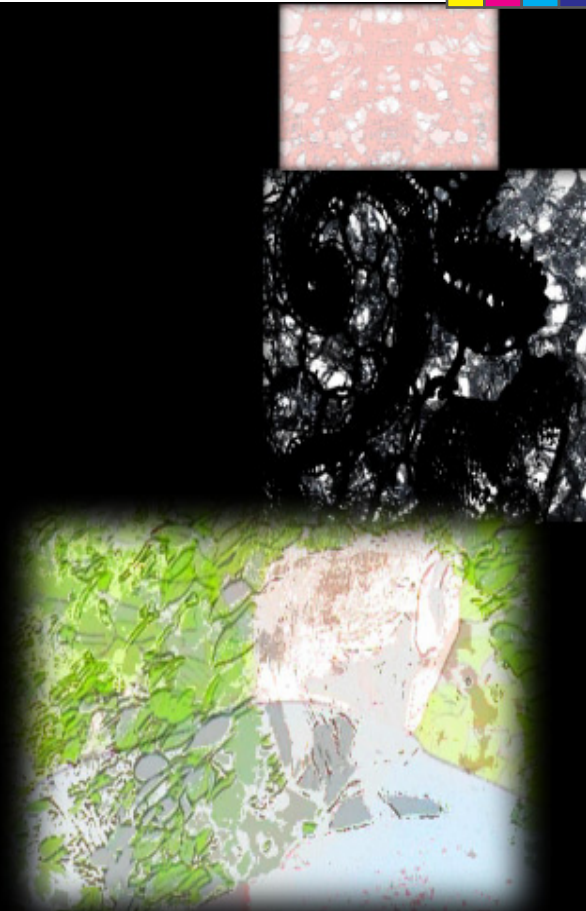




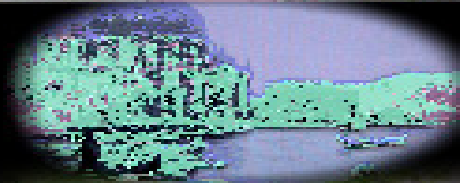
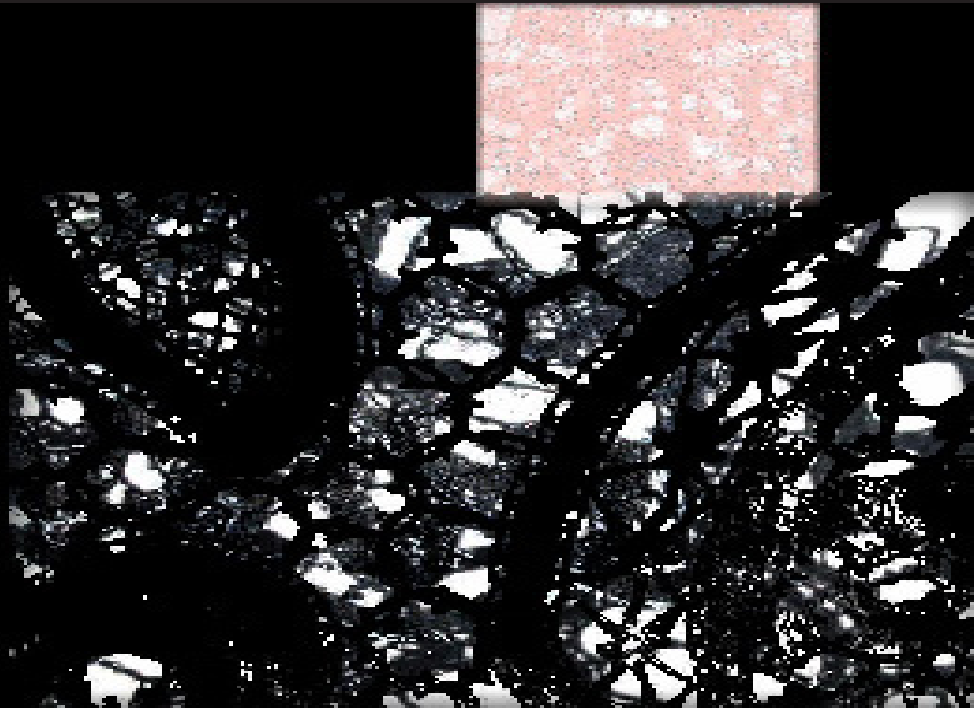


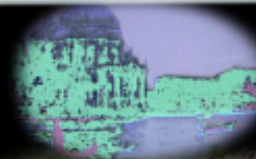
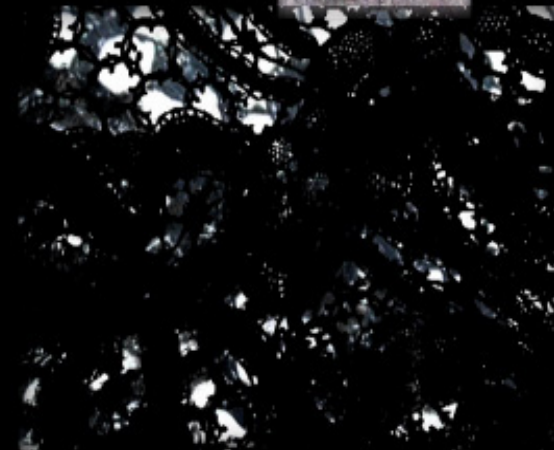
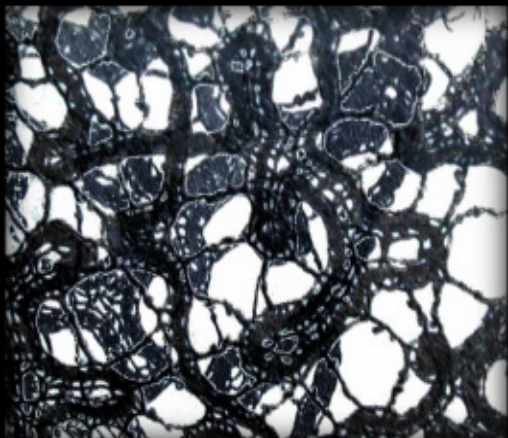
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BERLIN PROJECT / TEMPORAL RELATIONS Stacks



Stack 2 (rippling time)
DVD, 5 min loop
2006
Collection of the artist





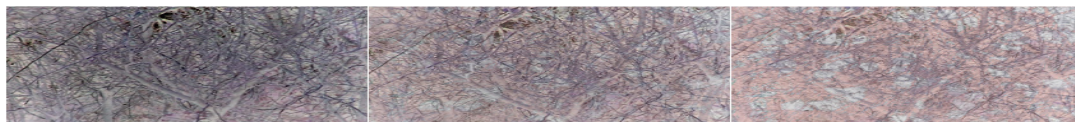


The Afterlife of Work

In Walter Benjamin's *The Arcades Project* we find a phantasmagoria of characters subjects and things, objects of interpretation, each subjected to the divinatory gaze of the collector. Redeemed through the momentary action of the dialectical image, the threshold of each object affords an encounter with the lost time embedded in its countenance, the spectral-time of its material.

Padovani's *Stack* series may not on the face of it encourage a Benjaminian study, yet the incomplete status of their images and the lingering quality of their appearing to have always already been, is compelling. In *Stack 1 (No Time)* for example, a series of rectangular forms piled irregularly offer selected partial views of the strangely familiar. We see the fleeting image of what appears to be the surface of an acrid yellow tapestry, a ponderous impression of a rock, a slowly appearing section of a Piero della Francesca painting and a series of drawn lines stretched tight like the woolen threads on a loom. In *Stack 2 (Rippling Time)*, feathered oval samples of telescoped views of landscapes, recognizable and unknown, emerge and disappear in time with fragments of nets and fissures; and in both *Stack 1* and *Stack 2*, through the structure of the stack and the intensity of the colour field, the repeating forms of modernism haunt the material and time of their viewing.

Utopia (unity)
Tapestry, 30 x 20 cm
2006
Collection of the artist



It is the fate of the ghost to repeat. According to Derrida the figure of the revenant is not a whole thing, it is an armor which is foreign to the body which it dresses. When we see a ghost we do not see what looks at us, what we see is the ungraspable visibility of the invisible, a non-contemporaneity of the presence of the present with itself. If Padovani's *Stack* series do not lend themselves wholly to the critical tradition of material history, Benjamin's lost object, remembered, imagined, dreamed, does offer the insight that what we experience in her work is like the arcades object, the time of the spectre, a disjunction of time: the afterlife of work.

Paul Whittaker





Biography

Born in 1963 in Florence, Italy, Clio Padovani received her BA degree in Tapestry at Edinburgh College of Art and her MA at the Royal College of Art in 1989.

Since then she has continued to develop tapestry as an expressive art medium, participating in numerous international exhibitions.

In 2000 she began working with tapestry and video, and her piece, Own Time, 2000, was the first video work to be acquired for the Crafts Council textile collection.

In 2002, she was short listed for the Jerwood Applied Arts Prize: Textiles and in 2006 received an Outstanding Award from the jury of the 4th International Fiber Art Biennale (Suzhou) China. She has received AHRC funding for projects addressing digital re-interpretations of historical textiles, and this is her current area of exhibition and research.

Clio Padovani lives and works in Winchester, UK, where she is Senior Lecturer in Textile Art at Winchester School of Art, University of Southampton.

Contributors

Sue Prichard is Curator of Contemporary Textiles at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Dr Jessica Hemmings is contributing editor to publications including *Selvedge*, and writes for *Crafts* and *Embroidery* magazines. She is Programme Leader for BA (Hons) Textiles, Fashion and Fibre at Winchester School of Art, University of Southampton.

Dr Paul Whittaker's research examines the notion of 'failure' as a positive feature of the creative process, discussing the temporality of the art object through readings of Benjamin and Lacan. He is Deputy Head of School (Education) at Winchester School of Art, University of Southampton.



List of works

Mermaid's Lace

DVD, 3 min loop

2006

Collection of the artist

Stack 1 (no time)

DVD, 5 min loop

2006

Collection of the artist

Stack 2 (rippling time)

DVD, 5 min loop

2006

Collection of the artist

Utopia (figure/ground)

Tapestry, 30 x 20 cm

2007

Collection of the artist

Utopia (unity)

Tapestry, 30 x 20 cm

2006

Collection of the artist

Acknowledgments

The Artist gratefully acknowledges support of Winchester School of Art, University of Southampton who made the publication possible.

Professor B. Makhoul (Winchester School of Art)
Sue Prichard, for her generous support and enthusiasm.

Alison Carter, Senior Keeper of Art and Design, Hampshire County Council Museum Service, for help, advice and access to HCCMS textile collections, without which the works could not have been made.

Graphic design by Danny Aldred
www.dannyaldred.com





978-0-9795869-8-9 0-9795869-8-4

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Published by Issue Art Publishing,
Po.Box 7334, NY 10150
New York.
USA

Printed and bound in China
Edition of 500

