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# **WORLD BEYOND THE HORIZON**

Reconstructing the complexity of the 'normal' experience.



by  
**Simon Bourke**  
BCA (Hons) First Class

**Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for  
the Degree of Doctorate of Philosophy.**

**University of Tasmania**

**February 2011**

## **STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY:**

I certify that the exegesis entitled *The World Beyond the Horizon* submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, University of Tasmania contains no material which has been accepted for a degree or diploma by the University or any other institution, except by the way of research and background information and duly acknowledged in the exegesis. To the best of my knowledge and belief no material previously published or written by another person except where due acknowledgement is made in the text of the exegesis.

Signed:

Name: Simon Francis Bourke

Date: 1<sup>st</sup> February 2011

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## **ABSTRACT:**

To be an artist is not a matter of making paintings or objects at all. What we are really dealing with is the state of our consciousness and the shape of our perception (Irwin in Noë 2000, p. 123).

*World Beyond the Horizon* explores the way people witness and experience variations of light falling on a landscape. To support the investigation I used the case study of the 1979 Mt Erebus aviation disaster in Antarctica, to explore degraded visual functioning, a condition resulting from variable perceptual experiences formed through the senses.

The landscape of Northern Tasmania was surveyed from the cockpit of an aircraft – the ‘flight view’, where sound recordings and video data were collected to study the extent to which light conditions may affect the process of perception.

The work of John Constable and Joseph Turner who, through their own art practices, pioneered new ways to depict light in the 1800’s, have been central to my investigation. In his paintings, Constable predicts changing weather patterns, through time, by referring to the science of meteorology. By contrast, Turner’s paintings are freely abstract, atmospheric and immediate with recognisable forms disappearing almost entirely, leaving only light, space and natural elements. Constable offers a pictorial forecast of the weather as a pilot would witness it from the ground, where as Turner places himself in the weather as a pilot would do while flying. The work of Constable and Turner expresses ideas of observation and participation that are integral and complementary to my study of the ‘flight view’.

To experiment with the paradox of reality and illusion and to create the synthetic experience of 'scientific landscapes', I designed and built an optical laboratory. The outcomes of this have been presented as a video-sound installation.

Simon Bourke

11 June 2010

Reference: Robert Irwin in Noë, Alva, 2000, 'Experience and Experiment in Art', *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, 7, No. 8-9, 2000, pp. 123-35, viewed 21 March 2007, <http://socrates.berkeley.edu/~noe/art.pdf>

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<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS:</b>	Page
TITLE PAGE	i
STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY	ii
STATEMENT OF AUTHORITY TO ACCESS	iii
ABSTRACT	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	vi
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vii
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
How it Started	1
The Case Study – The Mt Erebus Disaster, Antarctica	5
<b>CHAPTER 1: THE PROJECT</b>	<b>15</b>
1:1 The Project Outline	15
1:2 The Project Aims	23
1:3 The Research Questions	24
1:4 The Project Locations	25
1:5 The Rationale	26
1:6 Methodology and Processes	27
1:7 The Visual Experience – Photography and the Three Planes of Movement	30
1:8 The Sound Experience – The Drone as a Sensory Background	32
1:9 The Aircraft – (Cessna 337 VH-VMO)	33
<b>CHAPTER 2: FLIGHT INTO THE WHITE ABYSS</b>	<b>37</b>
2:1 Human Belief Systems and Mechanisms	37
2:2 Human Psychological and Mental Sets	43
2:3 Synthetic Vision – Believing what we See	47
2:4 Losing the Horizon – True and Artificial	52
<b>CHAPTER 3: EARTH/RELATIONSHIPS</b>	<b>56</b>
3:1 Art – Interpretation of Light in the Landscape	56
3:2 The True and Artificial Horizon	64
3:3 The Landscape as Seen Through the Artificial Horizon	66
3:4 The Viewer the Object and the Space Between	70
3:5 Atmospheric Phenomena	72
3:6 The Flight View	73



<b>CHAPTER 4: ART AND COGNITION</b>	79
4:1 Linking Art and Philosophy	79
4:2 A Theory of Perception	85
<b>CHAPTER 5: BODY AND MACHINE IN THE CONTEMPORARY TASMANIAN LANDSCAPE</b>	89
5:1 The Machine: 'There's a Tractor in my Garden!'	89
5:2 The Machine as an Extension to the Human Body	96
5:3 The Body and the Landscape as a Machine	98
<b>CHAPTER 6: EXPERIENCING THE TASMANIAN LANDSCAPE FROM THE FLIGHT VIEW</b>	101
6:1 My Perception from the Flight Platform	101
6:2 Pilot as Artist	105
<b>CHAPTER 7: WORLD BEYOND THE HORIZON</b>	118
7:1 The Creative Data	118
7:2 Experimental Film and Video	119
7:3 Evolution of the Optical Laboratory	124
7:4 Re-manufacturing the Landscape	126
7:5 Testing the Methodology at the World Year of Physics, 2005 Art Prize at the Macquarie University Sydney	130
7:6 Human Interface Technology	132
<b>CONCLUSION</b>	135
<b>REFERENCES</b>	138
<b>LIST OF FIGURES</b>	145
<b>APPENDICIES</b>	
APPENDIX A: Schematic Diagram for the Project Research Plan	154
APPENDIX B: The Case Study – The Mt Erebus Disaster. 1979	155
APPENDIX C: The Case Study Philosophy	178
APPENDIX D: The Project Philosophy	179
APPENDIX E: Flight Survey and Project Site Map	180
APPENDIX F: Cessna 337 – Description and Specifications	188
APPENDIX G: Project Media and Publicity	191
APPENDIX H: Installation Layout – Vision Space Facility	194