

Travelogue as an Embodied Gaze: Inner and Outer Terrains

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This paper, an outcome of an ongoing practice-based artistic research process (journey), explores creative strategies related to the experiences of the embodied creator and delves into issues of self- and spatial representation within experimental travelogue films. The paper analyses how the filmmaking approach that I am currently developing focuses on using psychogeographical experiences and the embodied gaze as guiding principles for crafting images and sounds. It examines the impact this approach can have on the filmmaker's thinking, behaviour, and artistic practice itself. My considerations are framed within the personal travelogue genre – films that transform outer terrains into inner terrains (from landscape to mindscape) and vice versa. These films explore the structures of society and cultural context through the act of travelling in unfamiliar natural and urban landscapes, and through the inner transformations of the filmmakers themselves. The final movement of the paper addresses considerations on the significance of the tactile analogue film medium for such practice and explores how the expanded cinema form can be employed to communicate captured personal images and embodied experiences to the spectator. Furthermore, I reflect on the personal stakes of my inquiry as a traveller, filmmaker, and researcher.

Keywords: travelogue film, embodied gaze, psychogeography, autoethnography.

If we opened people up, we'd find landscapes.

If we opened me up, we'd find beaches.

Agnès Varda

Commencement "locus"¹

I must commence by elucidating that within the scope of this paper, I make reference to the concept of the journey – not as a straightforward path, but as one defined by tangible circumstances and marked by non-linear progressions. This journey encompasses subjective reflections and contemplations gathered over time and across varied locations (Lithuania, Latvia, South Korea, Canada, Georgia, etc.) These experiences, often documented and introspectively analyzed, are prone to sudden interruptions.

I believe that such interruptions are integral to the travelogue film genre, particularly within the realm of experimental and personal perspectives. As expressed in the phrase "I'm not entirely here" from my forthcoming expanded cinema piece *Travelogue* (Fig. 1), these moments convey a sense of partial presence, balancing between the external world and the inner self. This exploration also reevaluates the role and significance of the embodied author in artistic research.



1. Still from *Travelogue* by Miglė Križinauskaitė-Bernotienė (work in progress)

Kadras iš Miglės Križinauskaitės-Bernotienės filmo *Travelogue* (vystomas projektas)

1 Locus – a particular position or place where something occurs or is situated.

In the realm of experimental personal travelogues, I believe that understanding and emotion are most vividly conveyed through an embodied gaze – a perspective that moves fluidly through both the familiar and unfamiliar, navigating ever-changing natural and anthropogenic landscapes. This gaze is not static; it evolves with the filmmaker's own inner transformations, capturing the essence of these journeys on film.

As I compose this text, I find myself on a quest, seeking threads that connect me to the very essence of the medium and the underlying impulse that drives me to film. This journey is deeply personal. I am constantly in search of clues that respond to the landscapes I encounter, forming systems of observation and translating these experiences into notations of moving images.

Henri Bergson's philosophy appeals to me here. He suggests that every work of art is born from a process where the inner self, with all its temporal depth, becomes accessible to others through intuition. For Bergson, art is a conduit through which we share our innermost selves, always striving to capture and communicate what is uniquely personal. This notion – that artistic intuition can embody and express the spiritual essence of nature – guides my approach to filmmaking.

For hundreds of years... there have been men whose function has been precisely to see and to make us see what we do not naturally perceive. They are the artists. What is the aim of art if not to show us, in nature and in the mind, outside of us and within us, things which did not explicitly strike our senses and our consciousness?²

In my work, I aim to weave my personal experiences and observations into the fabric of my travelogues. Each frame is an attempt to bridge my inner world with the outer landscapes I traverse, to share not just what I see, but how these places transform and resonate within me. This process is about more than capturing images; it's about inviting viewers into my journey, allowing them to experience the landscapes through the lens of my own evolving perspective.

2 Henri Bergson, *The Creative Mind* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1946), 159.

The act of filming, then, becomes a dialogue – a way of communicating with the world and with others. It's about uncovering the layers of meaning in each place, responding intuitively to the sights, sounds, and emotions that unfold. Through this artistic exploration, I hope to create a deeper connection, both to the landscapes I encounter and to the audience who journeys with me.

Henri Bergson delves into the artist's unique ability to perceive and reveal aspects of reality that aren't immediately obvious. He asks, "What is the aim of art if not to show us, in nature and in the mind, outside of us and within us, things which did not explicitly strike our senses and our consciousness?"³ This idea touches me deeply, as I believe that art – especially in the form of travel cinema – enhances our perceptual abilities and allows us to share our inner experiences, the ones hidden from plain sight.

In today's world, where monumental achievements like space exploration capture the public's imagination, I often ponder whether a more intimate form of expression, such as a personal experimental travelogue, can still find its place and audience. Each person's inner world is like a unique universe, prompting me to ask: "What should a world be like, so that it eludes scientific explanation and stands apart from natural science?"

I see artistic research as a journey in itself, where I, as the creator, navigate through my own experiences, and my work becomes akin to a travelogue. This perspective aligns with Gilles Deleuze's view that "The nomad is not necessarily one who moves: some voyages take place 'in situ,'⁴ are trips in intensity."⁵ Here, travel transcends physical movement, transforming into an exploration of inner landscapes and experiences.

Through this lens, experimental travelogues become more than just records of physical journeys – they are deep reflections on the connection between our inner and outer worlds. They embody the ongoing quest to capture the ineffable essence of existence through film. This philosophy underpins my artistic research, driving me to explore the interplay between personal narrative and visual expression, and inviting viewers to join me on this shared journey.

3 Ibid.

4 *In situ* is a Latin phrase that translates literally to "on site" or "in position."

5 Gilles Deleuze, "Nomad Thought," in *New Nietzsche: Contemporary Styles of Interpretation*, ed. David B. Allison (New York: A Delta Original, 1977), 149.

Trajectories of my artistic research

At this juncture in my artistic journey,⁶ I must acknowledge a profound influence on both my artistic practice and research, derived from the esteemed French director Agnès Varda. Her intriguing proposition, articulated at the outset of her captivating autobiographical film, *The Beaches of Agnès* (Agnès, 2008), wherein she enigmatically posits that if we opened her up, we would find beaches, has significantly shaped my trajectory.

This directorial insight has served as the guiding principle for my artistic research, delineating the path for an ongoing exploration. Here, my fascination with the phenomenon of landscape intertwines with an exploration of how the cinematic medium itself can function as a tool for the examination and visualization of our evolving comprehension of self, spatiality, and inquiries.

Varda's perspective has profoundly shaped my creative interests and experiments, serving as the guiding star for my artistic research. At the heart of this exploration lies the question: How can experimental cinema serve as a vessel for personal perspectives, capturing both the physical landscapes we traverse and the inner terrains we navigate? This inquiry drives my work, particularly in seeking ways to express deeply internalized, embodied experiences and communicate them effectively to the viewer.

While making *Blue Mountain. White Cloud* (Fig. 2), this question was at the forefront of my mind, shaping my creative decisions and influencing the film's narrative and visual approach. My research also delves into techniques filmmakers can use to embody and convey emotional responses to (un)expected encounters with these landscapes. Ultimately, I aim to unlock the potential of experimental travelogue as a medium for representing individual responses to the diverse and complex terrains – both external and internal – that we encounter on our journeys.

In this process, I am continually drawn to the tactile and sensory elements of filmmaking, which root my creative expression in physicality. Whether through the textures of analogue film or the embodied gestures involved in shooting and editing, I strive to bridge the gap between the visceral act of creation and the profound emotional resonance I aim to evoke in the viewer.

6 As I write this text, I begin to remember that I have been interested in the topic of wandering for many years, but only now I begin to notice the traces of that interest, which I will try to openly share in my text.



2. Still from the travelogue *Blue Mountain. White Cloud* by Miglė Križinauskaitė-Bernotienė, 2024

Kadras iš Miglės Križinauskaitės-Bernotienės kelionių filmo *Mėlynas kalnas. Baltas debesis*, 2024

Within the realm of my artistic inquiry, I employ creative methodologies that intersect with the embodied nature of the creator, delving into inquiries surrounding self-representation and spatial dynamics within experimental travelogues distinguished by a personal and self-reflexive first-person narrative. The genre I engage with, namely personal autoethnographic cinema, encapsulates a cinematic approach that harmonizes the passion and intellect of the auteur. Autoethnographic cinema – which combines the interior life of the archival researcher as well as the visually articulated inner life of the original shooter – is a difficult phenomenon to grasp. This characteristic resonance may, perhaps, underscore my choice to adopt the autoethnographic method in my research.

In my artistic practice, I strive to convey the human experience from within, connecting my senses to the world through words. Inscribing oneself in a text becomes a dynamic process and a space where memory, history, performance, and meaning intersect. And my travelogues become a space where documentary intertwines with imagination. While personal experiences or inner knowledge don't necessarily mean that only the autoethnographer can articulate truths or knowledge more accurately or indisputably than outsiders, they do allow us, as authors, to tell our stories in unique

ways. These narratives can be more accessible and relatable to a broader audience than traditional academic discourse. Furthermore, autoethnography serves as a powerful tool to convey the ongoing nature of artistic research. This research does not always culminate in a final product but continuously generates new insights. These aspects make autoethnography a method that humanizes research.

Autoethnography is a phenomenon that ventures into the abstract realm of mirrors, and this perhaps accounts for its allure among researchers – a sentiment I share. I find the autoethnographic method particularly intriguing due to its oxymoronic nature, encompassing not only the artist's introspection but also a broader cultural context.

For instance, I would characterize the genre of experimental travelogue as one that captures not solely the internal metamorphoses of the creator but encompasses an expansive spectrum of ideas and themes. These include considerations of ecologies, the ever-evolving tapestry of landscapes and soundscapes, performativity, colonialism, and our connections with non-human entities cohabiting our world. Moreover, the genre addresses issues pertaining to societal structures, as well as the political and cultural contexts encountered by the creator while journeying across the globe amidst the dynamic interplay of natural and urban landscapes.

According to theorist Catherine Russell, utopian impulse of autoethnography relies on a certain mobility of the filmmaker and remains in many ways couched in modernist, imperialist, and romantic discourses. Russell refers that "Travel films are collections of images made for other spectators in distant cultures and therefore constitute a kind of traffic in images with the traveller-filmmaker as their unreliable referent and point of origin."⁷ Drawing on Russell's perspective, I assume that travel films constitute a domain for questioning, perceiving, and sharing the embodied experiences of filmmakers, particularly within the subgenre of experimental travel cinema. Furthermore, I contend that the film medium itself can serve as a tool for scrutinizing and visualizing our comprehension of space.

In examining the concept of the embodied creator, I consider the insights of Ilsa Barbash and Lucien Taylor, who in their book propose that

7 Catherine Russell, "Autoethnography: Journeys of the Self," excerpt from *Experimental Ethnography* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), accessed December 1, 2023, <http://www.haussite.net/haus.0/SCRIPT/txt2001/01/russel.HTML>.

the language of cinema is inherently characterized by movement, sight, and sound. More than any other medium or art form, cinema utilizes experiential elements to articulate and “convey lived experiences.”⁸ I find a resonance with that proposition, my creative work is profoundly shaped not only by my observations of landscapes and (un)expected encounters with them but also by the broader context that surrounds these journeys. In my artistic practice, I employ an instinctive embodied filming method characterized not only by a reflective mode of observation but also by the incorporation of psychogeography⁹ within the cinematic medium.

Integrating psychogeography into my work has profoundly influenced the creation of my experimental travelogues. Psychogeography, which explores how geographical settings impact human emotions and behaviours, aligns perfectly with the experimental nature of my cinematic journey. This approach fosters a synergy where the playful, exploratory essence of psychogeography enhances and deepens the experimental process of filmmaking. For me, art isn’t just something we create; it’s something we live. This belief drives my passion for a form of cinema that is not merely captured but encountered and experienced through the medium of film.

I see my creative projects and this artistic research as pathways to engage with the world through cinema. They are opportunities to explore the world cinematically, to reveal our inner landscapes through film, and to share embodied experiences with others. However, I believe that personal cinema transcends mere self-expression and becomes truly artful when it reflects broader aspects of life. As both a creator and a researcher, I am deeply connected to the idea of interacting with the world through art and depicting life’s vastness through artistic forms.

Currently, I am developing a methodology for crafting experimental travelogues where psychogeography and embodied experience are at the core. This involves capturing the world with my Super 8 mm camera, an intimate and tactile medium, and then sharing these visual explorations live with an audience. This method allows me to convey not just the places I visit but the profound ways they resonate within me.

8 Ilisa Barbash and Lucien Taylor, *Cross-Cultural Filmmaking* (Berkeley: University of California, 1997), 380.

9 Psychogeography is a term proposed by Marxist theorist Guy Debord in 1955 to describe how different environments affect human feelings.

My proposed method of embodied artistic research has evolved as the outcome of a tripartite gesture, through which I seek to explore:

- a) Employment of Super 8 mm, one of the smallest analogue film gauges, in the creation of travelogues, seeking ways to capture and articulate the inner landscapes of the creator;
- b) Applying creative strategies inherent in the psychogeography method within artistic practice, with the objective of distancing from the tourist gaze and approaching a more authentic capture of the embodied experience;
- c) Conveying the embodied experience to the viewer, incorporating the ephemeral aspect of performativity in live travelogue presentations accompanied with live essayistic narration. This pursuit seeks to dissolve the boundary between mediated and unmediated imagery and sound, creating a space for the spectator to partake in a lived embodied experience.

Camera as a companion on the journey

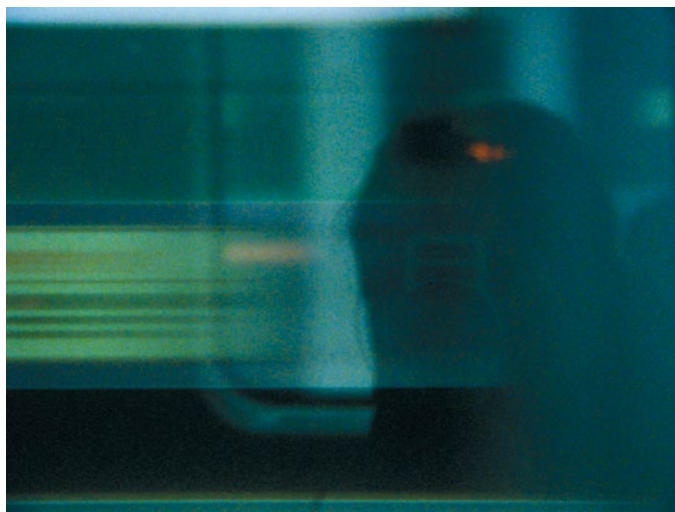
As I continue to refine my method of embodied artistic research, I embrace a tripartite approach that integrates the innovative use of Super 8 mm film, psychogeography techniques, and live performative elements. Through this process, the camera evolves from being just a tool to becoming a vital companion on this transformative journey. In my experimental travelogues, the Super 8 film camera isn't just a device; it's a means of self-discovery and expression.

The Super 8 mm format I rely on in my practice offers a tangible, sensory experience – it's a medium you can see, touch, and feel. This analogue format aligns perfectly with my focus on embodiment and psychogeography. It invites significant contemplation on how technology, especially the camera, can serve as a collaborator in the creative process. Instead of being a barrier, the camera becomes a partner in exploration.

My goal in creating landscape cinema is to move beyond mere observation. I strive to craft films that capture my emotional responses to the landscapes – both natural and urban – that I encounter. Ecologist and anthropologist David Abram, in his book *Becoming Animal* (2010), explores

how our senses connect us to the Earth and considers the role of technology in these connections. Abram suggests that “technology can be used as a way to avoid direct encounter, as a shield (...) to ward off whatever frightens, as a synthetic haven in which to hide from the distressing ambiguity of the real.”¹⁰

Reflecting on Abram’s insights, I choose to work with a Super 8 mm analogue film camera in my artistic practice. This choice resonates deeply with me because it transforms the act of filming into a more intimate, tactile experience. The Super 8 mm camera becomes an extension of myself – a trusted travel companion that integrates seamlessly with my creative process. Together, we navigate and capture the world, bringing a personal and embodied perspective to the landscapes we explore.



3. Still from the travelogue *Blue Mountain. White Cloud* by Miglė Križinauskaitė-Bernotienė, 2024

Kadras iš Miglės Križinauskaitės-Bernotienės kelionių filmo *Mėlynas kalnas*. Baltas debes, 2024

I usually employ handheld shooting (Fig. 3), and I deliberately eschew any post-production interventions such as colour correction or effects. Whether executing a single continuous shot or editing within the camera itself, my intuitive inclination is to minimize technological barriers between myself, the landscape, and the viewer. I present films to the audience directly from the original film strip.

10 Adam Abram, *Becoming Animal* (New York: Pantheon, 2010).

As asserted by Smith, “Technology can be an amazing tool when used for good. But when it is used constantly throughout your day, it serves to distract and disconnect you from the things you are attempting to explore on a deep level, namely yourself and the world.”¹¹ I concur with these propositions and I also believe in the significance of scrutinizing the relationship between the camera and its object. As Hamlyn contends:

Films that deal with the representation of space also tend to question and reconfigure the relationship between the camera and its subject. Any critical cinema is bound to do this in order to explore how the film apparatus – finite, two – dimensional, enclosing, transient – confronts space – infinite, three dimensional, continuous, enduring.¹²

Cinema transcends its mechanical apparatus to function fundamentally as a medium that deeply resonates with individuals, engaging their physical, emotional, and intellectual energies. In discussing the sense of touch, it is crucial to consider Laura Marks’s theory of “haptic visuality,”¹³ which emphasizes tactile, *multisensory experiences*.¹⁴ According to David Clarke, the haptic mode of film practice prioritizes the embodied vision of the viewer or director over the depersonalized visuality of the cinematic “gaze.” This perspective influences my preference for analogue cinema in exploring haptic visuality in my work. A filmstrip is tangible material that one can physically touch and feel, enhancing the sensory immediacy of the experience.

In general, *physicality* and *tactility* underscore the inherent qualities of the Super 8 mm format, marking it as a physical medium perceptible both visually and through touch. These concepts are further supported by Schneider and Pasqualino’s assertion:

11 Keri Smith, *The Wander Society* (New York: Penguin Books, 2016), 70.

12 Nicky Hamlyn, *Film Art Phenomena* (London: British Film Institute, 2003), 121.

13 Laura Marks, *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses* (Durham and London, Duke University Press, 2000), 162.

14 Laura Marks’s proposed definition of haptic visuality: a tactile mode of experience that requires the viewer to “touch” the cinema cinaesthetically and directly engages the viewer’s body.

Filmmaking as a sensory tool must construct a film experience that works in tandem with the intermittence of lived (temporal and spatial) experience. Furthermore, by reflexively calling attention to itself as a temporal and spatial construction, a film becomes a participatory environment that elicits sensory and political engagement from its audience. Although the relationship between the ear and eye is a key concern in our practice, it is also pertinent to discuss the hand.¹⁵

Additionally, the Super 8 mm film format has played a pivotal role in reshaping the paradigm of cinematic work, offering filmmakers increased independence – an attribute crucial to the creation of the personal, embodied travelogue film genre. It is noteworthy that the Super 8 mm format originated within the realm of home movies, where, even in sales promotions, it was marketed as user-friendly, designed for amateurs, and particularly suited for women aiming to capture significant family moments. As a mother of two navigating the ongoing balance between motherhood and creative pursuits, the intuitive choice of a Super 8 mm film camera is aligned with my creative preferences and explorations. I aim to demonstrate that the Super 8 mm format has the potential to transcend the confines of domestic archival use and make a distinctive mark in the realm of art. Motherhood, in this context, serves as a versatile lens through which to engage with themes of generation, responsibility, and the very act of selecting a medium for creative expression.

Over time, as I grappled with the inquiries emerging in my artistic research titled “Travelogue as Embodied Gaze: Inner and Outer Terrains,” following the filming of the travelogue *Blue Mountain. White Cloud* in the spring of 2023 in South Korea, I came to the realization that I do not wish to define myself solely by the quantity of films created within the context of artistic research, the number of places visited, or specific ideas or themes that might restrict the inherent freedom of experimentation in artistic research. I have discerned that, while traveling through different countries, my focus should not solely be on the final product (the film) or predetermined film concepts. I prioritize authentic presence in each space, genuinely experiencing my surroundings and employing in-camera editing extensively during filming, rather than relying heavily on post-production. This approach

15 Arnd Schneider and Caterina Pasqualino, *Experimental Film and Anthropology* (Bloomsbury: London & New York, 2014), 120.

aims to explore the relationship between myself and the spaces I encounter through the lens of psychogeography, seeking answers to the questions posed in this research with the aid of an embodied gaze (Fig. 4).



4. Still from *Travelogue* by Miglė Križinauskaitė-Bernotienė (work in progress)

Kadras iš Miglės Križinauskaitės-Bernotienės filmo *Travelogue* (vystomas projektas)

I remember traveling to South Korea with the initial plan of spending the first few days alone in a monastery to acclimate, recover from jet lag, and prepare for the shooting. However, upon arrival, the warm hospitality of the locals, typical of their culture and human nature in general, made it challenging for me to decline their offers. Struggling with severe jet lag, I found myself sleep-deprived, managing only two hours of rest per day during the first week. Eventually, feeling disoriented, I decided to cut short my stay and spend a few solitary days in Seoul before returning home. It was during this time that I deeply immersed myself in the practice of psychogeography. I believe this immersion was possible because I shed all preconceptions, plans, and obligations related to the film, allowing myself to truly engage with the environment.

My decision to work with the Super 8 film format is also rooted in its ability to preserve recent memories and provide filmmakers – both experimental and traditional – with the independence and freedom crucial for their initial explorations. This realization liberated and emboldened me, encouraging

more audacious experiments within my artistic research and aligning well with contemporary principles of psychogeography that inform my work.

Fundamentally, I believe that mere observation is insufficient; true understanding comes from active engagement and exploration. As Tim Ingold suggests, “curiosity and care go hand in hand, which should be evident from the fact that both words share the same etymological root (from the Latin, *curare*).”¹⁶ In scientific practice, these concepts are often separated, but in artistic research, they are inseparable.

In my practice, I seek insights through the reciprocal exchange between humans and landscapes. With my Super 8 mm film camera attached to my body, I navigate environments that evoke a sense of movement – places where I discover as much as they discover me. I assert that new possibilities in filmmaking emerge when we view our bodies as integral to the creative process, essential companions to the cameras we use. The medium of film itself becomes a tool for exploring and visualizing our understanding of self and spatiality. Moreover, how we present our art to the audience profoundly shapes the meaning and impact of our work.

The embodied gaze: body, spatiality, and beyond

I wonder whether contemplating the visible and otherwise experienced landscape can evolve into self-reflection and vice versa. I translate these inquiries into my travelogue *Blue Mountain. White Cloud* (2024). My goal is for internal reflections to transform into an analytical perspective on the landscape. It is noteworthy that in the history of cinema, there has been a shift from reports and tourist perspectives to essays and reflections on personal experiences. This coincided with the emergence of essay cinema and the mid-20th-century decolonization processes. Filmmakers began to reassess the intervention of the camera, their gaze as a “visitor,” their evolving identity, and the internal transformations brought about by the travel process. Although the travelogue returned to its initial form of first-person narration, the new travelogues increasingly used self-reflexive narration. Examples of this are Chris Marker’s *Letter from Siberia*, Agnès Varda’s *The Gleaners and I*, Jonas Mekas’s body of work, and more.

16 Tim Ingold, *Art, Science and the Meaning of Research*, Text of a talk delivered at GAM, Turin, March 28, 2018, 6.

As a creator and researcher, the issue of power dynamics is also of great importance to me, particularly when making travelogues. As the French historian and philosopher Michel Foucault asserts, “the gaze that sees is the gaze that dominates.”¹⁷ I am compelled as an artist and researcher to explore the discourse surrounding internal and external landscapes through the lens of psychogeography. My aim is to merge with the world, to dissolve boundaries.

Psychogeography, for me, serves as a method to intertwine our inner and outer realms – a journey that encompasses space, time, memory, and presence in unconventional settings. This exploration of the embodied self is a vital tool for grappling with issues of self and spatial representation, especially in crafting a personal experimental travel diary. It has the potential to deeply influence the artist’s cognition, behaviour, and, consequently, the artistic practice itself.

These explorations and my journey as a creator are poignantly illustrated by a still from my filming in South Korea (Fig. 5), which were not included in the film *Blue Mountain. White Cloud* but will instead be expanded into a film performance titled *Travelogue*. This image contains layers of metacinematic elements from my role as both maker and researcher, which hold profound personal significance for me.



5. Still from *Travelogue* by Miglė Križinauskaitė-Bernotienė (work in progress)

Kadras iš Miglės Križinauskaitės-Bernotienės filmo *Travelogue* (vystomas projektas)

17 Michel Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 39.

Contemplating the method of psychogeography, I wish to impart my reflections on (un)anticipated encounters with landscapes. In the book *Walking Backwards: The Magical Art of Psychedelic Psychogeography*, I encountered an exceptionally inspiring notion that reflects my artistic research focus. It delves into the significance of sensory exploration and purposeful intention while traversing landscapes, emphasizing that artistic research serves as a space for deliberate contemplation in a swiftly evolving world. Ultimately, it posits that certain observations can only be discerned when one takes the time to slow down.

Walking through a landscape is of course a means of embodied exploration of physical and intrasubjective territories. By walking, with a magical intention or attitude, we actively invoke the mythic reality of what we experience as we stroll in the Mystery of existence. Signs, objects, relationships, time, all these things slip into a synesthetic morphing matrix of the poetic truth of the journey. Everything is charged with hyper-real meaning, but this meaning isn't necessarily fixed.¹⁸

Intentionality is an intention towards something. Consciousness is always directed towards objects or phenomena, it is intentional. We experience the world through our perceptions, feelings, imagination, and other sensory modalities.

When exploring the world through our consciousness, I remember the artist Tacita Dean, whose work profoundly illustrates the concept of intentionality in art. During a visit to an alchemy centre in France, Dean embarked on the fascinating project of capturing a cloud in a bag – an ancient alchemical endeavour involving the combination of various elements. She documented this process in her three-minute film *A Bag of Air* (1995), which became a metaphorical predecessor to her later work, *The Green Ray* (2001). In this later film, Dean attempted to capture the elusive last ray of the setting sun as it refracts and disappears below the horizon. Recorded on 16 mm film during her stay in Madagascar, this work exemplifies her ongoing pursuit to encapsulate the ephemeral and the intangible.

18 Greg Humphries and Julian Vayne, *Walking Backwards: The Magical Art of Psychedelic Psychogeography* (The Universe Machine, 2018), 4.

What captivates me most about Dean's work is her relentless and intentional quest to capture the invisible and otherworldly. Her dedication to these fleeting moments, through repetitive gestures and acute sensory engagement, transforms her attempts into profound artistic expressions. This deeply resonates with my own research. I am keenly focused on how similar repetitive gestures and sensory experiences can enhance the connection between travellers, their cameras, and the spaces they explore. My goal is to identify creative strategies where psychogeography and embodied sensory experiences guide the creation of compelling images, sounds, and narratives. In doing so, I aim to provide travelogue creators with practical tips to deepen their engagement with the world and capture its essence in more meaningful ways.

Just as Dean's work captures the essence of her subjects through a nuanced and perceptive lens, in creating travel cinema, it is equally crucial to consider the concept of gaze, as it fundamentally shapes the narrative perspective and viewer engagement. "Gaze" typically refers to looking at, staring at something, or fixing one's eyes on a subject. This concept is widely explored in various academic fields, particularly in cultural, film, and gender studies. While the gaze is extensively examined in the realms of art and culture, delving into how individuals perceive and interpret images and visual representations, my focus in the context of artistic research leans more towards the embodied gaze.

In my artistic practice and research, I seek answers to the question of how to detach from the tourist gaze when crafting an experimental travelogue, and how to effectively capture personal sensations while expressing and conveying these embodied subjective experiences to the audience. Russell also talks about subjectivity which subsists within image culture as an "other reality":

(...) a utopian space where hierarchies of vision, knowledge, and desire are diffused and collapsed. The journey to this parallel universe is linear neither in time nor in space, moving across histories and geographies to produce a dialectics of cultural representation.¹⁹

19 Catherine Russell, *Experimental Ethnography: The Work of Film in the Age of Video* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1999), 312.

As both a filmmaker and a traveller, I've come to realize how profoundly the gaze – whether mine or the audience's – shapes the way destinations and cultures are portrayed and understood. For me, being mindful of the gaze is crucial; it's not just about capturing an image but about challenging stereotypes, avoiding cultural appropriation, and presenting a more nuanced and respectful depiction of the places I visit.

When I film, I think about the power dynamics embedded in observation. Is my gaze that of an outsider, wandering through unfamiliar terrain? Or is it the gaze of a local, captured and shared through my lens? This awareness is more than an artistic consideration; it's about ethical filmmaking. It nurtures an authentic exchange of perspectives and fosters a deeper cultural understanding.

In making travel films, I strive to use the gaze as a tool to transcend superficial images. My goal is to foster empathy and encourage viewers to engage with different cultures thoughtfully and meaningfully. Yet, I'm acutely aware of the pitfalls that British writer and naturalist Mark Cocker describes. He warns of the concealed narcissism in creative practice, suggesting that landscapes can easily become "a space where we talk to ourselves about ourselves, pushing nature into the background as just an attractive green backdrop."²⁰ This echoes my own struggles to ensure my work remains genuine and avoids reducing places to mere backdrops for my own narrative.

Similarly, the words of avant-garde film director Stan Brakhage inspire me: "Imagine an eye to which the man-made laws of perspective do not apply, an eye to which compositional logic does not apply."²¹ It challenges me to break free from conventional visual frameworks and to see the world – and the people within it – through a more liberated and authentic lens.

In my filmmaking journey, I aim to cultivate a gaze that respects and enriches the subject, creating a cinematic experience that not only captures but also deeply resonates with the viewer. It's about connecting with the world around me and sharing that connection in a way that is as meaningful and empathetic as it is visually compelling.

20 Cocker, Mark cited in Stephen Moss, *The Best Nature Books of 2016*, *The Guardian*, 3 December, 2016, 12.

21 Stan Brakhage, *Metaphors on Vision* (New York City: Anthology Film Archives/Light Industry, 2017).

In her book *Landscape and the Moving Image* (2022), British art critic and creator Catherine Elwes explores the idea that the essence of cinema is deeply rooted in the act of looking. She references John Berger's concept of the "art of looking" and his exploration of different "ways of seeing" the world. It connects with me profoundly, especially as I think about the embodied gaze – the intimate connection between my body as a filmmaker and the spaces I inhabit and capture.

Elwes delves into the complex relationship between the creator and nature, raising concerns that in today's art world, making a work about the landscape can sometimes feel ethically uncomfortable. She argues that using nature merely as a "repose for the senses" risks being unethical, or even immoral. This notion strikes a chord with me because it challenges me to go beyond surface-level engagement with the environments I film.

As I journey through diverse landscapes with my small, lightweight Super 8 mm film camera literally strapped to my body, I don't just capture scenes – I immerse myself in them. There's a serendipity in the way I find places and how these places, in turn, seem to find me. It's a reciprocal dance where my body and my camera become conduits for experiencing and documenting these spaces. This approach brings new dimensions to my filmmaking, where my physical presence is as integral to the process as the camera itself.

For me, film is not just a medium but a powerful tool for exploring and visualizing my understanding of myself and my spatial experiences. The way I present my art to the audience – the form it takes and the space it occupies – is crucial. It's about creating an experience that engages both myself as the creator and the audience in a deeper dialogue with the landscapes we explore and the stories we tell.

Through this embodied approach, I find that the boundaries between me, my camera, and the world blur, allowing for a richer, more meaningful engagement with the spaces I traverse. Each frame becomes a part of my personal journey, and sharing it with the audience invites them to walk alongside me, not just as spectators but as participants in the unfolding story.

Expanded cinema and its ephemeral performativity

While creating travelogue films, I broaden my horizons and expand the world. This inclination leads me to embrace the form of expanded cinema not only as a mode of creation but also as a means of communicating with the audience. Expanded cinema serves as a spatial metaphor, signifying the extension of cinematic expression beyond the traditional confines of a single projector and screen.

This transformation includes adopting a multi-screen environment and engaging in multimedia performances, fostering an aspect of nomadism and performativity within my projections. In my artistic practice, I strive to preserve and reflect the traces of its creation, sensations and emotions that I felt during filming in each film. The gesture of gathering in itself implies subjectivity and reflexivity, the importance of the creator's point of view and idiosyncratic responses.

Also, I want to find other ways of just not telling linear stories, but actually thinking about the way of telling stories, the oral way, traditional way. Every time they change, every time the narrator adds something, the spectator interacts differently. So, I have this inquiry about generating the experience for the people to share the embodiment of journey. Following the idea of the performative dimension of live narration, it appears that not only travelogue lectures but also alternative cinema modes, like presentations of home movies includes in-person narration, often by filmmaker.

Last year, I had the opportunity to experience Courtney Stephens's film essay *Terra Femme* (2021), which toured widely as a live performance with Stephens narrating live from the stage. This experience was transformative for me as a filmmaker. Witnessing how Stephens skilfully crafted a sensitive narrative that articulated profound ideas about gender, mobility, perception, history, and more while maintaining a personal perspective was incredibly inspiring. I deeply admire how the film also served as a tribute to the travelogue genre, a medium for gathering knowledge.

The presence of the filmmaker or artist as an integral part of experimental film exhibition resonates strongly with me. It reminds me of another filmmaker, Helga Fanderl. An extraordinary artist, Fanderl not only personally

screens each of her films but also curates a unique program for every screening, thereby sharing her personal perspective and presence in the space.

These experiences have shaped my own approach to filmmaking, emphasizing the importance of personal narrative and presence in exploring broader themes and engaging audiences on a deeper level. As I was saying, it's essential for me to consider how I convey the personal images and experiences captured in my films to the audience.

Theorist Laura Rascaroli posits the idea of self-reflexive cinema, where the director steps into the frame to say "I," taking responsibility and engaging directly in dialogue with the audience.²² This approach connects deeply with me because I believe in bridging the gap between filmmaker and viewer. Rather than merely existing on the screen, my curiosity drives me to explore what happens when we share the same physical space with the audience.

Rascaroli suggests that spectators of first-person films often feel a closer connection to the text and its creator, leading to a more personal and subjective viewing experience compared to other types of cinema. Inspired by these insights, I've embraced the role of presenting my travelogue projections in person, intertwining them with live, embodied narratives. This initiative has given birth to what I see as expanded cinema²³ – a concept that enriches the cinematic experience by extending it beyond the screen and into shared physical and narrative spaces.

This personal engagement with the audience, through live narration and physical presence, transforms traditional film viewing into a form of cine-performance, where expanded cinema serves as a bridge connecting distant places and moments with the present. Acting as a mediator between the past and the now, I use the Super 8 mm camera not just as a recording tool, but as a medium that invites contemplation of time. The camera's inherent fragility and the ephemeral quality of its footage reflect the imperfections and fragmentation of human memory, making every projection an exploration of temporality.

22 Laura Rascaroli, *The Personal Camera. Subjective Cinema and the Essay Film* (London and New York: Wallflower Press, 2009), 224.

23 For the live screening experience and familiarity with this form, I am very grateful to the expanded cinema festival "Process" that has been taking place in Riga for several years and is organized by the Baltic Analog Lab.

In my research, time and memory are not just themes but essential components. By leveraging the ephemeral nature of both the Super 8 mm medium and the live cine-performance, I aim to create a collective experience of the present moment, where the audience can engage with the film's temporal layers and their own perceptions in a deeply personal and shared space.



6. Still from the screening of the film *Impetus* by Miglė Križinauskaitė-Bernotienė, BAL, Riga, 2023

Miglės Križinauskaitės-Bernotienės filmo *Impetus* peržiūros akimirka, BAL, Ryga, 2023

Through documenting my creative journey and preparing this paper, I've realized a unifying theme that is very important to me: the erosion of memory and time. This theme threads through my artistic research, exploring travel through space, the passage of time, and the preservation of memories amidst shifting landscapes. These embodied moments and memories, like eroding soil or the changing contours of the Earth's surface, fascinate me. Embodied field recordings animate reality, imbuing everything with a living memory (Fig. 6).

Memory and the erosion of time not only inspire my artistic practice but also shape my creative decision to present travelogues live from the original film strip. In analogue projections, using the original film rather than a copy transforms the viewing experience into a tactile, material encounter that appeals to both the audience and myself. It reimagines the

spatial dimensions – both inner and outer – through the lens of psychogeography, emphasizing the materiality and presence of the film in real time.

Reflective endnotes

To summarize this journey, my approach to embodied artistic research is deeply personal, involving a tripartite exploration that intertwines the intimate dimensions of Super 8 mm film, the reflective paths of psychogeography, and the immersive power of live essayistic narration. Each method serves as a conduit for my desire to authentically capture and express the complex dance between outer landscapes and my inner world, transforming every physical journey into a tapestry of personal reflections.

Working with Super 8 mm film is more than a technical choice for me – it's a way to physically connect with the process of creation. The tactile nature of this analogue medium allows me to infuse my work with a tangible sense of intimacy and presence, making every frame a piece of my lived experience. This medium captures the nuances of my journey in a way that digital formats simply can't, grounding my visual storytelling in the rawness of reality.

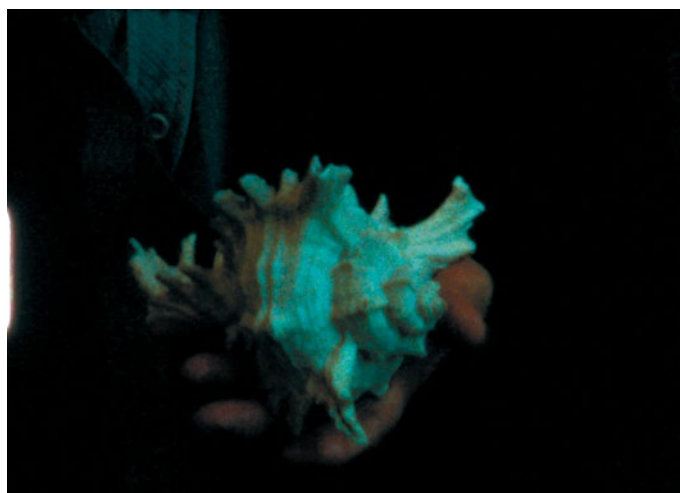
Applying psychogeographical method helps me navigate beyond the superficial layers of a place, diving into its deeper currents of memory, space, and self. It's through this lens that I move away from the detached tourist gaze and immerse myself – and, by extension, my audience – into the rich, textured narratives of societal, political, and cultural landscapes. These explorations are not just about where I travel but how these places engage with me, changing my perceptions and understanding of the world.

Using the tool of psychogeography, I seek ways to truly experience and perceive the landscape so that it becomes not just a background or decoration in my films, but a substantive participant in the narrative. Psychogeography allows for a deeper immersion into the spirit of a place, experiencing it through an individual relationship with space, capturing subtle connections between humans and their environment. In this way, the landscape becomes an organic part of the film, enriching it with narrative significance beyond visual aesthetics alone.

This method enriches my experimental cinema of journeys, adding new layers of meaning and allowing the landscape to become an active participant in the storytelling process. Integrating the landscape as a character rather than just a location helps create a deeper emotional and intellectual experience for the viewer, inviting them not only to observe but also to feel the spirit of the place, its textures, and emotional resonances.

In my artistic practice, I employ the modes of experimental film and performance to contemplate personal aspects of my journey as both a traveller and filmmaker, aiming to create a powerful synthesis of travelogue and essay film forms reminiscent of how early travel films could have been presented, as travel lectures. The live essayistic narration is my way of breaking the fourth wall, dissolving the boundary between creator and audience, and transforming each session into a shared experience where mediated and unmediated perceptions blend seamlessly. This approach allows me to invite viewers into my journey, making them part of the story and fostering a deeper, more personal connection.

Through this holistic and deeply personal approach, I aim to transcend traditional boundaries of filmmaking and research. By blending documentary elements with the imaginative and subjective, I hope to humanize my research, making it accessible and resonant with a broader audience. This journey is not just about capturing and articulating the inner and outer landscapes I traverse but about forging meaningful connections that go beyond the confines of conventional artistic expression.



7. Still from the travelogue *Does the Sea Have a Heart?* by Miglė Križinauskaitė-Bernotienė, 2024

Kadras iš Miglės Križinauskaitės-Bernotienės kelionių filmo *Ar jūra turi širdį?*, 2024

As a traveller, filmmaker, and researcher, my dedication lies in the perpetual exploration and dissemination of fresh insights, fostering a profound comprehension of the human experience. This path transcends personal growth; it encompasses the creation of environments where others can contemplate, interact with, and engage with the narratives I convey. In my travelogue *Does the Sea Have a Heart?* (Fig. 7), I reflect through live narration, “I carry embodied memories,” encapsulating the essence of my journey filled with discovery and introspection.

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Kelionių kinas kaip įkūnytas žvilgsnis: vidiniai ir išoriniai reljefai

Miglė Križinauskaitė-Bernotienė

Reikšminiai žodžiai: kelionių kinas, įkūnytas žvilgsnis, psichogeografija, autoetnografija.

Šis straipsnis – tai besitęsiančio meninio tyrimo (kelionės) apmąstymai nagrinėjant kūrybines strategijas, susijusias su įkūnyto kūrėjo (-os) (angl. *embodied author*) jutiminiais išgyvenimais, taip pat savęs ir erdvės reprezentavimo klausimų svarstymai eksperimentiniuose kelionių filmuose (angl. *travelogues*), kurie išsiskiria asmeniniu ir savirefleksyviu pasakojimu pirmuoju asmeniu. Tekste taip pat nagrinėjamas psichogeografijos (angl. *psychogeography*) įsiveržimas į eksperimentinių kelionių filmų kūrimo procesą, aptariama šio susitikimo kuriama harmonija dėl psichogeografijos reiškiniuose užkoduotų eksperimentavimo ir žaismingumo elementų, ir *vice versa*. Apžvelgiami kelionių filmų kūrimo metodai, paremti psichogeografinės patirties ir įkūnyto žvilgsnio principais, siūlančiais naujus *kelius* dokumentuoti vaizdus ir garsus bei kūrybinio proceso metu, keliaujant per naujus, nepažįstamus / pažįstamus, nuolat kintančius, gamtinius ir antropogeninius vietovaizdžius, patirtas kūrėjo (-os) vidines transformacijas. Straipsnyje gilinamasi, ar psichogeografinė įkūnyto AŠ patirtis gali būti reikšmingas įrankis sprendžiant savęs ir erdvės reprezentavimo klausimus asmeninio eksperimentinio *travelogo* kūrimo praktikoje bei turėti įtakos kūrėjo (-os) mąstymui, elgesiui ir net pačiai meninei praktikai? Psichogeografija interpretuojama kaip būdas sujungti mūsų vidinius ir išorinius pasaulius, kaip erdvės, laiko ir atminties bei buvimo svetur tyrinėjimas. Paskutinėje straipsnio dalyje svarstoma apie gilią taktiliškumo ir kūniškumo analoginio kino terpės svarbą autorės vykdytai meninei praktikai. Kokios naujos filmų formos, rūšys yra įmanomos, kai priimamos sąlygos, kad kūrėjo (-os) kūnas yra lygiavertis jo kūryboje taikomoms technologijoms? Permąstomi užfiksuotų asmeninių vaizdų ir įkūnytų išgyvenimų perteikimo žiūrovui iššūkiai. Apžvelgiamas praplėsto kino performatyvumui būdingas efemeriškumas bei kūniškumas. Be to, aptariami asmeniniai su atliekamu meniniu tyrimu susiję klausimai, dalinamasi atradimais, aptiktais meniniame

tyrime taikant autoetnografijos metodą. Pateikiamos išvalgos apie dvigubą autoriaus, kaip keliautojo ir kaip filmų kūrėjo (-os), vaidmenį. Tokiu niuansuotu požiūriu siūloma tyrinėti simbiozę tarp asmeninės patirties ir meninės raiškos eksperimentinio kelionių kino kūrimo srityje.