

Zoom/Section:

A Slow Document in Various Scales

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From south to north, sunrise to sunset, over a seven-day cycle along the entire length of Broadway Street in Manhattan, a cross-section of physical conditions and activities through the city is collected using a digital video camera. In this *section*, the city is sampled, measured, and represented.

SECTION – AS A TRAJECTORY

A *cross-section* samples, and as a drawing convention, it reveals spatial relationships along a chosen line. Here, the ubiquitous Broadway Street, the only street deviating from the grid while traversing the entire island, is this line – the *section-cut*. The line that locates the section is already drawn, bisecting the city from south to north; it exists as an inscription on this territory, a path made, a line drawn by the movement of the inhabitants of this island. Broadway Street, which extended north beyond the occupied area of the island ahead of the rest of the city in the 1600's as a pathway to then faraway farms, delineates the directionality of the development of the city and in this case becomes our section-cut, an imaginary vertical plane that bisects the city to allow the investigator to sample the city along this length on this line. Instead of looking into the cut perpendicular to its length as one would on a conventional section-cut drawing, we inhabit and travel this line. In collecting the footage, we follow the historical trajectory of the city north, as if within a sliver of space in the city.

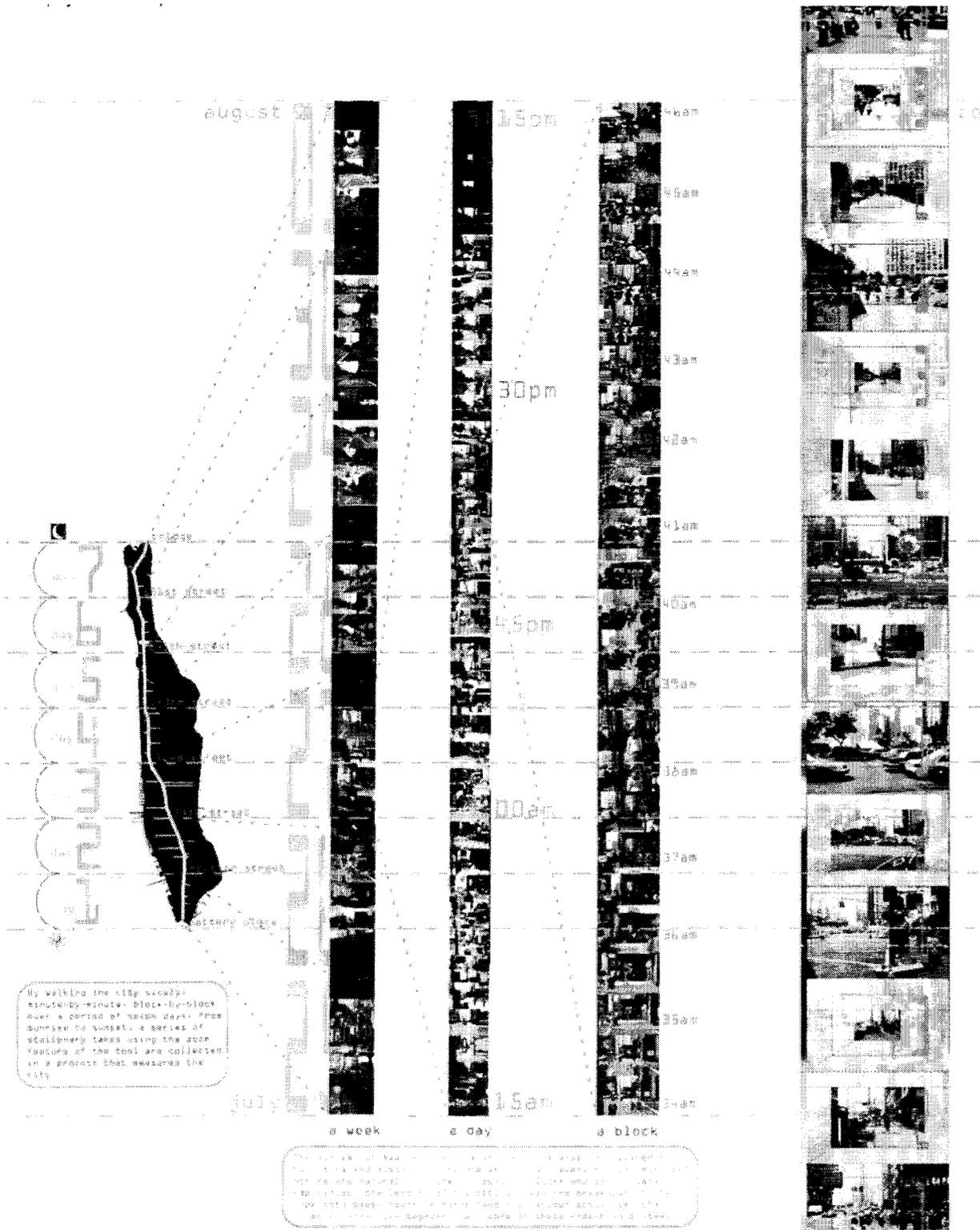
ZOOM – A SLOW DOCUMENT

In this document the zoom feature of the camera is exploited as a filtering device, a measuring device, and as an idea for traversing the city – zoom as

zooming through (passing quickly), zoom as detail (getting very close). While zooming suggests great speeds and moments that merge into each other quickly as the individual takes overlap, the process of collecting the footage is quite slow, slower than the moments captured – a state of being *zoomed in*. Between each shot there is a fifteen-minute wait that involves the walk north (one third of a city's block length) and the set up of the next shot. By walking the city slowly, minute-by-minute, block-by-block over a period of seven days one is consumed in a process that closely observes – a process that discovers the city. The slowness of this process, like that of working on a drawing over a long period of time, allows one to engage – feel, experience, understand this place. The process of collecting the footage takes seven days. Each day, the investigator, through the viewfinder, is entranced by a different story, by a different place, as the various personalities of the city are experienced. Like Italo Calvino's recount of Venice in *Invisible Cities* (1), each day along this line, as we travel the city, is as if a different place – as if a different story has taken place. In this trajectory, in seven days, we inhabit seven places yet one place.

SECTION – AS A MEASURING SYSTEM

The idea of section can be transposed and read at many scales within the investigation of this city. As already mentioned, the section-cut is a street -- Broadway Street. Moving from south to north on this line allows us to sample the city along its length. Day by day, we inhabit and experience the various districts of the island as if side-by-side yet marked and separated by days and streets. Therefore, *section* is also referring to the segments of the city as broken down (measured, located) by days – the days of a



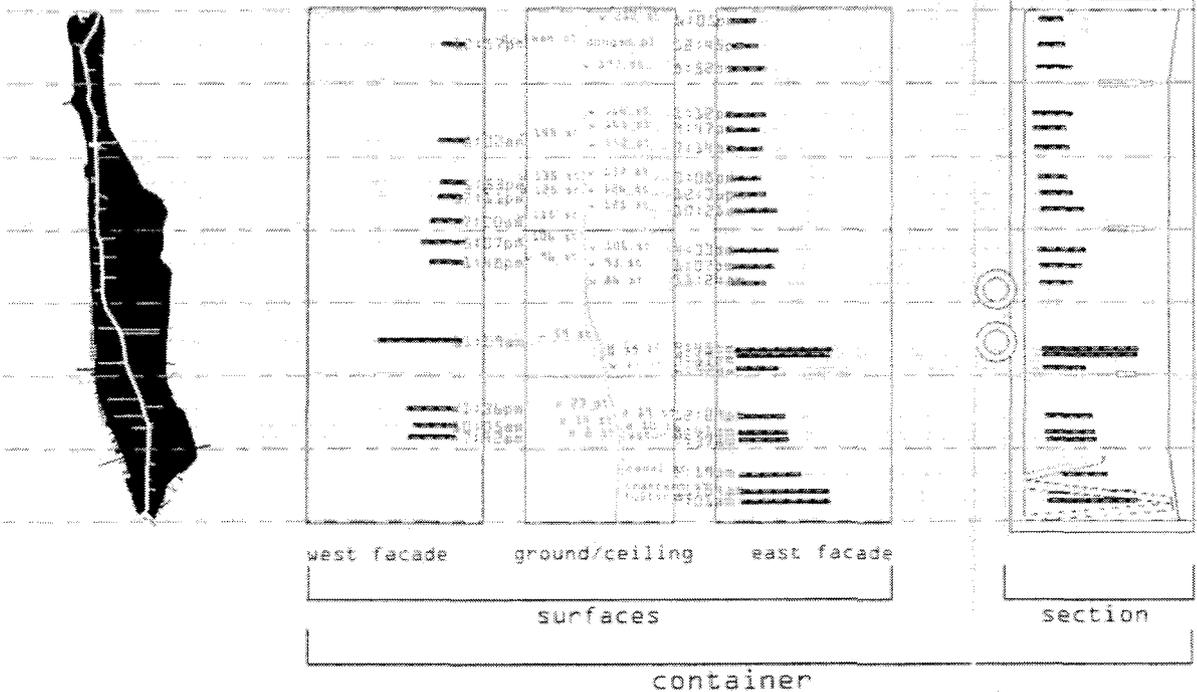
ZOOM

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In this happening, what is collected can only happen once, yet it reveals patterns about the city at many scales that are repeated in time, like a thumbprint. Each zone is unique, yet at the same time, each zone is repeated again and again in the trajectory. At a larger scale, the entire document, which is connected into one seemingly continuous zone in post-production editing, studies and represents what was in the history of this city. Already three years have passed since the collection of this footage, and those activities - interactions in those places - are happening and have happened again and again: day-by-day in the routine of the city.

The document within will play the collected footage at three speeds. These various time formats together and individually will allow different conditions of the city to be read and juxtaposed within the space of the city. Their assembly in the container as related to the city will constitute another map: a three-dimensional, inhabitable document, an and moving or -Bradshaw from South to North to reveal both the physical and the ecological rhythms of the city as the city.



These collected and assembled physical conditions and everyday scenes captured in audio and video are amplified as a silver of time to be played within a container. Topographical and planometric information about this city as documented along this chosen line is transferred to the surfaces that make up the container and used as a framework for the organization of the structure and components that make up this container.

week, and also by the infrastructure of the city, its grid. The individual districts that we inhabit each day in the trajectory are each marked, bounded and located, by the sunrise and sunset of each day and by the streets that coincide with these time segments. Section is also each individual moment when the camera records. Two-hundred and thirty-six video shots are taken. As if CAT scans of the city, these numerous section-cuts allow us to get inside, to understand the interiority of the city in both physical (visible, tangible) and ephemeral (fleeting, passing) ways. The assemblage of these individual irreplaceable moments allows us to get inside, to understand the city in its entirety as a physical entity that lives, throbs, and changes.

SCALE – AS DEFINED BY SPEED

In this mapping, what is collected can only happen once, yet it reveals patterns about the city at many scales that are repeated in time. Like a thumbprint, each zoom is unique, yet at the same time, each zoom is repeated again and again in the trajectory. At a larger scale, the entire document, which is connected into one seemingly continuous zoom in post-production editing, studies and represents one week in the history of this city. Already three years have passed since the collection of this footage, and those activities – the daily interactions of this place, are happening and have happened again and again, day-by-day in the routine of the city. As Allen Lightman writes in one of his fictional theories of time in his novel *Einstein's Dreams*, "And just as all things will be repeated in the future, all things now happening happened a million times before." (2) Each interaction is the same yet it is unique. In the film *Smoke*, (3) the character Auggie photographs his corner cigar store at exactly 8:00 a.m. every day. A friend flipping through the thousands of photographs remarks that they are all the same. Auggie, corrects him, pointing out that each is completely unique. This contradiction embodies the two distinct scales that can be revealed in two different speeds. By speeding up the footage, we are able to see and understand the patterns both physical and ephemeral of the city – the transformations of the configuration of the street, the way the light moves through the city, the topographical changes, the movements of people and cars ... Slowing down the footage or better yet collecting the footage - seven days entranced by what is framed within the viewfinder, allows us to

become absorbed with the irreplaceable details of each take, the particular activities, the various populations, what they are wearing, saying, looking at, their expressions and attitudes, the individual interactions that are taking place at each moment collected. These are as Sigfried Kracauer states in *Theory of Film*, "movements of so transitory nature that they would be imperceptible were it not for two cinematic techniques: accelerated-motion, which condenses extremely slow and, hence, unobservable developments...and slow motion, which expands movements too fast to be registered." (4) Changing speeds like changing scales allow for different information to be articulated. These two extremes of speed is a duality similar to that which is evident in the two perceptions of Auggie's photographs.

While this document exists as a repetitive fragment within a larger cycle of history that plays itself over and over again, it also exists as one unique moment in time. The systems of measure used in this study of the city are of various scales and related to both time and distance. Some are artificial (every fifteen minutes); others are natural (sunrise and sunset). Zooms and their distance capacities, the lengths of the city blocks, the breakdown of the week into days, hours, minutes (and the various activities that inhabit these time segments) are some of these measuring systems.

Perspective – historical narrative/ point of view

As we collect the footage, in looking through the viewfinder, we are guided by vanishing lines that vanish both forward and backwards, disappearing both into the distance ahead north and also beyond the foreground of the picture frame. As we collect the footage, we are guided by lines (the sidewalk edges) that converge into one vanishing point ahead of us, our consistent and guiding point that helps us to accurately place the individual two-hundredth and thirty-six shots on our chosen axis – the line. These lines also vanish backwards as we traverse picture planes zooming with each take forward as we traverse the city. In its technicality, the procedure of collecting and organizing the footage is a coordination of picture planes and vanishing lines, as one would construct a perspective drawing. Could we then also compare this video investigation to perspective drawing? Does it relate to perspective in a way similar to how Stan Allen describes it?

“as a concept of time: ordering, surveying and re-creating the past from the privileged viewpoint of the present...Space is read in depth-locating the spectator in front and in the present, from which distance and the past are entered and traversed. Perspective establishes a temporal field, from which supports narrative history.” (5)

In this audio/video mapping, this idea for traversing the city could be considered a perspective in that we pass through the city's historical sequence following its evolution as we move forward north zooming through it – a one point perspective in motion. While we are following time and trying to keep up with it (in our complex choreography for collecting the footage), we are also retracing time.

Scale – as defined by time

These collected and assembled physical conditions and everyday events captured in audio and video will be amplified as a sliver of time to be cycled and presented at the fourth year anniversary of the collection of the footage on Broadway Street itself. The activity of four years past will be overlapped on the activity that loops the city block-by-block, day-by-day four years later. A container has been built to the measurements collected and inscribed with information about the city. Attached to a vehicle, this container will travel the length of Broadway over seven days with specific rest moments that will ground it momentarily (for a measured period of time) yet mark the locations where Broadway is crossed by an avenue, also measuring and locating. This marks the unique condition of interstitial parks that occurs on the city from the residual spaces of these crossings as this line slowly diverges from the grid of the city. The same public that has been documented, the same public that constitutes the map may also physically inhabit this document in passing and in going about their respective daily activities. The same activity, the same light, the same streets and buildings will play their rituals against the rituals of three years past.

Speed - as scale

The document within will play the collected footage at three speeds: slowed down to occupy the length of seven days, sped up to occupy the space of seven minutes and at normal speed. These various time

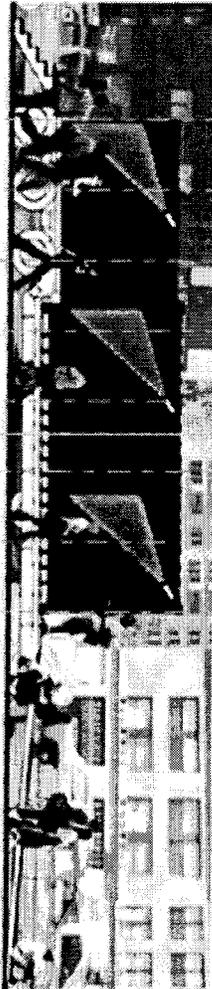
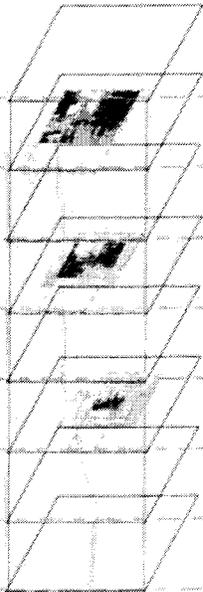
formats together and individually will allow different conditions of the city to be read and juxtaposed within the space of the city. The extreme slow motion exposes the subtleties of what may be considered banal everyday interactions, slowing down reveals the gestures that would usually remain unseen at normal speed. Like Bill Viola's video/sound installation, *The Greeting* (6), which takes the real-time forty-five second encounter of two women and stretches into a slow-motion encounter of ten minutes, this document is in a *zoomed in state*, achieving a kind of possession of time. It is a moment so slow that it is “arrested, rendered, stretched, and compressed, in short articulated, we can state that we have possession of it, that we are approaching a new vocabulary of space-time” (7), as stated by L. Moholy-Nagy in *Vision in Motion*. Again, when we refer to speed, as argued on this paper, we are also referring to scale. This extreme slowness is like a close-up in the language of the moving image, like a detail in the language of drawing – and yet these terms are interchangeable and have the same or similar meanings and outcomes.

The zooming by quickly, the fast version, is also “arresting” but in a different way. A study has been done by the *NY AV Map* team in which the various speeds are presented and viewed side by side, and every time, the viewers are consumed by the fast pace version, ignoring or not being able to engage with the slower speed version, even if consciously trying. The observer is pulled in by the speed of the vanishing lines, and funneled through the picture plane into the vanishing point beyond. We, the viewers stay there. Unable to pull away, we are in fact arrested by speed. A reversal occurs here. It is us who are captive. It is the movement that attains us. Sigfried Kracauer states that we, like animals after their prey, are drawn to movement. It is innate and thus our fascination with the moving image. (8)

INHABITABLE DOCUMENT

The assemblage of these various speeds and the information that they each expose as related to the city will constitute another map. This document like the making of a drawing is developed by the pushing and pulling of information, like the manipulation of lines on a drawing surface, this document, in its making is adjusted as needed to conceal and reveal information, achieving depth. A layering of relationships exists together in a transparency that allows a

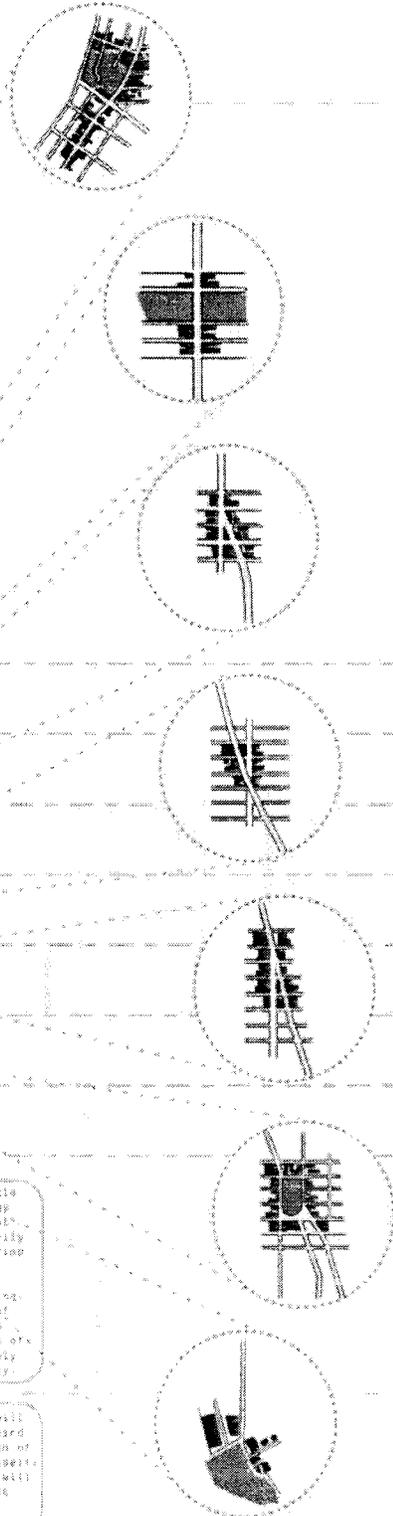
The same public that has been documented, the same public that constitutes the map may also physically inhabit this document in passing and in going about their respective daily activities. The same activity, the same light, the same streets and buildings will play their rituals against the rituals of three years past.



Fishan park
 Trinity cemetery
 Straus
 Everett square
 Equity square
 Union square
 Battery park

The container attached to a vehicle will travel the length of Broadway over seven days with specific spatial moments that will ground momentarily the container for a measured period of time to mark the locations where Broadway is crossed by an avenue also measuring and locating this marks the unique condition of interstitial parts that occupy the city from the residual spaces of these crossing as this line slowly diverges from the grid of the city.

This three-dimensional document will be cyclic and presented at the third year anniversary of the collection of the footage on Broadway Street itself. The activity of three years past will be overlapped on the activity that leads the city block-by-block, day-by-day three years later.

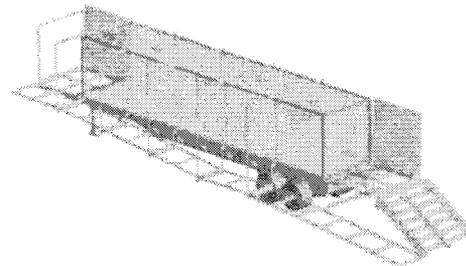
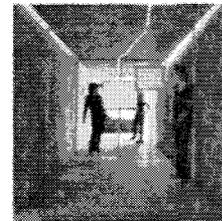
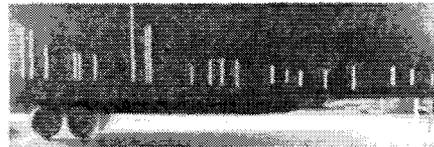
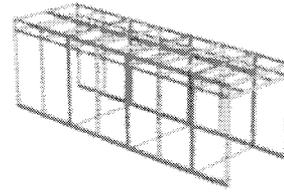


multiplicity of conditions to be understood by the various readers of the map. This assemblage of speeds, of scales, will constitute another map, a map within the container, a three-dimensional, inhabitable document, on and moving on Broadway to reveal both the physical and the ephemeral rhythms of the city to the city. This involves a complexity of interactions and thus of readings.

Container – a moving document

What is contained is the city. The container encapsulates the information collected as inscriptions, projections, sounds, movements, pauses... The container as a map contains and organizes the information collected and also presents and distributes it. It is an orienting device that moves and traces that which it maps. While it is marked by traces that reveal information about the city, it also marks the city with its own movement and specific rest points. This container is occupied by the city yet it occupies the city.

The container presents the collected information in its various scales and proper orientation, facing north and moving north on Broadway. The structure of this container is divided into seven bays that define the physical structure of its construction yet also mark the seven days of the trajectory – the structure of the document, a segment of time. Plywood panels that are inserted within these bays are articulated by markings that bring light into the container while revealing information about the city – major streets that intersect Broadway from east and from west, their location in relationship to the trajectory in time and in relationship to their topography. The section-cut (Broadway) is clearly marked as a sliver of light, an implied vertical plane defined by a gap. On it and at certain intersections within the structure are the three screens in their respective sizes, in their respective heights and playing the footage at their respective speeds. A stair and a ramp bring in and through this encapsulated moment of the city's history, the activity of the city on that week, minute-by-minute, day by day. Another scale is introduced as the real time activity, of the inhabitants of the city who enter, is overlapped onto the other speeds of activity previously collected. While history is in the midst of its motion, another cycle yet begins.



NOTES

1 See Calvino, Italo. *Invisible Cities*. Trans. by William Weaver. San Diego, New York London Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers.

2Lightman, Alan. *Einstein's Dreams*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1993, p.11

3 See *Smoke* by Wayne Wang 1995

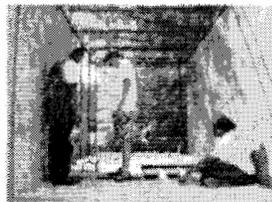


4 Kracauer, Sigfried, *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality*

Oxford University Press, 1965, p. 52

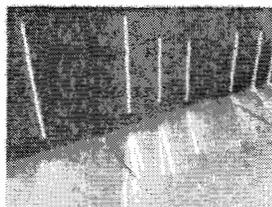
5 Allen, Stan. "On Projection," *The*

Harvard Architectural Review 9 (1993) p. 130



6 See Viola, Bill. *Bill Viola*. Whitney Museum of American Art, New York 2000, p. 122- 123

7 Moholy-Nagy, Laszlo. *Vision in Motion*. Chicago: Institute of Design, 1947, p. 247



8 Kracauer, Sigfried, *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality* Oxford University Press, 1965, p. 158

