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Whether patterns

Carleen Maur
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WHETHER PATTERNS

by

Carleen Maur

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the Master of Fine Arts
degree in Film and Video Production in the
Graduate College of
The University of Iowa

May 2017

Thesis Supervisor: Assistant Professor Michael Gibisser

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

MASTER'S THESIS

This is to certify that the Master's thesis of

Carleen Maur

has been approved by the Examining Committee for
the thesis requirement for the Master of Fine Arts degree
in Cinematic Arts Film and Video Production at the May 2017 graduation.

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To: Icky Bleiman who never learned how to cook.

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PUBLIC ABSTRACT

My experimental film essay *Whether Patterns* explores how the language of weather is used to describe political actions, and, in so doing, naturalize them. I show how the Pride Parade has become a well-established and regular seasonal occurrence, in contrast to its disruptive origin in the Stonewall Riots. When we talk about a political “climate,” as we often do, we imply that the political situation is out of our control, that it is something we must endure or wait out or “weather.” In my film, I juxtapose the sonic and visual effects of weather with footage I have taken at Pride parades throughout the country, and with found footage that documents the history of the gay rights movement. In so doing, I complicate the image of the parade space, and show how it has become untethered from its original radical context.

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INTRODUCTION

“I danced in a sort of despair and thought about how history gets costumed. How toiling over language feels like transcribing skywriting made of dotted lines.” – Ariel Goldberg,

The Estrangement Principle

During the summer of 2016 my partner and I embarked on a Pride event tour stretching across the US and Canada, hitting as many as possible, which was very hard considering they happen roughly the same week of June. Somewhere along this tour I became irritated by the culture of the Pride parade. I don't know when or by which one exactly, but all of them were slowly swallowed by police vans, banks and businesses with rainbow decals. I instantly felt strange about how shamelessly organizations were cashing in. I began *Whether Patterns* thinking through the violence of language and complacency.

People often use weather as a tool to hide or cover. When we don't know what to say to someone we talk about the weather. It's somehow become a conversation topic that's both nice and neutral, yet we use the terms “political climate” and “taking the temperature of the room” to understand complex human emotions, struggles and goals. Outside of our conversational needs, the weather's relationship to humans is anything but neutral. The Pride parade's relationship to weather is also symbolic. As the signifier of LGBTQ+ Pride, the image of the rainbow quickly became an adopted symbol for anyone self-identifying as ally. And if we examine the saying “don't rain on my parade,” we can think about how cancelling a Pride parade due to dangerous weather will be seen as a financial loss for the organizations that pay to be a part of the parade event. Pride's beginnings, too, stemmed from police “storming” in to break up queer friendly spaces

such as clubs and bathhouses. *Whether Patterns* starts to examine the overlapping qualities of different forms of complacency, language and the power of disruption.

Chapter I

Don't rain on my Pride parade

In her book *On Longing* Susan Stewart states,

Unlike the carnivalistic Pageant, where the crowd moves with the image, the image in the parade is exaggerated by the very distance it places between it and its viewer. While the carnival plays on the metaphors of display and concealment, on a licentious and sexual shifting between the official and its inverse, between performer as crowd and crowd performer, the parade seeks a seamless presentation, the smooth movement of the official apparatuses toward infinity at either end. We do not see the true origin or conclusion of the parade without experiencing a corresponding disillusionment with its power... And between us and its moving face is the perfectly uniform line of the police barricade, a line designed to perfect the parade's spatial closure as much as to protect the parade from the interruptions of inversions or speech. We might say that the barricade is to the parade as the cover is to the book, providing integrity and an aura of completeness. (Stewart 85)

Moving lines within borders within moving lines with boarders, it seems as though the construction of a "completed" parade is similar to the construction of cinema. Watching a film, for example, requires the projector to display multiple moving images linearly, threaded precisely within the borders of the machine to keep it from tangling, ripping or otherwise not working. Beyond film, most performances that require an audience also use

some form of barrier, rows of seating for example, in order for the audience to view the show as it was intended, although we rarely think about these barriers as regulations.

The parade viewer looks at the Pride parade the same way that one would sit in a theater and watch a movie, a play, or a performance. The audience entering the theater space is guided in by barriers. Whether that be roped off aisles leading the viewer to their seat or tiny lights that illuminate a path to one's seat. Sitting in a seat is also a barrier that tells the viewer to stay in one spot facing a certain direction in order to view the performance as it was intended. At this moment viewers' bodies have become regulated by the show and its borders. Viewers sit quietly, until the show seeks a particular reaction from the audience, i.e. a laugh, cry, maybe even to be requested to shout something. When the audience is held in by these barriers, they are more predictable and complacent. By building barriers into the Pride parade, viewers are more likely to abide by such barriers and are more easily controlled.

If we consider the viewer of the Pride parade in the same way we consider the viewer of a performance or film we might consider how Benjamin thought about the viewer of the cinema: "This permits the audience to take the position of a critic, without experiencing any personal contact with the actor. The audience's identification with the actor is really an identification with the camera. Consequently the audience takes the position of the camera" (Benjamin 3). If the parade acts as a live performance of the cinema then we can consider that the audience is not just identifying with the camera but becomes a part of the reenactment *of* the camera. In Christopher Isherwood's *Berlin Stories* he writes, "I am a camera with its shutter open, quite passive, recording not thinking, Recording the man shaving at the window opposite and the woman in the

kimono washing her hair. Someday all this will have to be developed, carefully printed, fixed” (Isherwood 114). Isherwood’s use of passive, for my interpretation, refers to the regulated bodies and to “develop” and “fix” the Pride parade puts the viewer in a position to develop that fix, echoing Benjamin's thought of the viewer as critic. What does it mean then to be the camera-critic of the parade and in this case the Pride parade? Can we be critical of the Pride parade and the viewers that come to watch when it is reliant on the same police barriers that were broken by the Stonewall Riots?

Chapter II

Stonewall Was a Police Riot, Not A Parade

“The naturalization of heterosexuality involves the presumption that there is a straight line that leads each sex towards the other sex *and that “this line of desire” is “in line” with one’s sex.*” – Sarah Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*

The Pride Parades in tandem with other sanctioned events to celebrate the LGBTQ+ community started popping up roughly around the 1970s across the United States and Canada (other countries as well, but this is the geographic area I am focused on). On June 28, 1969, the police raided the Stonewall Inn. Police raids on queer spaces were not uncommon. Police would cite made up reasons, such as improper liquor licenses, in order to break up the queer friendly spaces. However, that particular night the patrons chose to fight back against police raids. Riots against the police continued through the week. In New York, the first Pride parade came one year after the riots at Stonewall Inn (*The first gay pride parades*). In looking at the history of these events I knew from my own experiences of Pride events that histories would be largely whitewashed, focusing on gay men while neglecting the role trans women and trans women of color had in the transformative events such as Stonewall. In her memoir Juliet Jacques writes

But the hero’s weren’t the ultra-cautious, white ‘homosexual rights’ activist who insisted that men wear suits and women wear dresses to their peaceful protests, but the African American ‘drag queens’ of colour who sang and danced in New York’s dimly lit Stonewall in. [...] I felt so inspired by Miranda and the queens who joined arms with her outside the Inn: they refused to keep quiet and blend in,

knowing that they could only bring about change by standing up for themselves together, and fighting discrimination with radical action (Jacques 35-36).

The Pride parades that include the police barricades and police cars forgets about the actions taken against these inherently discriminatory institutions, then and still now, in order to defend civil rights, especially of trans women and trans women of color who were on the front lines of the resistance to police brutality.

In 2014 Janet Mock was the celebrity Grand Marshal for San Francisco Pride. In her speech she mentions the struggles that occur today, saying:

We must never forget that Stonewall was not a parade; it was a police riot.

(Cheering from crowd) We must never forget that whole communities of low-

income trans and queer folk were fighting for their lives that night. We must

never forget that the legacy of survival and resilience and brilliance is so deep in

our community and that it goes beyond the sound bite of “equality for all,” a

sound bite that allies throw around even though they’re not conscious enough to

realize that queer and trans folk exist in homelessness and joblessness, that our

siblings, our siblings are still fighting HIV/AIDS, our sisters are still banished to

the darkness of street corners, and that our people are still being locked away and

hunted down (Mock 1).

Mock speaks to the cheering crowd the truth that Pride so often forgets. The Pride’s borders serve as symbolic prison walls holding the deviant bodies on the street. As viewers we are asked to excuse these borders, look past or ignore them, perhaps even feel as though they are necessary for safety.



Figure 1. Police marching in 2016 Toronto Pride parade

In their book, *The Estrangement Principle*, Goldberg recounts a conversation they had with curator Adrienne Roberts at a queer San Francisco art show. In the interview Roberts mentions the irony of the Pride parade: “Police officers escorting [gay pride parades] rather than raiding our bars...completely denies the reality that there still exists state-sanctioned violence against minority subjects, including queer people, in our cities, on the streets and through the prison system” (qtd. in Goldberg 41). The Pride parade enacts a farce because of its compliance. Both Mock and Roberts speak to the irony of the Pride event. But it’s more than just irony—it’s dangerous. If Pride acts as a celebration of not hiding why does it still insist on just that, hiding?

Chapter III

W(h)e(a)ther Patterns

Before I address the position of myself to the parades, it's necessary to address the GoPro camera I've used for almost all of the recording. In *Whether Patterns*, I chose to take on the critical position of "becoming" camera both literally and metaphorically. This camera is a part of what is now referred to as "wearable technology." The GoPro camera's most saleable feature is its ability to provide a first person perspective from the recorder. Most commonly, those who use the GoPro attach it to their heads in some way. GoPros attached to the user's head are so common in fact that the camera comes standard with hooks and attachments to make it easier to wear over a helmet. The camera is small and light enough so that it does not hurt the user's head or neck, and its waterproof exterior and durability allow it to travel to areas that would be too risky for other less durable cameras to travel. I wanted to challenge and push what it means to use a small and durable camera that's meant to privilege a point of view that shows the wearer's perspective. Considering Benjamin's thoughts of the I / eye of the critic who looks onto the parade, this idea and literal perspective becomes the foundational structure of *Whether Patterns*. The camera is not only used throughout the video but also becomes a part of the frame, such as when I've used the camera inside the tank of water; its light is blinking to show this act of recording or looking from within. Or during another GoPro storm shot, I allowed the blinking light of the recorder to reflect in the window.



Figure 2. GoPro camera shown inside tank, still from *Whether Patterns*

Some of the recurring themes I explore are the image of the Pride parade, instances of weather, riots and raids surrounding the beginnings of the Pride movement, and a tank of water with a body inside. Sonically I use weather, riot and police raids, and a computer-generated voice that performs as an institutional perspective. This institutional figure slowly transitions from commonplace statements about the weather (e.g. “Do you think it will rain?”) to giving voice to what the institution can hide: such as self-reflection and awareness of ones own perspective (e.g. “This will all need to be printed, developed and fixed”). These themes begin to construct my argumentative essay on the rhetoric of political climate and the institution of Pride, specifically Pride parades.

At the video’s outset, the viewer is given some clues for how to read each scene. At the start, events such as weather, Pride parades and dancing at a club, are introduced to the viewer. In many ways the structure and theme of the video is introduced by the initial image that contains so much of the entire piece within one image. It’s an angle that is only achievable by the use of a small recording device as it is placed underneath a

potted plant looking out and away from the structure to the sky. There is rain, a slight swinging motion, and the sky disrupted by the roof of a building. In this image there are four main elements within the composition. The sky, roof, plant and rain. Rain and the sky both speak to the weather and the plant becomes the natural and organic representation that needs the rain to live but is also sheltered by the building and away from the rain directly. In addition the camera's placement is a literal "grassroots" position, indicating resistance to large institutions. The roof is also a barrier that is generally understood as a utility to shelter one from the weather. The camera's point of view is looking out toward the sky gazing up and out the same way a plant might grow. The plant would benefit from rain and while we know the roof prevents rain from entering, it's still obvious from the image that the plant gets the rainwater it needs, thanks to the other element of weather, the wind, to reach the plant. This image then sets up both an understanding of the weather's uncontrollability and the elements of human-generated barriers to weather the weather.

After introducing the image I added a line from Janet Mock's Grand Marshall Speech: "We must never forget that Stonewall was not a parade; it was a police riot (Mock 1)." This is the only time that you read text within the piece. I wrestle with dialogues, text and voice but her words, as text, rather than heard, function as the calm before the storm, or the stillness in the air that comes during intense weather events. I wanted her voice in the viewer's head instead of heard out loud. I use this line in particular to function as the lens through which to view the rest of the video. I questioned adding this line of text in this way at first but I felt as though even if it comes off as prescriptive at the start, *Whether Patterns* is in conversation with many more things than

just one argument. Throughout the course of creating this video I realized the comparisons that I was making visually and sonically were lost because I needed to be able to give a specific lens from which to view the entire piece. After reading Mock's statement a viewer can understand quickly what the parade and riot footage pointed too, which allows the weather, voices, and the shots of the tank to further complicate this central critique. The only other voice besides Mock's in *Whether Patterns* is the institutionalized voice. And this is for a few reasons. I like to poke at the idea of the all-knowing-disembodied nonfiction voice that is usually a masculine voice. Having his voice speak as a banal institutional bureaucracy, but over time transform into a more complicated form of self-reflection, allows for distrust or doubt within the voice and what perspective it holds. I chose to give him a computer voice, because its campy robotic suggestions resonate with several of the puns that appear throughout the video (don't rain on my parade, floats in a parade, floating in a tank, and so on). The first text that he speaks was from an administration email sent to students, staff and faculty at the University of Iowa who use a particular building. I made some modifications so that it would become even more generic:

Facilities is taking some proactive steps to reduce the level of humidity in the building. First they will no longer turn up the temperature at night and on the weekends (with regard to air conditioning) but instead will leave it at its weekday setting 24/7. This should help a lot. Additionally they have asked us to keep the corridor doors closed in an effort to keep the humidity from traffic coming in and out of the building out of the hallways. We have put signs on all the doors asking that they be kept shut – at least when it's hot and humid outside. Facilities is also

actively looking at ways to improve the climate control in the building. We are definitely on their radar. (Bevelacqua 1)

This letter was chosen due to its attention to climate. I was thinking a lot about climate control and political climate when I came across this letter and I thought it represented bureaucracy, literal climate, and spoke to the social “climate.” The best part, of course, is the ending, “we are definitely on their radar.” A pun? A joke? It’s unclear if it was unintentional or if it was a tiny gesture to break the tone of administrative emails but it acted as a perfect breaking point in my robotic construction. Later the voice returns to proclaim, “My weather app says it’s going to rain but the TV said it will pass over us instead. Do you think it will rain? The clouds look ominous. It’s really windy now. Did you remember to close your window? I think it will rain. The weatherman is always wrong.” With this text begins both the banal conversations of weather and rain. In the same way that the first text begins to “break” so does this text when he asks a question to someone, “Do you think it will rain?” It’s unclear to whom this question is for. Maybe the “I” of the viewer or perhaps to someone in the parade? Finally he has his last monologue but this time it has completely removed itself from the banal. I used the Isherwood quote and modified it to say, “I am a camera with its shutter open, quite passive, recording not thinking, some day all this will have to be developed, carefully printed, fixed.” By this point his position is completely unresolved. He proclaims himself a camera but it is unclear if it’s the literal camera, someone else’s camera, or a metaphorical camera such as a parade viewer as camera. He’s become completely disembodied yet claims the space as some sort of eye.

The confusion of this voice is meant to frustrate the viewer; it's impossible to hold onto things being said or to lace the statements together to make sense of his commands or warnings. His bureaucratic messages sound familiar to anyone who has worked with some sort of "administration." These messages are performative in the same way that the Pride parade performs. The messages are there to say, "We are responsive" but compassion and understanding often stops there. Because of the lack of compassion, nothing said can be trusted or remembered. The division of humanistic compassion and formalities constructs its own type of wall or barrier which suggests that the information is symbolically impenetrable. The function of the voice shifting from banal bureaucracy to poetic understandings becomes the potential of a break in that barrier.

The wall of the parade becomes a central idea in the exploration of the Pride parade. While viewers should notice that the parade is indeed a Pride event because of the rainbow flags and the clues given in the parade itself, the barriers containing people are shown when the viewer sees bodies pressed against a metal gate. Near the beginning, after the initial montage of images that give context for the video as a whole, a split screen is introduced to further highlight the barriers, as well as to think of the parade as a barrier. It's also an image of people looking away from and to something. The people on this image are waiting for something and looking forward. The Pride parade viewers oriented themselves to the event. Their hands, arms and shoulders become the subject of this frame. They are bodies pressed against the gate, pressed to one another, and in anticipation. They are the potential energy of the parade. They await themselves to react to this event. These moments are striking to me as I consider my accusations of complacency. The complacency isn't without intense emotion. It's not laziness it's static

electricity. I'll return to examining potentiality within the parade later in this chapter but first further explaining of scenes are needed.

The reoccurring theme of Pride parades and police raids can quickly point to historical beginnings that the Janet Mock quote at the start points to, but beyond that I wanted to highlight that the police force acts as both a part of the parade as well as the gate that separates them. This is of particular interest given the historical context of police walls and barriers put up to break up rioting crowds. Throughout the process of editing this piece I approached the implementation of police raid archival footage in many different ways. I wanted originally to find film of the Stonewall Riots. I was particularly interested in seeing the moments that the police were using force to break up groups of people. This is where I hit my first wall. Any film of this event is virtually impossible to find without going to the archives in New York where they house most of the footage of the Stonewall riots. While I considered the journey to this archive and contemplated ways in which I could unnoticeably rerecord the footage they had I decided that the risks were too high and that I would probably be unable to capture any usable footage. It's also hard to know exactly what they do have in the archive given that a label that just says LGBTQ+ could hold anything from oral histories to newspaper clippings. There is one video that's watermarked which showed an incredibly hard to read scene of Stonewall riots. I was angry about this inaccessibility for some time. Those riots and police raids went on for 3 days but it's nearly impossible to find usable images of that event.

I was thinking a lot about poor images, especially as Hito Steyerl thinks of them. In her essay she writes about inaccessible films:

This development was of course connected to the neoliberal radicalization of the concept of culture as commodity, to the commercialization of cinema, its dispersion into multiplexes, and the marginalization of independent filmmaking. It was also connected to the restructuring of global media industries and the establishment of monopolies over the audiovisual in certain countries or territories. (Steyerl 1)

Here, Steyerl is talking about the inaccessibility of seeing experimental films in particular, but I couldn't help but consider this in relation to films absorbed into the archives. While the upkeep and preservation is always important the images were meant to be (somewhat) easily accessible through media outlets. During the months I spent trying to collect any archival media from archives I was met with the impossibility of gaining access to these movies without going to the archive, and if I did, I wouldn't be able to have a recording of my own. These particular archives became another institutional barrier. As Steyerl argues, these documents were now owned and have become culture as commodity. Eventually I found resources related to White Night Riots, the day of raids and riots that happened after the verdict of the Harvey Milk trial in San Francisco (Walter 1). These images are housed as a part of the online archive at the San Francisco Bay Area Television Archive, which preserves and digitizes news film, documentaries and other TV footage produced in the Bay Area and Northern California (*White Night Riots in San Francisco*). Originally the strangeness of this footage captivated me so much, so I put as much as I could into *Whether Patterns*. The strangeness of these images were that the camera scanned half empty rooms frantically as if it was being chased, zoomed onto the cheeks of officials speaking, and felt as though

none of the footage captured could be or would be used. It looked as though the camera was always in the wrong space at the wrong time.



Figure 3. Still from White Night Riot footage 1



Figure 4. Still from White Night Riot footage 2

This strange and beautiful B roll footage told the story I wanted to tell about the night that police raided just because they could. This showed the police state. It took me a long time before I could figure out just why these images couldn't take up the space in *Whether Patterns* just as they were in my project, and it was a very important realization.

I was collaging these scenes into images of Pride parades and weather but they were holding a position of objectivity and truth. By positioning them as the “counter point” they had so much power within the video. Their placement was after the parade so it was positioned as the historical beginnings. But showing these particular images as THE beginnings became problematic due to the lack of showing a full contextualization. It’s not to suggest this footage isn’t functioning as the historical reference and also a strong depiction of different kinds of police force but placing it just the way I had found it ignores all the bias of the image and that maybe this footage does or does not reveal all of the brutality of the police at this time. And, more importantly, how were these images used to show the police force or were they used at all? I decided that these important archival pieces needed to be redone entirely. My first decision was to not use multiple moments but instead focus on just one. I chose the moment that the camera pans to reveal a long line of police officers, waiting and creating a barrier.



Figure 5. Still from White Night Riot police line

This image would be repeated throughout the video as a moment to return to. It's also an image that holds the film within itself, not unlike the first image we see in the video. The line of police officers creates a wall with their bodies and additionally with the sticks that they hold. They create a double wall that keeps anyone from going in or out. It's unclear from the image if they are about to move forward to push back or if they are standing still to hold a line. The image only tells us that they are in waiting, and thus, in anticipation. Not unlike the parade viewers they are complacent yet embody potential movement. What's at stake, knowing that the Pride parade began as a celebration of the resistance to police raid? If we think about the line of police officers like we do the parade viewers we know that the parade viewer waits in anticipation for their own reaction to the parade, and the police line waits to react to the potential of bodies no longer regulated. While the viewers of the parade come to witness, presumably by choice, the police officers that create a barrier are there to do just that, create and hold the barrier. The audience of the parade then creates a barrier by responding and reacting to the line of the police. The police line holds potential energy to react to the crowd and the participants in the parade. Within this quick scan from the camera we can see this moment, the moment of stillness, the moment of the calm before the storm.

After I decided that the police officer was the image to which I was going to continuously return, I still had complications with it as an image positioned as pure objectivity. I decided that so much of my own positioning had become important within this piece. I used myself and my body as performance, and in so doing, brought forth more of the subjectivity of myself as collagist. I decided to wear a GoPro in its most

clichéd form, attached to my head, and cut a snowflake out of the image of the police line I kept returning to.

This gesture acted as a small, incomplete resolution or conclusion to much of my



Figure 6. GoPro still from *Whether Patterns*

argument. By cutting out a snowflake, I was able to think about the ways we use weather to talk about things or to cover and redact (the cut out holes literally redact the information of the image) and in the end we have a pretty craft to hang up that uses its own symbol as commentary on its own powers or lack of powers and abilities as a signifier.

After I had recorded the scene I described above, I ultimately decided that the image did not do the work that I had intended it to do, and I omitted the scene entirely from the video. Upon reflection on the feedback I had received about the image, there are

two issues that kept me from including it in the final piece. First, the space of the desk is a domestic space. Because the desk and the surroundings were both a new setting and one that doesn't directly relate to the other themes in the video, it became unattached as a scene in a way that was not productive to the video's argument. Secondly, the entire scene itself was a new element that I was introducing towards the end as a way of resolving the video, but its visual disconnect failed to situate itself as such. Instead of this scene the video returns to scenes of the club and parade in order to conclude the themes that were explored previously in the video.

Along with the manipulation of the police archival footage, the addition of my body in the tank was one of the final scenes recorded for the purpose of adding a performative element that could continue the commentary specific to barriers, feelings of exhibitionism, containment, climate, and commentary on the space of the gay club which is not unlike the space of the parade. The space is contained not by a police wall but by actual walls. It's a space away from the public, but one in which dollar rainbow shots (or some other alcoholic beverage that fits itself into the Pride theme) allow any bar to cash in every June. The gay club, not unlike the Pride parade, has its own sectioned off space, the four walls of the club. And as a space specific to a community of people its existence is limited. Within the limited space of the gay club the community at large is welcome. However, the space can become overwhelmed by those outside of the queer community and at times coopting the space entirely until it no longer resembles a queer space at all. In *Whether Patterns* the placement of the tank of water situates itself in a performed gay club space. By putting the tank in this space there is more suffocation or drowning than liberation. The GoPro is used to capture images inside the tank while simultaneously a

camera captures the tank as a whole. Throughout the piece the tank images are introduced early from an inside angle, and then slowly reach the outside view. At first these images are more abstracted until the full image is realized. The very last view of the tank is where the body emerges from the tank; it's a relatively short instance and is meant to represent potential breakage. Within the context of the video it is followed by the final image of a media camera person capturing the Pride parade, which is off screen. So this "potential break" is interrupted by this final image. So the final image keeps the image of a person emerging from the waters as potential breakage rather than solution. The conclusion is a return to the ideas presented at the beginning, that the parade has forgotten its routes/roots and has become commodified as seen by the camera person framing the perfect shot.

CONCLUSION

The largest challenge of *Whether Patterns* was to create cohesive arguments through montage strategies. I looked to other filmmakers, such as Laurie Jo Reynolds, whose video *Space Ghost* seamlessly combined space-themed fiction movie and phone calls to an incarcerated loved one, and Hito's Steyerl's *November*, which combined the memories of her friend and genre movies to think through political struggle. The combination of seemingly unrelated ideas coming together to think through larger issues related to the social or political conditions are continuously the most powerful moving image works for me. Beyond that I had a personal investment in the accessibility of these experimental video essays (I realize the term "video essay" is debated, and this is just my own person usage of it) As someone whose disabilities make reading texts a struggle, video essays allowed me access to a mode of thinking and understanding that worked for me and I know video essays, in addition to or alongside written essays could be beneficial to a community that has equal or greater struggles than I do. So I kept text to a minimum and language was placed in such a way that allowed and encouraged a fluidity of understanding. Throughout this process I learned the benefits of combining montaged archival footage with performative shoots, which could solidify metaphors in way that felt just discursive enough. *Whether Patterns* acted as an important and extremely challenging dive into argumentative essays that I will continue to develop throughout my career as video and filmmaker.

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