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**LEONARDO ABSTRACT SERVICES (LABS) 2008-2009
MUTATIONS OF PASTNESS: TIME, CINEMA, ONTOLOGY**

By Jenna Pei-Suin Ng

The thesis investigates how recent digital technologies of cinema—digital video, CGI, virtual cinematography and motion capture—reconfigure the nature (and, in turn, temporalities) of the moving image. Its objectives are to rework the ontology of the image, revisit the meaning of time in relation to the image and re-evaluate the significance of cinema for ourselves and our consciousness of time. The thesis revolves around the central premise of the photographic image’s (Peircian) indexicality—the imprint of light on film/celluloid—whereby the referent “adheres” to the photograph through existential, causal and physical connection. It argues that this connection transmits not only reality but also time, specifically pastness. By virtue of this, we may analyse the photographic image as a trace not only of an object but also of time past. Extending this premise of ontology and pastness from still photography to cinema, the thesis investigates how this temporality of pastness mutates in cinema’s digital transformations. Chapter One deals with pastness in the indexicality of the photographic image in relation to its presentness qua moving image, i.e. as cinema unreels before us in our viewing of it. Chapter Two explores how computer code inherent in the technologies of DV, CGI and virtual cinematography revises the nature of the image so as to generate its own form of timelessness. Chapter Three examines the novel manner in which motion capture technologies create cinematic imagery by recording invisible movement rather than visible light, in turn transfiguring time in the image as space and temporal between-ness. Studying cinema as an object of time rather than as an object of reality, the thesis suggests how cinema might exist—in all its transformations, in all its different ways—in distinctive temporalities.

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