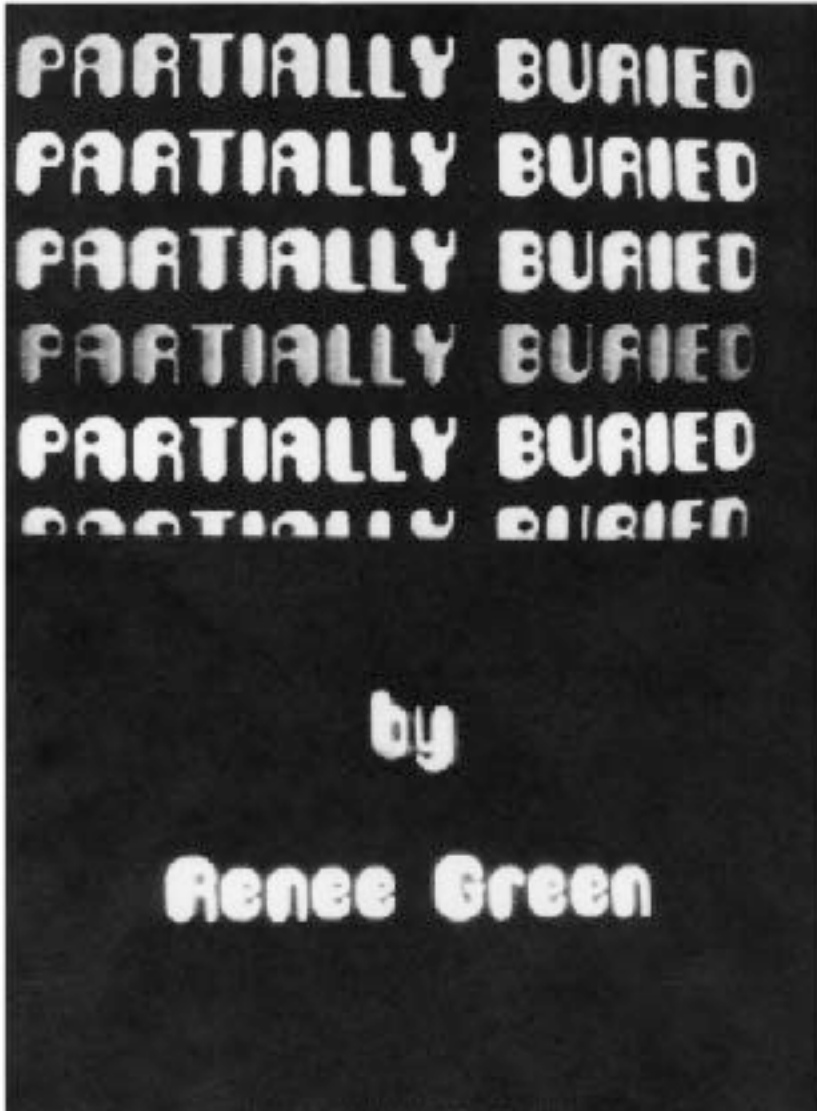


NOVEL

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*A reproduction of three weeks in May 1970*

May 2018 – May 2019

Patricia L Boyd

Helen Cammock

Renée Green

Studio for Propositional Cinema

Steven Warwick

# NOVEL

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Screening: *Partially Buried* (1996) and *Partially Buried Continued* (1997)

2.00 - 4.00 pm, 20 October 2018

Lo22, G01, Whiteknights Campus, London Road, Reading RG1 5AQ

*Partially Buried* explores a web of genealogical traces. In this work the artist probes the notion of sites of memory as well as site-specific work by focusing on the location of Kent, Ohio. *Partially Buried* references the year 1970 during which the artist Robert Smithson produced his site-specific work, *Partially Buried Woodshed* at Kent State University. By chance the mother of the child in the video was present also in Kent State in May of that year, studying experimental music. In May of 1970, four students were shot while attending a rally protesting the U.S. invasion of Cambodia. “May 4, 1970” was painted on the *Partially Buried Woodshed* shortly afterward and the artwork took on another meaning.

After having lived and worked away from the country in which she was born for many years, Green asks in her film the questions: “How does one return? To a country, to a place of birth? To a location which reeks of remembered sensations? Is it possible to trace how they are triggered and why they are accompanied with as much dread as anticipation?” She also focuses on a time during which she was a child: 1970, in particular, and more generally the 1970s, as perceived from the vantage point of 1996. How do we reinterpret the past? What do we choose to remember or discard? What is inescapable?

# Partially Buried

RENÉE GREEN

Version A: Reading Script

Black screen

Music begins: "Apocalypse," The Mahavishnu Orchestra, 1970

Titles roll up.

(Footage of R. driving, World's Fair globe, childhood association images—zoo, children playing, museum, parks, etc., alternate between black screens with blue running text.)

RUNNING TEXT (to translate as a simultaneous voice-over in German)

How does one return? To a country, to a place of birth? To a location that reeks of remembered sensations? But what are these sensations? Is it possible to trace how they are triggered and why they are accompanied with as much dread as anticipation?

"Apocalypse" continues, but shifts from orchestral to '70s jazz fusion

RUNNING TEXT

Returning to a once familiar place can remind one of childhood, especially if one was just ending childhood upon departure. Although there have been many departures and returns since those earlier years, this return, perhaps for reasons of age and uncertainty, induced the artist to examine her relationship to the genealogy of American artists as well as to attempt to imagine the currents that affected her before she was consciously aware of their capacity to shape.

(Footage of models of New York, a German toy train passing through a model city, still photo of Robert Smithson and Robert Morris climbing a chain-link fence, students in Berlin protesting Axel Springer Verlag is intercut with the running text at intervals.)

Music: "Changes," Jimi Hendrix and Buddy Miles at the Fillmore, 1970

### RUNNING TEXT

Everywhere she goes she encounters echoes of the 1970s. The 1970s are in vogue now. Were they in vogue then? What could that mean? Are the 1990s in vogue now? This is the decade we are in and we are contemporary. It does seem popular to be contemporary, in step with the times. But hasn't that always been the case when one is contemporary?

(Images from "Performance" with Mick Jagger, and of 1970, and of records from the 1970s are intercut with the running text at intervals.)

ROLLING TEXT: Background colors change continuously

CONTEMPORARY: 1. existing, occurring, or living at the same time; belonging to the same time: *Newton's discovery of the calculus was contemporary with that of Leibnitz.* 2. of the same age or date: *a Georgian table with a contemporary wig stand.* 3. of the present time: *a lecture on a contemporary novel.* —n. 4. one belonging to the same time or period with another or others. 5. a person of the same age as another.

Music stops

\*

(Sound of projector and voice-over in English over footage of earth being dug up and dropped by machinery, fingers pressing down and moving over piano keys [close-up], views of bridges and industrial wasteland in Cleveland, feet walking up a hill [close-up], photo of William Carlos Williams.)

STILL TEXT ON SEPARATE SCREENS : Intercut with above-stated images

SCREEN A: He was born in 1936. Her mother was born in 1934. Often when you read about his work, you can't escape the importance of his death:

SCREEN B: "Robert Smithson, who died in a plane crash in 1973, remains as compelling a presence among artists today as he was then."

(The first sentence in Jack Flam's introduction to *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings*, 1996)

or

SCREEN C: "The greatest tragedy of Smithson's early death is not merely that there will be less 'good art' in the world, but that he was virtually the only important artist in his aesthetic generation to be vitally concerned with the fate of the earth and fully aware of the artist's political responsibility to it."

(The closing sentence of Lucy Lippard's "Breaking Circles: The Politics of Prehistory")

or

SCREEN D: “Before his fatal accident in 1973 Robert Smithson was a leading vanguard artist, but after it he became an even more significant figure, especially for those who viewed him as the equal of such innovators as Jackson Pollock.”

(The first sentence of Robert Hobbs’s introduction to *Robert Smithson: Sculpture*)

\*

Black screen

A ticking sound begins

The ticking sound continues over footage of demonstrations of “entropy”: an egg falling to the ground and shattering, fingers “running” in a circle inside a bowl in which salt and pepper are equally divided. Footage is intercut with the running text.

RUNNING TEXT

Deaths and lives are what myths are made of and their residue is what we can read about or watch in a movie.

The artist is now 36.

Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita  
mi ritrovai per una selva oscura,  
che la diritta via era smarrita.

At midpoint of the journey of our life  
I woke to find me astray in a dark wood,  
perplexed by paths with the straight way at strife.

Often she thinks of these words and remembers having read that when Samuel Beckett died the only book he had with him was Dante’s *The Divine Comedy*.

\*

(Sound of music experiments and music by Arnold Schoenberg. Footage of John Cage with students, musical contraptions installed in museums.)

RUNNING TEXT WITH GERMAN VOICE-OVER

She thinks of her mother’s training as a classical vocalist, of her study of 20th-century music, of how she’d been impressed to find John Cage on the cover of the art magazine in which her daughter was interviewed, strangely enough on “sites of genealogy.” The artist remembers how she and her little brother assisted their mother in her experimental music exercises for a workshop at Kent State. Making noise with kitchen utensils at specified intervals. The year was 1970.

images of dirt dug and dumped, of those coined “beatniks,” even of her uncle, who went to Kent State, jamming, or did they say groovin’? But Smithson was no boho cat and her mother was certainly not a boho chick.

\*

Did people have more fun then? Burying buildings with dirt, pouring glue down hills, making islands out of broken glass. Allan Kaprow gave students dollar bills to pin on trees at Kent State then. But, what a question! She was alive then. Contemporary. A ten-year-old contemporary.

\*

The girl watched the news and waited anxiously, often. That’s part of what she recollects of childhood. Waiting. Seeing the running text of news reporting students shot at Kent State moving across the bottom of the TV screen. Waiting. TV programs were interrupted, and her mother was late returning home from there. Across the street kids played Jackson Five 45s and Sly Stone. The girl smoothed her bedspread and checked for order. Finally her mother did arrive, but she can’t now remember what either said. It was May 4, 1970.

\*

(Footage of Kent State and the town of Kent, Ohio, in 1996, moving footage and still photographs)

They drive around the campus, July 1996. “Is that the notorious door to the Music and Speech building?” she says pointing at one of the boxlike buildings. This she read about in James A. Michener’s nonfiction book, *Kent State: What Happened and Why*. Her mother doesn’t remember. Her father points to “The Hill,” which he remembers.

\*

INTERVIEW INSERT: Dorothy Shinn, art critic, *Akron Beacon Journal*, describing the red plants on the slope in front of the Partially Buried Woodshed site.

RUNNING TEXT: Intercut with footage of Dorothy moving into the woods and with her voice still describing the site.

“Whenever there was an unusually violent incident, or a scatological one, or something ‘excessive,’ one finds the writer taking refuge in the literary conventions of the day. ‘I was left in a state of distraction not to be described’ (Equiano).” (Toni Morrison, “The Site of Memory”)

\*

No Sound

### ROLLING TEXT

“The rustic, ramshackle woodshed stood in sharp contrast to the other buildings in the area, which were for the most part modern concrete structures. It was a makeshift storage for dirt, gravel, and firewood. Smithson decided to leave some firewood in the building, and, on January 22, had earth moved to the area from a construction site elsewhere on campus. Operating a back hoe under Smithson’s direction, Rich Helmling, a building contractor, piled twenty loads of earth onto the shed until its central beam cracked. The breaking of the beam was crucial to the piece: to Smithson it symbolized entropy, like the falling of Humpty Dumpty, ‘a closed system which eventually deteriorates and starts to break apart and there’s no way that you can really piece it back together again.’”

(From *Robert Smithson: Sculpture*, editor, Robert Hobbs)

\*

INTERVIEW INSERT: Brinsley Terrell, artist and former sculpture professor, Kent State University.

“He was coming down with the flu. I put him up at my house. He’d wanted to do a mud slide, but mud doesn’t slide in northeastern Ohio in January. He said he’d go back to New York, but the students asked him if there was anything that he’d always wanted to do and he said he’d always wanted to bury a building . . .”

(Footage of R. walking to the *Partially Buried Woodshed* site, entering the woods, walking on the remaining foundation of the shed)

\*

VOICE-OVER (continues over above stated footage)

“The *Partially Buried Woodshed* has been regarded as a prescient and revolutionary work of art. Only four months after its creation, four students were killed and nine others wounded by National Guardsmen during a campus protest against America’s invasion of Cambodia. This subsequent tragedy has for many people eminently politicized the creation and significance of the *Woodshed*. Art critic Phil Leider told Nancy Holt he felt it to be the single most political work of art since Picasso’s *Guernica*. Nancy Holt has referred to the piece as ‘intrinsically political’ and indicated that Smithson himself believed it to be ‘prophetic.’ All we can say definitely, however, about the politics of the work is that the *Woodshed* is implicitly anti-‘Establishment’ through its reference to ‘muddy thinking.’”

(Robert Hobbs, editor, *Robert Smithson: Sculpture*)

(Recording of the reading of an excerpt of “The Establishment,” by Robert Smithson simultaneous with music—Hendrix)

(Footage of Metropolitan Museum of Art and Central Park)

\*

(Continue Brinsley Terrell’s description)

(Footage from the pages of *Robert Smithson: Sculpture*: “I, Robert Smithson, hereby donate the following work of art to Kent U....”)

(Footage of departing shot of woodshed after Dorothy Shinn interview, view from distance, fade to black)

VOICE-OVER: Lumumba Turner, freedom fighter, interview excerpt

“The times have been buried . . .”

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VOICE-OVER: Laura Owens, artist, born in 1970, describing a high school teacher in Ohio who had been a National Guardsman.

(Footage: slow motion out of sync with voice-over)

RUNNING TEXT Intercut while Laura’s voice continues

“When I hear someone say, ‘Truth is stranger than fiction,’ I think that old chestnut is truer than we know, because it doesn’t say that truth is truer than fiction; just that it’s stranger, meaning that it’s odd.”

(Toni Morrison, “The Site of Memory”)

Laura’s voice stops and the sound of a child speaking in German in sync with the jellyfish footage continues (“Haben die auch?”). Sound of projector begins with footage of road at night.

Cut to black

END

TITLES: STILL SCREEN

Camera: Renée Green, Nils Norman

Editor: Simin Farkhondeh

Thanks to: Dorothy Shinn, Brinsley Terrell, Lumumba and Janice Turner, Laura Owens, Paul O’Keefe.

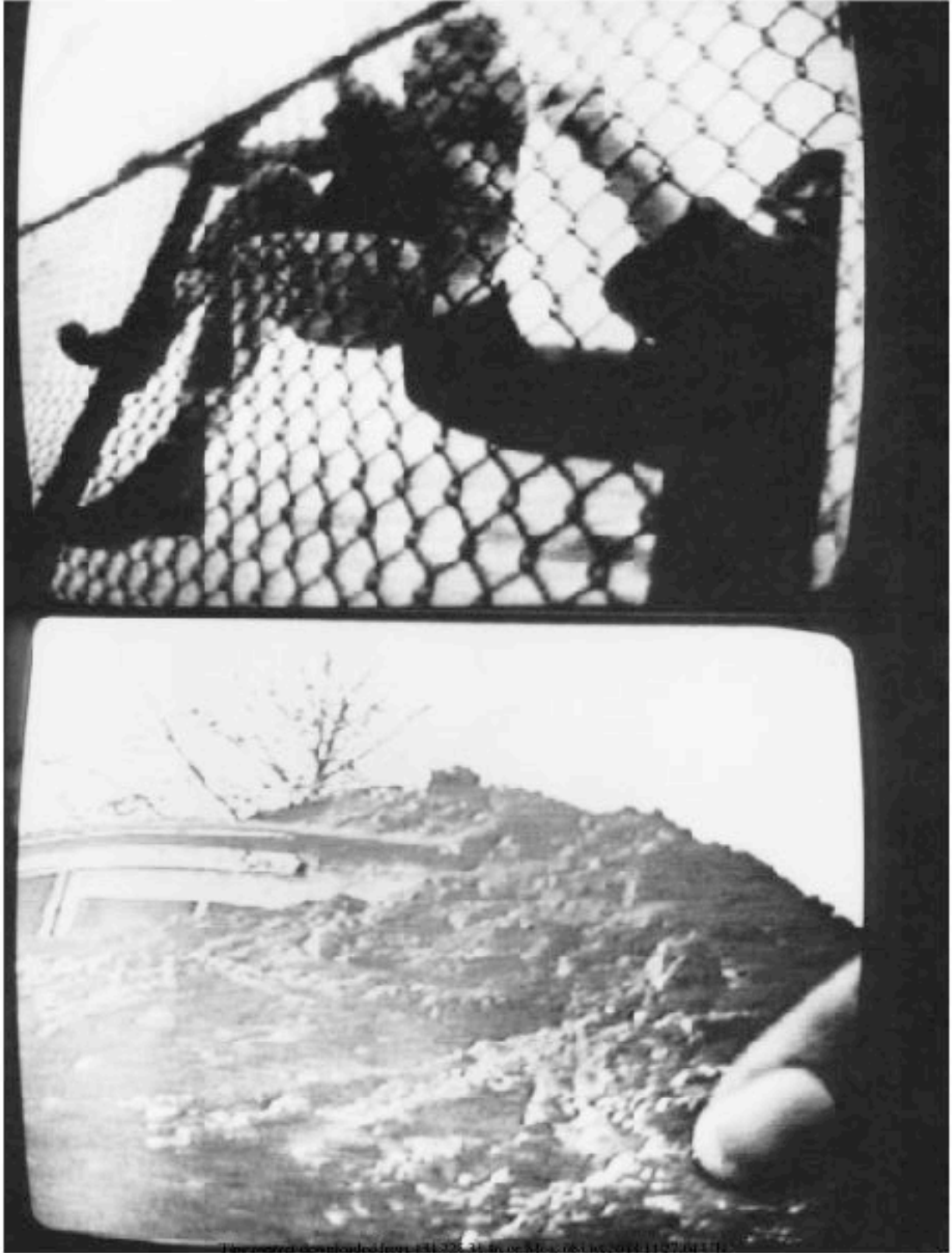
Partially Over

Stay Tuned



# NOVEL

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In May 1970 artist Rita Donagh and a group of students occupied a studio at University of Reading. Staging events, performances and collective actions they wrote and discussed circumstances within and beyond the confines of the university. Didactic conventions and context were replaced in an attempt to diagram a charged collective knowledge. Activated against a backdrop of student protest, in particular the Kent State massacre, the group sounded political images, registered distance and invested in a politics of time, place and bodies. Donagh's own response, the painting *Reflection on Three Weeks in May 1970* uses a social-political cartography to plot distinct events, between image and experience.

This historical scenario acts a catalyst for the year-long publishing and curatorial project. NOVEL will present a programme of interdisciplinary projects, commissions and events – with contributions from Patricia L Boyd, Helen Cammock, Renée Green, Studio for Propositional Cinema, Steven Warwick.