Baptizo and Immersion: A Panoramic Perspective

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This article investigates the relationship between audiences and the moving image in cinematic and virtual space(s) outside of the museum through Canadian artist Levi Glass's new media project Cineorama. This wooden panoramic cinema, which the artist built in 2019, immerses viewers in the eight-channel video Baptizo—a 360° experience of the Baptistery in Florence—on double-sided screens inside and outside the building. The article focuses on the outdoor public display of Cineorama at the 2020 Luminocity exhibition in Kamloops, Canada, and Glass's digital adaptation of the project for viewing on personal devices or virtual reality headsets. Rooted in the historical traditions of the panorama, philosophical toy, and early cinema, the physical and virtual versions of Baptizo/Cineorama offer a valuable case study in reconciling our diverse viewing practices today in light of the vast array of visual media appearing in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

This article explores the relationship between audiences and the moving image in public cinematic and virtual space(s) through two different displays of Canadian artist Levi Glass's project *Baptizo/Cineorama*: its outdoor installation at the 2020 video art exhibition *Luminocity*[1] in Kamloops, British Columbia (Figure 1), and online adaptation during the pandemic (http://cineorama.ca/).[2] A hut-like wooden structure built by Glass in 2019, *Cineorama* is a 10' tall panoramic cinema, which projects the eight-channel video *Baptizo* ('to immerse' in Latin) in 360° on interior and exterior screens embedded in the architecture. The 8'11" video immerses the audience in a tourist encounter with the façade of the Baptistery of Saint John in Florence (1059-1128). Tourist footage, which is shot from various viewpoints, elevations, and camera angles, gives the viewer a sensation of being 'transported' to Florence, but never forms a perfect optical and spatial illusion of the building. Through Glass's radical and highly tactile approach to cinematic construction, the singular viewpoint of linear perspective is multiplied and fragmented, and crisp, rhythmic splicing of the geometric marble façade presents moments of complete abstraction.

Grounded in the historical traditions of the panorama, philosophical toy, and early cinema, Glass's *Baptizo/Cineorama* provides a useful case study in reconciling our diverse viewing practices today in light of the plethora of technologies that audiences could use to see images in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. *Cineorama* takes its name from Raoul Grimoin-Sanson's *Cinéorama* of 1897—a multiscreen panoramic cinema that was a commercial disaster. When he came across the term *Cineorama* and its doomed history, Glass (2020a, personal communication[3]) found it a 'laughable discovery' but 'rejoice[d] in the collective invention and failure.' In reviving the panorama—a 360° viewing environment indelibly linked with intermediality (Trumpener and Barringer 2020: 20)—through new technologies, Glass's work is testament to the robust dialogue that artists have forged between early and proto-cinematic viewing experiences and contemporary image-based practices, such as, for example, Stan Douglas's *Panoramic Rotunda* (1985), Donald Lawrence and *The Camera Obscura* project, Bill Brand's *Masstransiscope* (1980), and Sandra Gibson and Luis Recoder's *Topsy Turvy* (2013). The way in which Glass's virtual reality (VR) version of *Baptizo/Cineorama* encourages curiosity and a sense of play through the use of hand-held devices or headsets in domestic settings also points to the philosophical or optical toy. One of the dominant modes of seeing images in the nineteenth century, the philosophical toy later became a crucial tool for artists such as Robert Breer and Marcel Duchamp in shifting film practices outside of the traditional site of the movie theatre in the 1960s (Uroskie 2014: 93). Building upon scholarly discussions of the tactile engagement of handheld philosophical toys (Doane 2006) and toy moving panoramas (Huhtamo 2013), this article views interactions with the moving image on phones and VR headsets as part of a much longer history.

The subject of significant scholarly attention in the fields of art history and literary, film, and media studies, the panorama has been (re) conceptualized through various approaches and frameworks. It has been historicized as a technical invention and form of entertainment (Oettermann 1997) and positioned alongside digital art in a wider account of illusionary and immersive spaces (Grau 2003), and its multiscreen commercial permutation has been discussed as a foil for avant-garde expanded cinema in the 1960s (Uroskie 2014). More recently, Katie Trumpener and Tim Barringer (2020) have emphasized its status as an intermedial phenomenon in historical and contemporary practice. There have also been efforts to recover large-scale image practices outside of the circular panorama: Erkki Huhtamo (2013) has shed light on the moving panorama, which, unlike its 360° counterpart, unfurled continuous images from a rolled mechanism alongside a narrative performance. Amid a range of aims and focuses, sources on the panorama largely categorize it as an immersive spectacle that overwhelms and awes through subliminal illusion. This article shows how Glass's *Cineorama*, while sharing characteristics of the panorama tradition more broadly, does not fit comfortably within this narrative and generates wonder on a smaller but no less affective or impactful scale. In turn, this analysis questions the idea that immersion—either physical or virtual—is necessarily limited to a singular type of aesthetic experience.

Figure 1. Photo of Levi Glass's *Cineorama* at *Luminocity* (courtesy of Levi Glass, 2020).

Looking to the range of different formats and situations available to nineteenth- and early twentieth-century spectators, from hand-held devices in domestic settings to full-body immersion in public spaces, Glass's flexible use of moving image technologies facilitates virtual and real interactions with audiences that instill wonder and delight. In view of the closing or restricted opening of museums and galleries due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this article's close examination of the in-person and online *Baptizo/Cineorama* speaks to the broader significance of public moving image displays in urban environments and digital spaces in our continued isolation. Outside, free, and accessible to all, public moving image projections like Glass's at *Luminocity* present rare opportunities to view art safely with strangers and can enliven the relationship between art and local communities. Indeed, *Luminocity* attracted a wide audience, which is generally reflective of the active public engagement programs of the Kamloops Art Gallery—the exhibition's organizers—and the enchantment of the glowing *Cineorama* structure (Dell'Aria 2021: 9) lured in regular gallery-goers and visitors who did not intend to encounter art. Amid calls for museums to see the present moment as an opportunity to galvanize free online platforms to engage with new and more diverse audiences (Joselit 2020), there remains a prevailing disdain for the kind of aesthetic encounter we can have in domestic settings. The online version of *Baptizo/Cineorama*, which can be viewed on any device and through a VR headset, illustrates the wonder that arises from art you can hold in your hand. By activating new and unexpected ways of seeing in enchanting and familiar environments, Glass's use of the moving image invites the viewer to emerge from the real or virtual space with a more expansive, open view of the world.

Baptizo: Multisensory Play with Perspective

From the very start, *Baptizo* plunges the viewer into a multisensory tourist experience of Florence within the physical or online space of *Cineorama*. Amid the clanging of the Bell Tower of the neighboring Duomo, car sirens, and the multilingual murmuring of tour-guides, the eight screens show separate tracking shots that approach the Baptistry on foot from different routes. The ethereal synth notes of the soundtrack by Glass and musician Monte Heyman—a lyrical expression of the minor quality of the bell tolls—blend with the street noise and act as an emotional undertone throughout *Baptizo*. At 0:30 (Figure 2), the cameras, which appear as eight individual viewpoints for most of the film, halt in front of the building and remain positioned on stationary tripods. Each screen frames a different side of the structure, showing either the geometric façade or one of its three bronze doors. The videos sync up to form an inverted mirror image of the façade—a 360° experience of the exterior folded within *Cineorama*'s interior. The projectors' views do not remain fixed and slowly begin to shuffle clockwise: Lorenzo Ghiberti's *Gates of Paradise* (1425-1452) may appear in front of the viewer and then in a blink jump one screen to the right. The cuts gather speed, resulting in a flickering effect at 3:01. An accompanying blaring tone echoes and fades into a single bell clang, joined by a deep synth note and a thumping heartbeat in the same scale. This dramatic overture is the backdrop for the work's next encounter with close shots of the dark green and white marble façade. Unseated from their tripods, the cameras rove around the building at asynchronous paces. This pleasurable foray into abstraction (Figure 3) is increasingly disrupted by passers-by, cars, a souvenir

stand, and railings, especially as several cameras begin to zoom out. At 7:19, *Baptizo* comes full circle: all eight cameras zoom in once more before zooming out to form the inverted façade again. Ten seconds later, they rise above the lower section of the building in a vertical tilt, losing the crowd, and glide up the arcade of arches, upper panel, and lantern into darkness.

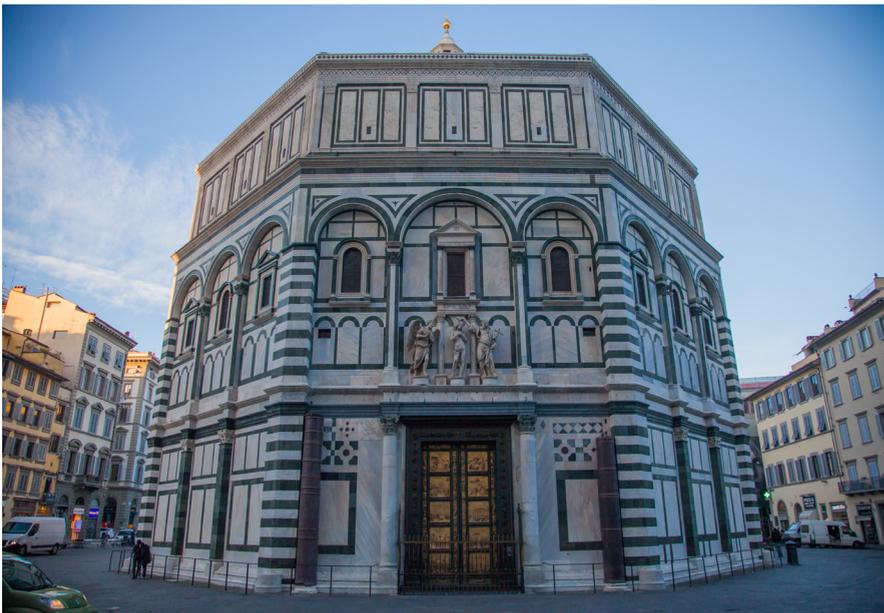Figure 3. Exterior view of the abstract sequence in *Baptizo* (courtesy of Levi Glass, 2020).

Figure 4. Façade of the Baptistry of Saint John, 1059-1128, Florence (courtesy of Bradley Weber, 2017).

Like Peter Greenaway's *Leonardo's Last Supper* (2008), Glass combines new moving image technologies with a canonical work of Renaissance art. No textbook survey of Western art can fail to include the Baptistry (Figure 4) for its contribution to the development of linear perspective and the *Gates of Paradise*, which are the quintessential example of relief sculpture. Famed for building the dome of the adjacent Florence Cathedral (1420–1461), the pioneering Renaissance architect Filippo Brunelleschi used the front façade of the Baptistry for his groundbreaking experiment in pictorial illusionism in 1425, which *Baptizo* playfully re-stages. Attempting to revive artistic approaches prevalent in Antiquity, Brunelleschi sought to discover the exact method behind linear perspective, which created the illusion of three-dimensional space on a two-dimensional surface. He used a painting of the Baptistry he had created in one-point or central perspective and a mirror to show how parallel lines converge in single vanishing point at the horizon line. The viewer could look through a hole right at the painting's vanishing point to the mirror, which then reflected the painted image proportionately onto its surface, and this flat mirrored image could then be successfully compared with the Baptistry in the flesh (Friedberg 2006: 15). Both Brunelleschi's experiment and Leon Battista Alberti's (1435) conceptualization of the technique in *On Painting* set out the use of linear perspective in theory and praxis. Thanks to this radical new optical illusion, which astonished viewers, the status of painting, which had long been seen as inferior to sculpture and architecture, skyrocketed. Popular *spalliera* (shoulder-height) paintings such as *The Ideal City* (Attributed to Fra Carnevale, c. 1480-84, Walters Art Collection) (Figure 5) paraded artists' mastery of the technique through balanced, ordered scenes of the perfect city square, which often included an octagonal Baptistry-like building.

One of the most prevalent and recognizable systems of representation in the arts from the Renaissance onwards, linear perspective enforces a way of seeing that has important implications for Glass's work and the immersive potential of the moving image in general. In this 'scopic regime,' as Petran Kockelkoren (2003: 53) calls it, an illusionistic image is neatly and coherently organized for the eye from a singular point of view. The closed, self-sufficient, and autonomous world remains fixed in time and sealed off from the space and body of the viewer (Kockelkoren 2003: 53).[4] Our vision is bound to the horizon line; we are detached, objective observers, passive witnesses to marvelous mimesis. In using imagery of the Baptistry, *Baptizo* offers a creative reworking of this visual system, which is still 'impose[d]...on our sensory equipment' (Kockelkoren 2015) and structures how we perceive and relate to our own reality.

By combining the mobile, temporal, and multisensory qualities of the moving image with the radical spatial possibilities of expanded cinema practices, Glass multiplies, eradicates, and rebuilds linear perspective. The medium of film addresses one major failure of Brunelleschi's experiment: the painted image is static, and only the reflective properties of the mirror enable the viewer to experience the movement of wind and clouds around the building (Friedberg 2006: 15). Each channel of *Baptizo* is shot from an individual, framed point of view, but the multiscreen format enables the

viewer to see from multiple viewpoints and angles, which evolve and shift over time. No singular view is forced upon the viewer, who has the freedom to choose where to look. And move: both the online and in-person formats require mobility in order to be experienced, and the viewer must pivot with the head, body, or hand.

Figure 5. *Spalliera* painting with Baptistry-like building. Attributed to Fra Carnevale, *The Ideal City*, between c. 1480-1484, oil and tempera on panel (courtesy of Walters Art Museum).

In addition to their freedom of movement in space, the viewer is granted virtual mobility through travel. In recreating a tourist's journey to Florence, Glass draws upon the visual strategies of urban panoramic films, which gave immobile spectators a sense of wonder by 'transporting' them to faraway destinations as if by magic (Gunning 2006a). Filmmakers such as Thomas Edison and the Lumière brothers bestowed a 'dose of scopic pleasure' (Gunning 1995: 121) upon late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century audiences by combining telepresence with new cinematic technologies, and cities became dazzling spectacles to be viewed on foot or by boat, automobile, or balloon (Friedberg 2006: 162). Directly linked with streetwalking along city sites such as arcades and department stores, the 'anatomy of movement' (Bruno 2007: 17) in early cinema underlines the haptic and spatial impact of film on the viewer. Accounting for this 'sensory spatiality,' Giuliana Bruno (2007: 16) shifts film theory's emphasis from 'sight' to 'site'—from the fixed gaze of the *voyeur* to the mobile 'site-seeing' of the *voyageur*. *Baptizo*'s tracking shots, which mimic the fluid movement of the site-seeing pedestrian, who soaks up buildings and architectural details, directly reference this history and grant the viewer the sense of movement in filmic space. The video starts with forward-tracking shots that approach the Baptistry from eight different routes and follow a clear vanishing point, while from 3:16 onwards, the lateral shots more commonly associated with film panoramas move horizontally or vertically around or up the façade. At 7:30, the smooth, sumptuous passage of the cameras up and out of the frame is shot with a vertical tilt akin to Edison's *View from a Balloon* (1901), and the dramatic shift from day to night also nods

to his *Pan American Exposition by Night* (1901), which showcased the temporal possibilities of film alongside the technology of electric light.

Apart from the still, stationary moments of *Baptizo*, Glass's lens maintains an unsteady shake suggestive of a tourist's handheld camera. The fact that he embraces the rough, variable style of personal footage reflects an integral aspect of his broader film-making practice, in which he seeks to retain the qualities of the medium and its mechanism (John 2015: 164). This 'texture of movement' (Uricchio 2011: 7), which often appeared in mounted shots of early filmmakers, activates a more embodied sense of 'being there' to the immersive experience. Indeed, *Baptizo* thrusts the viewer into a tourist trap. Glass includes sights and sounds that would spoil the view in postcards and urban panoramic films, which, on the whole, focus on the site and show crowds at a distance. With the exception of the film's final sequence, the body of the tourist is inescapable and disrupts the harmony of the geometric façade, from the muffled din of footsteps and voices to the vividly colored puffer jackets and rucksacks that coast in and out of the frame and sometimes block the shot altogether. Glass does not shy away from the dingy, loud, and tacky side of tourism either: the vulgar chaos of an ambulance, souvenir stand, horse and carriage, graffitied van, rickshaw, and trashcan seem to make a mockery of Alberti's adage that 'without order [in urban space] there can be nothing commodious, graceful, or noble' (Hansen and Spicer 2005: 65). Glass's edits and cuts intensify this visual and aural dissonance, and the unpredictable sequence of the video does not conform to a straightforward, linear narrative. He denies continuity across the channels as figures and vehicles that exit one frame fail to appear in the next, eerily disappearing.

Glass's radical cinematic construction requires aesthetic labor on our part to make sense of what we see. *Baptizo* takes us on a tour of the birth, death, and resurrection of linear perspective: after being lulled into still, balanced views of the building, at 3:16 we are suddenly plunged into the world of abstraction (Figure 3) as each channel cuts to close-up roving shots of the façade, jumping from a distanced vantage point to extreme magnification. The elimination of depth in the fragmented shots of the geometric pattern underlines the flat surface of the screens, dispelling the illusion of three-dimensional space in the moving image. In a sequence that seems to recall the greatest hits of abstract modernism, from the monochrome colors of Kazimir Malevich's *Black Square* (1915) to Robert Breer's animated *Form Phases I* (1952), visual abstraction is paired with musical abstraction as the rhythmic pulse of the synth soundtrack overtake the sound of tourists or any other audible ties to reality. The various breaks from the single viewpoint of illusionistic perspective throughout the video simulate the effects of analytic cubism, in which 'the eye is puzzled' by the 'constant shuttling between surface and depth' within the frame (Greenberg 1965: 74) and multiple points of view are presented at once.

Through his avant-garde approach to editing, Glass creates a new aesthetic experience out of personal tourist footage—a recognizable, banal type of moving image—that activates our aural and visual equipment in unexpected ways. Applying the handcrafted construction techniques of his sculpture

practice—a fusion of wood, industrial materials, and new technologies—to filmic construction, he cuts and shapes videos of the Baptistry as if they were material substance. Emphasizing Robert Beavers's (1998) observation that 'a bodily sense of filming is sustained through the editing,' this approach ignites our haptic engagement with filmic space, especially the surface of the Baptistry façade. The rough, cracked surface of the ancient marble is shot through Glass's textured method of filming, and in a pleasurable intersection between our sense of touch and movement, the material tangibility of the building, accentuated by the cool geometry of its design, combines with the camera's vertical lick up the façade at the video's end. This heightened tactility, which gives us 'a more spatial understanding of art' (Bruno 2014: 193), helps create an active, embodied, 'site-seeing' spectator within the moving image space.

Baptizo/Cineorama and Public Enchantment at *Luminocity*

In October 2020, visitors to the *Luminocity* video art exhibition, which was organized by the Kamloops Art Gallery, in Kamloops, British Columbia, could experience *Baptizo* within the architectural space of *Cineorama*. While non-essential travel was permitted within the Canadian province at the time, international borders were closed due to the pandemic, making the *Luminocity* site accessible to a strictly national and largely local audience. Amid various outdoor installations spread across the city, the work was part of a free week-long public art event that ran in the evenings from 6 p.m. to 2 a.m. in Riverside Park alongside the confluence of the North and South Thompson Rivers. Nestled in the middle of a circle of seven other video works, the *Cineorama* structure, which projected *Baptizo* on two-way interior and exterior screens, appeared as an alluring beacon of light. Freeing film from the hermetically sealed black box of the cinema, Glass deployed the luminous properties of the moving image to wondrous effect as the projected façade playfully combined with the physical building.

   Cineorama's locus at the center of the site and its status as a uniquely built structure attracted the curiosity of visitors, including members of the public who spotted the work while walking in the park with no intention of experiencing art (Glass 2021c, personal communication[5]). Annie Dell'Aria (2021: 9) refers to this type of 'unexpected and wondrous' encounter between people and the moving image in public spaces as 'enchantment'. Artworks such as Brand's life-size zoetrope, *Masstransiscope* (1980; restored in 2008 and 2013), which, like *Cineorama*, directly references nineteenth-century technologies, elicit what philosopher Jane Bennett's describes as 'a shot in the arm, a fleeting return to childlike excitement about life' (Dell'Aria 2021: 27, 32). Glass's form of enchantment activates the kind of visual pleasure and delight that made early film a 'cinema of attractions' (Dell'Aria 2021: 13). Formulated by Tom Gunning and André Gaudreault (2006b: 384, 381-388), this term first originated from Soviet film director Sergei Eisenstein, who deliberately used the word 'attraction' to emphasize the link between cinema and the fairground.

Figure 6. Visitors to *Cineorama* at *Luminocity* (courtesy of Frank Luca, 2020).

Indeed, with the outside offering a tantalizing peek at the experience within, *Cineorama* achieved the status of a fairground ride or attraction. As the only installation with restricted entry between the hours of 6 p.m. and 10 p.m., it was open to two people or one social group at a time in accordance with COVID-19 social distancing rules, and visitors often queued to await their turn (Figure 6)—an especially cold experience after it snowed. More broadly, *Luminocity*'s sprawling outdoor space recalls late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century sites such as amusement parks, fun fairs, circuses, and World's Fairs. The layout encouraged carnivalesque wandering through Riverside Park, supported by a map and walking guide found at an information kiosk located outside *Cineorama*.

Drawing upon the pleasure of cinematic architecture, the enchantment of *Baptizo/Cineorama* brings about a dynamic interaction with the structure and site in which we feel a disposition to move and act (Newen, De Bruin and Gallagher 2018: 6).[6] In his well-known text 'The Cult of Distraction,' Siegfried Kracauer (1926) saw 'picture palaces' [*Lichtspielhäuser*] or 'optical fairylands' as governed by tensions between two-dimensional images and the 'elegant surface splendor' of the built space of the theater (Friedberg 2006: 167-168). Glass's work seems to answer for the fact that the English translation of *Lichtspielhaus* excludes the words 'play' [*spiel*] and 'light' [*licht*]: his glowing 'optical fairyland' engages and expands the viewer's haptic and spatial relationship with architecture through the three-dimensional *Cineorama* structure and virtual, flat screen of moving images of the Baptistry. At *Luminocity*, the spectator experienced a double movement as a 'site-seeing' *voyageur* (Bruno 2007: 6) in both real and filmed architectural space. Mimicking the camera's path towards and then around the Baptistry, the visitor first glimpsed and heard the noisy building at a distance while navigating the

perimeter of the park, then were drawn in and walked around the exterior. This self-driven peripatetic movement was often inquisitive as some people approached the *Cineorama* simply to find out what it was (Glass 2021c, personal communication[7]). The changing images and looped repetition of the film often prompted multiple circuits of the building—the haptic trace of which became marked by footprints in the snow (Figure 6).

The surprise of having a multisensory tourist encounter with the Baptistry in Florence during the pandemic added to *Baptizo/Cineorama*'s allure and novelty. The highly adaptive format of the *Cineorama*, which can be broken down, flat-packed, and re-installed anywhere with relative ease, demonstrates the same kind of mobility and wonder as the traveling panorama tradition. The nineteenth century saw immersive, touring panoramic structures (Trumpener and Barringer 2020: 13) as well as moving panoramas, which were 'ephemeral small-scale attractions' (Huhtamo 2013: 10) that could be set up in local theatres, community halls, or churches. Just as nineteenth-century spectators could experience painted views of far-off cities and landscapes in such displays, viewers at *Luminocity* could marvel at witnessing the sights and sounds of a bustling European city amid the riverside landscape of Kamloops. Given the closure of Canada's borders during the pandemic, *Baptizo/Cineorama* temporarily restored the recently lost pleasure of global travel: two visitors remarked with delight that 'it feels like we're traveling,' while others reminisced about previous trips abroad (Glass 2020c, personal communication[8]). The feeling of pleasure and nostalgia arising from unexpectedly being 'transported' to the site of a faraway place or a memory encapsulates film's ability 'to render affects and, in turn to affect' (Bruno 2007: 7).

Figure 7. *Cineorama*'s miniaturized Baptistry façade (courtesy of Levi Glass, 2020).

Despite this connection to traveling panoramas, Glass's *Cineorama* departs from the predominant circular panoramic tradition from the late

eighteenth century to the present day in significant ways. The panorama's massive size is meant to overwhelm the viewer. Indeed, the nineteenth century the suffix 'o-rama' became synonymous with the grandiose and sensational (Oettermann 1997: 6), and the panoramic cinema at the Exposition Universelle of 1900, for example, was ten times the size of Glass's structure. Audiences are immersed in a continuous, whole image, which appears across multiple panels or curved surfaces and is typically viewed from a set distance on a viewing platform. The experience aims to replicate reality so closely that we can receive and process visual data without much effort (Grau 2003: 49). In the nineteenth century, dramatically staged lighting, sound effects, artificial wind, smoke, and a rotating platform became popular ways to further enhance the illusion. Recent panoramas by artists such as Yadegar Asisi and Olafur Eliasson tend to adhere to the historical panoramic paradigm with high-tech spectacles or expansive views. In the broader sphere of public art, much of the outdoor moving image displays that garner public and scholarly interest are large-scale, from massive media projections such as *The Image Mill* (2008) to superimposed building façades in the work of Krysztof Wodiczko or Doug Aitken.

   Glass's *Cineorama* at Luminocity demonstrates the implications of a moving image installation that awes and astonishes through intimacy rather than subliminal immersion or mass scale. Unseating the fixed spectatorial relations governed by the viewing platform, Glass's small wooden building dissolves the distance between audience and art and relishes in its lack of grandeur. At 16' x 16' x 10', the *Cineorama*, whose size, shape, and material recall a gazebo, can hold up to 16 people and became even more exclusive at *Luminocity* due to social distancing. In a playful inversion of the grand, subliminal view of a city or landscape espoused by the panorama tradition, the artist collapses the monumental size of the Baptistry into the compact *Cineorama*. The delight of the illusion lies in its miniaturization: when the exterior screens project a complete image of the façade (Figure 7), the slim columns and geometric pattern shrink to fit within the frame.

   In Glass's work, immersion is an invitation, and the panorama shape comforts rather than engulfs. Mobilizing the multisensory, 'affective power' of the panoramic space (Trumpener and Barringer 2020: 20), Glass heightens the illusion of being a tourist in Florence while maintaining the viewer's active presence in the space. With six speakers, two subwoofers, and eight projector speakers, the sound resonates loudly inside and out of the building, causing the floor and walls to vibrate. The street din, bells, and abstract tones are clearly distinguishable from one another, especially as Glass localizes elements of the contemporary soundtrack and the bell chorus, which plays through the projectors above. The synth notes shift around the structure in an echoing sensation, and the heartbeat, which Glass calls 'the rhythmic core of the work' (2021a, personal communication[9]), remains in one speaker, acting as an anchor for the body of the viewer. The vibrations in the *Cineorama* link with our own heartbeat to forge a direct sensorial interaction between the body and the environment. We also affect the space in turn: as soon as visitors step inside, their shadows disrupt the projection, and after sitting on the benches, their

heads continue to block the screen. As Bruno (2014: 78) highlights in Wodiczko's video façade projections, the human body is 'consistently animated with and against the body of building forms.' Outside the *Cineorama* spectators merge with both filmic and real architectural space, where the shadows of passers-by cast phantasmagoric projections on the ground and eerily join those of the tourists in the video (Figure 8).
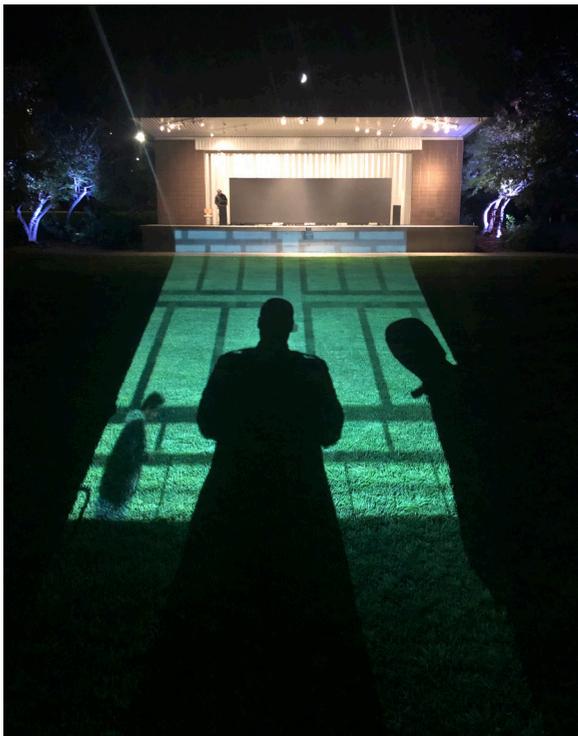

Figure 8. Visitors with projected images of *Baptizo* at *Luminocity* (courtesy of Levi Glass, 2020).

　　　　The body's interaction with the highly tactile *Baptizo* in the material environment of *Cineorama* is a haptic experience that results in heightened sensory awareness. Once the chevron-patterned doors shut (Figure 9), the space is not hermetically sealed off, blurring the boundaries between interior and exterior. While warmly sheltered from the cold night at *Luminocity*, visitors could still feel cool air coming through slots between the roof and wall, which ventilated the projector airflow, and despite the loud bells and soundtrack, conversations of people in the queue or circling the building were still discernible. With the audible thump of feet on the floor and creak of benches, the materiality of the building firmly grounds the viewer in reality, and the rough texture of beveled cedar, commonly used in Canadian architecture, which has been burnt, wire-brushed, and oiled through the method of cedar-burning, gives the cinematic space a rustic charm. Our sense of touch is further activated by the 'tension' of the tactile 'skin' of surfaces (Bruno 2014: 3) as we find pleasure in the classical marble, jagged shingles, or screen texture. Glass

seamlessly blends the haptic allure of the work's handmade elements with the sleek design of new technologies in the ceiling, the white eight-camera device built by the artist nestled within a symmetrical web of wooden beams (Figure 10).

Figure 9. *Cineorama*'s doors (courtesy of Levi Glass, 2020).

Glass's mode of enchantment creates an active viewer who is aware of the experience and the apparatus behind it. Given the octagonal shape of the Baptistry and *Cineorama*, a proportionate replication could have easily been achieved, but Glass avoids this kind of cheap illusionism. There is 'a thin layer where the image exists' (Glass 2020b, personal communication[10]): at 0:30 and 7:30, the viewer can drink in a 360° view of the Baptistry façade, which briefly maps spatially onto the interior and exterior walls of the *Cineorama*. Even in the moments when the channels sync up, they do not perfectly align, and there is noticeable gap between each screen (Figure 2). The image of the Baptistry is also a stylized version of the actual building, whose western side juts out into a two-bay apse and disrupts the otherwise symmetrical octagonal shape. In a twist on Brunelleschi's mirror, which verified the 'truth' of perspective (Friedberg 2006: 15), *Baptizo* produces a funhouse mirror image of reality, whose distortion of the truth is apparent to the spectator. Harkening back to the 'physiologically stimulated observer' of early film (Gunning 2006a: 35), the peek behind the curtain Glass offers can be related to other multiscreen or projected experiences that enchant a consciously aware viewer, such as the 'intentional daydreams' of Aitken's *SONG 1* (2012), which 'thwarts total immersion' (Dell'Aria 2014: 218-219), or Wodiczko's *Guests* (2009), in which the tangible surface of the façade is always visible (Bruno 2014: 78).

Capitalizing on the intersubjective exchange that is intrinsic to art in the public sphere (Colangelo 2019: 17), *Baptizo/Cineorama* drew upon its ability to stimulate viewers sensorially and spatially to create a shared experience encouraging empathy for others. According to 4E cognition,[11] spatial navigation, action, perception, and understanding the emotions of others rely
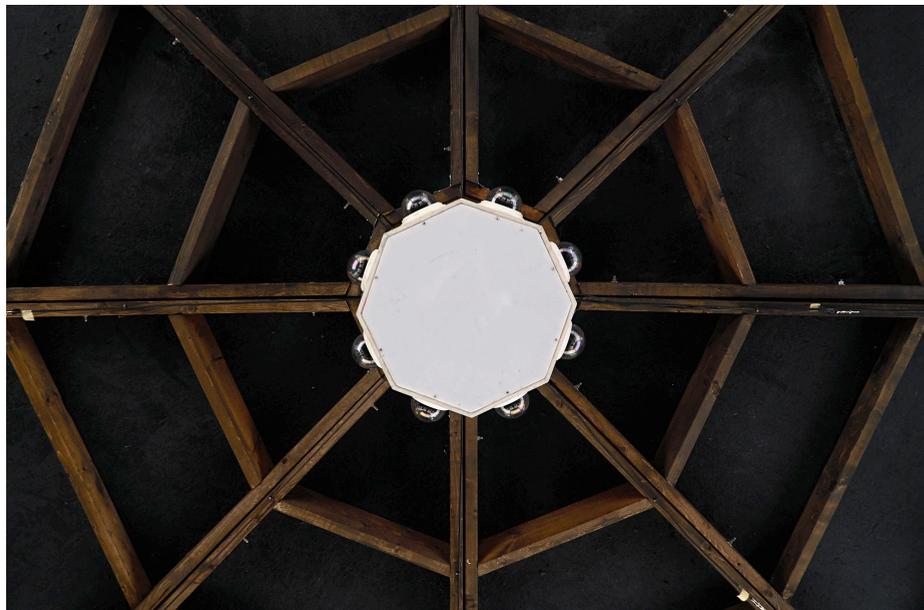
Figure 10. *Cineorama*'s ceiling (courtesy of Levi Glass, 2020).

upon 'an active and embodied interaction with [our] environment' (Newen et al. 2018: *5*). If we are in the same environment with others, intersubjectivity means we are jointly aware of this (Froese 2018: 165) and can 'participat[e] in the creation and transformation of meaning together' (De Jaegher 2018: 454), while empathy enables us to see or experience the situation from the perspectives of others. Fritz Breithaupt (2019: 7) defines empathy as 'assuming the perspective of another' or 'perspective-sharing,' which is less focused on affect or emotion—the response we most typically associate with empathy— but rather intent. 4E and phenomenology have emphasized the connection between empathy and intentionality: according to Shaun Gallagher, empathy involves 'attuning' to the same focus of the other person and, as Maurice Merleau-Ponty contends, 'perceiving another' and understanding they are 'directed toward the same world' (Zahavi and Michael 2018: 600). When we are, therefore, in a social environment in which a group of individuals direct their attention to the same art object, we are drawn into a whole host of empathic and intersubjective relations. Our actions and emotions align with those of others as the processes of looking at, reacting to, discussing, or taking pictures of include an awareness of others doing the same. As Per Aage Brandt (2004: 203) discusses, what 'attracts' the attention of one person then becomes 'interesting' for others, who then 'try to interpret that interaction and empathize' with that person.

While entry to the interior was restricted due COVID-19, the enchantment of the outdoor installation of *Baptizo/Cineorama* represented a rare opportunity to see art with others during the pandemic as well as have intersubjective interactions with strong potential for empathy. The work's central location in Kamloop's main park and the festival itself led

to gatherings of visitors around the structure (Figure 6), attracting passers-by from members of the homeless population to families with costumed children on Halloween night. In a domino effect of joint discovery, visitors who were drawn towards the structure out of curiosity then prompted others to investigate what they were looking at, with different groups thus becoming 'part of a whole intersubjective situation' (Froese 2018: 175). Easing some of the anxiety surrounding our proximity to strangers during COVID-19, the size of *Cineorama* meant interactions could happen at a safe distance but be close enough for meaningful exchanges. For Glass, the work and its situation at *Luminocity* 'levelled the playing field' among members of the public: viewers were inspired to 'bring their own interpretations to the work' (Glass 2021c, personal communication[12]) and exchange feelings of awe and confusion with others when they had been confronted with a less familiar cinematic environment and unconventional film practices (Dell'Aria 2016: 25). When enchantment is shared, we become more open to the perspectives of others and, through empathy, the possibility of seeing something differently 'because we note how others feel about it' (Breithaupt 2019: 7).

Not limited to real encounters outside the building, even lone visitors at *Luminocity* could participate in a shared viewing experience with the video itself in the interior or exterior space. Underlining the collective element of tourism, *Baptizo* centralizes the act of looking and observing how others see. According to Breithaupt (2019: 7), empathy's 'main effect... is a duplication and multiplication of our perceptions: we perceive what we perceive *and* we participate in the experiences of someone else.' As we are 'transported' through multiple camera 'perspectives' and 'viewpoints' to Florence, we become aware of the fact that we are now part of others' experience of the Baptistry. In what Glass calls 'a sense of togetherness' (2020b, personal communication[13]), we are able to forge empathetic connections with others in the video, especially as our attention is directed at the same work of architecture. This intersubjectivity is heightened by the fact that the joint focus on and pleasurable exploration of the Baptistry façade is dynamically mirrored in the viewer's interaction with the real *Cineorama*; mimicry, according to some cognitive theorists, acts as the 'social glue' between groups of people (Carr et al. 2018: 544).

Engaging with the slippage between the metaphorical and literal meanings of 'perspective,' 'viewpoint,' 'seeing/looking,' and 'perception,' *Baptizo/Cineorama* also involves seeing from different perspectives in an optical/spatial sense. The extreme perspectival shifts and 'breaks' from illusionistic perspective across the video are more intense in the space itself, and the rapid cuts that spin around the spectator at 3:01 in metric time with a jarring tone especially shock the senses. Marking the transition between linear perspective and abstraction, this brief disorientation, however, enables *re*-orientation and resets the viewer's senses to ready them for a new perspective (Kockelkoren 2003: 13). The action of entering then exiting the structure at *Luminocity* also results in a change in perspective: the inner/outer screenings of *Baptizo* offered different spatial and haptic experiences. Indeed, after emerging from the interior space, many visitors opted to view the video

again from the exterior—a desire akin to the thrill of a second merry-go-round ride on a different horse.

This wondrous and pleasurable interaction with perspectives other than our own—both literal and imagined—may open up or activate different ways of seeing. The physiological impact of the experience on the body, especially through immersion, which involves 'a process, a change, a passage from one mental state to another' (Grau 2003: 13), can shift or even change our perception of others; the perspective-sharing of empathy is not simply an imaginative occurrence in the mind but is actually *felt through* and *because of* bodily processes. The lasting effect of the cinematic encounter of *Baptizo/ Cineorama* at *Luminocity* on audiences is ensured through enchantment—'a sensory experience that both carries [the viewer] away and returns them to a deeper engagement with the world' (Dell'Aria 2021: 26).

VR Baptizo/Cineorama: Enchantment at Home

During the pandemic, Glass has adapted an online VR version of the *Luminocity* installation to enable viewers to experience *Baptizo/Cineorama* on any device at no cost. A purpose-built VR interface allows the user to move 360° in the *Cineorama* and see two-dimensional looped footage of the building from the outside, and there is also a YouTube VR version[14] of the interior. With mobility still deemed high-risk in most countries in 2021, audiences can engage in an immersive experience of Glass's work without having to travel or leave their homes by using a VR headset. The digitization of *Baptizo/Cineorama* not only increases accessibility but is also an act of preservation: the interface's video tour of the phantasmagoric *Cineorama* exterior at *Luminocity* recreates an ephemeral installation that no longer exists in, as Glass puts it, a 'potentially endless exhibition' (2021c, personal communication[15]).

Glass's online version of *Baptizo/Cineorama* presents a productive case study in questioning established paradigms for virtual viewer-artwork relations and revealing the more diverse set of goals and strategies at play in VR practices. While VR formats can accommodate an 'infinite' number of artistic approaches (Birnbaum 2019), recent high-gloss VR works made by prominent artists or as part of spectacles such as the Van Gogh Experience have led to the assumption that immersion must be done through advanced and cutting-edge technologies to have significance. Such formats, however, may lose the specificity of artists' work, which raises concerns about how the technique and design of these media and interfaces are evaluated. Glass sees VR as an experimental, flexible medium and envisages adapting the *Cineorama* project into a permanent viewing room to show different works or test out new ideas. The rapidly evolving nature of VR technologies presents opportunities for the online version to be 'played with, failed on, and expanded. Online art affords this malleability and is perhaps what some early expanded cinema artists dreamed of' (Glass 2021c, personal communication[16]). Glass sees any quirks and frustrations as 'the papercuts we get' from working in virtual media,

which he equates to projectors that would overheat or slides that would crack in early cinema. Indeed, the diverse range of digital interfaces, formats, and devices artists can use to create and disseminate moving images today parallels the confluence of film technologies and other image-viewing media in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Amid the Mutoscope, small-scale moving panoramas, travelling cinema, and Cineorama, earlier philosophical or optical toys such as the kineograph, zoetrope, and praxinoscope, which produced animated rather than moving pictures, remained popular with the advent of cinema and were seen as complementary rather than competitive media (Doane 2006: 152-153).

The viewing practices associated with the philosophical toy offer a valuable framework for examining the exploratory and playful relationship between art and audience in Glass's VR *Baptizo/Cineorama*. As Mary Ann Doane (2006: 151-165) has discussed, hand-held items like flipbooks or zoetropes miniaturized movement on a portable device and 'required something of the spectator,' without whom animated images could not be produced. The related phenomenon of the moving panorama, too, was miniaturized through transparency rolls in objects from peepshow boxes to toy panoramas, which were especially popular in mid-nineteenth-century America (Huhtamo 2013: 47). Philosophical toys required hand-eye coordination and active tactile engagement to be operated; cranking handles, mounting photocards, and flipping pages not only brought viewers into closer proximity with images but also offered the pleasure of touch and wonder of holding animated images in the palm of one's hand. Aimed at adults and children alike and frequently used in education, these apparatuses could be owned, coming in compact, affordable versions like the Lumière brothers' kinora, and magazines published make-your-own panoramas (Huhtamo 2013: 178) and were oriented towards a single viewer or small group in domestic rather than public settings.

Harnessing these aspects of the philosophical toy and the wonder of the cinematic situation at *Luminocity*, Glass's VR version of *Baptizo/Cineorama* introduces enchantment into our domestic space and personal devices through a small-scale experience of art. As with the real panorama tradition, scholarly or mainstream discussions of immersive VR tend to stress the creation of a 'high-grade feeling of immersion' in a 'completely alternative reality' (Grau 2003: 9, 7, 13). Even though platforms such as *Acute Art* have recently raised the profile of online encounters with art, immersive VR or Augmented Reality (AR) is seen to have limited potential in domestic settings because the technology cannot simulate the massive scale of a truly subliminal experience, especially if viewed on a phone ('Future Art Audiences' 2021). Overwhelming immersion, however, is not the goal of Glass's VR, which enchants through intimacy, touch, and curiosity and, like the real *Cineorama*, calls for an active viewer who is awed by but aware of the technology behind the encounter. The technology in this case is indeed a noticeable part of the experience: VR headsets in galleries and at home have attracted criticism for being heavy, clunky, and ugly, and their domestic use has not been particularly popular or prevalent ('Future Art Audiences' 2021). Lacking the sleek design

we associate with new technologies, the cheap, widely available cardboard VR headset I used for this article (Figure 11) has a nostalgic, retro charm, especially for viewers who grew up with the red plastic viewmaster. Recalling the labor of cutting and pasting together homemade panoramas from nineteenth-century magazines, its DIY assembly involves a kind of instructive play through watching how-to videos and bending, folding, velcroing, sticking on felt, and snapping the phone into place through trial and error.

The VR *Baptizo/Cineorama* invokes the meaning of 'enchantment' in a magical sense by reanimating our relationship with our technological devices. While our phones can immediately show us photos and videos of the Baptistry, *Baptizo*'s embodied experience brings surprise and delight to the viewer's sudden shift from their domestic environment to Florence. The slight blurriness from weak WiFi and the low-quality plastic lenses do not diminish the jolt of our plunge into immersion and the disorienting loss of real space. Moving images encircle the spectator at every turn of the head, and noise-cancelling headphones intensify the vibration of the bass as well as ambulatory noises; the cough or footstep of a tourist are so distinct they appear to emanate from real space. Along with the non-linear narrative of the film and its dissonant cuts and edits, the sensation of unexpectedness heightens the viewer's aesthetic engagement with the work.

Figure 11. Photo of cardboard VR headset (courtesy of the author, 2021).

Through the viewer's physical movement, the VR *Baptizo/Cineorama* encourages active and pleasurable 'site-seeing' with cinematic and Renaissance architecture. In his digitization of architecture, Glass's work enters what Bruno calls 'the architectural imaginary' in the virtual building forms and constructions of artists such as Sarah Oppenheimer and Rachel Whiteread. In *Baptizo/Cineorama*, too, architecture is 'far from being abstracted space; rather it becomes the envelope, the skin of our inhabitation' (Bruno 2014: 187). He folds the spatial environments of the *Cineorama* and Baptistry into a haptically charged viewing space. While the material structure of both buildings is now rendered immaterial, the tactility of their different surfaces—wood, screen, marble—engages with the texture of the phone screen. Whether played on a phone, computer, headset, or tablet, optical tracking relies on our movement in the virtual architectural space, which is, in turn, linked to physical motion in real space. While limited to a fixed distance from the screens, we have Three Degrees of Freedom (3DoF) and must play an active role in triggering movement. The headset impels us to stand up and shuffle around our surroundings, and a flick of the wrist can reveal different views of the Baptistry on *Cineorama*'s multiple screens. Like the delight of a carnival ride, the combination of real and filmic motion can have a physiological effect of the body: the acute shuttering sensation at 3:01 coupled with our movement is dizzying, and the YouTube toggle lets us gleefully whirl at breakneck speed in 360°. Any motion or gesture necessitates close haptic engagement with a device—the weight of laptop on a lap, a finger on a trackpad or mouse (Friedberg 2006: 7). Through the rough texture of a cardboard headset pressed into the face or the grasping and tilting of a smooth iPhone, the sensation of touch can, as with philosophical toys like flipbooks (Doane 2006: 153), elicit pleasure and may have the potential to 'lead to emotional object relations' (John 2015: 172).

The enchantment of the single-user VR *Baptizo/Cineorama* cannot be experienced with others through the current technology, leading to a loss of the empathetic connections with strangers at *Luminocity*. Strategies for generating empathy or emotion in VR tend to involve overwhelming immersion or simulation: recent interdisciplinary research[17] on VR, which Chris Milk (2015) identified as the 'ultimate empathy machine,' has focused on its ability to simulate the illusion of being in someone else's body, while film makers such as Alejandro G. Iñàrritu have similarly used VR so that the viewer sees from a different viewpoint in a realistic narrative ('Can Virtual Reality...' 2018). According to Breithaupt (2019: 7), however, simulation does not necessarily result in empathy or, by extension, altruism, which both require that 'we perceive what we perceive *and* we participate in the experiences of someone else.' True intersubjectivity, too, relies on the difference between self and others, and a similar awareness is fundamental for interpersonal understanding (Zahavi and Michael 2018: 597). In the VR *Baptizo/Cineorama*, the viewer's intersubjective relations with the filmed figures are meaningfully brought into contact with their own personal space. Rather than simulate a single point of view, multiple 'perspectives' are collapsed together in the digital environment through a kind of matryoshka-doll effect: the viewer can, for example, look through VR glasses

to see *Cineorama*, whose screens show filmed views of tourists gazing at the Baptistry. An online space that brings together different 'perspectives' and ways of seeing bears a far more subtle but no less potent emotional power. As Bruno writes (2007: 7), film 'moves, and fundamentally "moves" us,' transforming our inner space.

Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic represents a watershed moment for innovative moving image practices that dynamically undercut conventional cinematic situations in real or online spaces and, like early film in the *fin de siècle* or expanded cinema in the 1960s, have the potential to revitalize and recalibrate the relationship between art and viewer. This article has stressed the continued importance of public moving image installations in engaging broad audiences who can view art (safely) together. Glass's *Baptizo/Cineorama* underlines that such displays do not need to be massive or overwhelming to enchant or create empathy for others. Not limited to a particular geographical location or institutional setting, the highly adaptive panorama format also gives *Cineorama* a promising afterlife without detracting from the thrill of encounter at different sites. This examination of Glass's work in VR points to a broader reassessment of the moving image's potential in domestic spaces, which remains critical as COVID-19 continues to restrict our ability to leave our homes, travel, or visit museums. Recovering the spirit of philosophical toys and the expansive field of image consumption in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it is crucial to recognize the existence of multifarious forms of creative expression and audience interaction in the digital realm. Looking beyond COVID-19, a more expansive picture of the innovative and accessible new spaces for the moving image is required, 'papercuts' and all.

1. The 2020 *Luminocity* exhibition (https://luminocity.ca/) was curated by Charo Neville of the Kamloops Art Gallery and Zoë Chan of the Vancouver Art Gallery.
2. The VR interface can be found at: http://cineorama.ca/.
3. Glass L (2020a, June 29) Personal communication, video interview, *Baptizo/Cineorama*.
4. This conceptualization of linear perspective does have obvious exceptions that involve viewers in more embodied way, but this article focuses on the implications of this way of seeing as defined by Erwin Panowsky, Jonathan Crary, and Petran Kockelkoren, among others.
5. Glass L (2021c, October 10) Personal communication, video interview, *Luminocity*.

6. This disposition to act in an environment is referred to as 'enactment' in 4E cognition.

7. Glass L (2021c, October 10) Personal communication, video interview, *Luminocity*.

8. Glass L (2020c, December 12) Personal communication, video interview, *Luminocity*.

9. Glass L (2021a, April 20) Personal communication, video interview, sound in *Baptizo/Cineorama*.

10. Glass L (2020b, September 25) Personal communication, video interview, *Baptizo/Cineorama*.

11. 4E is a recently established field of research dedicated to embodied, embedded, enacted, and extended cognition. The 4E paradigm emphasizes that cognitive processes do not just occur in the brain but depend on complex interactions between the body, brain, and environment.

12. Glass L (2021c, October 10) Personal communication, video interview, *Luminocity*.

13. Glass L (2020b, September 25) Personal communication, video interview, *Baptizo/Cineorama*.

14. The YouTube VR version is available here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EuSsLSU7574&t=214s.

15. Glass L (2021b, May 30) Personal communication, email correspondence, VR *Cineorama*.

16. Glass L (2021b, May 30) Personal communication, email correspondence, VR *Cineorama*.

17. See, for example: Herrera F, Bailenson J, Weisz E, Ogle E, and Zaki J (2018) Building long-term empathy: A large-scale comparison of traditional and virtual reality perspective-taking. *PLoS ONE*, 13(10): e0204494. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0204494.

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