

Reflections on the meaning of pastiche and its relevance to the process of making the film *Transparent* and its distribution.

Siobhan Davies May 2024.

TRANSPARENT 2023 directed by Siobhan Davies in collaboration with David Hinton and Hugo Glendinning.

I had never used the term Pastiche when making a dance and am now learning how to adopt the term in relationship to two of the films I have made and to the wider field of artists working with found footage.

All This Can Happen 2012 and *Transparent* 2023 both repurpose film and photographic material from many different sources.

To me *Transparent* is a version of an archaeological site.

Initially I found shards of information held in many images which I had collected over years. Each one had given me a spark of physical recognition however distanced they were from dance.

When I began to piece some of them together, even though they were from many different sources, I felt unexpected connections between them, and these led me to a more layered understanding of how movement can be unearthed from my body.

The film is both a choreography and a dance but not in a traditional sense. We all are a body rather than having one and I wanted to be more accurate about the many felt experiences I have had throughout my life which live outside dance, but which ultimately inform my dance.

The shards included images from the arts, sciences, the animal and natural world, sport and dance, with some biographical information.

I printed hundreds of images on acetate paper and over several years I developed a practice of sliding, superimposing, and layering the images until I arrived at a particular and often less orthodox combination. In that moment I felt as if a previous pattern of thought and feeling was in the process of altering within me and that I had touched on something known within me but as yet not recognised or languaged by me. A place where dance might begin.

I trusted the sensations enough for me to continue to search for other combinations of images many of which were later included in the film *Transparent*.

Using the transparencies let me see through from one world to another, from one time to another, from the use of one material or medium to another.

Dance involves movement and constant change and the see-through nature of my practice helped me to experience ideas and images as less fixed in time or place but rather on a way to becoming something else or emerging out of what came before.

Later this understanding helped me to recognise how the term pastiche could be applied to my film.

My understanding of pastiche in relationship to Transparent is that each of the original images exist in their own right and have their own history but placed within a constellation of images they can give the viewer a chance to interact and create empathetic threads of gesture across time, place and materials.

I think of pastiche, in my case, as threading different materials together to create altered perspectives both on the original and what they have been transformed into. What they have become is due solely to the imagination, research and work of the pastiche artist.

Crediting all the shards used in the film was important to me and I think that practice is correct. I also paid for them because at that time I had not yet fully appreciated the term pastiche.

The end credits are long, and I am proud that a dance film can be made out of such rich and varied materials.

I was also nervous that the organisation I was then a director of might be left vulnerable after I had retired.

The licences for them will run out at different times.

I am interested to extend the life of the film but in the future, I won't have the means to pay for the licensing and want to encourage the use of pastiche to support my and many others who work with found footage.

Much of the footage belongs to private people who we reached and there were very few we could not find.

The major artists, unless they were beyond the age of needing a licence, were under the care of DACS and the estates of these artists did ask us not to superimpose or cut into any other image unless it was during the end section when I was seen to be researching ideas.

Each image is irreplaceable by another because each has been chosen for an emotional reason and a particular angle, position, quality of image, use of light and place within the frame needs to be and feel right.

When I began the whole process of collecting imagery, I was a bit haphazard with keeping records. I was too excited by the process to concentrate on indexing them but over time I employed someone to make a spread sheet of all the information needed to include specific images which were the only ones I wanted to use.

I now recognise that I can and should apply the pastiche exemption for the future of my two films.

ALL THIS CAN HAPPEN 2012 created by Siobhan Davies and filmmaker David Hinton in 2012.

<https://vimeo.com/200807625?share=copy> PW: SDSfilm2012

This film was made before the term pastiche was used and it was necessary for us to pay the archives. It is now out of licence and both David and I dearly want the film to continue to be available. The film was successful and has more audiences to reach so from now on we will show it under the pastiche exemption.

All This Can Happen is a film constructed entirely from Archive photographs and footage from the earliest days of cinema and photography.

Based on Robert Walser's novella *The Walk* (1917), the film follows the footsteps of the protagonist as a series of small adventures and chance encounters which take the walker from idiosyncratic observations of ordinary events towards a deeper pondering on the comedy, heartbreak, and variety of life. The imagery chosen from early studies of movement, films of the natural world, news footage, home movies bring to light the possibilities of ordinary movements from the everyday which appear, freeze and then move on. Juxtapositions, different speeds, and split frame techniques, convey the walkers state of mind as he encounters, observes, and makes comment on the world he passes through.