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**Northumbria
University**
NEWCASTLE

PARALLEL





Type of output:
Digital/Visual
Media (Film)

by
Cecilia Stenbom

Below: Parallel (film still)

Photo credit: Cecilia Stenbom

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SUMMARY

Parallel (2016) is a 14-minute experimental film that examines the enduring resonance of landscape and location in television and cinema. Using strategies of re-enactment, it transposes scenes of narrative fiction and substitutes settings to produce a series of uncanny vignettes.

The research interrogated audience expectations of popular narrative fiction and explored the agency of location in the cinematic treatment of landscape and character. It set out to reclaim the gap between fiction and reality by anchoring the project with local communities and, through innovative use of popular moving image media, it sought to uncover visual and cultural connections between the North East of England and West Sweden.

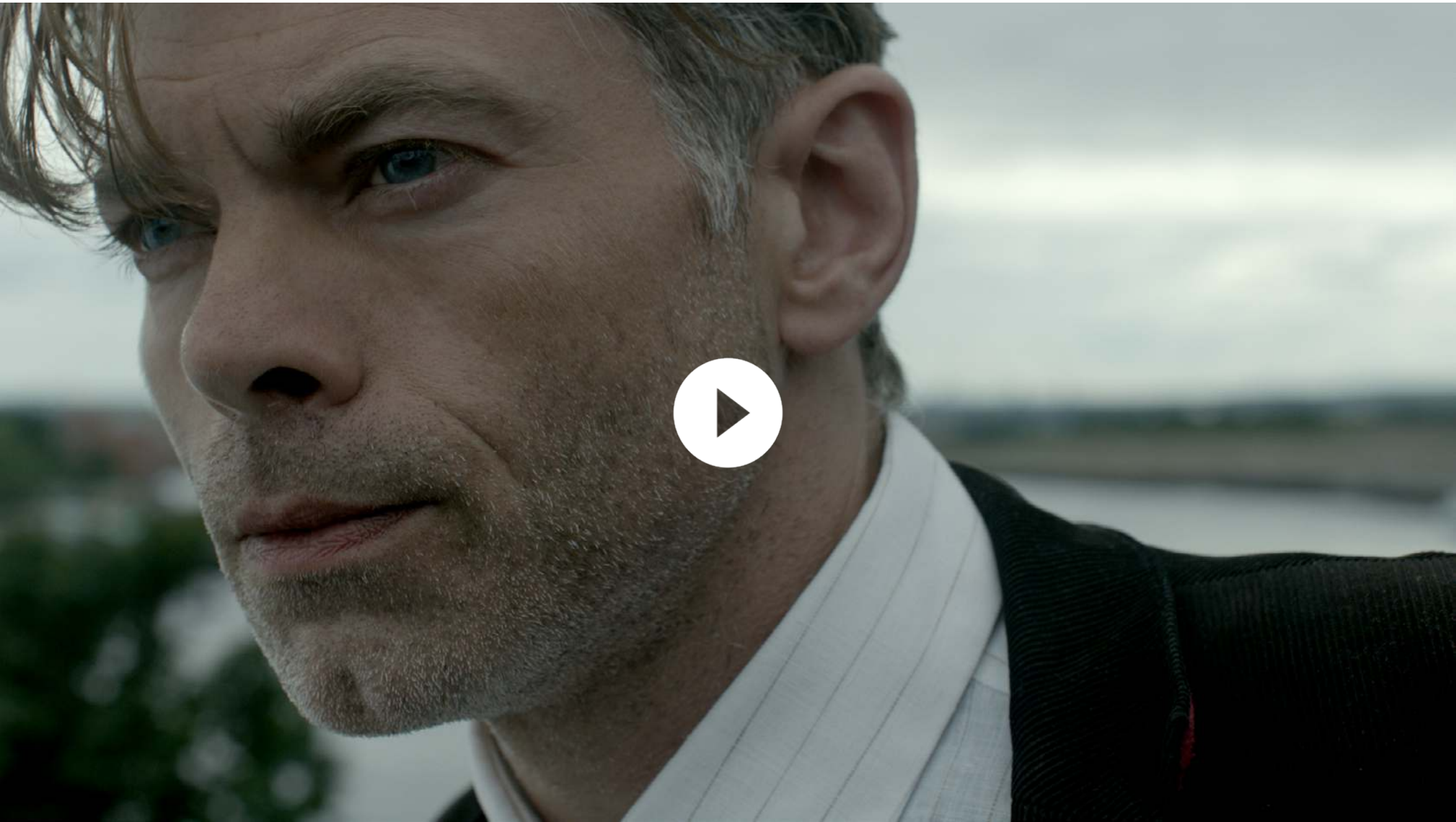
The use of re-enacted representations and of manipulated temporalities situates the work in the field of contemporary art practice, contributing to a discourse around popular narrative fiction, landscape and community. Commissioned for the Tall Ships Cultural Festival (2016) the project emphasised the relationship between Blyth and Gothenburg – the two ports connected by the Regatta.

Scene selection was determined from an open call to local communities and these deconstructed cinematic episodes became a shot list and script for the film. From a further call out, local amateur performers and non-actors were cast. *Parallel* enacted a cinematic exchange whereby scenes were transposed and reimagined in the opposite location; scenes set in Sweden restaged and filmed in the UK and vice versa.

Commissioned with support from Arts Council England and the University of Gothenburg, Sweden, *Parallel* premiered during the Tall Ships Regatta in Blyth, and was selected by Film & Video Umbrella for *Somewhere Becoming Sea*, Humberside Gallery for Hull City of Culture (2017).

Below: *Parallel* (film still)
Photo credit: Cecilia Stenbom

Link to *Parallel* on Vimeo:
<https://vimeo.com/437853096/864770891a>



RESEARCH CHALLENGE

The aim of the research was to work with local communities to re-enact scenes from opposite ends of the North Sea to explore the agency of location in the cinematic treatment of landscape and character and uncover visual and cultural connections between the North East of England and West Sweden.

The project sought to use open call processes to cast local participants and identify landscapes to serve as substitute locations for re-enactments and to produce a short experimental film that eschewed narrative conventions and disrupted audience expectations of cinema and place.



Above and below: *Parallel* (film still)

Photo credit: Cecilia Stenbom

CONTEXT

Parallel asked how does cinematic treatment transform and fiction the landscape? A film location can have a long-lasting impact on the local community, for example, so-called 'movie induced tourism' can increase visitor numbers by a third (Riley, Baker, Carlton & Van Doren, 1998). In such a way, real locations become part-fictionalised.

Instead of drawing attention to actual filming locations, *Parallel* restaged selected film scenes from opposing shores of the North Sea in new, substitute locations. The use of substitute locations - when a film or TV-series is set in one place but filmed in another location - is often done for reasons of economy or convenience. In the case of *Parallel*, the locations were substituted to further transform and fictionalise the landscape.

The initial concept for *Parallel* emerged from previous research that had investigated visual and cultural connections between Stenbom's native Sweden and adopted home of the UK. For example, *The Case* (2012) reinterpreted Scandinavian Noir drama in Berwick. *Parallel* took further the idea of using popular content to connect the two locations by including a range of different material - in terms of genre and style - and transposed these across the North Sea by filming in both the UK and Sweden.

Below: *Parallel* (film still)
Photo credit: Cecilia Stenbom



In its approach, *Parallel* contributes to a growing body of practitioners including Jeremy Deller, Douglas Gordon, Christian Marclay, Omar Fast, and Tania Bruguera who employ cinematic techniques to re-enact or restage real or fictional experiences together with members of a particular community. For example, Matt Stokes' restaging of a Northern Soul event at a former venue in *Long After Tonight* (2005), or Rosa Barba assembling a group of residents to re-inhabit an abandoned industrial site in *Subconscious Society* (2014).

However, unlike Stokes or Barba - who both use re-enactment to reclaim an existing site - *Parallel* uses re-enactment to anchor fictions in communities at new locations and thereby also facilitating an exchange.

Below: *Parallel* (film still)
Photo credit: Cecilia Stenbom



METHODS AND PROCESSES

The project began with a call-out for suggestions of film scenes that had been filmed or set near the North Sea and could then be considered for re-enactment. The call was targeted to community groups based in Northumberland, UK and the greater Gothenburg area in Sweden. Responses brought an eclectic mix of material ranging from crime television drama and science fiction to art-house cinema.

8 scenes were selected out of 72 suggestions. The UK selection came from sci-fi films (*Alien 3*), gangster drama (*Get Carter*) and comedy (*Billy Elliot*) as well as police TV-drama (*Vera*) - all filmed in the North East of England. From Sweden the costume drama *How Soon is Now*, feature-length action thriller *Kodnamn Lisa*, screwball comedy *Göta Kanal* and an early Ingmar Bergman film *Port of Call* were selected to reflect a breadth of genre.

The scenes were then stripped of dialogue and action and deconstructed into a shot list that became the shooting script for the film. Stripped of context, dialogue and story the individual shots could then be assembled and re-written as a non-narrative short film.

Then followed the process of finding locations that would be suitable for the scenes. This was achieved through word-of-mouth, satellite footage searches and scouting recces in both Sweden and UK.

Below left: Reference stills
Photo credit: Kodnamm Lisa, 2012



Below left: Reference stills
Photo credit: Port of Call, 1948



A second call-out for performers linked to the local community shaped the casting process.

Parallel filmed in the UK and Sweden in July 2016. During filming each separate shot from the selected material was reconstructed in terms of framing and movement. The performers were asked to inhabit the screen based upon these shots rather than perform a role for the camera. In this way, the film captured the gap between a performed re-enactment and documentation of an unscripted moment within a carefully composed frame.

The resulting film became a series of shots with characters which appeared like a narrative drama but stripped of any action and dialogue. The result of this approach was a film deprived of narrative information. It had the look of a conventional televisual or cinematic drama, but the lack of speech and actions disrupted viewer expectations of screen-based conventions.

Northumberland County Council commissioned the work through Active Northumberland with funds from Arts Council England and the University of Gothenburg, Sweden. The total production budget was £12,000.



Right and below: Production shots

DISSEMINATION

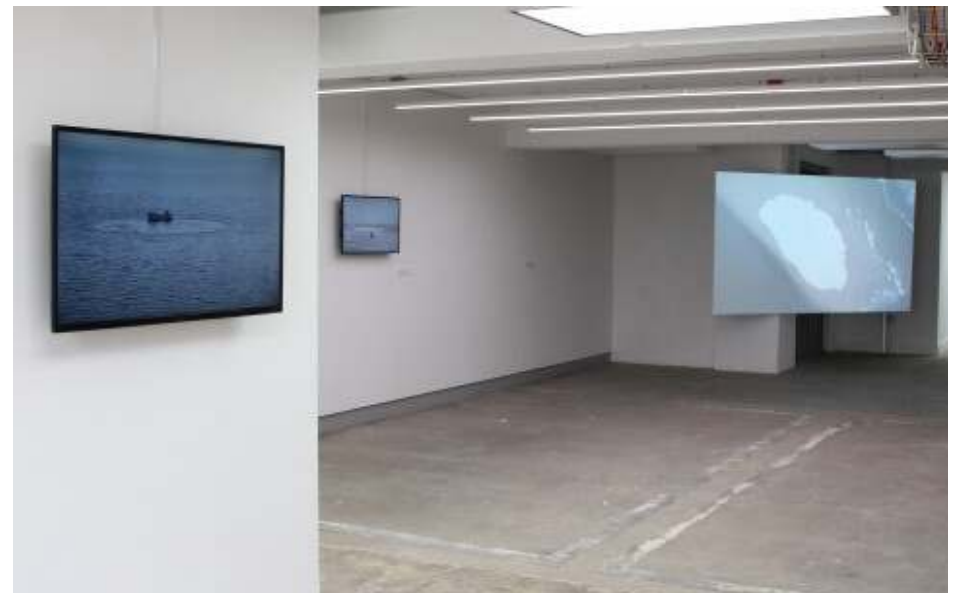
Parallel has had two high profile public presentations.

Parallel was first presented to the public on large-scale outdoor screens at the evening celebrations for the Blythe Tall Ships Regatta in August 2016. It was screened nightly during the festival. While there are no exact audience figures for the public film screening, the festival as a whole had nearly 500.000 visitors in total (Northumberland County Council, 2016).

In 2017 *Parallel* was re-commissioned for *Somewhere Becoming Sea*, a group exhibition that examined the ever-changing boundaries between land and sea curated by Film & Video Umbrella at Humber Street Gallery for Hull City of Culture. A subtle underscore was added to the film for this exhibition – composed by Ziad Jabero – that alluded to the type of film and television scenes that the work originated from.



Above: *Parallel* screening during Tall Ships Cultural Festival
Photo credit: Cecilia Stenbom



Below: *Parallel* in *Somewhere Becoming Sea*
Photo credit: Humber Street Gallery

Selected links:

Film and Video Umbrella:

<https://www.fvu.co.uk/projects/fvu-touring-somewhere-becoming-sea>

Humber Street Gallery:

<http://www.humberstreetgallery.co.uk/exhibition/somewhere-becoming-sea/>

Workplace Foundation:

https://workplacefoundation.art/artists/45-cecilia-stenbom/works/#/image_popup/artwork9693/

Coverage of Tall Ships Cultural Festival:

<https://www.chroniclive.co.uk/whats-on/family-kids-news/tall-ships-blyth-favourite-19-11818173>

<https://www.newspostleader.co.uk/news/video-watch-the-stunning-tall-ships-fireworks-display-404926>

<https://www.northumberlandgazette.co.uk/news/video-watch-the-stunning-tall-ships-fireworks-display-404926>



Right: *Parallel* featured on in *Somewhere Becoming Sea* banner in Hull

REFERENCES

Northumberland County Council (2016) Tall Ships net £13.5million boost for Northumberland.

Available at: <https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/News/2016/Dec/Tall-Ships-net-13-5million-boost-for-Northumberla.aspx> (Accessed: 28/09/2019)

Riley, Baker, Carlton & Van Doren (1998) 'Movie induced tourism' *Annals of Tourism Research*, 25(10), pp. 919-935.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Northumberland County Council

Arts Council England

Film & Video Umbrella

Film Credits:

A film by Cecilia Stenbom

Producer Gerry Maguire

Director of Cinematography Emma Dalesman

UK CREW

1st Assistant Director Gerry Maguire

Focus Puller Steve Aitchison

Camera Assistant Michael Gardner

Grip and Lighting Kev Todd

Costumer Supervisor Laura Jane Aitman

Make up Artist Kristina Foster

SWEDEN CREW

Production Manager Mawin Andersson , Anchor Point Pictures

Research and Location Rosemarie Wolf

Focus Puller Linn Hillar

Camera Assistant Philip Lager

Costume Supervisor Jonathan Schultz

Makeup Artist My Åkesson

PARTICIPANTS

Rayburn 'Ray' Bainbridge

George Davidson

Janet Dodds

Linda Hansen

Helena Jansson

Sarah Louise Johnson

Mimi Kennedy

Liz King

Felicia Klang

Wayne Lancaster

Jan Lindwall

Ron Macdonald

Jimmy Tripolitsiotis

Joshua Turner

Allie Walton

Brian Zulu

Michael Östervee

Right: *Parallel on Somewhere
Becoming Sea* exhibition flyer

Photo credit: Humber Street Gallery



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