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## Art Reviews / Criticism in the Saskatoon area by Bart Gazzola

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## [Manuel Chantre / Memorsion](#)

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I was speaking to a filmmaker about how sometimes you want to know the inner machinery and secret workings of artwork but other times you don't. If you remember Gordon Monahan's *Seeing Sound* at the College Gallery in 2012, you'll appreciate what I mean. In fact, that knowledge could ruin your experience of said work: like a sterile and overtly specific technical manual, it can kill any transcendence.

Usually, that word is to be avoided: it has a bruised and abused history (looking at you, Greenberg). But consider that sentiment while in the environment created by Manuel Chantre, titled *Memorsion*.

*Memorsion* is in the upstairs "event space" that aka and paved share (it may be the first "regular" exhibition I've seen in that space, but it was an amenable and exciting space that was used often during Sounds Like III, this past July). The physical requirements of *Memorsion* necessitated this: this may be the most ambitious installation I've ever seen at paved. There are multiple screens, multiple projections and the audio suffuses the space in a manner that can be alternately hypnotic, soothing and grating. A multitude of screens fill the room, at regular intervals, but not always facing in the same direction, though all identical in size and shape. Their translucent nature allows you to see not just the same image many times, but to see the same image through "itself" – or another image.

There are 18 screens and four projectors, and the images and audio both seem to build towards a crescendo, then resting, then resurging. Scenes are often broken by vacillating horizontal lines (like an old TV broadcast), and the "eye" of the camera moves, sometimes smoothly, sometimes in a jerky and almost violent manner. There are fragmented geometrics, like ice or shapes, that fly through space, and these give way to full colour projections of a glowing yellow or an intense blue (synced with a kind of ozone burning sizzle drone). I'm reminded of the movie **Metropolis**, with mechanical shapes accompanied by ominous gongs, and motorized forms, and industrial wastelands...dark, hopeless, abandoned and ruined sites (interiors and exteriors), strewn with trash. When the faces appear, six of them, downcast, wiping or washing, possibly tears or ablutions. Not all the same projectors are showing the same image at the same time: there are variations, relating, overlapping, and allowing one scene to be seen through another. At times I feel like I'm looking at a ghost of a city, or a large apparition that haunts the space.

Primarily black and white, the monochromatic cast gives the space a mournful feel, or a sense of gravitas: whether graffiti and urban desolation, faces that seem grieving and broken, all flashing and looping, appearing briefly but sure to reappear in the looped projections to emphasize the "dark mood".



My first experience of *Memorsion*, moving among the same face on six screens, staggered and massive, brought to mind the film works of Leni Riefenstahl, that unrepentent Nazi filmmaker who conceived of the legitimizing carnivals that the Olympics could be, for tyrannical governments. Her cinematic accomplishments in **Olympia** or **Triumph of the Will**, with a technical genius and acumen, still awe and confound (while her political ambivalence and malevolence disgust). I mention her here not to impugn Chantre, but to also say that I've never experienced a space like *Memorsion* before, in a gallery.



This work is spectacle: I'm unsure that there is any content beyond that, but the visceral nature of *Memorsion* barely gives you time to consider that, or to challenge it. It's success, you might say, is also it's failure.