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The title says it all. *Lemon*. A viewer may wonder if they need even watch the film. When it was made in 1969 it must have seemed as futile. But as an attentive viewer will soon realise, Hollis Frampton was not so concerned with the Lemon as he was with depicting it. It mattered greatly that his medium was film. This mode of encounter with the world was Frampton's material. The Lemon allowed to slowly emerge from a blank black backdrop, the viewer's experience of the object is mediated; the object is staged. The film does not operate under the guise of the real but admits its own medium, the setup designed precisely to reveal the devices that underpin that of which unfolds before the eye. The Lemon is encountered through the screen and the viewer who encounters it is implicated in a particular kind of visual semantics that has the possibility of being repetitively iterated.

The encounter in visual culture is changing through the impact of the internet. The spectacle no longer resides on the pedestal or the wall; it is on the screen and in the ether. It is now found in the cognitive processes of the viewer, in the air where awareness is and things are not. As in film, and particularly as in Hollis Frampton's structuralist works, the contents of the world are often now experienced through an intervening screen. An immaterial turn in curatorial practice has occurred and artwork often now exists in this 'subjunctive'<sup>1</sup> state, outside the physical limits of a room and an active audience.

Certain conditions are vital if art is to function without the physical convergence of an audience in a location. Firstly, the capacity of the artwork must surpass its material actuality. Secondly, the artwork must be willing to relent to the vertiginously vast array of subjectivities that arise when its viewership is entirely detached from the guiding force of the institution. It is as vulnerable to various versions of interpretation as a joke told to a crowded room. Ironically, as cultural production is disseminated more efficiently, its 'message' simultaneously becomes more precarious and more contingent. The shift in curatorial attention away from the object and towards the immaterial has, in recent years, magnified this detachment. It is amplified by the extension of curatorial practice into the realm of the internet, such as in the development of online exhibition auxiliaries, podcasts and recorded discussions.

The hegemony of the gallery space declining with this shift towards immateriality, the transformative potential of the public institution is relinquished in favour of a new power structure; or perhaps more accurately, non-structure. Through media-based dissemination, such as the release of work that may be viewed online, or indeed shared through other spaces defined by the needs of a piece itself, an artwork is even less solidly bound to a particular direction and intent but rather relies, for its semantic functioning, on the viewer's rewriting of the work. The responsibility and authorship moves from artist to viewing subject: (this has always happened in the gallery to a certain extent, yet through the vista of the internet, it is exaggerated). Frampton's *Lemon* reveals the tendency of cinema to encourage us to perceive a psycho-emotional significance from qualities of the image such as movements and textures, even when the camera is purely observing. In other words *Lemon* demonstrates a central quality of the medium of cinema, as well as an individual's proclivity towards

emotional interpretation. This means that objectivity holds little power over subjectivity when an artwork is disseminated upon terms dictated by its own materiality. While much accessibility is gained through immaterial means of dissemination much, too, is lost. It is with this semantic quandary in mind that Basic Space introduced their studio program at IMMA. Through the premise of their residency they posed a number of questions: What is to be gained from this site of loss? How must cultural production respond to a living-room viewership? How may visual culture grow through this changing 'encounter'? How may immaterial means, as Frampton's blatant film set did, impact and expand the richness of an artwork and alter the relationship between maker and viewer? In his essay *Compassion in Criticism*, Adrian Duncan argued for a more diplomatic language in art writing that is inclusive and offers a 'richer experience' of content than fashionably 'complex' jargon is capable. This may 'open up an unforeseen sense of the artwork.'<sup>2</sup> Notions of immaterial dissemination hold this diplomatic potential also, 'changing the nature of the gaps between the public gesture of an artwork' and its prior life in the care of its maker.

It is in this diplomatic spirit that Basic Space suggest, through their residency program, a new order, a new way of articulating something that is beyond our eye's sight. It is a mode of articulation that *emerges* before the implicated viewer, offering a curious view of the persistently hidden. Imprinting upon us the sheer scope of the world, the *Lemon*'s deliberate smallness offered a tense dichotomy between the finite and the cyclical that lent a distinct fullness to Frampton's compact shot. Acting as an expansive catalogue, Basic Space Press too offers a certain fullness of vision that hints at infinitude and creates anew a range of possibilities for what art, within its modern parameters, may have to offer towards the endless proliferation of things and people to perceive them.

- *Marie Farrington* is an artist based in Dublin

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<sup>1</sup> Tim Stott, 'Declan Clarke's Fantasies,' *Fugitive Papers*, vol. 3, 14

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<sup>2</sup> Adrian Duncan, 'Compassion in Art Criticism,' *Paper Visual Art*, Limerick Edition, 08.2012



Hollis Frampton, *Lemon*, 1969. Film still, Anthology Film Archives.