

# Abstract

Title: For every word has its own shadow: Sunsets, Waves, Notes From Underground

Language: English

Key words: affect, becoming, Maurice Blanchot, displacement, dispossession, essay film, experimental video, geological time, liminal, Clarice Lispector, materialism, primordial obscurity, provisional, solitude, Susan Sontag, threshold, transformation, translation, video, video installation, Virginia Woolf

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Liminality permeates this doctoral project's questions: how can an experience of the liminal exist as an artwork? What things and experiences can orient us towards affectivity and states of becoming? Lisa Tan relates such concerns to Clarice Lispector whose writing renders becoming(s) visible. Coupled with Maurice Blanchot and his literary discourse on dispossession and the outside (analogous to becoming), Tan's inquiry is critically engaged inside a moving image practice. A suite of videos: *Sunsets*, 2012; *Notes From Underground* 2013; and *Waves* 2014-15, stand as the primary output of this dissertation. Drifting between day and night, above and below ground, land and sea, they exist as movements towards the fulfillment of the promise of the liminal: transformation. In *Sunsets*, the sun converses with the force that is Clarice Lispector. The video documents the audio of a casual translation of an interview with Lispector from 1977. This recording forms the video's soundtrack. The visual footage is comprised of scenes that were filmed at 3 o'clock in the morning during the summer or 3 o'clock in the afternoon during the winter in Sweden. *Notes from Underground* connects the Stockholm metro and Susan Sontag's sojourn in Sweden with a cavern system 5,000 miles away in New Mexico. The video suggestively links this journey to experiences of liminality, narrating varied intensities of geological time and strata of personal and cultural history. Departing from Virginia Woolf's novel *The Waves*, Tan's video *Waves* imagines how consciousness forms in relation to society and its technologies, but also to expressions of geological and hydrological processes. Filmed at the threshold of land and sea, a conversation forms between disparate hydro-relations, such as Woolf's prose, Courbet's paintings of waves, Google's data centers cooled by the Baltic Sea, invisible jellyfish, and transoceanic cables. The dissertation includes the videos, a doctoral thesis, and an artist's book, containing: illustrated transcriptions of each video; a documented solo exhibition; texts by Mara Lee, Lauren O'Neill-Butler, Natascha Sadr Haghghighian, and Lisa Tan. The artist's book both documents and reflects on the research performed and involves the voices of others, providing a critical, intersubjective understanding of liminality.