

# FrameWork 5/23

Philip Leonard Ocampo on Oliver Husain and Malik McKoy

*The glitches in our matrixes*

**EXT. SAN FRANCISCO ROOF TOPS - (DUSK) - CLOSE SHOT**

Scottie looking down.

**EXT. SAN FRANCISCO ROOF TOPS - (DUSK) - LONG SHOT**

From Scottie's viewpoint, the gap beneath the building and the ground below. It seems to treble its depth.

**EXT. SAN FRANCISCO ROOF TOPS - (DUSK) - CLOSEUP**

Scottie looking down with horror. His eyes close as a wave of nausea overcomes him.

Alfred Hitchcock's 1958 film *Vertigo* charts the psychological state of retired detective John "Scottie" Ferguson as he descends into a spiral of passion, obsession and tragedy following a diagnosis of acrophobia; a fear of heights.

*Vertigo* was the first film to utilize the "dolly zoom", a cinematographic effect wherein the lens zooms to adjust the angle of view while the camera moves toward or away from a static, unmoved subject. In *Vertigo's* iconic use of the shot, Scottie peers down the spiral staircase of a bell tower only for his acrophobia to take hold, the shot accenting the way he perceives both the immense height of this stairwell but also his anxiety surrounding heights at large. As a visual storytelling asset Hitchcock coined a technique that would forever broaden the filmmakers' toolkit. *Vertigo*, in its exploration of both narrative *and* cinematographic disorientation, posthumously became a piece of meta-cinema itself. It's a film about a man grappling *with* vertigo using camera techniques that could *give* the viewer vertigo.

**SCOTTIE**

Don't you think it's a waste, to wander separately?

**MADELEINE**

Only one is a wanderer. Two together are always going somewhere.

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Gavin Elster, an old friend, tasks Scottie to follow Madeleine, his wife who has begun behaving in a way that implies either supernatural possession and concerning delusions. He observes her until they eventually meet and begin spending time together.

I shut my left eye, then peer out of my right.

I shut my right eye, then peer out of my left.

I toggle back and forth between the two, reminding myself that my singular field of vision unites two offset halves in order to form one whole.

Stereoscopy: A technique not unlike how my very eyes work, layers two images at different angles to fabricate optical depth. Paired alongside the color of the anaglyphs red and cyan further pulls the audiences into the worlds they were keenly observing. Images can now move along x, y, *and* z-axis.

In *lenticoolers*, Husain and McKoy's video sculptures reflect projected light of video and animation with attention paid to left and right perspectives. The final images are altered and distorted.

As for me? I never cared for 3D glasses. Layering one set on top of my existing pair is such a nuisance. They're the only instances where I myself am prone to motion sickness, made nauseous by the innovations meant to entrance me.

### **EXT. PODESTA, BALDOCCHI - (LATE AFTERNOON)**

Coming up Grant Avenue, headed for Sutter Street, is a group of shopgirls who have just come out of work, and among them is one who -- again -- must surely be Madeleine. The one nearest to Scottie, seen in profile, might have the same features as Madeleine. He cannot be sure. This girl's hair is dark, where Madeleine's was light; her features on closer inspection seem heavier, and she wears much more makeup. And yet there is something about the way she carries herself. The other girls cross the street while the one nearest to Scottie goes on alone. He instinctively turns and follows.

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In his psychological downturn after the suicide of Madeleine later in the film, whom Scottie has fallen in love with, he begins hallucinating, mistaking various women across town for this deceased paramour. He perceives her in public spaces in San Francisco but as they pass him by, the women turn out not to be so. The sight of a woman that transcends past death itself- How could it possibly be?



If you google “glitch in the matrix” you can browse through a selection of crowdsourced images and stories that depict scenarios negating physical logic. Objects, people, and environments are inverted, distorted, and multiplied in real life. A synthetic, uncanny sight discovered across reality, almost as if they’re assets replicated and interpreted in digital 3D programs.

I’ve greeted strangers who I’ve mistaken to be acquaintances before.

I haven’t been who a stranger thought I was either.

**JUDY**

Couldn't you like me, just me, the way I am?! When we first started out it was so good! We had fun! And you started on the clothes! I'll wear the darned clothes if you want me to! If you just like me!

They are face to face, and Scottie is studying her somberly.

**SCOTTIE**

The color of your hair...

**JUDY**

Ah, no!

**SCOTTIE**

Judy, please it can't matter to you...

Becoming romantically involved with Judy, someone who shares an eerily similar resemblance to the late Madeleine, Scottie begins a violent bout of control, changing various aspects of Judy until she looks just like the woman he once loved. Beginning with ordering a duplicate of Madeleine's gray dress, to ordering the same shoes, to forcing Judy to dye her hair, and finally to styling said hair into a tied bun just like Madeleine would. The result is, at first glance, a success, but there is an irregularity in his attempt at re-creating his lost love.

As a psychological thriller, *Vertigo* alludes to a visual hypothesis that would be later named "the uncanny valley". As human biases are inherent to our perception of the world around us, fabricated objects that appear as human are strange and off-putting, and dive further into the abyss of the irregular with every new detail added. While there's no denying that Judy is human, in the context of *Vertigo*, the distinction of this near exact version of a recently deceased Madeleine is enough to unsettle the beguiled viewers watching at home. From being perplexed at the likeness of these two women from the start, to pushing that similarity further and further, the act parallel's Scottie's own deteriorating psychological state as he attempts to gasp control.

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And so *lenticoolers*, this collaborative project carried out through individual and joint explorations by Oliver Husain and Malik McKoy, curiously highlights the material processes essential to their practices, just as the film does. *Vertigo*, a seminal classic in filmmaking, is a tertiary work that runs parallel to the exhibition and its thematic interests: From Judy to Madeleine, Hitchcock evokes the spirit of the latter through Scottie's trial and error, similar to how amalgamated images seek to make itself whole through our various directions and commands. Optical phenomena within cinema and image making is underscored as *Vertigo* and *lenticoolers* intervene in the viewing experience by destabilizing depth perception in moving image and painting. McKoy, Husain and Hitchcock each layer repeated instances, familiar imagery and chosen sights. They allude to new ways of spatial interpretation through meditations of the screen and the stories those screens display back at us.

With curiosity and intrigue, we watch with both eyes open as left and right views come together as one.



**JUDY'S VOICE**

Dearest Scottie ... and so you've found me. This is the moment I dreaded and hoped for, -- wondering what I would say and do if ever I saw you again, I wanted so to see you again. Just once. Now I'll go and you can give up your search.

(pause)

I want you to have peace of mind. You've nothing to blame yourself for. You were the victim. I was the tool, you were the victim of a [Gavin Elster's] plan to murder his wife. He chose me to play the part because I looked like [Madeleine]; he dressed me up like her. He chose you to be the witness. The Carlotta story was part real, part invented to make you testify that Madeleine wanted to kill herself. He knew of your illness; he knew you would never get up the stairs of the tower. He planned it so well; he made no mistakes.