

CHANNEL DRIFT

by

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**APPROVAL**

CHANNEL DRIFT

by

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the faculty and staff of the TCU School of Art, especially my committee members Nick Bontrager, Cam Schoepp, and Kalee Appleton. I want to thank them and my graduate peers for constantly pushing me to become a better artist. Likewise, I would like to thank my family and friends outside of the program for supporting me and my endeavors.

Lastly, thank you to Batmunk for existing.

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Defining the term *channel drift* is important for the context of this thesis work as the exhibition shares the same name as the term. *Channel drift*, also known as network decay, is the gradual shift in the broadcast of a television channel or network away from its original programming. An example of this would be The History Channel television network. Whereas the original lineup of The History Channel began with documentaries, the network then in the late 2000s shifted its programming towards more reality-based programs like *Ice Road Truckers*<sup>1</sup> along with shows like *Ancient Aliens*.<sup>2</sup> The original lineup of the channel has changed and, in this case, broadened the viewership through its variety of programming. The channel or network drifts out of necessity; attempting to attract a variety of audience members through their “diverse” content, or even choosing to hyper-focus on one subject so they garner a specific demographic. I see this definition operating in a literal sense in the context of the exhibition.

My exhibition, *Channel Drift*, utilizes appropriated media from 2000-2006. I chose this period because it was a formative time for me in terms of my personal viewing history. 2000-2006 was the start of what continues to be a powerful relationship with television, its programming, and the screen in general. *Channel Drift*, while directly referencing the term, sees its source imagery deviate from its intended purpose.

*Power Rangers*<sup>3</sup> are no longer seen as exploding icons of great power. NASCAR<sup>4</sup> and its vehicles are stretched to obscurity. The Warner Brothers logo finds itself in a perpetual existence rather than disappearing as soon as it appears. The media in the exhibition drifts from its original

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<sup>1</sup> Cole, Nikki, Gran, Elliot, Story, David, *Ice Road Truckers*, directed by Adam Dubrowa, (2007; Burbank: Original Productions, 2007), broadcast.

<sup>2</sup> Burns, K, *Ancient Aliens*, directed by William Martens, (2009; Los Angeles: Prometheus Entertainment, 2009), broadcast.

<sup>3</sup> Fletcher, John, Lynn, Judd, Marchad, Jackie, Skinner, Denise, *Power Rangers*, directed by Ryuta Tasaki, (2000; Los Angeles: Saban Entertainment, 2000), broadcast.

<sup>4</sup> *Samsung/Radioshack 500*, episode 9, “Samsung/Radioshack 500,” aired on March 30,2003, on Speed.

purpose due to the manipulation placed onto the final product. Layering, repeating, and stretched visuals make themselves known in the appropriated media while remaining in the realm that they are sourced from.

My personal viewing history is on display in this exhibition. For example, the piece titled *Fast-Forward* (figure 1) takes a plethora of FBI warning screens, scrolls through each line of text at a quick pace, and overlays them on top of one another. These FBI warnings and the act of fast-forwarding through them happened regularly as I would watch the same VHS tape eight times a week. *Lap 445* (figure 2) utilizes a found recording of a NASCAR<sup>5</sup> race from 2003 in a way that sees the vehicles stretched across multiple CRT monitors. These same machines travel from one screen to the next. Events like a NASCAR race were on every weekend during their season and my dad would always be asleep in the chair “watching” every portion of the race. *Power Rangers*<sup>6</sup> and television shows geared towards children were constantly filling my screen at a young age as they do in *ABC Family Lineup* (figure 3). Credits, through a trip to see the latest animated feature or at the end of every episode of *Pokémon*<sup>7</sup>, were present in every piece of media I consumed and make their way as the subject matter in *Color/152 Mins* (figure 4). The Warner Brothers logo was a staple in the variety of DVDs I owned. Permeating its way through car rides to Grandma’s house and through my portable DVD player, this logo made itself known in my childhood and in *THIS FILM HAS BEEN MODIFIED AS FOLLOWS FROM ITS ORIGINAL VERSION: IT HAS BEEN FORMATTED TO FIT YOUR SCREEN* (figure 5). Finally, *Source* (figure 6) references the prevalence of television static when pressing the “Input” or

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<sup>5</sup> *Samsung/Radioshack 500*, episode 9, “Samsung/Radioshack 500,” aired on March 30, 2003, on Speed.

<sup>6</sup> Fletcher, John, Lynn, Judd, Marchad, Jackie, Skinner, Denise, *Power Rangers*, directed by Ryuta Tasaki, (2000; Los Angeles: Saban Entertainment, 2000), broadcast.

<sup>7</sup> Masuda, Junichi, Sugimori, Ken, Tajiri, Satoshi, *Pokemon*, directed by Kunihiko Yuyama, Norihiko, Sutô, Hidaka, Masamitsu, (1997; Tokyo: The Pokemon Company, 1998), broadcast.



“Source” button found on either the television or remote. Likewise, the static is acting literally and physically as a space in between both channels and the walls in the gallery.

The work in the exhibition, much like the definition of *channel drift*, has been altered from its original purpose. Rather than warning the viewer of the dangers of copying a tape, FBI warnings (figure 9) have been transformed into a colorful and cyclical experience that locks the viewer into a relationship that proves hard to separate from in the piece *Fast-Forward*. Due to *Fast-Forward's* placement in the exhibition, the viewer can see the work as soon as they look in the direction of the gallery. The glow of the CRT monitor radiating from the darkened gallery ropes any viewer into the gallery space. This force is not only helped by the colorful and looping visuals on screen but also through another monitor outside of the gallery (figure 7). Breaking from the expected didactic information delivered through vinyl on the wall, the monitor acts in a similar manner to *Fast-Forward* by once again drawing the viewer in. This slightly larger monitor displays the show title, dates of operation, and my name. As both monitors draw the viewer into the gallery space, the relationship with the work that continues to keep the viewer engaged persists.

Passing by *Fast Forward*, the viewer happens upon *Lap 445*. The piece takes found footage of a NASCAR<sup>8</sup> race from 2003 and stretches the media across five CRT monitors. *Lap 445*, while referencing the looped and lap-based format a NASCAR race traditionally has, entrances the viewer through both presentation and content. Having Tony Stewart's vehicle stretch across five monitors references the affective power a similar Best Buy display would have, but also continues to engage with the viewer by never finishing the race (figure 10). The name of the piece references the lap that these racers are perpetually on in this piece. A small detail in the work displays “55 to

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<sup>8</sup> *Samsung/Radioshack 500*, episode 9, “Samsung/Radioshack 500,” aired on March 30,2003, on Speed.

go” throughout the loop. As vehicles travel from one monitor to the next, wreck and race between screens, and craft a sense of nostalgia through recognizable brands and properties such as Budweiser, Cingular, and AOL, the work furthers the connection made with previous work by hypnotizing the viewer with a never-ending loop. Ushered by the curve of the five monitors, the viewer continues into the space.

Coming off *Lap 445*, the viewer finds themselves at *ABC Family Lineup*. This piece takes Power Ranger<sup>9</sup> morphing sequences from the different iterations over the 2000-2006 period and overlays them over one another. All the transformation sequences are centered on shots that feature the rangers from the chest up. Every piece of media I used for this piece has been motion tracked to the character’s face. Therefore, all the transformation sequences lineup with the character’s body as best as possible. A similar event happens with this piece when compared to *Fast-Forward*. The final product makes itself known as a colorful, flashing, and entrancing piece of media. Due to the number of transformation sequences and number of graphics used in the source material, the final product takes on a more painterly look at this appropriated media. Painterly in this sense meaning that the appropriated media and the manipulation placed on the media transforms the final product into work that falls in line with color field painting. Power Rangers, and their recognizable attire, get lost in favor of flashing lights and exploding visuals. However, this is not to say that the media is lost entirely.

As previously mentioned, all faces in *ABC Family Lineup* are centered on top of one another. In turn, there are brief gaps in the work where a face or another recognizable facial feature is present (figure 13). Much like *Fast-Forward* where the “FBI WARNING” label is only slightly

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<sup>9</sup> Fletcher, John, Lynn, Judd, Marchad, Jackie, Skinner, Denise, *Power Rangers*, directed by Ryuta Tasaki, (2000; Los Angeles: Saban Entertainment, 2000), broadcast.

visible, *ABC Family Lineup* provides a reference point in those facial features. While these features do interrupt the trance that I have crafted in the work thus far, I see them acting as grounding moments for the viewer. These moments are both short and scarce. As the viewer grasps onto those grounding moments, they find enough time to both catch their breath and question what recognizable form they just saw before taking a plunge back into the trance I have developed. I find this tactic and piece operating in a similar fashion to Dara Birnbaum's *Technology/Transformation: Wonder Woman*.<sup>10</sup> Birnbaum created a similar relationship with the viewer by using recognizable media for the time. However, in her alteration, the connection made with the viewer using Wonder Woman is broken. The viewer, still hanging onto the reference point of the popular main character, begins to question what they are viewing, why certain scenes seem to repeat, and how the edit came to be. I see the same fluctuation in *Color/152 Mins*.

The large projection seen after *ABC Family Lineup* titled *Color 152/Mins*. takes one credits sequence and duplicates it on top of one another. The final sequence is then projected onto the west wall of Moudy Gallery. Wasting no space, *Color/152 Mins*. encompasses the entire wall (figure 14). In turn, the viewer is confronted with a washing and slow composition that weaves between visual noise and readable information. As the credits interact with one another, shapes begin to develop. No discernable form is crafted in this piece. Acting like *ABC Family Lineup*, the moments of recognizability ground the viewer in this massive work (figure 16). However, as fast as the viewer is grounded in a discernable concept, they are once again thrust into an entrancing sequence that floods the viewer with soothing visual noise. The relationship continues with the small DVD player hung high on the corner of a false wall.

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<sup>10</sup> Birnbaum, Dara. *Technology/Transformation: Wonder Woman*. 1978-79. Video. New York, The Museum of Modern Art.

*THIS FILM HAS BEEN MODIFIED AS FOLLOWS FROM ITS ORIGINAL VERSION: IT HAS BEEN FORMATTED TO FIT YOUR SCREEN.* [hereinafter referred to as *THIS FILM*] is the DVD player and carrying case that I would use on long road trips in my youth (figure 18). The Warner Brothers logo plays on repeat with no sign of ending or transitioning into the feature presentation. Commanding your attention with its placement in the space, *THIS FILM* continues the affective power the work in the show has by locking the viewer into a loop that clearly does not have an end. While all the work in the show is looped and has no ending, *THIS FILM* clearly indicates to the viewer from the beginning that it will not waiver from its recognizable logo and mesmerizing piano. In this piece, the visuals do lock the viewer into a relationship that holds their gaze, but this is only aided by the piano echoing throughout and outside of the gallery.

Sound, or the lack thereof, plays an important role not only in *THIS FILM*, but the entire show. Of course, *Fast-Forward* has sound and operates in a similar way to *THIS FILM* by providing a sturdy and expected sound in the shifting feedback tone. However, the fluttering instrumentation found in the Warner Brothers logo not only scores the source material, but a large portion of the show. Hearing the familiar tones from outside of the space, the viewer is drawn in. While in the space, the viewer gets acquainted with sound of the source material while viewing the entire show. In turn, the audio coming from *THIS FILM* provides a backbone to the show that is always constant. There is a hypnotic quality about the audio due to its application. The sound is always there as it contributes not only to the visuals that it is accompanied with, but other work in the show. As the viewer comes off *THIS FILM*, they are shown four CRT monitors sandwiched between two false walls.

*Source* takes four CRT monitors and places them in between two false walls (figure 19). The monitors are spaced with equal distance between each screen. True static cover every screen.

*True static* in this case means that the visuals on the monitors are being produced through an analog signal (figure 20). In turn, the static being produced on these monitors is authentic. The importance and prevalence of this true static comes from the aforementioned relationship with the “Input” or “Source” button on the remote control or television proper. Static, much like the visuals in the show, provide continually evolving imagery that give the viewer a difficult time in looking away. This relationship is also aided by the unconventional method that these televisions are displayed. In the same way that *Lap 445* mesmerizes with its presentation and content, *Source* does the same by presenting monitors in unlikely situations while providing hypnotic content.

While I have mentioned briefly how the viewer would encounter each work, I would like to introduce the wall arrangement, layout, and my reasoning behind these decisions (figure 21). Operating from the entrancing qualities my work has, I arranged the show in a similar way. Guiding viewers into the space was important in the gallery design. For my work to entrance the viewer, the viewer needed to be in the space. I have mentioned this slightly with the placement of *Fast-Forward* and the title information. These monitors acted as the flame that drew the moth in. However, there is a wall in the gallery that separates the viewer from the rest of the space.

As soon as the viewer enters the space, they are greeted with *Fast-Forward* on the ground next to a false wall. The wall blocks the rest of the space from the viewer. Seen from straight on or far away, the viewer only witnesses those two monitors that illuminate the gallery and entryway. However, the audio from the Warner Brothers logo and the dimly lit space invite the viewers into what those two monitors have already established. Garnering interest through the wall disguised as a blockade was crucial in getting viewers into the space. Once in the space, I wanted the viewer to be surrounded on almost every side with media.

As the viewer travels along the length of the wall that divides the rest of the space from the entrance, *Lap 445* creates a curve that places the viewer into an open area that I have crafted mainly for the projection. The open area allows for media to be in the viewers peripheral vision, but I wanted to give *Color/152 Mins.* room to breathe. It was important that I gave the viewer enough room to consider the scale that the projection was producing. To facilitate this consideration, the walls were placed on opposing sides of the gallery, aside from the one providing a corridor into the space. Two walls were placed on the south side of the gallery while one was placed on the north side of the gallery close to the east concrete pillar. This layout provided me the interest and space I needed to deliver my entrancing visuals.

The entrancing visuals are aided of course by the content of the work. Colorful sequences find themselves transforming into painterly compositions while demanding that the viewer not look away. Calming visual noise seeps its way into the viewers vision and sets its roots deep within their mind. Presentation also plays a large role in continually keeping the viewer interested in the work and only perpetuates the content of the videos themselves. However, one other portion of the work is partially responsible for creating the relationship with the viewer. Nostalgia is significant in crafting the interlocking relationship my work has with the viewer.

Nostalgia operates as a one-two punch in the work. Much like the two monitors at the start of the space, nostalgia grasps viewers' attention. Once again operating like Dara Birnbaum's *Technology/Transformation: Wonder Woman*<sup>11</sup> where the viewer is acquainted with the media in question, and then realizes something has been altered, I find nostalgia working in the same way.

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<sup>11</sup> Birnbaum, Dara. *Technology/Transformation: Wonder Woman*. 1978-79. Video. New York, The Museum of Modern Art.

The viewer becomes acquainted with the Power Rangers<sup>12</sup> in *ABC Family Lineup*, the Warner Brothers logo in *THIS FILM HAS BEEN MODIFIED AS FOLLOWS FROM ITS ORIGINAL VERSION: IT HAS BEEN FORMATTED TO FIT YOUR SCREEN.*, and the NASCAR<sup>13</sup> race in *Lap 445* and sees their alteration. In turn, nostalgia garners interest in the viewer, and the content of the piece itself continues that interest and fosters the entrancing qualities *Channel Drift* contains.

Nostalgia, mesmerizing visuals, and presentation all work together to create the relationship with the viewer. As the viewer becomes hooked into my work through the entry points that I have crafted, they are stuck in the media loop that I have created with hypnotic imagery. I craft these visuals through appropriated media because I need to have a physical representation of these ideas. I need to have multiple Power Ranger sequences layered on top of one another. I need to stretch a NASCAR race across five monitors. I need to play the Warner Brothers logo over and over again. In materializing my artistic vision, I find the motivations behind the work evolving. I continue to rely on these mesmerizing visuals through appropriated media. While the overall motivation remains unclear, I utilize this as a functional feedback loop that brings me back to my choice of imagery and visuals. However, the viewer remains entranced, only being brought out of the trance through short and rare reference points. Through my personal viewing history, *Channel Drift* keeps the viewer tuned in and uneager to leave.

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<sup>12</sup> Fletcher, John, Lynn, Judd, Marchad, Jackie, Skinner, Denise, *Power Rangers*, directed by Ryuta Tasaki, (2000; Los Angeles: Saban Entertainment, 2000), broadcast.

<sup>13</sup> *Samsung/Radioshack 500*, episode 9, “Samsung/Radioshack 500,” aired on March 30, 2003, on Speed.

## PLATES

<https://vimeo.com/543004854>

**Figure 1:** *Fast-Forward*, video on a CRT monitor, 2020

<https://vimeo.com/543005464>

**Figure 2:** *Lap 445*, video stretched across five CRT monitors, 2021

<https://vimeo.com/543005682>

**Figure 3:** *ABC Family Lineup*, video on a flat screen monitor, 2020

<https://vimeo.com/543004948>

**Figure 4:** *Color/152 Mins.*, projection, 2021

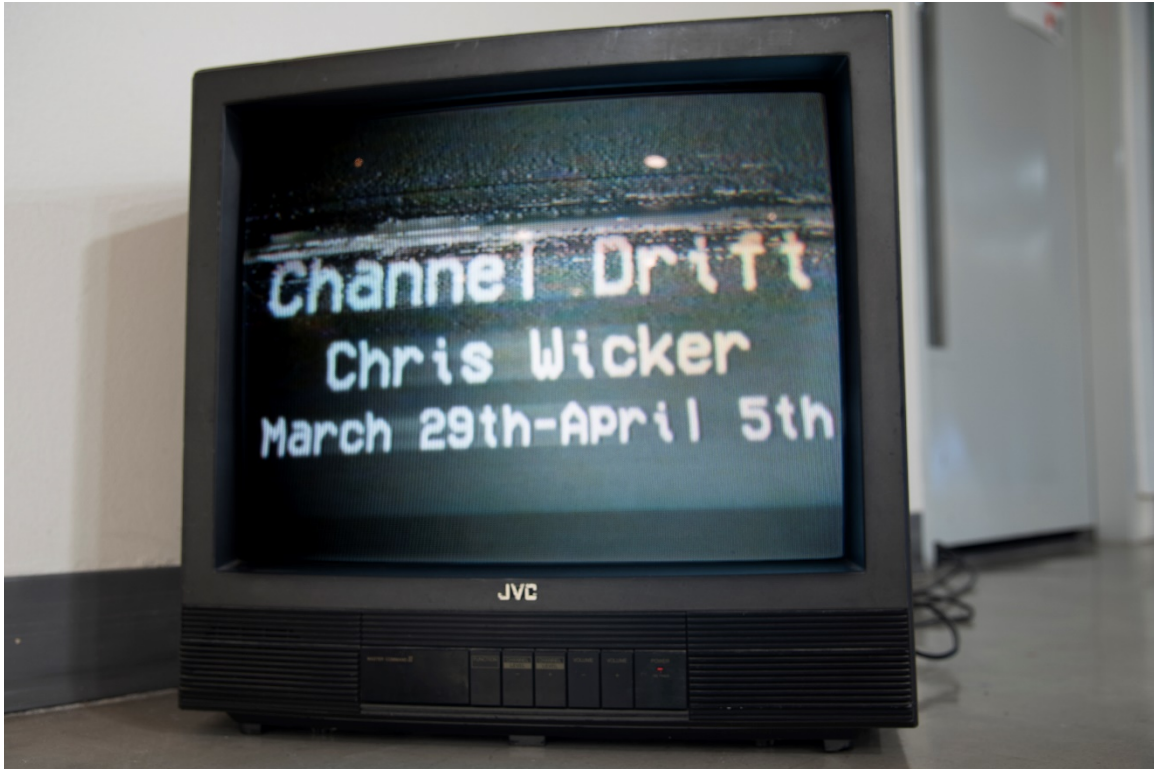
<https://vimeo.com/543005626>

**Figure 5:** *THIS FILM HAS BEEN MODIFIED AS FOLLOWS FROM ITS ORIGINAL VERSION: IT HAS BEEN FORMATTED TO FIT YOUR SCREEN.*, video on a DVD player, carrying case, 2021

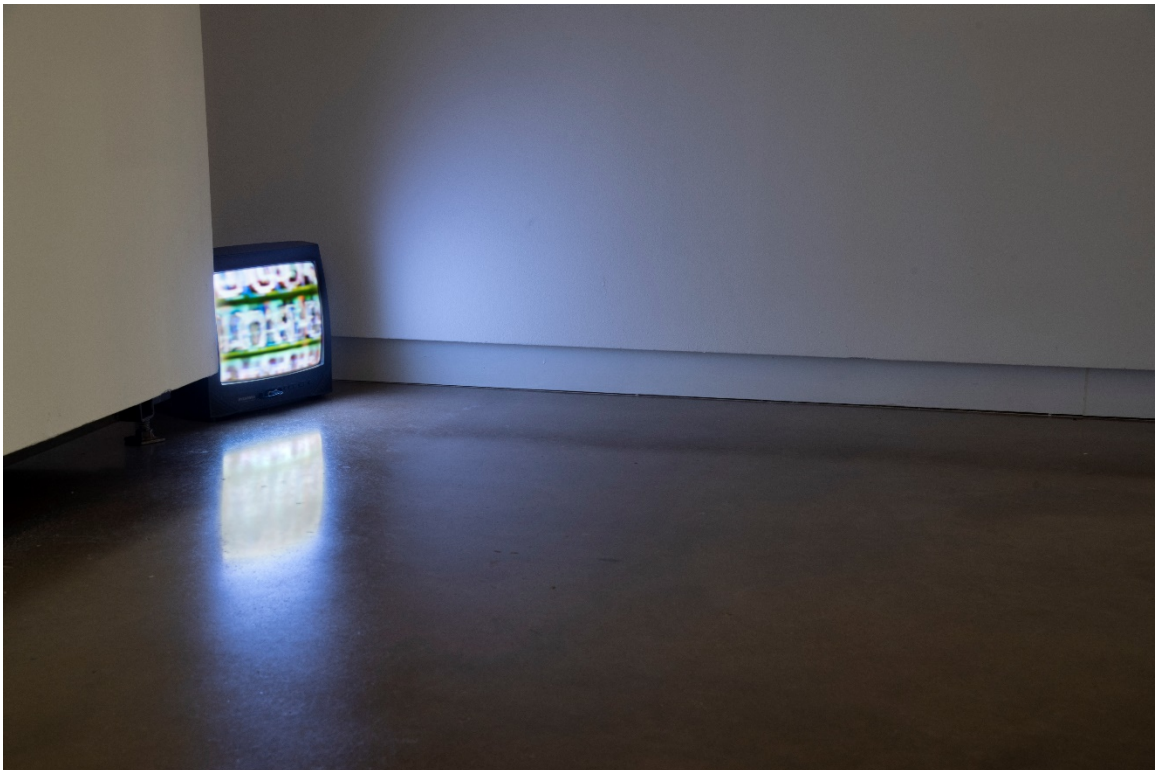
<https://vimeo.com/543005811>

**Figure 6:** *Source*, true static shown on four CRT monitors, 2021





**Figure 7:** *Channel Drift* information, video on a CRT monitor



**Figure 8:** *Fast-Forward*, detail shot



**Figure 9:** *Fast Forward*, detail shot



**Figure 10:** *Lap 445*, detail shot





Figure 11: *Lap 445*, detail shot



Figure 12: *ABC Family Lineup*, detail shot



Figure 13: *ABC Family Lineup*, detail shot

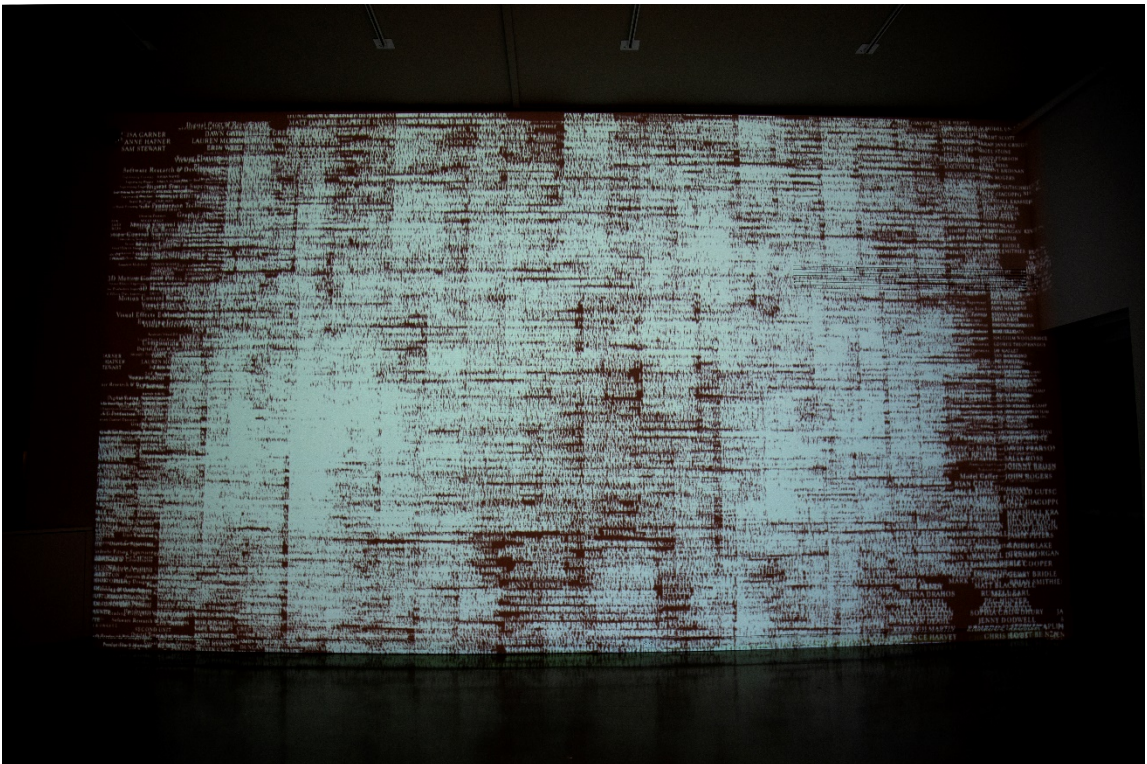


Figure 14: *Color/152 Mins.*, detail shot





Figure 15: *Color/152 Mins.*, detail shot

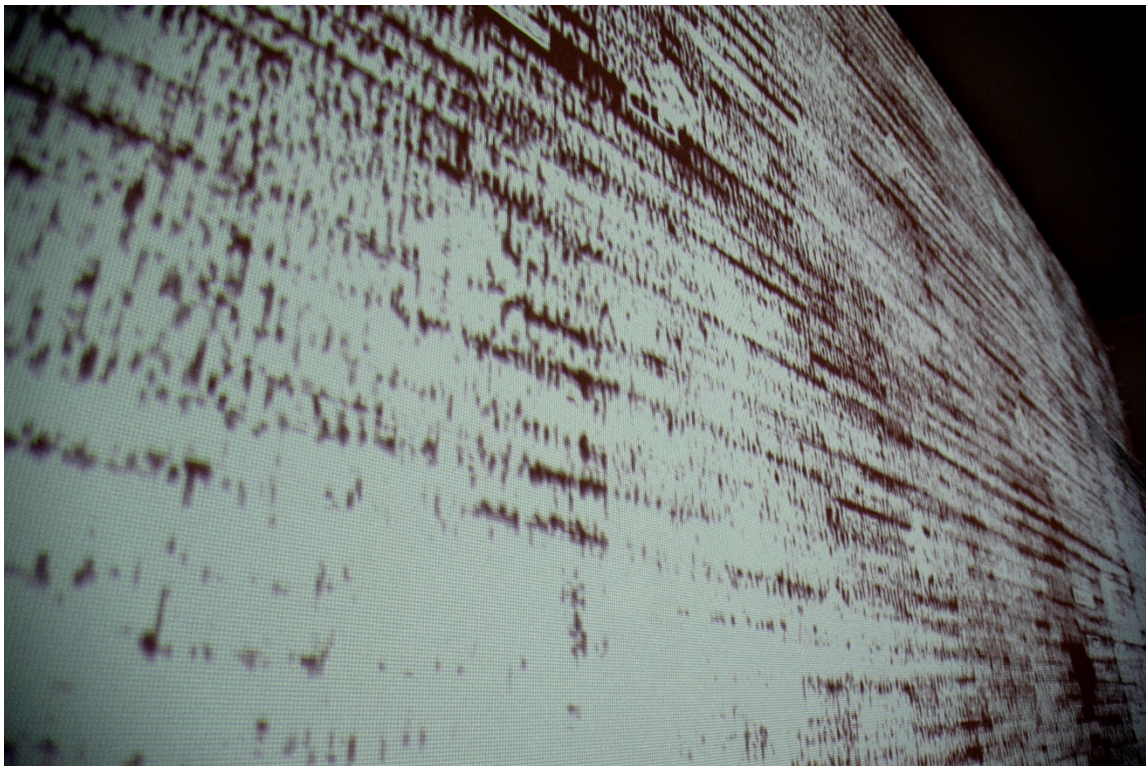


Figure 16: *Color/152 Mins.*, detail shot



**Figure 17:** *THIS FILM HAS BEEN MODIFIED AS FOLLOWS FROM ITS ORIGINAL VERSION: IT HAS BEEN FORMATTED TO FIT YOUR SCREEN., detail shot*



**Figure 18:** *THIS FILM HAS BEEN MODIFIED AS FOLLOWS FROM ITS ORIGINAL VERSION: IT HAS BEEN FORMATTED TO FIT YOUR SCREEN., detail shot*

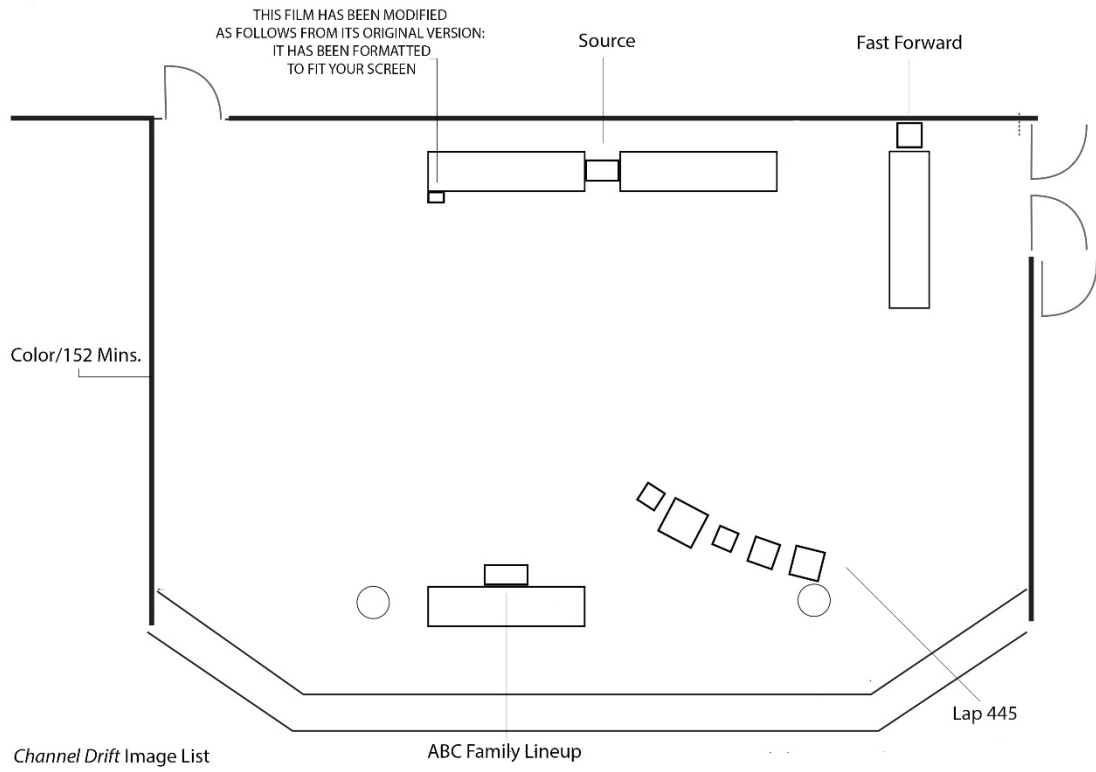




**Figure 19:** *Source*, detail shot



**Figure 20:** *Source*, detail shot



**Figure 21:** *Channel Drift* layout



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## VITA

Christopher Matthew Wicker was born on February 20, 1996 in Texarkana, TX. He is the son of Danny and Penny Wicker. A 2014 graduate from Texas High School in Texarkana, TX, Wicker received his Bachelor of Fine Arts degree with a major in Studio Art from Stephen F. Austin State University, Nacogdoches, in 2018.

In 2018, Wicker was awarded a Graduate Assistantship from Texas Christian University in Studio Art. During his time there, Wicker worked with the Art Galleries at TCU from 2018-2019, as a Teaching Assistant for Intro to Photography and Intro to New Media from 2019-2020, and as an Instructor of Record for Intro to New Media from 2020-2021.

During Wicker's graduate assistantship, Chris exhibited his work in the Dallas-Fort Worth area, Houston, and internationally. In addition to exhibiting his work, Wicker developed his own space and shows dedicated to exhibiting video work. Wicker continues to pursue these ideas moving forward from his time at Texas Christian University.

## ABSTRACT

### CHANNEL DRIFT

by

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*Channel Drift* is a series of video work that mainly utilizes appropriated media from 2000-2006. The work entrances the viewer through the manipulation placed on the media. Colorful visuals, repeating pieces of media, and visual noise are a result of the manipulation placed on the source imagery. In turn, the viewer is engaged with the work and does not leave the trance crafted through nostalgia, content, and presentation. The work serves as a way to visualize both the relationship created with the viewer and as a way to physically represent these media compositions that need to exist.