Still Supplementation: Stan Douglas’s Cuba Photographs

Kelly Wood

Focusing closely on the incorporation of photographs into Stan Douglas’s media installations, this essay argues that the relationship between photography and film in his work is more complex than critics have acknowledged. Drawing on Jacques Derrida’s concept of the ‘supplement’ as a necessary addition, both inside and outside specific forms, it contends that Douglas’s use of photography is an integral part of his film works and installations and functions to foreground stillness as a theme. In doing so, the Cuba Photos undermine the seeming finality of still images and ironically reveal the end of faith in historical progress. While scholarship on circulation, following John Tagg’s pioneering research, has emphasized Michel Foucault’s concern with the historical construction of ideological meaning, the supplement in Douglas’s work invites us to interrogate the very category of history by foregrounding the notion of re-construction. Approaching the relationship between photography and film in terms of the supplement offers a provocative way of understanding the significance of photographic circulation.

Keywords: Stan Douglas (b.1960), ‘Inconsolable Memories’ (Stan Douglas, 2005), ‘Cuba Photos’ (Stan Douglas, 2004-5), Cuba, film installation, still photography

Stan Douglas holds a prominent position in the history of contemporary media. While his distinctive practice spans the development of many progressive technologies, he has also embraced and incorporated those retrograde modes that have been left behind by the advance of media’s more mobile forms. Douglas’s hybrid use of varied technologies in his art works creates what he calls a recombinant cinema. These facts are all the more apt when one considers that the subject of Douglas’s work is often the representation of history, its repetition and reconstruction. Stan Douglas has produced works of art with such diverse subjects as: the relative freedom and democracy experienced by African-American musicians in France in the late 1960s and early 1970s, approached through accenting and filming a ‘Free Jazz’ session for Hors Champs (1992); a consideration of the colonial divide of conquerors and conquered on the West Coast of Canada after the year 1790 in his video work Nu•tka• (1996); and portrayal of the economic breakdown of the auto industry in the U.S. and its subsequent effect on the urban neighbourhoods of the city of Detroit in Le Detroit (1999).

Each of these projects is preceded by intensive historical research and frequently involves the production of photographs, on location, in related sites and constituencies. Photography has always been an essential part of Douglas’s project development and an expected accompaniment to his media installations in museums and galleries world-wide. This essay examines Douglas’s Cuba Photos, from his installation Inconsolable Memories (2005), and considers...
Kelly Wood

the circulation of these images in the wider context of his installations. Although Stan Douglas is considered primarily a media artist, the photographs traditionally accompanying his film installations have yet to receive extensive analysis. The catalogue for Inconsolable Memories contains eighty pages of full-colour reproductions of the Cuba Photos, but nowhere in the catalogue are the photographs fully discussed or addressed as a component of the artwork.2 And while the photographs have occasionally been exhibited separately, they are widely considered merely as support to the media works of art. Though an integral part of the whole project, they tend to be considered as separate from it. Despite Douglas’s description of the photographs as merely research for his installations, when examined closely they reveal the complex connection between different media.3 Indeed, even though the photographic stills that form the documentary foundation for the projects do not always physically appear in installations, they nonetheless can be seen to circulate in important ways, raising in turn complex questions about the relationship between film and photography.

Countless considerations of the function of the still image propose a complex integration between the two media.4 Between the film screen and the photographic frame we find associations that go back to the inception of both technologies. Influential critics such as André Bazin, Roland Barthes, and Gilles Deleuze have theorized not only the similarities, but also the inherent antagonisms between film and photography. Bazin, for example, sees in film photography’s ability to ‘share a common being with the model of which it is the reproduction’, with the addition that, in film, ‘[N]ow, for the first time, the image of things is likewise the image of their duration, change mummified as it were’.5 Barthes, in Image – Music – Text, looks to Eisenstein’s film stills and finds in them an ‘obtuse meaning’ which he describes as, ‘the supplement that my intellation cannot succeed in absorbing’. And yet, Barthes goes on to suggest, it is only the film’s still image, not the movement and narrative diagnosis of film, that ironically constitutes the obtuse meaning of the filmic itself.6 He reclaims the still image from the tendency to ‘see […] them as a remote subproduct of the film, a sample, a means of drawing a custom, a pornographic extract, and technically, a reduction of the work by the immobilization of what is taken to be the sacred essence of cinema – the movement of images’.7 Deleuze devotes the first chapter of Cinema 1: The Movement-Image to an investigation of earlier movement art forms such as dance and their ‘privileged instants’ and the contrasting concept of the ‘any-instant-whatever’ as snapshots equidistant from each other which together make up the arbitrary effect of the modern movement of the new industrial art of film. He similarly suggests the freeze-frame is paradoxically a kind of ‘any-instant-whatever’, although it may be ‘singular’ or ‘remarkable’.8 Despite their varied approaches, these theorists tend to define the filmic by means of its comparative, and somewhat antithetical, relation to photography.

While such accounts of the relationship between still and moving images highlight the embedding of the former within latter, this implicit hierarchy of forms neglects a more crucial issue. Focusing on the circulation of Douglas’s photographs, I suggest that his still images function as a supplement to the media installation or paracinema tradition. Jacques Derrida’s influential insight on the play of difference between speech and writing and, most importantly, their inextricability from each other in supplementation can be similarly applied here: photography and film need to be considered as intrinsically and extrinsically linked signifying systems. Derrida explains that the supplement harbours within itself two significations whose cohabitation is as strange as it is necessary.9 He elaborates by stating: ‘[B]ut the supplement supplements. It


7 – Ibid., 66.


adds only to replace. It intervenes or insinuates itself in-the-place-of; if it fills, it is as if one fills a void. If it represents and makes an image, it is by the anterior default of a presence'.

This approach to the relationship between the two media reveals that photography, conceived in terms of the supplement, has a culminating presence in film. Additionally, this presence functions as a kind of replacement, or, in Derrida’s terms, a ‘substitution and accretion’. I suggest that the Cuba Photos present themselves as a substitution for the film Inconsolable Memories. At the same time, the Photos form an accretion within the aesthetic of the film. It is through the stillness of the photographs that this accretion most effectively juxtaposes the relationship of space and time represented within each medium. In the media installations of Stan Douglas, the presentation of photography as an external component of film functions to juxtapose space (the inherent stillness of the photographic still) with time (the duration associated with the latter). Approached in terms of the supplement, the circulation of photographs in Douglas’s installation undermines assumptions about stillness. This emphasis on the theme of stillness serves, in the photographic still, to spatialize the representation of time (the freezing of a moment in history), and, in the installation, to temporalize space.

Perhaps the most obvious meditation on the theme of stillness in Douglas’s installations can found embedded within the still image itself. For this reason, it is important to begin by focusing on the Cuba Photos, even though, as I will shortly explain, they cannot be fully comprehended without considering the medium of film in which they are subsequently circulated. A first encounter with a Stan Douglas project will likely be with a suite of research photographs, akin, perhaps, to the publicity stills once displayed outside cinemas to give audiences a sense of the movie inside. When entering a Stan Douglas installation that includes photographs, one typically sees the photos installed separately, before or after seeing the media component. Notably, the research photographs Douglas continues to produce concurrently with his cinematic work provide the viewer with an abundance of information from the start, highlighting their documentary appeal. Indeed, one always learns a great deal from a Stan Douglas project. It must be pointed out that so much more is at issue with the Cuba Photos since they are not photograms taken from the film, or film stills, taken along with the film during shooting—they are, rather, photographs taken outside the film’s production which are only meant to serve and augment the film’s core themes. The Cuba Photos expand on the theme of historical reconstruction by revealing, in a visual way, certain ideological contradictions. The artist turns his energies to the material fabric of a place, organising and framing a set of visual conditions testifying to the deeply embedded, living history of a locale. As the catalogue introduction to Inconsolable Memories notes, ‘Douglas addresses the specificity of a place through research into its history; he is interested in how momentous forces of ideology and technology determine the large pattern and leave traces on the small observed details. His attraction is to the evidence of a collision of cultures; encounters that transform culture’.

As a set, the Cuba photographs exhibit a similar subject matter and sensibility. They are all photographs of places, spaces and sites in Cuba that have been retro-converted or otherwise retrofitted to new and evolving purposes. Considered together, the photographs function not simply as a still form of representation, but also, in their spatialization of stasis, to thematize stillness. For Douglas, stillness is not just a material part of the photographic process, a fixing of an image at a particular moment in time. Rather, stillness is a theme best contemplated through the representation of architectural forms. These forms, moreover, embody a plurality as well as simultaneity of uses. This
helps explain why, for example, Douglas focuses on reconditioned structures like 'La Immaculada Medical Clinic, Vedado' (2004) as temporary housing and the 'Villa' (2004) in Cienfuegos that is now a school. In the Cuba Photos, one learns that the motif of the re-conditioned building is not just a metaphor for the revolutions of political change; they are also a measure of culture and necessity. Cuba is historicized in these photographs as a place that has evolved, adapting to the forces of change within a precarious economy always seemingly one step behind itself.

These buildings can be read as the photographs' documentary capacity, which variously resemble a case history of factors; a report on the state of affairs; or, a history lesson disguised as a melodrama. Cine Majestic (figure 1), formerly a film venue, is now a carpentry shop operating under the supervision of the Office of the Civic Historian, charged with assisting the renovation of historic buildings. The peculiarity of the natural light streaming into the former night-space of the theatre illuminates many dysfunctional details. The building in this image bears witness to the change in society’s relation to cinema in the twenty-first century, wherein the public screening of film defers to newer technologies of distribution. In addition, the re-use of this site for historical restorations suggests both an increasing urgency for cultural preservation and a burgeoning tourism.

In the exhibition catalogue, the artist provides brief notes on the recent history of each photographed location. While this information is intriguing, the photographs themselves allude to much that is not evident within the picture. Some building sites, for example, have been modified more than others. The Royal Bank of Canada Parking Lot (figure 2) looks too elegant for the motorcycles and scooters it now houses. The stress is on the extent of transformations and their unanticipated outcomes. Douglas photographs the moment when unexpected adaptations become visible. The instances and sites Douglas has photographed varies widely, and includes hotels with periods of state occupation, private houses that have become restaurants; medical buildings that have become temporary housing. They also range from buildings large and small, domestic and institutional, so that every nuance of change succeeds is registered in the image. The instant between then and now is so fabulously compounded in these photos – subject in its arrested moment of transformation and the medium of photography itself as a document of time past – that this temporal flow of events constitutes Douglas’s decisive moment.

These allusions to the theme of stillness function as a commentary on the forces of resistance to change. Douglass exposes in the photos a lack of historical progress and even to an end of faith of a political ideal – its ruination – which is most vividly revealed in the physical ruin of so many of these buildings and locations.

**Mournful gloom**

The exhibition catalogue introduces the subject of post-revolutionary Cuba as ‘an ideological relic of the twentieth century’. The Cuba Photos accordingly have the air of the lurid and elegant nightmare of decay so beloved of the Western consciousness; they are tinged with the basic elements of ruin-sensibility (figures 3, 4). The half-realized aspiration in built architectural form becomes in them a ready emblem, laden with the mystique of catastrophe and dream. They symbolically comply with our conceptions, real or imagined, of the Cuban social and political experience—a symbol of resistance to the domination of the logic of global capitalism and its aftermath as well as of colonialism. The physical and philosophical forces of change have left upon...
these places an unknown and promiscuous mix of nostalgia and urgency; they truly read of ‘the great ambiguity that is the future of Cuba’.  

In *The Pleasure of Ruins*, Rose Macaulay states that ‘[R]uin is always overstated; it is part of the ruin-drama staged perpetually in the human imagination, half of whose desire is to build up, while the other half smashes and levels to the earth’.  

She concludes that everywhere the human
imagination admires and gains satisfaction from the mystique of ruins:

[When did it consciously begin, this delight in decayed or wrecked buildings? Very early, it seems. Since down the ages men have meditated before ruins, rhapsodized before them, mourned pleasurably over their ruination, it is interesting to speculate on the various strands in this complex enjoyment, on how much of it is admiration for the ruin as it was in its prime – quanta Roma fuit, ipsa ruina docet – how much aesthetic pleasure in its appearance – plus belle que la beauté est la ruine de la beauté – how much is association, historical or literary, what part is played by morbid pleasure in decay, by righteous pleasure in retribution, (for so often it is the proud and the bad who have fallen), by mystical pleasure in the destruction of all things mortal and the eternity of God (a common reaction in the Middle Ages), by egotistic satisfaction in surviving – (where now art thou? Here still am I) – by masochistic joy in a common destruction […] and by a dozen other entwined threads of pleasurable and melancholy emotion of which the main strand is, one imagines, the romantic and conscious swimming down the hurrying river of time, whose mysterious reaches, stretching limitlessly behind, glimmer suddenly into view with these wrecks washed onto stilted shores.¹⁸

18 – Ibid., xv–xvi.
That one nation should appear to an outside observer as an intriguing disaster is thus no surprise, but here this very wretchedness is awash with an easygoing optimism. Even if retrofitting occurs haphazardly without much drama, it is still a phenomenon that brings to bear some of the most pressing social and political forces of a region or locale, which we call Cuba. Ever since the islands became the port for colonial traffic between the New and the Old worlds, this area has been in a state of fluctuation. Presently, post-revolutionary Cuba is said to possess the greatest collection of colonial architecture in the Americas. In 1982, UNESCO placed the district of La Habana Vieja (figures 3, 4), where many of Douglas’s photographs were taken, on the World Heritage List. The country’s failure to achieve self-sufficiency over hundreds of years and in the midst of various Old and New world interests arguably played a role in the creation of living conditions still visible everywhere. Douglas’s photographs are replete with the details of post-colonial and revolutionary-era failure. Indeed, Cuba’s narrow and fragile economy arguably did more to preserve the many stages of Cuba’s colonial, neo-colonial and revolutionary architecture than any social reform could have accomplished. Now, of all things, after the withdrawal of Soviet support in 1991, and, as Castro taps into pre-revolutionary era investors again, it is the new ideology of tourism that preserves what remains salvageable.

Because we are accustomed to an environment of constant change, arguably what is new and exciting in the context of contemporary art, where there is constant pressure to produce new forms, is the possibility that something still remains. This appearance of tradition, however cobbled, as a theme in a work of art is revitalizing in its own way. The esoteric compositions and classic image tropes of foreground motif and counterpoint are all evident and return us back to the familiar pictorial norms of Romanticism. We find in them stormy skies, crashing waves, forgotten-looking locations with crumbling architecture and peeling walls; vaulted ceilings; doors and windows metaphorically placed, all with creeping vines and overgrown gardens – a veritable symbolist twilight. We might discern in these places the dream décor of oblivion. As with the touristic gaze anywhere, the photograph’s presence and circulation allows for an experience of the historical collapse so seemingly necessary for consolation with the past. The way they are presented, in the archaic form of the museum picture, only enhances their established credibility. In addition, these photographs have an aesthetic superiority that fulfils expectations for the image quality of fine art photography, and of scale as art photography. The photographic prints, in other words, are in stark contrast to the ruins they describe.

**Sympathy**

These still photos of ruination, then, provide the documentary support material for Douglas’s film installation—and as they often circulate within the installation, even as they are not wholly constitutive of the installation, we must account for their supplementary presence. The presence of photographic stills within a film yields what most theorists have speculated to be a breach in the illusionistic time signature, a rupture within registers of representation, or a break within the diachronic flow. This rupture or break in some cases is thought to provide a surplus of fiction. As the photographs lead viewers into and out of the film, they taint the film experience to a certain extent, arguably forming a parenthetical statement around the film’s core. Additionally, they establish certain themes and support the film’s fictional elements with their documentary mode. The *Cuba Photos* point to the monstrous after-effects of re-construction (one is specifically reminded here of Bazin’s descriptive term for film, ‘change mummified’).

The installation likewise raises the issue of historical reconstruction, only to be challenged by the photographic stills that ironically serve as its documentary
Inconsolable Memories, which draws from the 

Inconsolable Memories takes the conflict between reality and fiction a step further. Disrupting monotonous feature-length flow through the constant shifting of the narrative clips in interlocking varied permutation, the film ensures that the sequence of causal events is unlikely to repeat on any subsequent viewing. The film, therefore, has no fixed perspective. The permutation schema in Inconsolable Memories is generated by the seemingly simple projection of two interlocking films of different lengths comprising the final film. Phillip Monk, in his essay ‘Fugue Encryptions’, links the intertexuality of Douglas’s film directly to the novelty of its technical performance: ‘these strategies, technics rather than expression, produce a new work fabricated from a narratological analysis of a given text. The original ghosts through a rewriting relayed not only by means of another configuration of images and texts, but regulated in performance by the permuting bias of Douglas’s installation Inconsolable Memories, which is based loosely on Tomas Guitierrez Alea’s 1968 Cuban film Memorias del subdesarrollo (Memories of Underdevelopment), an existential film, disrupted by documentary footage, focused on the story of an architect in Havana who finds himself in conflict during the political maelstrom of the Bay of Pigs and Cuban Missile Crisis (1961–62). In his version, Douglas updates the story of the architect’s dilemma to focus on the expulsions of Cuba’s 1980 Mariel Boatlift. Inconsolable Memories is therefore more than a remake of one man’s story. Indeed, it is an allegory of history repeating itself. Like the photographs, historical recurrence is privileged and materialized in reference and in form. To that effect, as in Alea’s original film, Douglas’s work utilizes documentary and fictional film stock together within the feature. This tactical manoeuvre is not only in homage to Alea’s masterpiece; it is, I think, in support of documentary forms of mediation and their role in raising historical awareness. As one commentator observes, ‘With Douglas, the remake becomes a form of speculative history rather than reprocessed content’.20

In ‘The Viewer’s Dialectic’, Alea elaborates on the importance of newsreel footage and the reality-fiction relationship. Alea’s newsreel footage segments were intended to allow the spectator greater room for interpretation of reality and/or extraordinary events as he considered neither form alone sufficient for comprehension.21 This impetus to include multiple modes betrays anxiety about the image and the truth-telling capacity of both documentary and narrative fiction. In both cases, these directors use the documentary mode as a unifying principle to undermine assumptions about reality.

Inconsolable Memories takes the conflict between reality and fiction a step further. Disrupting monotonous feature-length flow through the constant shifting of the narrative clips in interlocking varied permutation, the film ensures that the sequence of causal events is unlikely to repeat on any subsequent viewing. The film, therefore, has no fixed perspective. The permutation schema in Inconsolable Memories is generated by the seemingly simple projection of two interlocking films of different lengths comprising the final film. Phillip Monk, in his essay ‘Fugue Encryptions’, links the intertexuality of Douglas’s film directly to the novelty of its technical performance: ‘these strategies, technics rather than expression, produce a new work fabricated from a narratological analysis of a given text. The original ghosts through a rewriting relayed not only by means of another configuration of images and texts, but regulated in performance by the permuting bias of the work’s projection apparatus’.22 Significant here is that the two projectors work simultaneously and in tandem. Indeed, the storyline’s constant shifts are made possible by the formal design of dual projection. After watching several iterations, the film form begins to feel like a prism folding and re-folding. In other words, this film never stands still: its constant and anxious movement increases uncertainty to a level that encourages sympathy with the protagonist and his state of crisis. Despite these abrupt shifts, it nevertheless remains legible as a story; viewers have no difficulty comprehending the temporal movements. In fact, it is pleasurable to view this art form that gives to the viewing time the feeling of space. And here, Douglas most clearly juxtaposes the two accounts of stillness. Whereas in the still images comprising the Cuba Photos the ‘stilling’ of historical ruin is spatialized (captured through an emphasis on architectural forms), in the film, we have emphasized instead a temporal experience (the duration of viewing) which cannot be understood without reference to space. Douglas’s innovative cinema apparatus inverts the logic of photography wherein time is represented by space. Rather, his film suggests that space is represented by time.
Inconsolable Memories

That the film work *Inconsolable Memories* is projected in a separate, darkened room of the museum is also significant. In 'Media Art in the Museum', Groys addresses the transformation of the museum’s increasing darkness and cinema-like space, arguing that the necessity for darkness creates a state of invisibility that fuses with the structural impossibility of viewing a video work in its entirety.23 Groys goes on to describe the disadvantages media artworks have accrued since their absorption into the institutional spaces of the museum. Spectators, he observes, have no easy access to the moving image as they once did with still pictures: the media installation is a hybrid space that has conflated the worst of both cinema and gallery institutional viewing norms. Groys compares and rightly comments on the advantages of viewing still pictures, explaining that they are completely available for any length of time the viewer wants. Moreover, Groys adds, it has been the museum’s role to preserve this for its viewing public. Stillness secures for the viewer total control over the time of contemplation (an experience unlike anything else); whereas, unfortunately, moving pictures in the museum dictate the time of viewing for the spectator and ‘steal the autonomy he is used to’.24 In retrospect, it now appears that what we have gained with all kinds of increased mutability in media has resulted in a loss of equal measure of the pleasures of stillness and contemplation. As Chris Dercon has recently commented, ‘we might say that [with] new applications of photography, cinema and video, we can now really reflect in our museums on what stillness is’.25

Stan Douglas is one of the great forces of this transformation; his installations involving media go back over twenty years, and to this day most of his work reflects on the impossibility of total viewing.26 His media works employ various iterative and structural techniques of recombination—a screening and editing performance in one—and they often self-generate in perpetually inexhaustible story combinations.27 They are the vehicles that carry the content history so present in all of Douglas’s work. The film’s sequence subtitles, ‘AN ENDLESS’, ‘ANOTHER’, ‘A FORGOTTEN’, link up with ‘PROBLEM’, ‘SITUATION’, and ‘ADVENTURE’ in any combination or re-combination and allude to the circumstances that occur and recur in the open narrative. The register of the story never effectively resolves, although it makes an issue of it at every turn. Douglas has stated previously that ‘[A]n absence is often the focus of my work. Even if I am resurrecting these obsolete forms of representation, I’m always indicating their inability to represent the real subject of the work. It’s always something that is outside the system’.28 Clearly, *Inconsolable Memories* is designed to give a full and nuanced account of an unrepresentable experience. More importantly, that the whole cannot be re-constructed (clearly this was not Douglas’s intent) suggests that the true subject of the film is the impossibility of historical reconstruction, here emphasized by its impossibility of viewing.

Superimposition

Out of film history’s ruins, then, Douglas calls this resurrected, obsolete form a recombinant cinema. Indeed, the term is as suggestive as the hybrid structures in the *Cuba Photos*. Yet, with all this collision and circulation of affect, the *Cuba Photos* provide something the film cannot: a reprise, or stillness as it were. They are the vehicles that carry the content for the spectator and ‘steal the autonomy he is used to’. They are always indicating their inability to represent the real subject of the work. It’s always something that is outside the system.28 Clearly, *Inconsolable Memories* is designed to give a full and nuanced account of an unrepresentable experience. More importantly, that the whole cannot be re-constructed (clearly this was not Douglas’s intent) suggests that the true subject of the film is the impossibility of historical reconstruction, here emphasized by its impossibility of viewing.

The stopping of motion within a film, moreover, has generated a wealth of fascinating analysis on the ontological nature of both media.29 Most importantly, the break in the illusionary suspension of time in film by a photographic element, either stop-motion, freeze frame, or a photograph...
filmed, is said to shock the spectator into an awareness of film’s origins in thousands of still images – its skeleton of images – it reveals, in an instant, the supplementary logic of celluloid based media. As Raymond Bellour observes:

[T]he stilled image is one form of exchange between images, as vague as it is general, and whose nature remains to be specified. But in the meantime, the stilled image has acted and still does act as a support to the relentless search for another time, for a break in time into which modern cinema […] has perhaps fallen while searching for its intimate secret.30

When film is, however, superimposed with the effects of photography, as I am suggesting it is here, it has a way of infusing it with that terrible enigma of the still image (in film) described variously by Serge Daney as ‘the vanishing point of ‘Godardian pedagogy’; ‘that which immobilizes the scopic drive’; and ‘the Sphinx of still photography’.31 Even if the photographs are outside the film and provide only a punctuating effect, their supplementary nature is no less obvious. The still enigma of the photographs extends the experience of the film into a fertile area of contemplation where the mind is free to consider the story and amplify its message in the subject of the photographs. The unifying theme of the re-purposed structures in the photographs is in perfect consort with the structural form and principles of Inconsolable Memories. Considered together, the photographs that help to focus movement are intimately associated to these same features that shape movement in Inconsolable Memories – even if their scope happens to range much farther afield. While Inconsolable Memories is clearly opposed to any privileged instant or any instance that might be fixed on transcendent elements, this is not the case with the photographs which it references.

To think of the circulation of photographs in terms of the supplement is to privilege neither photography, which is rooted in stillness, nor film, which, in incorporating stills, can be said to mobilize them. Rather the supplement offers us an unusual and provocative approach to the theme of circulation. Whereas, the history of photography has tended, following John Tagg’s important research, to consider the circulation of photos in the discursive framework offered by Michel Foucault, and thus to emphasise the historical production of ideological meanings, the concept of the supplement provides a means of interrogating the very category of history. The concept of the supplement suggests a far more complex relationship between the two media. For the sake of argument, let us maintain that the photographs are supplemental to the film. We can think of the photographs as a surplus, something extra added to the whole and outside it, so that the supplement must expose the defect of the film, since something that can accommodate the addition of a supplement must be lacking something within itself. Derrida calls this ‘the logic of the supplement’. In film, we can say that the moving celluloid image is not itself the whole (the originary), for its ability to represent is always compromised, perhaps even by film’s origin in still photography and the consequent, merely illusionistic nature of its movement. It follows that the Cuba Photos reveal the deficiency of the film—though they still confer presence and meaning in the ways we have seen. Derrida’s investigation insists on the undecidability of the supplement. He states that ‘The supplement adds itself, it is a surplus, a plenitude enriching another plenitude, the fullest measure of presence. It culminates and accumulates presence. It is thus that art, techne, image, representation, convention, etc., come as supplements to nature and are rich with this entire culminating function’.32 Derrida elaborates in the chapter ‘The Supplement of Origin’ in Speech and Phenomena:

This structure of supplementation is quite complex. As a supplement, the signifier does not represent first and simply the absent signified. Rather, it is
substituted for another signifier, for another type of signifier that maintains another relation with the deficient presence, one more highly valued because the play of difference. It is more highly valued because the play of difference is the movement of idealization and because, the more ideal the signifier is, the more it augments the power to repeat presence, the more it keeps, reserves, and capitalizes on its sense.  

The supplementary relationship of the *Cuba Photos* and the film installation function to spatialize the narrative of progress, and by extension, 'history' is deferred. By capitalising on the deficiencies of film and photography, Douglas is able to address a multiplicity of issues without privileging either medium. In this way, the film experience will not be the same without the photographs, though what they both allude to is clear and constant whether they appear together or not. The subject is in perfect consonance with the recombinant aesthetic of the film component of the installation, and a marker of their *differance*.  

Among Douglas’s extensive and wide-ranging projects, the *Cuba Photos* thus stand out as exemplary of the artist’s abiding concerns and strongest statements on the theme of stillness. Moreover, it is in this work that the photos and the film are in closest consort, and juxtaposed most provocatively. Douglas’s re-purposed structure encourages reflection on mimetic relationships to all other production processes. More importantly, these photographs obliquely evidence a notion of political and artistic revolution, one that is destined to return us to what came before. The photographs may pretend to be extraneous, in appearing to function merely as means (research) and not ends (a theme developed throughout Douglas’s work). The supplementary relationship between film and still photographs ultimately serves to juxtapose the relationship between space and time, undermining the viewer’s ability to grasp fully the scope of historical change, and the project of historical retrieval. When the circulation of photos within Douglas’s installation is considered in terms of the supplement, the theme of stillness is underscored, revealing the inseparability of time and space, the impossibility of total viewing, and, finally, the failure to recover fully the ruins of history. Douglas’s