

**David Ward**

## **The Camera Lucida Variations**

**Extracts from a performance lecture by David Ward, at Winchester School of Art, 23 January 2014**



David Ward *Casting and Stepping – Light on the Feet*.  
Performance 1992. Kunsthalle, Wein

The following texts and images are extracts from a performance that involves a number of ideas on the meaning and experience of variation in works of art, concentrating on three works in particular: a painting, a poem and a piece of music. The attempt was to achieve an apparent informality that still retained a kind of architecture to allow associations and thoughts on contemplative experience, cyclical

movement and bodily presence to develop and accumulate. Selected texts spoken during the performance are highlighted in blue.

### *Where to start?*

A choreographed introduction, placing four chairs at extremes of the performance space, representing compass bearings:

*From your point of view, this is South* (place chair very close to audience)

*From your viewpoint, this is North* (place chair at rear of space)

*From where you are, this is East* (place chair to audience left)

*From your position, this is West* (place chair to audience right)

A short discourse on viewpoint and historical examples of 'de-centring the subject': Copernicus, Darwin and Freud

### **The Reverend Robert Walker Skating on Duddingston Loch**

*I grew up in the Midlands.* (stand in the centre of the space)

*The first time I saw an image of Henry Raeburn's painting, The Reverend Robert Walker Skating on Duddingston Loch, was when a friend sent me a postcard of it in 1972. Here is the postcard:*



*My school friend had gone to Edinburgh University (move to rear of space – North) to study music and I had come here, to Winchester School of Art, (move to front of space – South) to study painting. The postcard made an immediate impression on me and I pinned it up straight away in my studio. I still have that card and it has most often been pinned up in studios, or propped on shelves and mantle-pieces, over the forty years since then.*

*First, in 1973, the card went with me to London, (move right – East) moving to East End studios. In 1991 I took it to my studio at King's College in Cambridge when I was artist-in-residence there. Then in 1994 the postcard flew across the Atlantic (move left – West) when I was a visiting artist at Harvard University and then back to London (move right – East). A year later, twenty-two years after it was posted, the card crossed the border back to Scotland (move to rear – North) where it originated, when I taught at Glasgow School of Art for two years. Then it travelled to Durham in 1996 and spent a year in my studio at the Cathedral when I was artist-in-residence there. After all these travels the postcard returned yet again to London (move right – East) until 2005 when it made the journey to Wiltshire. (move to front again – South)*

*All these extended travels seem appropriate for an object, a postcard, designed to be in transit, intended to go from A to B. This history seems especially suited to the image of a figure in transit too – the elegant iconography of a skater forever passing before our eyes - from left to right across the picture plane - parallel and perpetually gliding. While it suggests a meditation on mortality it speaks of the experience of life's momentum. It has been a visual pleasure always, and it is an exemplary painting in many ways that are open and formal. But it was after almost twenty years of familiarity with the postcard, and then the painting itself, that I reflected on it more deeply, and began to make works relating to it and incorporating it.*

Various slides are shown featuring the Raeburn painting in a variety of treatments: painting reproduction, postcard, black and white photograph and negative image.

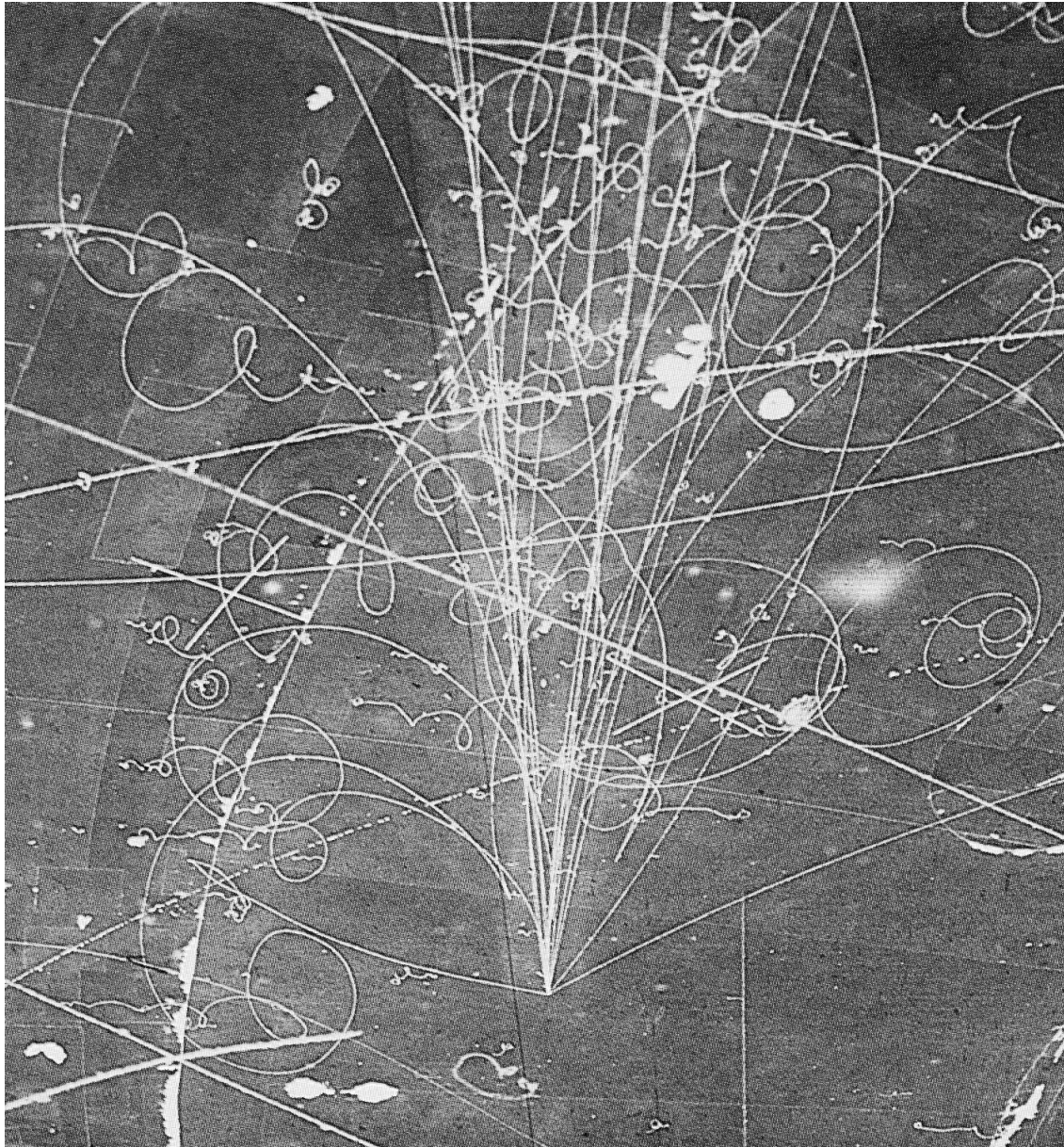
*In 1991, from Cambridge, I requested a black and white archival photograph of the painting from the National Gallery of Scotland and made a negative print of it. During 1992 I included a very big projection of it as a part of a performance I made, Casting and Stepping – Light on the Feet, at the Kunsthalle in Vienna. Later, in 1994, the projection was the first work in my exhibition at the Sackler Museum at Harvard.*

There now follows an account of Raeburn's studio method, his control of light and parallels with the future medium of studio photography. Associations with skating are cited including Duchamp's *Glider* from *The Large Glass*.

Also introduced is reference to a Deleuze essay, *Mediators*, with mention of the dynamics and momentum of contemporary sports as *....to get taken up in the movement of a big wave, a column of rising air, to "come between"....*

(Gilles Deleuze : *Mediators* – Incorporations MIT 1992)

Reflect on: serendipity, resemblance, free association.



Traces of sub-atomic particle tracks. Bubble chamber photograph

### **The Prelude: William Wordsworth**

Continuing to follow skating, attention now turns to poetry in the form of William Wordsworth's *The Prelude* that includes a remarkable, visceral passage on the experience of skating at speed on a frozen lake at night.

First written in 1805, Wordsworth returned to the poem in 1855, shortly before his death, and made numerous variations to the text.

On the page in question alone there are 21 punctuation changes, 7 word changes and an entire new additional line. All this is discussed and elaborated showing the two

1805 38 lines

And in the frosty season, when the sun  
 Was set, and visible for many a mile  
 The cottage windows through the twilight blazed,  
 I heeded not the summons: happy time  
 It was, indeed, for all of us, to me  
 It was a time of rapture: clear and loud  
 The village clock tolled six: I wheeled about,  
 Proud and exulting like an untired horse,  
 That cares not for his home: All shod with steel,  
 We hissed along the polished ice, in games  
 Confederate, imitative of the chase  
 And woodland pleasures, the resounding horn,  
 The pack loud bellowing, and the hunted hare.  
 So through the darkness and the cold we flew,  
 And not a voice was idle; with the din,  
Meanwhile, the precipices rang aloud,  
 The leafless trees, and every icy crag  
 Tinkled like iron, while the distant hills  
 Into the tumult sent an alien sound  
 Of melancholy, not unnoticed, while the stars,  
 Eastward, were sparkling clear, and in the west  
 The orange sky of evening died away.

Not seldom from the uproar I retired  
 Into a silent bay, or sportively  
 Glanced sideways, leaving the tumultuous throng,  
 To cut across the image of a star  
 → That gleamed upon the ice: and oftentimes  
 When we had given our bodies to the wind,  
 And all the shadowy banks on either side,  
 Came sweeping through the darkness, spinning still  
 The rapid line of motion; then at once  
 Have I, reclining back upon my heels,  
 Stopped short, yet still the solitary cliffs  
 Wheeled by me, even as if the earth had rolled  
 With visible motion her diurnal round;  
 Behind me did they stretch in solemn train  
 Feebler and feebler, and I stood and watched  
 Till all was tranquil as a dreamless sleep.

1850 39 lines.

And in the frosty season, when the sun  
 Was set, and visible for many a mile  
 The cottage windows blazed through twilight gloom,  
 I heeded not their summons: happy time  
 It was indeed for all of us, for me  
 It was a time of rapture! Clear and loud  
 The village clock tolled six: I wheeled about,  
 Proud and exulting like an untired horse  
 That cares not for his home: All shod with steel,  
 We hissed along the polished ice in games  
 Confederate, imitative of the chase  
 And woodland pleasures, the resounding horn,  
 The pack loud chiming, and the hunted hare.  
 So through the darkness and the cold we flew,  
 And not a voice was idle; with the din  
Smitten, the precipices rang aloud:  
 The leafless trees and every icy crag  
 Tinkled like iron; while far distant hills  
 Into the tumult sent an alien sound  
 Of melancholy not unnoticed, while the stars  
 Eastward were sparkling clear, and in the west  
 The orange sky of evening died away.  
 Not seldom from the uproar I retired  
 Into a silent bay, or sportively  
 Glanced sideways, leaving the tumultuous throng,  
 To cut across the reflex of a star  
 → That fled, and, flying still before me, gleamed  
 Upon the glassy plain, and oftentimes,  
 When we had given our bodies to the wind,  
 And all the shadowy banks on either side  
 Came sweeping through the darkness spinning still  
 The rapid line of motion; then at once  
 Have I, reclining back upon my heels,  
 Stopped short, yet still the solitary cliffs  
 Wheeled by me, even as if the earth had rolled  
 With visible motion her diurnal round!  
 Behind me did they stretch in solemn train,  
 Feebler and feebler, and I stood and watched  
 Till all was tranquil as a dreamless sleep.

11 changes of punctuation.  
 7 word changes.  
 12 commas deleted.  
 The additional line  
 2! added.

annotated versions. (My annotations illustrated here.)

### READ ALOUD ONE OR BOTH VERSIONS OF THE POEM

[A digression here on Newton's work on astronomy and optics and the fact that he was a close contemporary (1642 – 1727) of J.S. Bach (1685 – 1750)]

### Goldberg Variations: Johann Sebastian Bach

Recorded by Glenn Gould in 1955 and 1981

Glenn Gould recorded two variations of the Goldberg Variations, the second was made in the year before his death. Numerous differences are audible and able to be felt between the versions. Most evident is the difference in tempo with the later performance lasting some 13 minutes and ten seconds longer than the first.

**PLAY THE ARIA FROM BOTH PERFORMANCES:**

**1955: 1 minute 53 seconds – 1981: 3 minutes 5 seconds**

1955

**Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)** Time:

**Goldberg Variations, BWV 988**  
 Goldberg-Variationen / Variations Goldberg / Variazioni Goldberg  
 Aria with 30 Variations / Aria mit 30 Veränderungen  
 Aria avec 30 variations / Aria con 30 variazioni  
 (Clavier-Übung, part / Teil / partie / parte IV)

1	Aria	1'53
2	Variatio 1 a 1 Clav.	0'45
3	Variatio 2 a 1 Clav.	0'38
4	Variatio 3 a 1 Clav. Canone all'Unisono	0'55
5	Variatio 4 a 1 Clav.	0'29
6	Variatio 5 a 1 ovvero 2 Clav.	0'37
7	Variatio 6 a 1 Clav. Canone alla Seconda	0'35
8	Variatio 7 a 1 ovvero 2 Clav.	1'08
9	Variatio 8 a 2 Clav.	0'45
10	Variatio 9 a 1 Clav. Canone alla Terza	0'38
11	Variatio 10 a 1 Clav. Fughetta	0'43
12	Variatio 11 a 2 Clav.	0'55
13	Variatio 12 Canone alla Quarta	0'56
14	Variatio 13 a 2 Clav.	2'10
15	Variatio 14 a 2 Clav.	0'59
16	Variatio 15 a 1 Clav. Canone alla Quinta. Andante	2'17
17	Variatio 16 a 1 Clav. Ouverture	1'18
18	Variatio 17 a 2 Clav.	0'53
19	Variatio 18 a 1 Clav. Canone alla Sesta	0'46
20	Variatio 19 a 1 Clav.	0'43

2

Time:

21	Variatio 20 a 2 Clav.	0'48
22	Variatio 21 Canone alla Settima	1'42
23	Variatio 22 a 1 Clav. Alla breve	0'42
24	Variatio 23 a 2 Clav.	0'55
25	Variatio 24 a 1 Clav. Canone all'Ottava	0'58
26	Variatio 25 a 2 Clav.	6'30
27	Variatio 26 a 2 Clav.	0'52
28	Variatio 27 a 2 Clav. Canone alla Nona	0'50
29	Variatio 28 a 2 Clav.	1'11
30	Variatio 29 a 1 ovvero 2 Clav.	1'00
31	Variatio 30 a 1 Clav. Quodlibet	0'49
32	Aria da capo	2'10

*(Recording: 30th Street Studio, New York City, June 10, 14 & 16, 1955; Mono)*

From / aus / de / da:

"The Well-Tempered Clavier II"  
 »Das Wohltemperierte Clavier II« / «Le Clavier bien tempéré II»  
 "Il clavicembalo ben temperato II"

33	Fugue in F-sharp minor, BWV 883 (fis-moll / en fa dièse mineur / in fa diesis minore)	3'14
34	Fugue in E major, BWV 878 (E-Dur / en mi majeur / in mi maggiore)	4'17

*(Recording: 30th Street Studio, New York City, July 29-31 & August 1, 1957; Mono)*

Total time: 38'05

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1981

**Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)** Time:

**Goldberg Variations, BWV 988**  
 Goldberg-Variationen / Variations Goldberg / Variazioni Goldberg  
 Aria with 30 Variations / Aria mit 30 Veränderungen  
 Aria avec 30 variations / Aria con 30 variazioni  
 (Clavier-Übung, part / Teil / partie / parte IV)

1	Aria	3'05
2	Variatio 1 a 1 Clav.	1'10
3	Variatio 2 a 1 Clav.	0'49
4	Variatio 3 a 1 Clav. Canone all'Unisono	1'31
5	Variatio 4 a 1 Clav.	0'50
6	Variatio 5 a 1 ovvero 2 Clav.	0'37
7	Variatio 6 a 1 Clav. Canone alla Seconda	0'40
8	Variatio 7 a 1 ovvero 2 Clav.	1'16
9	Variatio 8 a 2 Clav.	0'54
10	Variatio 9 a 1 Clav. Canone alla Terza	0'59
11	Variatio 10 a 1 Clav. Fughetta	1'04
12	Variatio 11 a 2 Clav.	0'54
13	Variatio 12 Canone alla Quarta	1'38
14	Variatio 13 a 2 Clav.	2'38
15	Variatio 14 a 2 Clav.	1'04
16	Variatio 15 a 1 Clav. Canone alla Quinta. Andante	5'00

2

Time:

17	Variatio 16 a 1 Clav. Ouverture	1'38
18	Variatio 17 a 2 Clav.	0'54
19	Variatio 18 a 1 Clav. Canone alla Sesta	1'03
20	Variatio 19 a 1 Clav.	1'03
21	Variatio 20 a 2 Clav.	0'50
22	Variatio 21 Canone alla Settima	2'13
23	Variatio 22 a 1 Clav. Alla breve	1'03
24	Variatio 23 a 2 Clav.	0'58
25	Variatio 24 a 1 Clav. Canone all'Ottava	1'42
26	Variatio 25 a 2 Clav.	6'03
27	Variatio 26 a 2 Clav.	0'52
28	Variatio 27 a 2 Clav. Canone alla Nona	1'21
29	Variatio 28 a 2 Clav.	1'03
30	Variatio 29 a 1 ovvero 2 Clav.	1'02
31	Variatio 30 a 1 Clav. Quodlibet	1'28
32	Aria da capo	3'45

*(Recording: 30th Street Studio, New York City, April 22-25 & May 15, 19 & 29, 1981)*

Total time: 51'15

3

*Glenn Gould, Piano*

*Difference in overall duration: 13'10*

Glenn Gould, writing on these celebrated variations by Bach uses language remarkably reminiscent and evocative of the phenomenology of experience generated by the skater, the painter and the poet addressed above:  
(Glenn Gould: *The Glenn Gould Reader* – Faber & Faber 1984)

The music has an '*...aloof carriage...*' (how you hold your body) and a '*...detached bearing...*' (to keep the bow of a ship close as possible to the wind).

Gould quotes Baudelaire, saying the music '*...rests lightly on the wings of the unchecked wind*'.

This reminds us of Wordsworth's line: '*...when we had given our bodies to the wind...*' and Deleuze's '*column of rising air*'.

Gould goes on to say of the variations:

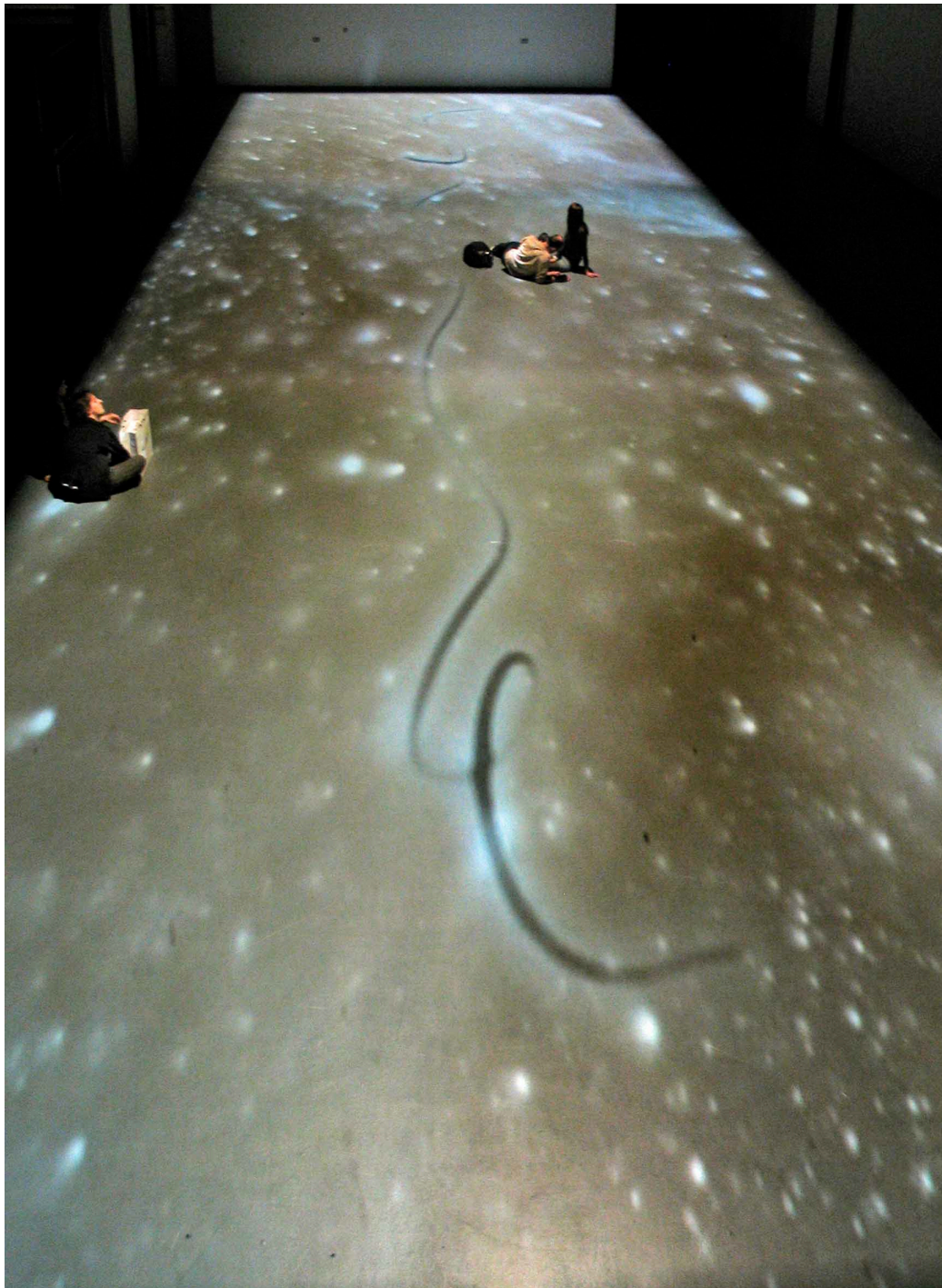
**The theme is** '*...not terminal but radial*'

**The variants are** '*...circumferential not rectilinear*'

**The form of the composition is** '*...concentric focus for the orbit*' '*...not beginnings or endings*'

**Approaching a conclusion:**

*How to end?*



David Ward. *Rink – a Drawing Skating Floor*. Moving image projection, Ambika P3, Westminster University, London, 2008

This article is part of *Looking at Images: A Researcher's Guide*:  
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